

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN
CARRS LANE BIRMINGHAM

EDITED BY HIS SON.

VOL. XV.

PASTORAL ADDRESSES.

**LONDON HAMILTON ADAMS & CO.
BIRMINGHAM HUDSON & SON.**

MDCCCLXII.

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THERE will be found here the Pastoral Addresses published monthly in the years 1840, 1841, and 1843 (which are included by the kind permission of the Tract Society), and also those for 1829, 1847, 1853, and 1854.

The addresses for 1834, 1848, and 1851 have been reprinted in Vol. XIV, p. 219, Vol. III, p. 367, and Vol. XIV, p. 402, where they seemed most appropriately placed. That on family prayer was first published as a Pastoral Letter from the Worcestershire Congregational Association, and forms part of Vol. XII, (at p. 293), and is omitted from the series of which it afterwards formed part.

The pieces here collected were with few exceptions delivered as sermons, and may be taken as representing the Author's usual discourses on Lord's-Day mornings, and as giving a very correct idea of his preaching. His old hearers will, it is confidently expected, prize this volume more than any of the others.

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INCREASE OF HOLINESS IN THE CHURCH.

As these addresses are designed more for the edification of those who, through grace, have received the gospel testimony in the exercise of sincere faith, than for the conversion of those who are still in sin, impenitence and unbelief, I know of no subject more appropriate and important with which to commence them, than “The necessity of a higher degree of holiness than is possessed by the great bulk of religious professors in the present day;” or, in other words, “Increased holiness in the church” of Christ at large. It is to be apprehended that the combined influences of politics, trade, controversy, and the general habits of society, have had considerable effect in lowering the standard, and depressing the spirit, of vital Christianity in the hearts of those by whom it is possessed. Even where it may be hoped the soul is truly renewed, the work of grace goes on but slowly in many cases, and the degree of sanctification is low and feeble: there is the salt but it has not its full savour, and the light but it is only glimmering, and emits but a sickly beam. It is of momentous consequence for professors to consider the words of Christ: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” The

emphasis of this passage lies not simply in the word fruit, but in the seemingly more insignificant term, much. To glorify God, we must not only bear fruit, and good fruit, but much fruit. For our "fruit "to be "unto holiness," it must be good in quality; and if we would glorify God, it must abound in quantity. A husbandman is not honoured by his crop if there be only a few ears of corn, and those, however excellent in quality, almost choked with weeds, but when the whole field is covered with produce of the best kind: so God is 'glorified not merely by real holiness, but by that which is eminent. It is possible to conceive of a little religion, in some circumstances, dishonouring God more, and doing more harm, than no religion at all. Hence the solemn woe denounced against the Laodicean church. The other part of the verse just quoted is also well worthy of the attention of professors, "so shall ye be my disciples." Christ was indeed a fruitful bough; his life was filled with the fruits of love to God and man, and all the manifestations of personal holiness; and it behoves us either to imitate his example, or forego the profession of his name. It is somewhat difficult to conceive how some that call themselves by the name of the Lord can satisfy their consciences that they are really his people; and it is fearful to consider on what slender evidence they come to the conclusion that they stand in this holy and endearing relation to him. In observing their deportment, one would be almost ready to imagine that they were making the dangerous experiment of trying with how little real religion they could be admitted to his family upon earth, and to the mansions of his glory in heaven. We know very well that various degrees of holiness are possessed by different members

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of the household of God; but he who on system is contented with low attainments, under the notion that such will ensure his entrance into heaven as well as larger ones, may be quite sure that he has yet to learn the first principles of personal godliness.

But even where there is no such fatal mistake as this, and there is little room to doubt the reality of religion, it is in many cases in a low and feeble state, and needs revival. Believers are called in this extraordinary age, and in this favoured country, to the great work of converting the world to Christ. This is emphatically the business of the present generation, and on the due performance of it depends, to a considerable extent, the spiritual welfare of all ages and all nations. For such a commission what eminent holiness is necessary! A dispensation is committed to us, for which it becomes us to make ourselves ready by a peculiar consecration. A calling so high and so sacred as this requires a sanctity of heart and character far above what it is our privilege to witness. Never since the days of the apostles was there, on this ground, so loud and impressive a demand upon the followers of the Lamb for large degrees of the wisdom that comes from above. If the lamp of zeal which is now kindled for the spiritual illumination of the world be not fed by the oil of piety, it will soon expire, however flashy the light may be which it now sends forth. If any other and lower principle than eminent sanctity be the impulsive cause of our activity, our energy will soon exhaust itself; and if it does not, it is an energy that we can scarcely expect God to honour and to bless. It is the power not of mere money and organisation and public spirit, but of faith, prayer, and holiness, that will lead to the world's conversion. The church is

yet too weak for her great work: the pulsations of her new heart are slow and feeble; the life's blood of spiritual feeling flows sluggishly through her frame, and what efforts she makes are in many cases more the result of stimulants than of healthful vigour. What is wanted is individual, personal, and deep-toned piety; the strong faith that lays hold of God's strength; the wrestling prayer that has power with God to prevail; the constraining love of Christ carrying away, as with the force of a torrent, the heart from sin and the world to holiness and zeal for the Lord's cause; a deep sense of the obligations of redeeming mercy; the sacrifice to Christ of all we are and have; a deadness of heart to things seen and temporal, and a life hid with Christ in God; the devout, contemplative, spiritual, heavenly-minded, frame; these things we want, and these we must have, before we are in state meetened to convert the world. How soon and how rapidly will this great consummation be accomplished, when the church thus, not only puts on her beautiful garments, but by a revived piety renews her youth and her strength like the eagle's! Permit me, then, in this introductory address, to urge upon my readers increased attainments in christian holiness, as the object of all the others that are to follow.

Holiness is a very comprehensive word, and expresses a state of mind and conduct that includes many things. It is the work of the Spirit; the fruit of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and the operation of the new nature which we receive in regeneration. Holiness may be viewed in various aspects, according to the different objects to which it relates. Towards God, it is supreme love; delight in his moral character; submission to his

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will; obedience to his commands; zeal for his cause; observance of his institutes; and seeking his glory. Towards Christ, it is a conformity to his example, and imbibing his spirit. Towards men, it is charity, integrity, truth, mercy. Towards sin, it is a hatred of all iniquity, a tender conscience easily wounded by little sins, and scrupulously avoiding them; together with a laborious, painful, self-denying, progressive mortification of all the known corruptions of our heart, and a diligent search for such as are unsuspected by ourselves. Towards self, it is the control of our fleshly appetites; the eradication of our pride; the mortification of our selfishness. Towards divine things in general, it is spirituality of mind, or the habitual current of pious thought and devout affections flowing through the soul. And towards the objects of the unseen world, it is heavenly mindedness, the turning away from things seen and temporal to things unseen and eternal.

Oh, what a word is holiness! How much does it comprehend! How little is it understood, and how much less is it practised! Who can read the foregoing description of it, and not admit that we need much, very much more of it, than we possess, and that we may well make it the subject matter of our earnest prayers? Study it as a whole, and in all its parts. How important is it in relation to your fellow-men, and to the notice they will take of your conduct, if they see any want of consistency between your actions and your profession, not only your own religion will be suspected, but all religion will be reviled; and how important also is that view of holiness which considers your conduct in reference to God and Christ. To which duty, brethren, shall I most earnestly direct your attention, to a deeper spi-

rituality, or a stricter morality, to a more elevated heavenly mindedness, or a more uniform exhibition of the graces that shed their fragrance, and exhibit their beauty upon earth? I exhort you to seek both. I want to see the devotion of the church incorporated with, and vitalizing and animating the morality of the house and of the shop. I want to see the spirit of prayer shedding the lustre, and diffusing the beauties, of holiness, over the whole character. I want to see the saint blended with and sustaining the husband, the father, the master, and the tradesman. To adopt apostolic and inspired language, I covet to see you exemplary in "all holy conversation and godliness."

And for whom should you seek more holiness? For your pastor; that his mind may be more filled with holy light, his heart with holy love, and his life with holy actions. Do not leave him out of your prayers. Much, under God, even in reference to yourselves, will depend upon him; upon his preaching, the tone of his piety, and the wisdom, sanctity, and blamelessness of his conduct. Appointed to be an example to the flock, as well as its teacher and ruler, it is for your own advantage that you should seek for him an abundant supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus. If apostles asked the prayers of the righteous, with how much greater propriety and correctness may we say, "Brethren, pray for us!"

Pray for the whole congregation with which you meet, and the church of Christ in its collective capacity, in all its wide extent, and variety of circumstances, sex, and station; that it may be full of the Holy Spirit, replenished with his Divine blessing as a spirit of holiness, and made to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God.

Let each individual consider himself as the representative of the whole church; for as the piety of the whole body is made up of the piety of its separate members, his duty is to begin the increase of it with himself. Let each seriously consider to what higher degrees of holiness he would have the church advance, and let him immediately seek grace to advance to that state himself. Let each grow in grace, then all will grow in grace. Let each seek a revival of religion in his own soul, then the whole church will be revived. Let each, therefore, say, "I solemnly purpose and resolve, as God shall assist me, to be more holy this year than ever. I will seek to increase with all the increase of God, and to be filled with all his fulness. My aim and directory shall be, more holiness."

But, perhaps, you would wish me to specify some points to which, above others, I would have you direct your attention, in order to an increase of holiness. Holiness consists of two general branches; the mortification of sin, and the vivification of christian graces.

As to mortification of sin, carry on a more determined crucifixion of all heart sins, all evil thoughts, and evil feelings. "Crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof." "Blessed are the pure in heart," said Christ, "for they shall see God." A real christian should "keep the heart with all diligence," a duty too much neglected. We are too apt to be satisfied if the life be free from visible sins, forgetting that God sees and searches the heart. Direct your attention more fixedly, and your aim more constantly, to the destruction of besetting sins. "Lay aside every weight," said the apostle, "and the sin which doth so easily beset you." You know what they are, whether lusts of the

flesh or lusts of the mind; whether bad tempers towards man, or sinful dispositions toward God; whether violations of piety, or of social propriety. Let this year then be distinguished by a great mortification of besetting sins. May we all go afresh to this work in the exercise of faith and prayer. What a year will it be, if all of us should come to the close of it, in a state of blessed freedom from the sins that have most distressed us, disgraced us, and hindered us in our progress heavenward. No sins require for their destruction such severe mortification, such incessant labour, such earnest prayer, such strong faith; but all these are necessary; for, if the sins be not destroyed, they will probably destroy us.

Connected with this, must also be the cultivation of a tender conscience: a conscience tender as the apple of the eye, and shrinking from little as well as from greater injuries. The christian's soul is sorely injured, the credit of religion is greatly lessened, and the minds of sinners much hardened, by what are called the little sins of professors.

But there must also be the vivification of our graces. I urge you to two things, greater spirituality of mind, that is, a greater delight to think and talk on spiritual subjects; a keener relish for what is divine; a more ardent and habitual delight in God; a more intense apprehension of the love of Christ; a hungering and thirsting after righteousness; a pleasure in prayer, reading the scriptures, and in attending, the means of grace: and with this heavenly mindedness; by which I mean, a sense of our pilgrimage state on earth, a longing and preparing for heaven. In short, I mean the disposition expressed in such passages as these. "Set

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your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:” “I have a desire to depart, and be with Christ:” “For we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” This is what I am anxious to see, a religion of the affections; a spiritual and heavenly religion; a religion that shall make you spiritual amidst worldly things, and heavenly amidst earthly ones.

Such are the things I propose to you as the object of your present diligent pursuit. Do you not need them? Are you holy enough, spiritual enough, heavenly enough? Can you so far impose upon yourselves, any of you, as to imagine you may be satisfied with your present attainments? God preserve you from the Laodicean mistake, of supposing you have “need of nothing!”

Would you not be more happy if you were more holy? Would you not thus have clearer evidence of your personal interest in the blessings of salvation, and be less troubled with doubts and fears; and at the same time experience a more blessed degree of spiritual liberty? Would you not bear your cares and troubles with greater ease and comfort?

Would you not be more useful by your example, your influence, your prayers, if you were more holy? And surely you cannot be indifferent to usefulness.

Would you not be thus meetening for heaven, and more rapidly training up for glory? Grace is glory begun, glory is grace completed; and according to your degrees of grace on earth, will be your degrees of glory in heaven.

Is not this the design of all God’s dispensations

of grace and providence towards you? For what were you chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world? To be holy, Ephes. i, 4. What was Christ's purpose in dying for you upon the cross? That you might be holy, Ephes. v, 26, 27; Titus ii, 11-13. For what is the Spirit poured out from on high? To make you holy, Gal. v, 16-26; Ephes. v, 22-32; John iii, 4-8. What is the nature of our calling? A holy one: for we are called to "holiness," 1 Thess. iv, 7. What is the design of the Bible? To make us holy, John xvii, 17. Why are we afflicted? To be made "partakers of his holiness," Heb. xii, 10-14. What is heaven? The perfection of holiness, Ephes. v, 27; 1 John iii, 2; Rev. xxi, 27; xxii, 11. See, dear brethren, how every thing concurs in your being made holy.

Let me then entreat you, as your friend, your pastor, the watchman of your souls, and the overseer of your spiritual interests, to strive after holiness.

Take up the subject in real earnest. Enter into the idea that you must be a more holy people, and let it take full possession of your souls. Oh, if this year should be devoted to such an object, what, what might we not expect! In order to this, let it be a matter of constant, earnest, believing prayer in your closets, at your family altars, and in your social meetings; for it is "the Spirit of holiness" from heaven, that must make you holy. Depend upon him, and express your dependence by believing prayer.

Expect it; look out for it; believe that your prayers will be heard, James i, 6.

Diligently use the means of grace; not only on sabbath days, but on week days. Take pains to attain

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this state of mind. Give yourselves to it as something of importance you must attain to.

Bend every thing to it; seek that your mercies may be sanctified, and your afflictions also sanctified. Go to hear sermons in order to be more holy. Go to social prayer to be made holy. Go to the Lord's supper to be made holy. Read the Bible to be made holy.

Keep up a spirit of faith in Christ Jesus. All fulness is in him; and all supplies must be had from and through him.

Such are my wishes, my prayers, and my pursuits concerning you. By God's grace I mean to take more pains with you, and to be more in earnest for you than ever. But this will be of no avail, unless you take pains for and with yourselves. You can no more grow in holiness, by merely wishing for it, than a child can increase in stature and strength by desiring it, while, at the same time, he neglects all the means of growth. Do not abuse the doctrine of the Spirit's influence to live in indolence. The promised aid of the Spirit is to stimulate, and not to paralyse your energies. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." In this cheering passage we are encouraged to work, because God works in us. Do not reconcile yourselves to imperfection, by the idea that there is no perfection in the world. "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us purify ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." It is obviously our duty to aim at perfection, though we shall never attain it on earth.

You are aware that, with the view of promoting your increased holiness, I have recommended the purchase

and daily perusal by every one of the communicants, of that simple and eminently spiritual manual of piety, Bogatsky's "Golden Treasury;"* and I trust that all of you will possess the book, and as each day comes round, will read the portion allotted to it, and make it the subject of devout meditation during the intermissions of secular business and domestic care. This will produce a sweet and blessed fellowship of sentiment and feeling between the communicants, necessarily separated from each other in their daily avocations.

My anxiety for your growth in grace is extreme. You are "called unto holiness," dear brethren; may you obtain help from the Spirit to be eminent in your profession.

SPIRITUALITY OF MIND.

THE subject of this address is "Spirituality of Mind:" a most blessed condition of the soul, much spoken of in conversation and in sermons; often discussed in books; frequently prayed for; yet little understood, and too rarely possessed, at least in any high degree. It is a branch of holiness, but refers rather to the state of the mind, as the expression imports, than to the conduct. "To be spiritually minded," says the apostle, "is life and peace;" or, as the words may be rendered, "the minding of the Spirit," that is, the things of the Spirit, "is life and peace." In the preceding verse it is said, "they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit." The word rendered "they mind," expresses primarily

* This was one of three books which the Author's mother always kept in her bed-room.

the exercise of the intellect, they attend to, they employ their thoughts; but secondarily, and by implication, the exercise of the affections. Hence in Col. iii, 2, it is thus rendered, "Set your affections on things above." Spirituality of mind, then, means the habitual and pious employment of the thoughts and affections on divine subjects. It is something more than morality of conduct, however pure and exemplary; more than attendance on the means of grace, however punctual; more than liberality, however diffusive; more than zeal, however active; it means in addition to all this, an habitual, devotional state of mind.

It is the same state of mind towards God and Christ, and divine things in general, as an affectionate husband and father has towards his wife and children, who not only upon the whole truly regards them, and avoids whatever is grossly inconsistent with such feelings, but whose heart, when he is absent from them, instinctively, spontaneously, and habitually turns towards them; who needs no prompter to remind him of them; whose thoughts in reference to them are confined to no time or place, and as often as they occur, and that is perpetually, kindle his affections, and make him love to talk of them, and long to be with them. This is more than decorous conduct towards them, it is minding them. Spirituality of mind is something like this, only the object is divine, and not human. It is such a minding spiritual things as arises from interest and delight in them; such a desire to meditate upon them as is produced by a strong attachment to them. The true indication of this state of mind, then, is to be found in the prevailing character and complexion of the thoughts. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Thoughts

are the springs of feeling, the elements of action and of character. The object of our thoughts in this state of mind is not merely future glory, for that we characterise as heavenly-mindedness: it is not a mere looking up into heaven, a longing and craving amidst the sorrows of life after immortality and eternal repose, but a devout and habitual reflection on the whole range of Divine truth, the glorious character of God, the person and offices of Christ, the wise and gracious care of a superintending providence, the covenant of grace, the exceeding great and precious promises of the Divine word, the millennial state of the world, and the second coming of Christ, with all spiritual subjects in their variety. If there be a spiritual mind, our thoughts of these subjects will be voluntary and spontaneous; they will rise up in the soul, not only when it is appealed to by sermons, books and events, (which in some sense compel it to think,) but in the absence of the minister, when at a distance from the sanctuary, and when neither volume nor dispensation of providence speaks to us. In retirement, in solitude, on journeys, in the sleepless hours of night, and during the intervals of business, we shall turn to some topic of religion, to the glory of God, the work of Christ, or the privileges of believers, and find our comfort and joy in such meditations. We shall muse till the fire burns within us. We shall court such seasons of holy thoughtfulness, and strive to lengthen them when they occur.

Such thoughts will be frequent and habitual. They will occur not only at long intervals, and be looked upon when they do, as strangers entering into the mind, surprising it by their novelty, and almost alarming it, as an angel did the Jews, under the supposition that they

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are the harbingers of death; but they will be the stated residents of the mind, necessarily having from time to time to make way for other visitors, but still returning home as soon as those visitors are gone to dwell there. They will be the daily, almost hourly occupants of the soul.

These thoughts are as agreeable to the mind as they are habitual. The christian loves to think on divine things; they suit his taste, are congenial with his desires, and are productive of his happiness. They are as welcome as beloved friends, who are received with joy, entertained with pleasure, and parted from with reluctance.

Pious thoughts are readily suggested by the occurrences of life to the spiritually-minded christian. His comforts lead him to think of the goodness of God; his afflictions of their divine source. In public judgments his mind goes up to the supreme Governor; in national mercies, to the Author of fruitful seasons and public tranquillity. Where others talk of nature, he thinks of God; and where they speak of fortune, he dwells on providence. Recollecting the beautiful imagery of scripture, which has associated the offices, work, and benefits of Christ, with all the objects of nature, he sees the glories of the Saviour figuratively set forth before him in the splendour of the sun, the brilliancy of the morning star, the clustered vine, the waging corn, the tender shepherd, and the affectionate bridegroom. Without allowing his spirituality to degenerate into an allegorizing, rhapsodical, or mystical piety, he loves to follow in the track of the sacred writers, and read his Saviour's name in those objects on which they have imprinted it. And I may remark that among all the

objects to which the thoughts and affections of the spiritually-minded are directed, the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ stand pre-eminent. They do not stop with the contemplation of God, and providence, and heaven, but contemplate all in Christ, and Christ in all. His divinity, atonement, and intercession: his perfect righteousness for their justification, and his spotless example as the rule of their sanctification; his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; are all themes which have irresistible attractions for their thoughts. Nothing more decidedly indicates spirituality, than this habitual tendency of the thoughts to Christ. It is not heaven, merely, nor chiefly, I again repeat, that this disposition leads the believer to dwell upon, but Christ; for what is heaven, but the presence of Christ? Provided he could see the glory, and feel the grace, of the Saviour, it is all one to the man of strong faith, the advanced Christian, whether he is in heaven or upon earth, or at any rate, his desire to depart is founded on the hope and desire of a more perfect vision and enjoyment of Christ. The degree to which our thoughts and feelings are drawn to the Redeemer, shows the precise amount we possess of true spirituality of mind. There may be, and doubtless is, much serious reflection of a certain kind, compelled by sorrow, or produced by a sentimental turn of mind, on various generalities of religion, and especially upon providence and heaven, even where there is no evangelical piety. But to them that believe Christ is precious, he is the specific object and centre of their devotional reflections.

The thoughts of the truly spiritually minded always kindle their religious affections, and lead them to corresponding actions. Spirituality of mind is not merely

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silent contemplation, inactive sentimentality, or passionless quietism: no; it is habitual and delightful thinking, producing habitual and delightful feeling, and ending in habitual holy actions. "It is of little consequence what are our musings, and meditations, and heart-stirring feelings, and elevated thoughts, unless there are connected with all these excitements, what are the only legitimate proofs of their genuineness and sincerity, conformity to the will of God, and actual nieetness for heaven in our temper, disposition, and character." It is a spurious spirituality, and one of the artifices by which Satan deceives and destroys unwary souls, to indulge in pious thoughts, and luxuriate in devotional feeling, while the temper is unsubdued, the corruptions of the heart are unmortified, and the actions of the life are in little conformity with the word of God.

Such is spirituality of mind: not mere religious talkativeness, which confines itself to a set of current phrases, and is ever forward to obtrude them upon all persons, and on all occasions: not affected grimace, and fawning, pious obsequiousness: nothing of the sort. True it is, that the persons enjoying this holy state of soul, will be ever willing, yea ready, to converse with others like-minded, on the subjects nearest and dearest to their hearts; and it is one of the marks of their character to solicit as companions, and to associate habitually with, those who are qualified by their experience, and prepared by their disposition, to engage in such discourse as befits the redeemed of the Lord, and the travellers to immortality. Shunning the worldly minded, the political, and the controversial, they will unite with those who fear the Lord,

and speak often to one another of the common salvation: but they will not indulge in what may be denominated mere cant words, which proceed from no conviction or emotion, and which end in no action.

This, my dear flock, is the state of mind which I am anxious to promote in you, and to set you an example of in myself. It is not enough that we are outwardly correct in our conduct, and that we maintain all the forms of godliness; but we must seek to maintain the vitality of it in the state of our minds and hearts. Religion is a living principle in the soul: yea, a divine life, a holy taste, whose seat is in the mind. Conduct is but the body of character, and however symmetrical it may lie, and however fair to look upon, it is pious thought and feeling which give it intellect and heart, and constitute its soul, and without these there is but the picture or the statue, but not the living christian. It is the object of the present address to promote the exercise of such thoughts and such affections as may be supposed to dwell in a soul that is renewed by the Spirit of God, and is sanctified by the truth; that loves God supremely, and is under the constraining influence of the love of Christ; that is hoping, waiting, and preparing for eternal glory. And do, my dear friends, reflect what spontaneous, numerous, delightful, and practical thoughts such a state of soul must be supposed to call forth. Can a soul be redeemed, regenerated, and going to glory everlasting, and not, think much, and feel much, and talk much, about it? Can such prospects be before us, such hopes in us, such brightness beaming upon us, and yet there be no habitual minding of such matters?

It may be useful to mention some proofs of a want

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of spirituality, that those who are destitute of it, may take warning, and seek to have the defect supplied. When there is no disposition or tendency to indulge in holy thoughts, but the whole character and complexion of the mind are worldly; when there is a disinclination to attend the week-day services; when the domestic and private duties of religion are little better than heartless forms; when the taste in regard to sermons is rather for talent and elegance, than for sound evangelical truth; when the society of worldly and political men is preferred to the company of the godly, or when the least spiritual of the latter are more sought after, and their discourse is more relished than that of the eminently pious; when cheerfulness degenerates into levity, and there is no pleasure in religious conversation; when there is a disposition to decry as hypocrisy and cant all spiritual taste and conversation; in all these cases there is a sad indication of a want of that state of mind, which it is the object of this address to promote.

But I will now enumerate some of the principal means by which spirituality of mind may be promoted. It will not grow in the soul without culture; nor come to us at the careless beckoning of indolent wishing. "We must set our hearts upon it, or we shall never have it, and must consider it both as a rich privilege to be enjoyed, and an incumbent duty to be performed.

The most direct and certain means of obtaining it are, a clear scriptural knowledge of divine truth, and a strong faith in its glorious and eternal realities. We cannot expect spiritual thoughts and affections from truths which are but imperfectly understood, or doubtfully and feebly believed.

How fervently should we pray for it, how ardently should we long for it, how laboriously should we seek for it, how confidently expect it, and how perseveringly and patiently wait for it! The prayer of faith and fervour must go up to the treasury of heaven, and fetch the blessing from the inexhaustible stores of divine grace. It is in the closet of private devotion, where we commune with our Father in secret, that this pious state of mind must be cultivated, and much time for prayer must be redeemed from the world to obtain it. If you will not always pray, and not faint; if you will not give yourselves to prayer; if you will not watch unto prayer, you cannot attain to this delightful state of soul. It is the Spirit's richest donation, which he bestows only on the soul that lays hold on his strength, and seems to say, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Then there must be much devout reading of the Holy Scriptures. It is not enough not to neglect the Bible for the newspaper, but it must not be displaced by pious uninspired books. The best books of men can be no substitute for the book of God. No fuel is so meet to feed the flame of devotion as the promises, precepts, and consolations of the word of God: a single text has sometimes kept it burning with intense brightness for hours, and has supplied a source of holy thoughts for a whole sleepless night or anxious day.

Meditation is of great power to promote this devout frame. We must pause and think upon the word of God, till its truths expand before us, and we feel its power upon the heart. Some of its minuter beauties, hidden from the hasty and superficial reader, come out to the admiring mind of him who looks attentively for

them. It would be well to fix upon a passage of Scripture in the morning, and make it the subject of meditation, to fill up the intervals of business during the day, and to be a topic always at hand for the mind to turn to in moments of leisure, which would thus gather up for a holy purpose, those fragments of time which would otherwise be wasted on trifles, or spent on something worse. Bogatzky will help you here.

When christians meet, they should endeavour to introduce some topic of conversation of a holy nature and common interest, and not allow the time to be lost, or their influence upon each other be at best negative. Large parties are unfriendly to this, as it is impossible or difficult to maintain a conversation in such circumstances, where all shall take a part. The parties even of christians are not always favourable to their Christianity. Where the time is spent in music, singing, or mere gossip, it is but little calculated to promote spirituality of mind.

Self examination and self inspection must be added. We should look into our minds, and keep a constant eye upon the state of our soul, as to the thoughts and feelings that habitually dwell there, or even come as visitors. Evil thoughts keep out good ones; and even worldly ones may so crowd the mind as to leave no room for better reflections. It would be well sometimes at the close of the day, when alone in our closets, to ask the question, "What have I been thinking about today? How many thoughts have I given to Christ and heaven?"

It should be a matter of special importance with us, not only to be regular and diligent in attending upon the ordinances of religion, but to be spiritual in the use

of them. Nothing tends more to flatten devotional feeling, than an undevout attendance on religious exercises.

Ejaculatory prayer maintained throughout the day would have a blessed effect. It would keep the heart in a sweet and holy temper all the day long, and have an excellent influence on all our ordinary actions and common duties. This were to “walk with God” indeed, to hold continually by our Father’s hand; whereas, without this, our praying morning and evening looks but a formal visit, and not delighting in that constant converse, which is yet our happiness and honour, and makes all conditions to be pleasant, all places to be sacred, and all occupations profitable. “This would refresh us in the hardest labour, as they that carry away the spices from Arabia, are refreshed by the scent of them in their journey; and some observe that it keeps their strength, and prevents them from fainting.”

And as we should be less worldly in our spiritual matters, so we should be more spiritual in our worldly ones.

“Not only labour,” says pious Leighton, “to keep thy mind spiritual in itself, but by it put a spiritual stamp even upon thy temporal employments; and so thou shalt live to God, not only without prejudice of thy calling, but even in it, and shalt converse with him in thy shop, or in the field, or in thy journey, doing all in obedience to him, and offering all, and thyself withal, as a sacrifice to him; thou still with him, and he still with thee, in all. This is to live to the will of God indeed, to follow his direction, and intend his glory in all. Thus the wife in the very oversight of her house, and the husband in his affairs abroad, may be living to God, raising their low employments to a high quality this way; ‘Lord, even this mean work I do for thee, complying with thy will, who hast put me in this station, and given me this task. Thy will be done. Lord, I offer up even this work to thee. Accept of me, and of my desire to obey thee in all.’ And as in their work, so in their refreshments and rest, christians do

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all for him. 'Whether ye eat or drink,' says the apostle, 'or whatsoever ye do, do all for the glory of God,' 1 Cor. x. 31; doing all for this reason because it is his will, and for this end that he may have glory; bending the use of all our strength and all his mercies that way setting this mark on all our designs and way. This for the glory of my God, and this further for his glory; and so from one thing to another throughout our whole life. This is the art of keeping the heart spiritual in all affairs; yea, spiritualizing the affairs themselves in their use, that in themselves are earthly. This is the elixir that turns lower metal into gold, the mean actions of this life, in a christian's hands, into obedience and holy offerings unto God."

How many motives urge you to the cultivation of this Divine temper! Some degree of it is essentially necessary to the very existence of personal religion. "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." The soul that has no degree of this holy, heavenly temper, is dead in trespasses and sins. To have no tendency to pious thoughts and affections, is the characteristic of a soul in which no spark of divine life is yet kindled. But I am not now urging the necessity of regeneration, but of higher degree of sanctification, and a larger measure of spirituality, as an essential part of it.

Think of the happiness accompanying a large share of spirituality. It is life and peace, a living peace, a peaceful life. It is life; just as much as we have of this, and no more, we have of the life of God, of heaven, of holiness in our souls. All life in sentient beings is delightful in proportion to its vigour and healthfulness; the sensations of animal life are agreeable; the exercises of intellectual life still more so; but the actings and aspirations of spiritual life, are the sublimest felicity the human soul can know; this is the life of spirits made perfect, of the blessed angels, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the great God himself, who is pure spirit.

In the exercises of this life, we therefore have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the life whose spring is hid with Christ in God. Let us rise higher, my dear flock, into this lofty and holy existence. As rational creatures, it is a dignified employment to use our noble faculties in the contemplation of the works of creation; but as spiritual ones, it is still more dignified to use them in contemplating and enjoying the things that are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. This is indeed "peace," a word that signifies not only tranquillity and repose of mind, but all the kinds and parts of substantial happiness. There is no real felicity out of the region of divine realities, and it is spirituality that brings us within that hallowed circle, and enables us to drink the crystal waters of those blessed springs.

If you would enjoy religion, then, or at any rate, if you would have a rich and powerful enjoyment of it, you must attain to high degrees of this devout temper. Think of the felicity which a current of holy thoughts flowing through the soul, and directing its course ever towards God, and Christ, and heaven, must bring with it. How richly must such a stream be impregnated with all the elements, of a paradisaic life! How would such a state of mind lighten your cares, alleviate your sorrows, sweeten your comforts, sanctify your trials, elevate your devotions, and anticipate heaven! How many otherwise cheerless seasons would it enliven, and how many gloomy scenes would it irradiate! What a source of perennial delight would it open, where all beside is a desert of the soul! Blessed state, day and night to be conversant with holy, heavenly, peaceful thoughts. Perhaps some

of you have not lost this spirituality, because you have never attained to any high degrees of it.

“What is the source of your most poignant regrets, what most powerfully awakens the bitter -feelings of self-reproach, renders the means of grace unproductive of joy, and exposes you to the most dangerous excursions of your spiritual foes? Is it not when you are ‘minding the things of the flesh,’ and not ‘minding the things of the Spirit?’ It is the want of spirituality that beclouds your prospects, causes darkness and doubt and fear to surround your path, obscures the evidences of your interest in the divine favour, gives power to your invisible enemies, and leads either to the experience of painful and morbid dejection, or the more dangerous feeling of unholy presumption.” “On Spirituality of Mind,” by Dr. Fletcher.

Think of what importance spirituality of mind is to give life, and beauty, and attractive force to your example. It is this which, when added to outward consistency of conduct, presents religion to the world as it really is, a divine and heavenly thing upon earth: for though its seat is in the soul, yet by the intensity and brightness of an inward flame, it sends out a lustre over the whole character, and exhibits the beauties of holiness in a state of illumination: or, to change the metaphor, though the principle of life be within, it presents the outer man of piety as a vital reality, and not a dead form.

You may be useful, I admit, without much, or even without any spirituality; for God can glorify himself by the instrumentality of unconverted men; but how much more useful may you be, if all the offerings of your liberality be salted with this grace, and the flame of your zeal be fed with the oil of this personal piety! What prevailing power will it give to your prayers, what an impulse to your liberality, and what a constancy as well as steadfastness to your energy and efforts!

And is it not thus you are to become meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light? Yea, is it not the beginning of heaven upon earth? What is heaven, but the absence of all that is carnal, and the presence and perfection of all that is spiritual? It is by the habitual recurrence of holy thoughts that the lineaments of a heavenly character are impressed upon the soul, and by the ardour of holy affections, that they acquire an unfading beauty, and an enduring form.

HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.

HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS is an expression that explains itself, it is the minding of heaven; or the exercise of the thoughts and affections upon those invisible and eternal realities, which are declared by the Scriptures to await the christian beyond the grave.

Alas, how little of this is there to be found even among professing christians! The description given by the apostle of the predominant taste and pursuits of the men of the world, "They mind earthly things," too well suits a large proportion of those who in profession have come out from the world, and are a people separate unto God. How engrossed are they, not only in the business, but in the cares, the love, and the enjoyments, of earth! Who would imagine, to see their conduct, to hear their conversation, to observe their spirit, so un-devout and so worldly, that these were the men who have heaven in their eye, their heart, their hope? Even to them, we should be inclined to think that the paradise of God is nothing more than a name, a sublime fiction, a sacred vision; as with all its splendour, it has

not power enough to engage their thoughts and fix their regards. How little effect has it to elevate them above a predominant earthly-mindedness, to comfort them in trouble, to minister to their happiness, or to mortify their corruptions! Can it be that they are seeking for, and going to, glory, honour, and immortality, who think so little about them, and derive so small a portion of their enjoyment from the expectation of them.

What is heaven? The Bible, and the Bible alone, can answer this question: and even this, though a revelation from God, only partially discloses the infinite and eternal reality. There is enough to excite, sustain, and animate hope, but not enough to gratify curiosity. The substance is revealed, all that is merely circumstantial is withheld. You cannot be ignorant that heaven is represented in the Bible, rather as a state of mind, than as a place; and that where objects of sense and locality are spoken of, they are to be understood, for the most part, in a figurative, and not in a literal meaning. The description of the celestial world, as we find it in the word of God, has always appeared to me one of the most striking and convincing of the internal evidences of Christianity. The elysium of the Greeks and the Romans, the paradise of Mohammed, and the various fantastic ideas of the world beyond the grave entertained by modern pagans are all of the earth, earthy: nothing more or better than earthly and sensual gratifications rendered immortal. How different the heaven of the new testament; how pure, how spiritual, how unearthly, how divine! How strictly in harmony with the sublime and holy character of God! How befitting an intelligent and holy creature! How completely different from every thing

which the unholy, sensual, and earthly mind of man would ever have devised!

Heaven is usually called eternal life, that is, eternal happy existence: everlasting existence, with all that can render existence a blessing. But what are the elements of its felicity? As regards our own condition, they consist of a soul possessed of perfect knowledge, perfect holiness, perfect liberty, perfect love, united with a body raised from the grave incorruptible, immortal, and spiritual. As regards our relations to other beings, heavenly bliss means our dwelling in the immediate presence of Christ; the perfect vision, service, likeness, and enjoyment of God: the society and converse of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. Connected with this is the absence of every thing that annoys, disturbs, or distresses us in this life. Such is the scripture representation of heaven.

“My chief conception of heaven,” said Robert Hall to Wilberforce “is rest.” “Mine,” replied Wilberforce, “is love; love to trod, and love to every bright and holy inhabitant of that glorious place.” Hall was an almost constant sufferer from acute bodily pain; Wilberforce enjoyed life, and was all amiability; “so that it is easy to account,” says Mr. Gurney, “for their respective conceptions of this subject. What a mercy that both these conceptions are true!”

Yes, both are true; and the union of rest and love perhaps conveys, within a small compass, the most correct idea of the heavenly state.

Heavenly-mindedness means the spontaneous, frequent, delightful, practical bent of our reflections towards eternal life. A heavenly-minded man is one who, as a convinced, condemned sinner, having obtained a title to eternal life through faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ, and a meetness for it by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, considers, him-

self as a pilgrim and stranger upon earth; regards heaven as his native country, and as instinctively turns his thoughts to it, as he does who, in a distant part of the world, feels his mind and heart attracted to his home. Scarcely a day passes during which no thought of his mind, no glance of the eye of faith, turns to the glory to be revealed. In his solitary musings in the house, or by the way, this object is present to his mind, to occupy his thoughts, to refresh and delight his spirit; and when he is with others like-minded with himself, it is his delight to converse upon the country to which they are travelling. Precious to him are those parts of revelation which speak of the life to come, and exhibit to him, amidst the darkness of his way, the distant lights of his Father's house. Sermons that represent the holiness and happiness of heaven are delightful to his heart; books that describe it are congenial with his taste; and the songs of Zion, which sound like the echo of its divine harmonies, excite all his hallowed sensibilities, and elevate his spirit to catch some of the falling rays of the excellent glory. The beautiful symbols of heavenly bliss, the city too bright with inherent splendour to need the sun; the walls of jasper, the gates of pearl, and streets of pure gold like unto clear glass; the crown of life; the harp of gold; the palm of victory; the white robe; the song of salvation sounding from the countless multitude of the redeemed, all by turns seize and fix his imagination; while his enlightened judgment and his holy heart, letting go these brilliant images, repose upon the realities which they are intended to portray, the presence of God, the vision of the Lamb, the sinless purity, the eternal rest, the communion of the blessed, the fellowship of angels.

The heavenly-minded man not only employs his thoughts, but sets his affections on things above. His hope and his heart are there. He does not wish (it would not be proper that he should,) instantly to dissolve his ties with earth, and leaving his family and connexions, fly home next moment: he is willing to wait as long as it is his heavenly Father's will; but he is willing to quit all and go to God whenever it is judged proper by him to decide that he should go up to the mount and die. His hopes of heaven do much to destroy his love of life and fear of death. If nature shrinks, as it sometimes will, at the approach of dissolution, he looks beyond the gloomy passage, and anticipates the moment when, "lifting his last step from the wave, having passed the stream of death, he shall linger and look wonderingly back upon its dark waters, then gilded with the light of immortality, and rippling peacefully on the eternal shore."

It is not in suffering only that he feels a longing after immortality; for it is no indication of heavenly-mindedness to wish to depart in order to get rid of trouble. Impatience to die is often felt by those who have ceased to feel any attractions in life, and the grave is coveted as a shelter from the storms of earth. There is nothing holy in such wishes; nothing heavenly in such impatience; it is only nature groaning after rest, and not grace longing for its perfection. Perhaps the most holy frame is to have no will or wish about the matter, but to feel readiness to live or die as God shall appoint. If, however, a preference may be cherished, and the soul rises into a longing to depart, the only ground on which it can with propriety be indulged, is an earnest desire to get rid of sin, to be near and like Christ, to serve God

more perfectly, and to glorify him entirely. Happy moments there sometimes are, alas, how rare! in the experience of the spiritual christian, when such are his views of the desirableness of heaven, that he feels as if he should be glad to break down the prison walls of his spirit, and let her go forth into the liberty of her eternal felicity. The celebrated John Howe once had such a view of heaven, and such a desire to depart, that he said to his wife, "Though I think I love you as well as it is fit for one creature to love another, yet if it were put to my choice, whether to die this moment, or live through this night and living this night would secure the continuance of life for seven years longer, I would choose to die this moment." Still the glory of a christian is, to be neither weary of the world nor fond of it; to be neither afraid of death, nor impatient after it; to be willing to go to heaven the next hour, from the greatest comforts, or to wait for it, through many lingering years, amidst the greatest hardships, the most self-denying and laborious duties, and the severest and most complicated sufferings. The heavenly-minded man goes further than this, and prepares for future glory. Considering heaven not merely as an object of delightful contemplation, of devout imagination, or of holy reverie, a sublime and splendid picture for a visionary piety to gaze upon, but as a state of moral being, action, and service, for which meetness is required, he diligently cultivates those dispositions which the word of God assures him belong to, and are to be exercised in the celestial state. He has a post to fill, a situation to occupy, a service to perform, in heaven, for which he knows the necessary qualifications must be acquired on earth. Death is only a physical change, and, as far as we can understand,

produces no other effect. Grace is the preparation for glory; and he who has most grace is most meetened for glory. The man who is going to occupy a place in the palace, endeavours to acquire courtly manners, and to provide himself with a court dress. So the eminently spiritual christian considers himself as going in to dwell in the palace of the King of kings, and his great business upon earth is to prepare himself with the qualifications and dress of the celestial court. And as he clearly perceives that the prevailing dispositions of heaven are purity and love, he labours to grow in holiness and charity. If asked, in any situation or circumstance, or at any period, "What are you engaged in or employed about?" his answer is, "I am dressing for heaven; making myself ready to go in and dwell with Christ."

Such is heavenly-mindedness: but alas where is it to be found? I know where it ought to be found, in every professing christian. His principles demand it, his profession requires" it, his prospects justify it. "If we should give a stranger to Christianity an account of the christian's hopes, and tell him what christians are, and what they expect to enjoy ere long, he would surely promise himself to find so many angels dwelling in human flesh, and reckon when he came among them that he should be as amidst the heavenly choir; every one, full of joy and praise. He would expect to find us living on earth as the inhabitants of heaven; as so many pieces of immortal glory, lately dropped down from above, and shortly returning thither again. He would look to find every where in the christian world incarnate glory, sparkling through the overshadowing veil; and wonder how this earthly sphere should be able to con-

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tain so many great souls.” And oh! how astonished, surprised, and disgusted would he be to witness the earthly-mindedness, and to hear the worldly conversation of the great bulk of professing christians, as if heaven were nothing more than a splendid painting to adorn their temples of religion, and to be looked at once a week, and not a glorious reality to be ever before their eyes, to form their character, to regulate their conduct, support them in trouble, and furnish their chief happiness.

What a source of strong consolation and ineffable delight is a heavenly mind to its possessors! This is what the apostle calls, “rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.” Could we actually look into the celestial world, and see its felicities and honours; could we really hear the sounds of paradise, and have the songs of the redeemed continually, or at intervals, undulating in our ears; could the rays of the excellent glory literally fall upon our path, how constantly should we go on our way rejoicing, as we reflected that each step brought us nearer to this world of light and love, of purity and immortality! How soft would be the cares, how tolerable the sorrows, how easy the most difficult duties, so soon to be laid aside amidst such rest and such happiness! The sight of heaven would irradiate the darkest scenes of earth, and prevent us from being seduced by the beauties of the fairest. Who could weep while heaven was spreading out its glories to comfort us, and opening its doors to receive us? Who could think much of that sickness which was sustained beneath the vision of an incorruptible inheritance, or of those losses which came upon them in sight of an infinite portion that never fades away? We should need no amusement or recreation to

make us happy, while listening to the song of salvation; nor of any other pleasure to cheer us, than the hope of immortality. And what, in addition to a heavenly mind and a vigorous, lively, and influential faith is necessary to give something like a reality to this? Heaven does exist, all these glories are above us and before us, though we see them not; and it is only to believe them as they may be and ought to be believed, and we shall rejoice in them with joy unspeakable and full of glory. If we do so the thoughts of them will, in measure, produce the same kind of happiness as seeing them. Happy shall we be amidst all the cares, and labours, and sorrows, and trials of earth, if in meditation, and by faith and hope, we can thus dwell on the borders of the promised land. It will be to pitch our tent on Mount Pisgah, and constantly to have the promised land spreading out in boundless and beautiful perspective before us.

Nor is it our comfort only that would be promoted by a heavenly mind, but our sanctity also. "Every man that hath this hope in him," says the apostle, "purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Heaven, being a hoity state, yea, the very perfection of holiness, by a natural process renders holy those who meditate upon it, believe it, hope for it, and long for it. Men's hopes always affect their conduct, and transform their character into a likeness to the objects of their desires and expectations. How effectually guarded from all temptations to concupiscence, worldly-mindedness, and malice, is he whose affections are strongly fixed upon a state of purity, spirituality, and love! Who that is drinking happiness from the throne of God and the Lamb can be satisfied with the filthy puddle of worldly amusements? What mortification of sin, what conquest of

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indwelling corruption, what eradication of evil tempers, what suppression of unholy disposition goes on, when the soul fixes the eye of faith on things unseen and eternal! Yea, what discoveries of hidden and unsuspected sins are made, when the light of heavenly glory is let into the soul! In looking continually on earth and earthly-minded men, we become so familiarized with sin, as to lose our clear preceptions, our acute discrimination of its evil nature, and our accurate sensibilities to its criminality and odiousness. We lose our self-abhorrence of our own sins, by the view of so much evil without and around us; and we recover our keenness of vision and tenderness of conscience, only by lifting up our eyes to that pure and blessed region, where no sin dwells, and holiness is in perfection.

You will much wish to know how such a state of mind may be promoted.

You must be willing to have it. "Willing!" you exclaim, with somewhat of surprise, "Who is not willing? Who would not enjoy such a frame?" You, perhaps, who ask the question. The great bulk even of professing christians do not want this state of the soul; they want to enjoy earth; they are ever seeking new devices, by which to be more and more gratified by things seen and temporal; they are ever seeking to invest earth with new charms, and to throw greater attractions over the scenes that surround them. It is no part of their plan, or wish, or effort, or prayer, to have one single terrestrial delight limited or displaced by such as are heavenly.

You must be not only willing, but desirous of this frame. It must appear to you a state to be coveted and longed for; and for which you would be willing to part

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with some of the joys of sense and the pleasures of earth, to endure the discipline of trial and the influence of sorrow. Your heart must be set upon it, your soul must pant after it.

It must appear to you not only desirable but attainable. No such idea must be in your mind as that it is too high an elevation of piety for you to reach, too difficult an acquirement for you to make. Do not imagine that it is the devotion of the cloister and the cell, and can be cultivated only by the recluse. Spiritual and heavenly christians have been known, though too rarely I admit, with all the cares of a large family, and all the urgency of an extensive trade. Besides if you cannot attain to as much of this celestial temper as some others have, may you not have much more of it than you already possess? Do not even your circumstances allow of its improvement and increase?

Use the right means of acquiring it. Believe its reality. Your faith is too weak to be influential. It is not so much a deep conviction, a full persuasion, a confident anticipation, as a mere opinion. You have the name of heaven upon your lips, but not the grand idea, the glorious reality in your mind; the infinite, the transcendent conception does not occupy and fill your soul. You are too much a stranger to the force of that expression, "Lay hold on eternal life."

Acquire a clear and satisfactory evidence of your personal interest in the joys and glories of immortality. Unite the full assurance of hope with the full assurance of understanding and of faith. What is our own interests us more, though it be little, than what belongs to another, though it be far greater. The heir of a small estate has his mind and heart far more occupied about

his little patrimony, than about the vast domain contiguous to it of some wealthy peer. Realize your personal interest in heaven. If you are indeed a child of God, seek the witness of the Spirit to your sonship. After reading the gracious promises, and surveying the boundless prospects of eternal glory, indulge the thought that these are all yours; that it is yours to be admitted to the presence of God and Christ, and to dwell here for ever; yours to be like God and Christ in purity, love, knowledge, and immortality; yours to be the everlasting companion of all holy angels and blessed spirits.

Give yourselves time for reading, meditation, and prayer. You must keep the world within due bounds, as to the time it occupies you. If you resist not its engrossing, absorbing power, your soul must suffer, your salvation be endangered, your heaven be lost. Oh, will you, with glory, honour, immortality, above you, and before you, allow yourselves to be so engaged, as to have no time to think of them, or to look at them? With the splendour of heavenly and eternal glory beaming upon your path, blazing around you, will you be so taken up with the world as to hurry by and not turn aside to see this great sight? O christians, believers, at least professed believers, in immortality, is it thus you treat the heaven which occupied the thoughts of God from eternity, which was procured by the death of Christ upon the cross, which is the substance of revealed truth, and the end of all God's dispensations of providence and grace to man? What! no time to retire and meditate on eternal life? Will you, can you, dare you, bring yourself to utter such an expression as this, "I am really so taken up with my business, that I cannot retire to meditate and pray?"

Then I must tell you, you have no time to be saved, though you have plenty of time to be lost.

Go into your closet, and with your Bible, as the telescope that brings eternal glories near, meditate upon heaven. Survey its glories: go over them in detail and in succession; dwell upon the presence of God; upon being with Christ; upon perfect love, perfect purity, perfect liberty, perfect knowledge, perfect bliss. Contemplate their infinity, their immensity, their eternity. Oh, what thoughts, what topics, what sources of delight! What sublime, elevating subjects for a child of Adam, of dust, of sin, of sorrow, of mortality, to indulge in! What a reflection upon us, that we should need to be admonished to turn our thoughts that way, that with heaven open before us, we should need to be reminded, "There is immortal glory, look at it;" and should feel so preoccupied and engaged, as to have no time to survey the wondrous scene! Dwell much upon the nearness of heaven. What is remote has less power over the thoughts than that which is contiguous. How near is all this glory to your soul! Nothing separates you from it, but the thin partition of flesh and blood: a moment of time, a point of space, may be all that intervenes between you and immortality. When you lie down to rest any night, you know not but you may be in heaven before the next morning; when you rise up in the morning, but that you may be in heaven before night. If you are true christians you are ever in the vestibule of the heavenly temple, waiting for the opening of the door to be admitted to the holy of holies. Heirs of glory are every moment going in to be for ever with the Lord, and you will soon go among them. If you realized this thought, how it would tend to

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keep up the frame of mind I am so anxious to promote!

As heaven consists of enjoying the Divine presence, and of holiness and love, with the joy arising from them, let us seek more intimate communion with God now, and labour after more purity, more benevolence, more spiritual peace. These first-fruits of heaven would make us think of it more, and long for it more. We cannot go up into heaven, unless heaven first comes down into us. Holiness in the soul of man, is a part of heaven, and the greater heaven above will put forth an attraction to draw up to itself that lesser heaven below. Fire ascends to the sun; rivers run to the ocean; matter gravitates to its centre; so holiness in the soul aspires to heaven to which it belongs.

And withal you must be much in private, earnest and believing prayer, for the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus. Who is sufficient for these things, but he whose sufficiency is of God the Spirit? To make the future predominate over the present, the invisible over the visible, the immaterial over the material, and heaven over earth, is an achievement of faith, to which he only is equal, who is taught and helped of God. "He that hath wrought us for this self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

Believers in Christ Jesus, children of God, heirs of immortal glory, travellers to Zion, possessors of eternal life, look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. Think of what is before you in the world to which you are going. Let your character and your destiny be in harmony. Born from heaven, and bound to it, let your conversation be in heaven, from whence we look for the coming of

our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be made like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

THE ASSURANCE OF HOPE.

THIS subject is of great importance to your spiritual enjoyment; and indeed you cannot enter deeply into the consolations of the Spirit without an experimental acquaintance with it; I mean, The Assurance of Hope. A christian is, or might be, the happiest man upon earth; but in order to this he must have some satisfactory reason to conclude that he is a christian. Religion is intended to make us happy; it is the overflowing of the felicity of the blessed God into the soul of man; the reflection of his smiling countenance from the redeemed, regenerated spirit; and the communion of the finite mind with the fulness of the grace and glory belonging to the Infinite One: but then we must know that we have religion.

There are three kinds of assurance spoken of in the word of God: 1. "The assurance of understanding" (Col. ii. 2): which means a clear, comprehensive, heart-establishing acquaintance with Divine truth. 2. "The assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 22): which signifies an entire persuasion of the truth of the gospel. 3. "The assurance of hope" (Heb. vi. 11): which imports a confidence of personal interest in Christ. It is of the latter I treat in this address. They are all three intimately related to, and grow out of, each other. In proportion as we fully know and are spiritually taught

the doctrines of the gospel, we shall be fully assured of their truth, and have the assurance of faith; and in exact proportion as we are fully assured of the Divine person, mission, and work of Christ, we shall be fully assured of our personal interest in them: faith being based upon knowledge, and hope upon faith. The assurance of knowledge and faith have reference to the gospel in itself: the assurance of hope to the state of our heart in reference to the gospel. The assurance of faith is called for in a man's first profession of the gospel, in order to his being acknowledged as a christian. The assurance of hope is an enjoyment proposed to them that believe, and have already begun the christian race, the prize which they are called to strive for, and to give all diligence to obtain.

It does not appear to be necessary to this state of mind that we should have such a persuasion as utterly and continually excludes every shade of doubt, and is so absolutely perfect as to admit of no degrees or increase; for it seems not to be understood by the sacred writers in that sense, but rather as importing a prevailing and satisfactory conviction; a state in which the mind sees no reason to question its sincerity and safety. Nor is it necessary to this blessed condition that the person who enjoys it should be able or disposed to use bold, strong, confident affirmation: such as, "I am as certain I am a child of God, as if a voice from heaven declared it; and am as sure of arriving safely in glory at last, as if I were already there." Many a modest, humble believer, if the question were put to him, "Are you a child of God?" would perhaps, under the influence of humility and self-abasement, shrink from the positive "I am, I am sure I

am;" and content himself with saying, "I hope and believe I am, having no serious reason to doubt it; for I am deeply convinced of my fallen, sinful state; I renounce every ground of dependence, but the righteousness of Christ, and rest my hope of salvation on him. My faith has given me peace, and led me to love God. And conscious of this, I doubt not I have passed from death unto life." This latter is the language of scriptural assurance.

Such a prevailing and satisfactory conclusion as to our state may be obtained. Had no injunction in reference to it been given in the Scripture, nor any declaration made concerning it, still it might have been fairly presumed that a change so great as that of regeneration could not have taken place without being its own evidence to him in whom it is wrought. The old and the new nature, the work and image of Satan and of God, are not so like each other as not to be easily distinguished; but, in fact, we are commanded to give all diligence to obtain and preserve the full assurance of hope; and evidences are laid down by which we may ascertain whether we are the children of God or not. Every one of us may know this; the means of judging respecting it are within the reach of us all.

If then we may know it, we ought to know it. Assurance is in one sense our duty, as well as our privilege. If it is our duty to believe it is our duty to hope, and if to hope at all to hope even to assurance. Every man ought to know his spiritual condition. It is a matter of too great moment to be suffered to remain undecided.

How is assurance to be obtained? This is a most momentous question. May God preserve me from error

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in giving an answer to it. It is said by the apostle, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Now, as it is witnessed, or testified by the Spirit, that we are the children of God, we naturally ask, In what manner is this testimony borne? This must either be in the way of a direct revelation to our mind; or by enabling us, on a comparison of the Spirit's work in our hearts with the description in the word of the Spirit's work, to draw the conclusion that we are truly born again. Some believe that there is granted to each regenerated soul a direct witness, in the way of suggestion, or impression, of its spiritual birth. This, however, does not appear to me to be the meaning of the apostle. It does not accord with the context, which is obviously practical, and speaks of the influence of the Spirit as received for the mortification of sin, and for the production of all the dispositions and habits of the christian life, especially the spirit of adoption; it is unsupported by any other passage where assurance is spoken of; it would, if this were its meaning, come under the head of a revelation from God, and seem to require something else to authenticate it; it would open a door for mistake and self-deception; it has never been received by multitudes who have been sincerely and eminently pious; and it is unnecessary, because, without being supported by the inferential evidence, it is not to be trusted. It is much safer and more correct to consider the witness of the Spirit as purely inferential. The case stands thus:

"The Holy Spirit speaks in the word: the same Spirit operates in the heart. There must be a correspondence between his testimony in the word, and his operation in the heart. The evidence lies in

this correspondence. We take the Divine word, as dictated by the Spirit, and containing a declaration of his mind: we see there what he testifies: we see especially the description which he there gives of the faith and character of God's children, of the principles and dispositions, the affections and desires, the hopes and fears, and the peculiar walk and conversation by which they are distinguished. If our spirits, in the court of conscience, and before the Father of our spirits, bear witness to a correspondence between this description, and what has been effected in us by the same divine Agent, then there is a concurrence of the testimonies; the testimony of God's Spirit and the testimony of our spirits agree: the one witnesseth with the other. What the Spirit of God has wrought in us harmonises with what the Spirit of God testifies in the word: and in proportion as our spirits have the inward consciousness of this harmony, do we possess the witness of the Spirit to our being the children of God." Dr. Wardlaw on Assurance, p. 104.

This is in strict accordance with other places of Scripture. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." We are to know that we have eternal life by the evidence of what is written, and of course by the comparison of our hearts and lives with it.

In reply, then, to the question, How may I know that I am a child of God? I answer, by consciousness, and a comparison of your state with the word of God. The apostle says, "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "I am conscious," says an assured christian, "that I do believe; and therefore I know I am a child of God." And suppose he were in any doubt about the reality of his faith, he pursues the subject and says, "The word of God says, In whom believing we rejoice, I have peace and joy: To them that believe he is precious, Christ is precious to me: Faith worketh by love, I love God, Christ, his people, and holiness: This is the victory that overcometh the world,

even our faith, I have overcome the world: We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren, I love the brethren; therefore I conclude I am a child of God. The fruits of my faith which I discern in myself, answer to the description of them given in the word.”

It is not, then, by any such methods as by dreams, or the suggestions of texts of scripture to the mind, or visions, or impressions upon the mind, or strong persuasions of our personal election, that we are to obtain this blessed hope of eternal interest in the mercies of redemption, but by comparing our hearts with the word of God. I will here quote the beautiful language of the celebrated Ralph Cudworth, in a sermon preached before the House of Commons, during the Commonwealth:

“The way to obtain a good assurance of our title to heaven, is not to climb up to it by a ladder of our own ungrounded persuasions, but to dig as low as hell by humility and self-denial in our own hearts; and though this may seem the farthest way about, yet it is indeed the nearest and safest way to it. We must, as the Greek epigram speaks, ascend downwards and descend upwards, if we would indeed come to heaven, or get any true persuasion of our title to it. The most triumphant confidence of a christian riseth safely and surely on this low foundation that lies deeper under ground, and there stands firmly and stedfastly. When our heart is once turned into a conformity with the word of God, when we feel our will to concur with his will, we shall then personally perceive a spirit of adoption within ourselves, teaching us to say, Abba, Father. We shall not then care for peeping into the hidden records of eternity to see whether our names be written there in golden characters: no, we shall find a copy of God’s thoughts concerning us written in our own breasts. There we may read the characters of his favour towards us; there we may feel an inward sense of his love to us, flowing out of our hearty and unfeigned love to him. And we shall be more undoubtedly persuaded of it, than if one of those winged watchmen above, that are privy to heaven’s secrets, should come and tell us that he saw our names enrolled in those volumes of eternity.”

In this way, and, as it appears to me, in this way only, is our personal interest in the blessings of salvation to be ascertained. It will be evident then that our assurance will be more or less full according to the measure of our piety. It admits of degrees of certainty, and they will be regulated by our degrees of vital experimental godliness. Hence the force of the apostolical exhortation to give all diligence to make our calling and our election sure: that is, sure to ourselves, as a clear and well-attested fact, that we are called according to the purpose of God.

It is unquestionably true that many professors have not yet attained to this comfortable persuasion of their personal interest in Christ. Various reasons may be assigned for this. Some ought not to have it; for they are professors only and not partakers of Divine grace. In them it would be only a lie in their right hand; and crying "Peace, peace," when they have no right to peace. Others are kept in doubt by physical obstructions to joy and hope: they are constitutionally gloomy and dejected. Little can be said to them but to encourage them, if they are walking consistently, to endeavour to distinguish between disordered nerves and destitution of piety; to hope against hope; and, if possible, to increase their joy by the improvement of their health. It is dangerous advice, in most cases, to let our friends judge for us of so important a matter as our spiritual condition and safety; but in the case of those to whom I am now alluding, the opinion of enlightened and judicious christians, who think favourably of the state of the dejected, should have weight. Others, though not constitutionally depressed, are timid, hesitating, and anxiously cautious; and even in common matters, find

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it difficult sometimes to decide an important question. To their timorous minds it seems a kind of presumption for them to conclude that they are the children of God, a rash and unauthorized decision, from which they start back with trepidation and alarm. They view this relationship merely in the light of a privilege which is granted to a favoured few, but not an attainment within the reach of all, or a duty the obligation to which all ought to feel. How mistaken a view is this of the whole subject! It might surely be presumed, that in every case of real scriptural piety, the subject of it would be able to ascertain his condition; that no child in the family of God need be ignorant of his divine relationship. It must strike us as very strange that a renovation of character so great as that effected in regeneration should take place, and the recipient of it be unable to certify it. The knowledge of his own heavenly birth cannot therefore be an unauthorized state of mind for any real and consistent christian to arrive at; it is what he should attain to. Some, I believe, actually nourish doubts and fears as a mark of grace, and an evidence of humility; and consider themselves in a more secure and salutary state for questioning their safety, than concluding upon it. If indeed they have not the evidence of true conversion, they ought to doubt of their being, or rather ought to be assured of their not being christians; but I am now dealing with the case of some good people, who with the marks of true grace, and a consistent walk, are cherishing the error that it is safer to doubt than to decide. This is a sad mistake, and a proof of deplorable ignorance of the word of God.

Others are engaged in a microscopic analysis of their feelings, and vary their opinion of their state with every

vicissitude of their emotions. A little more or a little less fluency in prayer, a greater or less degree of enjoyment of a sermon, a higher or lower measure of elasticity of the animal spirits produced by physical causes, raises or depresses their hopes, elevating them to confidence, or sinking them to despondency. Their opinions of their state are therefore in a state of perpetual vacillation. Their religious enjoyment is at the mercy of circumstances over which they can exercise no control, and they are strangers to settled peace. If such persons would look less to themselves and more to Christ, they would be far happier. In some instances, this propensity to be ever poring into the heart, is the remains of self-righteousness, leading them to look for comfort to themselves rather than to Christ. Let them, by a calm, sober, impartial examination of their habitual past conduct, come to a conclusion as to their state, and not suffer that conclusion to be disturbed by every little variation of their feelings. Neither our character nor our safety is altered, or endangered, by those minute changes of emotion which are ever going on in the heart of every believer. A man does not doubt that he is alive, or in general good health, every time his appetite is less keen, or his sleep less sound than usual: nor does he doubt the sincerity of his affection for his wife and children, every time there is a less vivid sense of it than at other seasons. If in either case the symptoms of declension remain or increase, and are attended with other signs of decay, he has cause to take alarm. Thus should it be with believers as to those passing varieties of feeling which occur in the experience of the holiest and best of men. Permanent and increasing declension is alarming, and

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should awaken doubts; but not the occasional interruption of what is denominated (by not a very felicitous expression,) “sensible comfort.”

There is, I am persuaded, often a neglect of acknowledged duty, or the indulgence of known sin, at the bottom of the doubts and fears with which some professing christians are troubled; some secret, beloved, and unmortified corruption, against which conscience is raising its protesting voice, but from which the subject of it refuses to part. It may be laid down as a settled point, that wilful sin must lead to darkness. “No sentiment can be more unscriptural, none more irrational or more shocking, than that sin should never make a believer doubt of his state; that whatever be the evils into which he falls, doubts and fears are only additions to his guilt; that all his iniquities have been atoned for in the blood of Christ, and that therefore no sin should at any time trouble his spirit, or darken the light of his joy. This is the most monstrous and miserable of all delusions.” The man who comes to assurance, and maintains it, while his conscience testifies of him that he is habitually declining in religious affections, living in the habitual neglect of known duty, or in the indulgence of actual sin, is one of the most fearful instances of self-deception in our world.

But there is still another class of professing christians who must confess, if they were asked the question, that they are strangers to this assured hope of eternal life, and it is a very large class too: I mean those whose piety, if admitted to be sincere, is so low and so lukewarm, as to yield but equivocal testimony to the reality of their heavenly birth. Swallowed up in business personal or public, immersed in politics national or municipal, or

devoted to worldly ease and domestic enjoyment, they are living sadly below their principles, privileges, and professions. "Who can wonder that they know little of the blessedness of a persuasion that they are interested in the great salvation? They take it for granted they are christians, assume that they are born from above, and with this vague, unsustained, and careless conclusion pass on. But as to the sweet and consolatory inference, deduced from premises cautiously examined, that they are the children of God, and have no reason to doubt the momentous and delightful fact, they know nothing of this; and hence when taken off from their usual pursuits, and shut up in the chamber of sickness, or laid upon the bed of death, how dark is their mind, how numerous and agitating are their doubts and fears, how distressing their solicitude! It will not do, in such circumstances, to take it for granted, and assume without examination, that they are christians; they must have it proved; and they now call for evidence, and, alas, how little can they find! They pore into their hearts, they scrutinize their conduct, and sometimes hope they can discern the marks of the Spirit's work, the characters of regeneration; but they are like a worn-out inscription, scarcely discernible, by no means clearly legible. Habitual worldly-mindedness has almost effaced the holy and heavenly dispositions which are left by God's hand when once it has touched the human heart.

Now, then, my dear friends, let me earnestly admonish you to comply with the apostolic injunction, and give all diligence for the full assurance of hope unto the end. It cannot be obtained without diligence. There is a faith so strong, a love so fervent, and a hope so lively, that

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they prove their own existence, both to those who possess them, and to those who observe them. Shining substances need no other evidence of their existence than their own radiance. A man in full health needs no examination to demonstrate to him that he is alive and well; he knows it because he feels it. So should it be with a christian. Self-examination for the purpose of ascertaining whether or no he is a christian, should be unnecessary for a child of God. But then, in order to this, his religion must be in a high state of vigour and prosperity. He must ever remember the great design of the gospel, which is to establish a God-like frame and disposition of spirit, consisting of righteousness and true holiness, in the hearts of men. "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." From this passage it is evident the design of Christ in coming into our world, was not only to cast over us the purple robe of his righteousness, and hide our wickedness and deformity from the eye of God's avenging justice; but also, like a good physician, to cure our moral diseases: and then may we be assured of our being in a state of salvation, when we are conscious at once of a simple faith in his righteousness, and of the spirit of holiness in our hearts, and the beauties of holiness in our character. "The least inward lust, willingly continued in, will be like a

worm fretting the gourd of our confidence, and always gnawing at the root of it; and though we strive to keep it alive, and continually besprinkle it with some dews of our own, yet it will be always dying and withering in our bosoms. But a good conscience will be always a cordial to a christian's heart; it will be softer to him than a bed of down, and he may sleep securely on it in the midst of raging and tempestuous seas, when the winds bluster, and the waves beat around him. A good conscience is the best looking-glass of heaven, in which the soul may see God's thoughts and purposes concerning it, as so many shining stars reflected from it." Hereby we know that we love Christ: hereby we know that Christ loves us, if we keep his commandments.

The end of the gospel is to make us holy, happy, and useful: and assurance contributes to all these. Hope is a purifying grace, while despair is unholy, both in its nature and in its tendency. He who has the most confident persuasion of his being a christian now, and of his going on to heaven hereafter, and whose confidence rests on good ground, will be the holiest man.

And then need I prove to you that assurance is the means of happiness? The gospel is a system of joy, as its name imports: it was thus announced by the angels at the birth of Christ, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy:" it is thus recognised by the apostle, when he says, "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." This is implied, when we are so emphatically called upon "to rejoice in the Lord:" all expressions which seem to import that the genuine right temper and frame of a truly christian mind and spirit may be reasonably expected to be an habitual joyfulness, prevailing over all the other sources of human

delight, and all the temporary causes of sorrow that occur in the world. I want you to enter deeply into this view of Christianity. I am desirous that as you travel to heaven, you should go on your way rejoicing; that in prosperity you should have a higher and holier source of enjoyment, than the favours of Providence here; and that in adversity you should still retain a spring of happiness, when the cup of earthly comfort has been dashed from your lips. This is to be found in assurance. Blessed state! to be a child of God, and to know it too; to be an heir of glory, and have evidence of the fact!

What sorrow need depress us; what care waste us; what danger appal us; what loss distress us; if assured of an interest in the blessing of salvation? The man assured of heaven may look at poverty, sickness, and persecution, without dismay. Assurance has enabled the dying christian to step without shrinking into the cold dark waters of Jordan, confessors to sing in dungeons, and martyrs to exult at the stake.

Be diligent then to make your calling and election sure. If you are christians, you may know it, and ought to know it. Be satisfied with nothing less. Pray for it earnestly, constantly, believingly. Beseech the Spirit of God to work all his works in you, and then to shine upon his own work, and enable you to draw the conclusion, that you are indeed a child of God.

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

IT appears to me that many persons are far too limited in their ideas of the nature, design, and extent of practical religion. An individual upon being re-

proached for some dishonourable transaction in business, as inconsistent with religion, replied, "What has religion to do with business?" The answer demonstrated either his ignorance, or wickedness, or both. But, if we may judge from their conduct, this is the sentiment of many professors although perhaps they would not avow it. Are they not acting as if religion had nothing to do either with business, with temper, or with our domestic and social relations; as if it were a mere matter of opinion, devotion, or ceremony; a thing of the cloister, the closet, or the sanctuary, to be confined to its own retreats, and never to be allowed to approach the scenes of worldly business and secular pursuits; a rule to direct us how we are to behave ourselves in the house of God, and to regulate our worship; and which, having done this, had accomplished its object? Is not this, I say, the view which many, if we may judge by their behaviour, take of religion? But can any thing be more inaccurate? Religion is a permanent, all-pervading, unchanging principle, possessing a kind of universality of nature. It must go with us, not only into the sanctuary of God, or into the closet of private devotion, but into all places; it must regulate our conduct, not only towards the church, but to the world; it must operate upon us and influence us, not only on sabbath, sacramental, and fast days, but at all times; and must dictate, not only how we pray, and read the Bible, and keep holy the Lord's day, but how we buy and sell, and get gain. Religion has no exclusive time, or place, or sphere of its own, hut is a matter of all times, places, and scenes. Though heavenly in her origin, her nature, and her destiny, she is not so purely ethereal as to turn away from the scenes of this low

diurnal sphere, as beneath her notice, and unworthy of her control. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words."

The subject, then, of the present address is this, "Practical religion must be seen in every thing."

Consider your situation. You are united with society by various ties, and have correspondent duties to discharge, every one of which affords an opportunity for the exercise of religious principle. A man can as truly, though not as publicly or impressively, show his regard to principle and conscience, in the least transaction of a secular nature, as at the martyr's stake. The various claims of society afford as correct a test of moral feeling, as the claims of the church of God. Religion must be co-extensive with all our relations to the world around us.

Dwell upon the commands of God. Take only two or three of these. What can be more explicit than the summary of the moral law given by Christ, that we should love God supremely and all men as ourselves. The latter part of this summary is as obligatory as the former. Love to man in all the varieties of its operations and manifestations, down to the most minute efforts for his comfort, is as essentially a part of religion as love to God. Read also the apostle's comprehensive and beautiful exposition of this precept: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." How explicit and minute is the direction. "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, think on these things." Observe, all these virtues relate to our conduct towards our

fellow-creatures; and because there are some things we owe them which can scarcely be classified under any one of these particulars, the apostle adds the general description, whatsoever things are “lovely,” and of “good report.” And how impressive is the word, so frequently expressed in the passage, “whatsoever things;” as if he had said, “All that is or can be imagined to be claimed on the ground of justice, honesty, truth, purity; every thing which by common opinion is thought to be amiable, attractive, honourable, and praiseworthy, let this be done by those who bear the name of Christ!” To this I may add one more passage, (than which nothing can be said or thought of as more imperative on a professor,) to let his religion shine out in every thing: “Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the’ glory of God.”

It is apparent, then, that God has taken our conduct under his own direction, not only in the church, but in the world; not only in the sanctuary, but in the place of worldly business; not only to our christian brother, but to Our unconverted neighbour; in not only our devotional, but our ordinary transactions; and that he has made it our duty to let our religion be seen in every act of our lives.

It may be useful here to point out those matters from which professors of godliness are too apt to exclude the influence of their religion, or in which at any rate they are not sufficiently careful to let it appear. They are ordinarily not deficient in their sabbath-day duties; they are regular in their attendance upon the services of the sanctuary; they are constantly present, and apparently devout, at the sacramental table; they are perhaps often, or always, to be found at prayer meetings

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or weekly sermons; they keep up family prayer; they subscribe money to public institutions for the spread of the gospel; and in consequence of this they imagine that they are spiritually and heavenly-minded, but still there are some other parts of their conduct in which their religion does not appear as it ought to do, nor is it any part of their care that it should do so; I mean their conduct towards their neighbours and each other. You observe that all those points, in which I have supposed them to be attentive to their duties relate to their conduct towards God; they are all matters of devotion. But devotion is only a part of religion; love to our neighbour, as I have already considered, is as truly a part of religion as love to God. Now it is really the case that there are many who, though seemingly very diligent in reference to the latter, are far too remiss in reference to the former. They attach great importance to spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, at least they talk much about them; but they are very lax in regard to some other things, which are as much their duty as those more elevated and unearthly states of mind. Devotion is with them every thing, but morality in its higher and more delicate and refined character, is but lightly spoken of: they love God, but leave others, whom they are pleased to denominate legal, to love their neighbour. These persons are generally known by a peculiar taste in regard to preaching. The only sermons they relish are those which are full of comfort; which are addressed exclusively to the children of God, and which are of such a kind as rather to excuse their imperfections, and make them happy in the indulgence of their corruptions, than to lead them on to higher degrees of sanctification. The enforcement of duty of any kind,

even to God, is not a very welcome subject; but duty to man is all legality and bondage.

One matter which religion claims to regulate, but from which it is excluded by many persons, is our temper. If any one should be disposed to ask, "What has religion to do with temper?" I will answer this question by referring him to the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. The whole of that exquisitely beautiful portion of divine truth refers to temper; and it is really very solemn to consider how imperatively and essentially necessary to salvation the Holy Spirit makes the exercise of a good temper. The most splendid miracles, the most profound knowledge of sacred truths, the most consummate eloquence in recommending them, the expenditure of a fortune in diffusing them, and a martyr's death in refusing to surrender them, will, we are there told, be of no avail to any one, if he have not the good temper there described. Nothing is religion in the absence of love; nothing can fit us for heaven but love; the very essence of religion is love to God for his own sake, and love to man for God's sake: we are to love our neighbour for God, and God in our neighbour. Can we love our neighbour and yet indulge in habitual passion, malice, revenge? Oh, how much dishonour is done to religion by the bad temper of its professors; by the petulance and peevishness of one, the passion of a second, the sullenness of a third, the obstinacy of a fourth, and the cherished resentment of a fifth! It is astonishing how any who habitually indulge in such dispositions can imagine they are the children of the God of love, the followers of Him whose designation is "the Lamb," and the temples of that Divine Spirit whose symbol is a "Dove."

I am aware there is something physical in the causes of bad tempers, but they are still subject to moral control. It may be that some find it much more difficult to restrain and manage their tempers than others; and that some who take far more pains to govern their disposition than those who are possessed of a natural amiableness gain far less credit than the latter. The mischief and the blame lie in supposing that as bad tempers are inherent in us, their indulgence is inevitable, and therefore excusable. If this be correct, all sin is inevitable and excusable; for it is all inherent. If then you would prove your regeneration; if you would carry on the work of sanctification; if you would promote the mortification of sin; if you would not have darkness of mind and distress of conscience; if you would not grieve your fellow christians, and disturb the comfort of those around you, subdue and regulate your temper. A professing christian, red or stormy with passion, pale with anger, furious with rage, is a most unseemly spectacle. How can the love of God or man be in such a heart? But it is not merely the excess of passion which is discreditable, but the waspishness, the touchiness, the moodiness, the sensitiveness and susceptibility to offence which many display; in short, the being easily offended, which so many exhibit without any effort to resist it. Your profession requires, my dear friends, a constant resistance of such dispositions; and it is one great part of religion to keep up this resistance. Your piety and principle should ever be at hand for this purpose; always nigh and ready to be applied, with all their mighty energies and motives, to suppress every rising unhallowed emotion. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kind-

ness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body.” This is the law of Christ, the rule of your conduct, the standard of your actions, the mould of your character. How tender the language, how touching the motives, how forcible the obligations! Abjure, then, the idea that religion has nothing to do with temper; adopt the sentiment that your temper must be governed by your religion; and by importunate prayer, constant watchfulness, and laborious effort, seek after the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Another scene from which many are too apt to exclude their religion, but over the whole of which it should be seen to preside is, their worldly transactions. Religion not only conducts us on the Lord’s day to the house of God, and there says to us, “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise;” but it also goes with us on Monday morning to the mart of business, and says to us, “Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, think on these things and practise them.” Travellers tell us, that the Chinese set up the objects of their worship, not only in their temples, but in their shops. If then idolatrous Pagans place trade under the patronage and direction of religion; if they acknowledge that their divinities take cognizance of secular concerns; and that one part of divine service is justice to man, how much more should this be the case with christians? Yes, my friends, your religion must be seen by those

who know you only as tradesmen, and have no opportunity of seeing you except in the shop. It must be at hand, ready for application to all the circumstances of life, and all the transactions of business. It must stand by in all sales, bargains, and contracts; it must prevent all overreaching, undermining, and circumventing; all false depreciation of the article you wish to purchase, and overpraising that which you desire to sell; it must forbid all falsehood, fraud, and artifice; all selfishness, and grinding extortion; in short, all that kind of conduct which would make others afraid to deal with you, and give the stamp and stigma to your character of a “deep man,” a “hard man,” or a “slippery man.” It is a disgrace to professing christians to have either of those epithets applied to them. They should be distinguished by all that is just, true, generous, and noble. They are commanded to let their “light shine before men.” Now this can only be done by being exemplary in the discharge of those duties which fall under the public observation. Although those who are conversant with you may make shrewd guesses, by what they see in your outward deportment, whether or not you are a man of devotional feeling, yet they cannot trace you to the family altar, or to the closet of private prayer; but they can, and will, quickly and certainly know whether you are true and just, honest and upright, generous and trustworthy; or, on the contrary, false and unjust, fraudulent and tricking, selfish and extortionate. And if they see a want of principle in your transactions they will of course suspect the destitution of religion in your heart, and resolve the whole of your profession into disgusting and odious hypocrisy. Let your religion then be seen in your business.

The discharge of the duties of our social relations is

another opportunity for exhibiting the influence of religion. Its excellence must be seen and its power felt, in making a happy home, and compelling a sojourner in the family, or a spectator of it, to exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign-aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedars beside the waters." Religion ought to give strength, tenderness, and sanctity to all the ligaments of society. It should make husbands and wives more affectionate and devoted; parents more kind, judicious and vigilant; children more dutiful, respectful, and attentive; masters more kind and just; servants more submissive and faithful. Religion is intended to be the magistrate of the social body, and the head of the domestic circle. We should all discharge the duties of our station piously; doing even common things as to the Lord, and for the Lord's sake. Like the stars of heaven, we should not only shine, but shine each in his own sphere. If we are unamiable at home there must be something essentially defective in our profession.

Nor is it of small importance that our profession should be consistently maintained abroad, as well as at home. It must, as an integral part of ourselves, go with us every where, and abide with us where we abide. We must take it as our companion in travel, as our associate in public, as our inseparable bosom friend. Those who constantly see us at home, and occasionally meet us abroad, should recognise the same unaltered and unalterable character; the same in the crowded metropolis as in the retired village, and the same at the fashionable watering-place as in the rural retreat.

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Religion should appear in our recreations and entertainments, separating us from the follies and amusements of the world; allowing neither what is polluting, nor what is frivolous; not only keeping us from the theatre, the ball room, and the public concert, but preventing us from turning our own habitations into the resorts of fashion, and the scenes of light and dissipating entertainments. If in the seasons allotted to relaxation from worldly business, any thing more be necessary than the cheerful and holy intercourse and conversation of the pious, then the beautiful scenery of nature, the works of charity, the pursuits of science, or the exercises of devotion, should be enough. A christian should appear to be a christian in his lighter as well as in his graver occupations.

Nor should even our politics be placed beyond the control of our piety. A professor of religion has duties to discharge as a citizen as well as a christian, since he is a member of society at large as well as of the church; and it is a misguided sanctity, a spirit of fanaticism alone, that attempts to dissuade him from discharging the obligations he owes to the community. But, then, he should act as a christian at the very time he is acting as a citizen. Instead of making his religion political, he should make his politics religious. It ill becomes a follower of Him whose kingdom is not of this world, to be a furious political partisan, filled with hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness towards those who differ from him; and not scrupling to use any means, however base, to ensure the success of his own party; nor is it less contrary to the christian profession to be seduced from the path which conscience dictates by the arts of corruption, or to be intimidated by the threats of power. Religion

should induce a man to carry his conscience with him as his guide and protector, into all the scenes and circumstances in which he is required to act for his country; and he should ever give his voice or his vote as he would do if he knew he was to be called to account for that act the next moment at the bar of God.

But why do I particularise? I remind you again your religion should be seen in every thing; in matters so great as to call for martyrdom, and as minute as the least trifle of any single day's transactions. It does not consist, I repeat, merely of prayers, sermons, and sacraments; but of supreme love to God, and love to man for his sake, running out into all the endless varieties of application and operation, of which these sacred affections are susceptible. Like the blood of our corporeal system, which does not confine itself to two or three large arterial ducts, but warms, vitalises, and moves the body, and pours the tide of life and the impulse of activity through a thousand vessels, some of them almost too minute to be seen; so religion is the sustaining, moving principle of the whole of the new man, which is renewed in knowledge and true holiness, after the image of Him that created him: it should not be confined to any special places, modes, or seasons of operation, but should diffuse itself through all the thousand little acts that are every day performed, and in the performance of which we have an opportunity, and are under an obligation to glorify God.

But this is not how the matter is regarded by the generality of professing christians, if indeed we may judge from their conduct; for when religion is mentioned, the only idea that many are apt to associate with the term, is the performance of devotional exer-

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cises, or the indulgence of devotional feelings; forgetting that good temper, the payment of debts, the fulfilment of contracts, the forgiveness of injuries, the duties of home, and the conscientious use of the elective franchise, are as truly a part of religion, as the observance of the sabbath, or the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

And this is in fact the religion which the world expects of us. They demand of us that we carry our religion into every thing, whether we meet the demand or not. Do they reproach us with inconsistency only when we neglect private or public prayer? Oh no. What do they know or care about such matters? But when professors are passionate, revengeful, and malicious; when they are shuffling, artful, and fraudulent; when they are slippery, treacherous, and evasive; when they are unkind, unamiable, and oppressive; then they are ever ready with the taunt, "This is your religion, is it?" By which they mean to insinuate that those who profess to believe in Christ for salvation, ought not to have thus belied a profession which binds them to be holy in all manner of conversation. They never ask, "What has religion to do with business?" if professors do.

Consider how much injury has been done to the character of religion, by not taking this view of its universal dominion. One single defect has been enough, in some cases, to disparage a whole character; and one act of inconsistency, and that not a very considerable one, has thrown its shadow over many excellences. It may be there were those who knew the individual only by that one transaction; they knew nothing of his general character, or his many valuable qualities, but they saw him in that one act from which religion was unhappily

excluded, and judging from the only evidence which has come before them, they were ready to condemn him as a base designing hypocrite.

What beauty invests character moulded in every part of it by the pervading influence of true piety; a character in which religion is seen giving devotion and zeal to the christian; justice and truth to the tradesman; patriotism and loyalty to the citizen; affection to the husband; fondness to the father; gentleness to the neighbour; kindness to the master; and charity to all: in which religion regulates the whole series of words and actions., running through the whole tenor of the conduct, and dictating what is right to be done in the ten thousand little occurrences that are ever taking place in the business of life. What a character, I say, is this, in which all the greater virtues unite with all the lesser graces, and religion is the bond that holds them together! Such a character should every professing christian present to the world; and his life is consistent with his profession no longer than while he is holding out to mankind such a pattern of excellence.

Permit me then, my dear friends, in conclusion to admonish you with great earnestness and solicitude to enter into the subject of this address. While you are intent on the acquisition of more and more of spirituality and heavenliness of mind, and of the assurance of hope, may you be equally solicitous to "let your light shine before men," that they, seeing your good works, may glorify God your heavenly Father. Remember, it is religion not as it appears in some few things, or in many, but in all, that will do this. There can be here no compensatory process; no setting off ex-

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cellences against defects; no balancing diligence in some matters against neglect in others. Depend upon it as a fact, that a partial religion, and a small degree of religion, dishonour God more than none at all. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Herein is your Father glorified, that you bear much fruit. Then will you not be ashamed when ye have respect unto all his commandments. Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

HOW TO SPEND A SABBATH PROFITABLY.

THE design of the present address is to direct you "How to spend a Sabbath profitably." How rich a boon has celestial mercy bestowed upon our labouring, toil-worn world in the day of sacred rest! What should we do, as regards either body or soul, without the sabbath, to invigorate the impaired energies of the one, and recruit the wasted piety of the other? If the man of wealth and leisure, whose time is all his own, to spend, if it please him so to do, in reading, meditation, and prayer, feels little need of such a season of repose, not so the tradesman, the servant, and the labourer. How sweet to them, as Saturday evening is closing upon

them, and all the weariness of six days' labour is pressing them down, is the reflection, "To-morrow is the sabbath of the Lord!" There is no need to prove to them by elaborate argumentation, that the sabbath is of perpetual obligation, for they cannot persuade themselves, that He who hath loved them in Christ Jesus, would have left them in their scene of toil, without such an opportunity as this affords, to dwell upon his love, and enjoy it; and hence, and often as the season comes round, they meet its very dawn with the words of Watts:

"Welcome, sweet day of rest,
That saw the Lord arise,
Welcome to this reviving breast,
And these rejoicing eyes."

The various mental associations, equally serene and delightful, the hallowed pleasures, the recollections and anticipations, the pure immortal hopes, the rapt exercises of devotion, which, like the day-spring from on high, enrich the passing hours of the sabbath, and render it the best type of heaven itself, make it a blessing to the child of God, which he would not part with for ten thousand times the gain he could acquire by devoting it to business and to wealth; and his heart would claim it as a privilege to keep holy the sabbath day, even if his conscience did not dictate it as a duty.

If, my dear friends, you would keep up the power of godliness in your souls; if you would live by faith upon the Son of God; if you would overcome the world, and set your affections upon things above, spend well your sabbaths. They are the days of the soul's gains; her golden seasons for growing rich in all that constitutes spiritual prosperity; her times not only for the enjoy-

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ment of devotion, but for gaining new light to guide the conscience, and fresh strength to invigorate all the religious and moral principles. Religion would retire from the world with the sabbath, and would be feeble and sickly in the church, if indeed it could live even there, without the aid of this holy day.

But how may our sabbaths be made profitable and pleasant to us?

1. By a deep impression of their inestimable value, and a great anxiety to spend them well. That which we esteem of no consequence, we shall be at no trouble to apply to any useful purpose. The first way then to spend a profitable sabbath is a real solicitude to do so. And are you destitute of this? Taken up as you are with the cares, labours, and anxieties of the world; urged by incessant demands upon your time; distracted by various claims upon your attention from objects all around you; and worn down by labour day after day, till, if you were not too busy, you are too weary, to meditate on things unseen and eternal, ought you not to be anxious about the improvement of the sabbaths? Ought you not to be intensely desirous that those days may be well spent? If they are lost to your soul's interests, nearly all your time is lost, and no portion will be well employed for your eternal welfare. Professing christians in general are not duly impressed with the importance of this matter. They complain how much their time and attention are occupied with this world's business through the week, and yet they are not sufficiently impressed with the necessity and vast importance of spending their sabbaths well.

2. Endeavour, as much as possible, to keep up through the days and business of the week a spiritual

frame of mind. The great obstacle to the profit and pleasure of our sabbaths is the intrusion of worldly thoughts and anxieties. These are the obscene 'birds which light upon the sacrifice, and which we find it so difficult to keep or drive away. Why is this? Just because we suffer our minds to be so deeply, I may almost say wholly, occupied by earthly pursuits during the six days of labour. It is not safe nor proper to thrust our religion out from working days, and trust entirely for its preservation to the exercises of the sabbath. We cannot easily make so sudden and entire a transition from things secular to things sacred, as to be wholly carnal and worldly up to Saturday night, and then entirely to throw off the world on Sunday morning, and be wholly spiritual through that one day. The day of devotion and the days of labour act and re-act upon each other: those who would keep up their piety in the week, must be diligent in cultivating it on the sabbath; and those who would successfully cultivate it on the sabbath, must not let it down very low during the days of the week. It is a fatal error, and sad delusion for a professor to quiet his conscience, when it is reproaching him for his backslidings of heart, by the answer, "Sunday is coming when I shall fetch up the lost ground."

3. It is desirable, where it can be accomplished, to end the business of the week early on Saturday evening, and thus secure a portion of time for reflection and devotional exercises. Unhappily, the modern habits of trade render this all but impossible to many, who are kept hard at work till almost, if not quite, sabbath morning, and then retire to rest so jaded, that they find it difficult to rise early next day for the worship of God.

But where time can be commanded, it ought to be; and an extra half hour or hour spent in the closet on the eve of the sabbath, communing with God, the Bible, and our hearts. It was the custom of the christians in America, at one time, to begin the sabbath at sun-set on Saturday evening. This cannot, and need not be done, but those who would enjoy and improve the season of holy rest, should uot, if they can help it, drive business or social festivities to a late hour on Saturday evening. That evening ought not to be a visiting time, except for such visits as would prepare the mind for sabbath occupations. Should a few pious friends in the same neighbourhood determine to meet at that time, for prayer and christian communion, this would be not only proper in itself, but a useful method of preparing for the exercises of the sacred day.

4. We must not only abstain from worldly labour on the sabbath, if we would improve it to any spiritual purpose, but from worldly thoughts. When the tradesman closes his shop on Saturday evening, he should lock up in it all his worldly thoughts and anxieties, plans and purposes, and if possible prevent any of them escaping to molest him on the sabbath. An eminently holy friend of mind who carried on trade in London, and lived in its environs, [Mr Steven] used to say, "he always left his business on Saturday evening on London Bridge, to be taken up there again on Monday morning." This is a blessed kind of self-control, and to a considerable extent may be acquired by watchfulness and prayer. Let the tradesman say, and try to give effect to his saying, "I will leave my business in my shop on the eve of the sabbath, and endeavour to forget, on the sacred day, that I have a business." Of course

it will require great pains, but if they are taken, it may and will be done. Oh, how many turn the house of God into a house of merchandise, and while hearing sermons, or professedly joining in prayer, or receiving the sacramental emblems, are thinking about buying and selling, and reflecting upon the business of the past week, or making arrangements for that of the coming one! How sinful is this in the sight of God, what a detriment to religion, and an injury to the soul! If you would keep away worldly thoughts, do nothing to produce them. Never open business letters on the sabbath, nor even have them brought to your hands. It is a great reproach for professing christians to be seen going to the post-office, for or with their letters, on the sabbath. Do not converse with others about trade and politics on the day of rest; and never touch a newspaper. Such practices turn away the mind from spiritual things, and divert the whole current of its thoughts. There can be no real communion with God, no stedfast beholding the things that are unseen and are eternal, if we thus keep the world at our elbow, and place its objects before our eyes. We must endeavour, as much as possible, to divest ourselves of a secular frame of mind, and put on a holy, serious, and devout one. Not that we should be gloomy and sad: no, while every dream of levity, every trifling disposition, every feeling of unhallowed mirth, is suppressed, and the mind is resolutely and conscientiously directed towards religious truth and duty, the sabbath, seeing it is a feast and not a fast, and a festival of great and lasting interest, should be a day of cheerful gratitude, and of joyous thanksgiving, as becomes the auspicious season, which the great Spirit of the universe has set apart for

receiving the homage of his creatures, and for ratifying his grace to the children of the dust. "It is not for Israel, in the hour of hope, in the prospect, yea the possession of redemption, to hang their harps upon the willows, as if nothing befitted their condition, but silently and in sorrow to listen to the sullen murmurs of the waters of Babylon." "Rejoice in the Lord. Enter into his gates with thanksgivings, and into his courts with praise. Be thankful unto him, and bless his name." The christian, always cheerful, should let his joy not only be felt, but seen on the sabbath. If he is the head of a family, he should illumine his dwelling on that day especially with the light of his countenance, and present to his children and his servants, who then have a nearer and a better opportunity of observing what manner of man he is, the type of happiness and holiness, and the gladsome spectacle of one, who in the passing hours of an earthly sabbath, realises the emblem and the pledge of "the rest remaining for the people of God."

5. If we would spend a profitable sabbath, we must not waste "the sweet hour of prime" in slothful indulgence upon our bed. Those who sleep away the morning till they have scarcely time to get ready for public worship, can expect no benefit from the ordinances of God's house, for they seek none. Early rising is essential to a devotional spirit. If we secure no portion of time for private prayer before breakfast, we can rarely get any through the day. The sabbath is the last day we should allow to be abridged by lengthened slumbers. If, then, you would spend well this holy season, say, as did the Psalmist, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give

praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early." Awake to prayer, reading the Scriptures, and meditation. Arise to seek the favour of God. "His morning smiles bless all the day." Be found at his footstool wrestling for his grace to come upon your souls in the ordinances of religion. Can he who goes prayerless to the sanctuary expect to be blessed in it? What right or what reason has he to look for favour from the Lord, who will not sacrifice half an hour's sleep to seek it by prayer? The slothful christian can no more expect to prosper, than the slothful tradesman. On the other hand, what a rich communication of light, and love, and joy, might he not look for, who rises early to obtain it by supplication, and who always goes from the closet to the sanctuary.

6. If we would gain benefit by the word, we must make our profiting the specific object of hearing it preached. By profiting I mean our growth in religious knowledge, affection, and practice; in other words, the increase of our holiness, spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness. In nothing I believe are professing christians more deficient than in their manner of, and motives for, attending the public means of grace. It is painful and humiliating to think how extensively the gratification of taste, and the pleasure produced by eloquence and oratory, are made the objects of attendance at public worship, instead of the cultivation of the mind in scriptural truth, and the improvement of the heart in christian excellence. To be pleased not to be profited, is the object of the multitude. Hence the question, so often asked of those who have been listening to the solemn truths of salvation and eternity, "Well, how have you been pleased to-day?" And hence

also, the common answer to such an enquiry, “Oh, greatly delighted. It was a most eloquent sermon.” Pleased we may be and ought to seek to be, but only as we are profited. Eloquence we may covet and admire; but then it should be the eloquence of truth, and not of mere rhetoric; the eloquence which makes us hate sin, love God, and mortify our corruptions; the eloquence which does not leave us either time or disposition to praise, and scarcely to think of the preacher, but absorbs us in his subject; the eloquence which burns into the very heart, and consumes our lusts, and stimulates and strengthens our virtues; the eloquence of the Bible, and not of any worldly book. What sabbaths we should spend, if before we left our habitations to take our seats in the house of God, we entered our closet, and as in the presence of God, solemnly put such questions as these to our souls, “What is, or should be, my object in going to the house of God to-day? Am I going to be pleased, or profited? Is it my wish to hear the preacher merely, or his Master? Is it the manner in which the truth is to be stated, or the matter of the truth itself, that I am anxious to hear? And what is now the state of my soul, and what are my wishes in reference to it? Do I want my lukewarmness to be kindled into the glow of holy love? Do I desire my corruptions to be mortified, and my languishing graces to be revived? Do I seek the conquest and eradication of some besetting sin, and am I prepared to be pleased with any sermon, though destitute of all the attractions of eloquence, that will accomplish these objects?” The christians who take this view of the end of preaching; who go to hear God’s truth and not mere eloquence; who, while hearing, consider that it is God speaking to them by and through his

minister; who pray while they hear, and whose prayer it is that they may be profited, these are the persons who spend not only pleasant but improving sabbaths.

7. Much of the improvement of our sabbaths depends on the state of our minds during what may be called the devotional exercises; I mean the prayers and the singing. If we consider them, as too many do consider them, only supplemental and inferior parts of the service, in which we have little interest, and which require but little attention, we shall not derive much spiritual advantage from the ordinances of God's house, and the occupations of the day of rest. It is to be feared, that a sinful vagrancy of thought, which they take no pains to check, characterises the frame of many persons during the season of prayer; and that at the very time the cloud of incense is rising before the throne of heaven, their mind is wandering to the very ends of the earth, and instead of communing with God upon the mercy-seat, they are conversing with the most trifling, perhaps with sinful objects. Our prayers should be fervent and devout. The singing to be such as alone ought to be heard in the house of God, should be plain, solemn, and suited to all the congregation; it should have a peculiar adaptation to give intensity to the devout feelings of the heart, and to promote our personal piety. Those persons will profit most, who endeavour to enter most deeply into all the sentiments and emotions of these parts of the worship of God.

8. In order to spend a profitable sabbath, great care ought to be taken to improve well the interval of public worship. It should be our aim, where the matter is within our choice, not to live at too great a distance from the sanctuary; much time is lost, much distraction of

mind is produced, much weariness of body is brought on, by not attending to this, and the mind is prevented by fatigue, on reaching the house of God, from enjoying its ordinances and from profitable reflection on returning home. We should not suffer the impressions produced by public worship, to be effaced by general conversation on our way to our own habitation, or around our own table. On reaching our place of abode we should seek the retirement of the closet, to recall what we have heard; to perpetuate by reflection our feelings, convictions, and purposes; and to sanctify all by prayer. Instead of wishing to indulge our appetite by a warm and plentiful dinner in the preparation of which we have deprived our servants of their day of rest, we should be content with simple and cold fare, and consider the sabbath as a day rather to feast the mind, than the body. The intervals of public worship should not be spent in lounging over the table and over wine, but partly in meditation and private prayer; partly in catechising the children; and partly, where it can be enjoyed, in domestic psalmody and thanksgiving. Every family should be a choir, where there is a capacity for vocal music; and, in order to this, it would be desirable that singing should be more cultivated than it is. If instead of our sons and our daughters being trained to music, merely as a drawing-room accomplishment, and for the purpose of having their simplicity corrupted, and their vanity flattered by showing them off before company, they were trained for domestic harmony, to what a holy and happy account might their musical talent and acquirements be turned! What harmony is sweeter, if that of the great congregation be grander, than the dulcet sounds which gladden the habitation of a pious

family on the christian sabbath, when parents and children blend their vocal and instrumental music in the praise of Almighty God, and the Lord Jesus Christ!

9. Before the day quite departs, and sleep drowns in oblivion, or only keeps alive in dreams, the solemn engagements and topics which have filled its fleeting hours, we should be found again in our closets reviewing the whole, and pouring over all, the silent and dewy influence of prayer: this being done, we should then take care as the last duty of the day, when we lay our head upon our pillow, and resign ourselves to slumber, to fall asleep with the petition, "Seal instruction upon my heart, O God, and let my profiting appear unto all men."

10. One more step should be taken, and that is on Monday morning before we again plunge into the business, and labours, and anxieties of the world, to secure a portion of time to look back on the day that is past, for the double purpose, first, of recalling the views, emotions, and purposes that were suggested by the services of the sanctuary and the sabbath; and then, of settling with ourselves a plan for reducing them all to action.

There are one or two classes of christians, who perhaps may feel that the foregoing remarks are not so applicable to them as to some others, and to whom, therefore, I would now suggest a few hints. Many Sunday-school teachers happily know by experience the value of the sabbath, but are in danger of losing something of its enjoyment, and even of its improvement, by the bustle and labours of their office. It is, I am aware, an act of self-denial and no small sacrifice, to surrender the calm repose of the closet and the sanctuary,

for the active, and sometimes harassing duties of the school-room and the class. You, my young friends, need great care, lest you lose the profit of the sabbath for yourselves, while you are seeking to render it profitable to others. Rise early in the morning for meditation and prayer, before you go to the scene of your labours. Endeavour to discharge your duties to the children in a spirit of seriousness and prayer. Avoid all trifling conversation with your fellow teachers. Let the intervals of worship be well employed in retirement, and try as much as possible to keep your attention fixed on the service in the house of God, even when seated amidst your youthful charge. Endeavour, in humble dependence upon the Spirit of God, to be useful, and then, "in watering others, you shall yourselves be watered."

The poorer members of the church demand a little special attention. Be you, my dear friends, peculiarly thankful for this short, sweet respite from the curse denounced on fallen man, "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread, until thou return unto the ground." Enter into God's merciful provision for your comfort, and do every thing to enjoy and improve the season of rest. Let every thing necessary to be done for the order, comfort, and cleanliness of the family, be finished on the Saturday evening, and even the food prepared for the sabbath's repast. Let not the husband deprive the wife of her day of repose by requiring her to give up her attendance upon public worship, or if detained at home by young children, to endure the additional privation of losing her opportunities of private and solitary devotion, in order to gratify his palate by a warm dinner. Nor should the husband refuse to take his turn in looking after the house and the young family at home, that

his wife may have an opportunity to enjoy the refreshing influence of public worship, and “the communion of saints.” Few persons are more to be pitied than the poor mothers of young families, who are united to husbands that have not tenderness enough to give their wives a share of the sabbath privileges. Let such women, amidst all their privations, keep up the expectation of “the rest that remaineth for the people of God.” Yes, heaven is an eternal sabbath. There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. No domestic cares shall follow you there. No family labours or duties shall there detain you from the assembly of the saints. No ungenerous husband shall there hinder you from going to the sanctuary of God. No infirm body shall obstruct your enjoyment, or be a clog upon the spirit that would otherwise mount on the wings of devotion to God its supreme good. Eternity shall roll on, and its repose shall never be broken in upon by a single sorrow, sin, or labour: your soul shall end its weary pilgrimage, and rest for ever in the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore.

In this manner, my dear friends, we may spend our sabbaths upon earth both pleasantly and profitably; in the prospect and hope of a heavenly and eternal one, and in preparation for its exalted services, and its complete felicity. The sun of that day shall never set; its holy convocation shall never break up; and its services never know a termination, an interruption, or intermission. “Remember therefore the sabbath day to keep it holy.” “Let its high and sacred character be ever present to your minds, persuaded that it was appointed for no trivial purposes; that if there are benefits of a

subordinate nature to be derived from it, such as the respite afforded by it from the labours of the week, these are not its most noble distinctions; but that it is an institution founded by a mandate of the Deity to secure from oblivion the most momentous facts, and to exist throughout all generations, as a memento of the creation of the world by the power of God, and the salvation of man by the death of Christ. Let the day, therefore, which testifies to the world that God is righteous, powerful, and good, and that man is redeemed, and immortal, be spent in a manner correspondent with these stupendous facts.”

CHRISTIAN OBLIGATIONS.

“SHE hath done what she could.” Such was the testimony borne by Christ to Mary, the sister of Lazarus, when she poured upon his sacred person her alabaster box of precious ointment. What a eulogium! And from such lips too! Blessed woman! unknown perhaps beyond the boundaries of her own native village, little did she imagine when she was filling the room with the perfume of her unguent, that she was performing an act which would fill the world with the fragrance of her memory. How much greater the honour of anointing Jesus for his burial, in one of the humblest cottages of Bethany, than to be anointed upon the proudest throne that ever glittered with the gold of Ophir! So true is it that piety immortalizes its subject, and invests every one who practises it with deathless renown. Such was the ardour of this woman’s love and gratitude to her Saviour, that in order to express her emotions, she ven-

tured to the verge of the rules of decorum; and, disregarding the curious eyes and censorious tongues of both the host and his guests, she lavished her box of precious ointment upon the body of her Lord. Yes, love to Christ prompted this act, and it was the love of Christ to this daughter of Abraham which bestowed upon her the token of his gracious approbation, which is to be seen and read by all men. Whether he meant, as in the case of the poor widow, she gave all she had, or simply that regardless of the cost of the ointment, and without stopping to examine whether she could afford it or not, she brought it as the highest testimonial she could give of love to Christ, and of her desire to honour him to the extent of her power, it is of no consequence to inquire; in either case it was a costly expression of the purest and the strongest affection.

This act of Mary suggests a series of practical remarks, and consecutive and important queries.

All true believers are under infinite obligations to Christ. Take your station at the cross in the hour and scene of his redeeming agony, and hear the voice which asks, "How much owest thou thy Lord?" From thence go and place yourselves in imagination on the borders of the bottomless and flaming pit from whence he has delivered you, still followed by the question "How much owest thou thy Lord?" And then ascend to the celestial city, and with all its honours and felicities spread around you, once more hear the voice, "How much owest thou thy Lord?"

A christian's soul ought ever to be filled with a sense of his obligations to Christ, and fired with the love and gratitude they should inspire. In his history there

should be no seasons of forgetfulness or coldness towards the Lord that bought him; but he should be always constrained by the love of Christ.

His love to the Saviour should ever prompt the inquiry, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" If in a right state of mind, he is not content with the inquiry, "What shall I feel?" or "What shall I say for Christ?" but "What shall I do?" Love is practical and so is gratitude. It is more: it is diligent, laborious, ingenious, self-denying. If we love a friend, or feel grateful to a benefactor, we ask ourselves and others, what we can do to please him. We get a knowledge of his tastes, wishes, and predilections, and then do something that we suppose will be pleasing, welcome, and acceptable to him. Thus Mary acted. She looked round on her little possessions, with the question, "What can I do, or give to my Lord?" The alabaster box caught her eye, and she exclaimed, "It is precious and costly; and for that very reason he shall have it." So should the christian act.

Having found out what he can do, and what he imagines will be acceptable to Christ, he should promptly and cheerfully do it, however laborious, self-denying, or expensive it may be. "Oh, what has he not given to me?" he exclaims: "his life, his death; his cradle, his cross; his agony and his bloody sweat: and what can I withhold from him?"

Every thing a christian does for Christ should be done from a pure principle of love and gratitude. Nothing should be done from vanity or a regard to fame; nothing from pride and ostentation; nothing from self-righteousness; nothing from compulsion; but all from love, and gratitude, and conscience.

I make one more remark, and it is, that there is always, and especially in this age, ample opportunity for a christian to show by substantial acts his love to Christ. It is true Christ is no longer upon earth going about doing good, and therefore we cannot now open to him our doors, spread for him our table, make for him a feast, or anoint his head with precious ointment; but though he has ascended on high, he has left behind him two representatives, his members and his cause. In reference to the former, he has most explicitly told us that "whatever we do unto the least of them," he takes as done unto himself. All christians have an opportunity of doing something for Christ in the way of comforting his sorrowful, relieving his necessities, or restoring his backsliding, disciples. Brotherly love is love to Christ. And it is not perhaps sufficiently considered by professing christians, what an emphatic expression it is of our attachment to the Saviour, or how he takes it at our hand, to act kindly towards his people. If a mother considers every act of favour shown to her child as shown to herself, how much more does Christ regard the benefits bestowed upon his people, as bestowed upon him; for what is a mother's love to that of the Saviour?

But besides the members of his mystical body Christ is also represented upon earth by his cause. The cause of true religion is the cause of Christ; its doctrines speak of him, its precepts refer to him, its institutes commemorate, him, He is the end and object of all. This cause is promoted in various ways; by the preaching of the gospel, and therefore by the education of preachers; by the support of christian missions; by the circulation of the Scriptures and religious tracts;

by the education of children and adults; and numerous other methods. Whatever means are employed to diffuse the knowledge and promote the influence of true religion, if done from love to Christ, are an expression of attachment to him.

It is evident therefore that every christian can do something for Christ. No individual is so poor, so illiterate, or so obscure, as to have no opportunity of performing substantial acts of service for the Redeemer. God has not placed a single disciple in a situation where nothing can be done for Christ. Some have more opportunities than others; but all have some opportunity. To one is given ten talents, to others five, and to all besides one. There is no monopoly of the honour of doing good; no chartered company of philanthropists; no patentees of mercy. To do something for spreading the cause of Christ is as a duty binding on every man's conscience, and every woman's too; and is as a privilege within the reach of every one's desire. The peasant and the mechanic, the man servant and the maid servant, the pauper and the cripple, may all do something for the Lord Jesus. If they cannot give pounds, they can give pence; if they cannot influence and move a multitude, they can influence some individual; if they have not great abilities, they have some. No, none that love Christ can honestly say he has given them no opportunity to serve his cause. Take the case of a labouring man and see in how many ways even he can act for Christ; he can train up his children in the fear of God; set an example of religion to his neighbours; persuade some that neglect the house of God to accompany him to public worship; rebuke the sinner in his ways; subscribe his own penny, and gather the

pence of others, for a religious society; distribute religious tracts; visit the sick; talk with and pray for them; all these things he can do, and others which a little ingenuity can invent, adapted to his own peculiar situation.

I want to take from all persons the dead weight of helplessness and uselessness, which hangs about them, which depresses and discourages them; to excite a holy and laudable sense of their just importance, and to show there is some post for them to occupy, and some work for them to do in our world. In every manufactory there is something for the child, as well as the adult; and in every machine something for the least pin, as well as the fly-wheel to do: none are useless, nothing is superfluous. This is encouraging, and at the same time stimulating, to the poor. Jesus Christ has assigned a duty to every man, and expects every man to do his duty. God's voice says, "A great work is to be done on the earth. Do something. All can do it. Do something, do it." Let no man reply, "I cannot do anything."

I now go on to propose a series of consecutive and important questions.

What have you done for Christ? What have you done compared with your obligations, your opportunities, your professions? Look back upon your life and course of action; examine your creed; consider what you have professed to Christ and before the world; recollect all the opportunities of usefulness that God has thrown in your way; calculate the resources he has placed at your disposal: and then ask yourselves the solemn question, "What have I done?" Look at what others have done, with far less opportunity or ability than you; and again

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ask the question, "What have I done?" Sum it all up, and what does it amount to? Is there a soul in heaven, or on the way to it, whom you have sent there? Have you made any direct effort to save a soul? What have you done in the way of property, exertion, influence, compared with what you might have done, and should have done?

What are you now doing for Christ? What course or scheme of usefulness does this address find you pursuing? What institution points to you as one of its active and liberal supporters? What plan of modern benevolence, and christian enterprise, is indebted to you for counsel, property, labour, and time, and regards you as one of its pillars? Where are you, in what part of the great field of the world are you working, and what work are you doing? Perhaps you say, "I love to work alone, and am not fond of these confederations." Very well. Choose your own way of doing good, so as you do it. What then are the objects of your silent and solitary benevolence, and the channels through which you are pouring the streams of your mercy?

What can you do? This is a most momentous question, and should neither be dismissed hastily nor answered carelessly. It requires great seriousness of inquiry, diligence of investigation, and cautiousness of research; and, moreover, much self-knowledge, modesty, and impartiality. "Can," and "cannot," are small, frequently repeated, and seemingly very insignificant, words; but in reality, they are immensely important, and not to be pronounced in haste or levity. When we say, "cannot," energy is paralysed, and effort is suspended. We have pronounced a thing to be im-

possible; and who attempts impossibilities? Let us be cautious how we say "cannot." "When we say "can," we become responsible, for this little monosyllable measures our accountability. We then utter a word which should be followed by action. What, then, can you do for Christ? Inquire, examine, study, and pray for light. Investigate your circumstances, situation, abilities, resources, opportunities. Perhaps you have property, yet but little talent for speaking; well, give then, and give the more from the consideration that you cannot do anything else. Give what you can, and beware how you limit what you can give. Think how much you can give, not how little. Remember, God knows what you can give. Look round upon your property with the word "can" upon your lips. But, perhaps, you have not much property, but you have ability to influence others. Employ it then; exert it to the uttermost, and the more because you have no wealth of your own to give. It may be you have talents for speaking; well, speak then for Christ, not for self under the impulse of vanity but for Christ. Or you have a tact for business; then go to committees, and act there humbly, laboriously, unostentatiously. You are young, and can employ yourself as a Sunday school teacher; go without delay to this scene of useful occupation. Or you can distribute tracts, or read the Scriptures to the poor, or collect money: do it then. But it is needless for me to enumerate and specify, if you will but take up the question, "What can I do?" If there be but a sincere desire to do something, and to do all you can, ingenuity would soon come to your help, and you would be astonished to find out what and how much you can do. Do not say, "What can others do?"

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but, “What can I do?” nor, “What could I do if others would do their duty?” but, “What can I do by myself and without them?”

What ought you to do? This is another important word, “ought.” It expresses the extent of your duty: it means all a man can do, is bound to do, and will be condemned for not doing. To the question, “What ought you to do?” I answer, “All you can do.” This is demanded by Christ. And he set you the example, for he did all he could for your salvation. Conscience, gratitude, justice, love, demand it of you.

What will you do? What from this hour will you determine to do? Will the past effort satisfy you? Does it satisfy you? What, have you done enough for Christ? Stop before you answer that question. Let me take you again to the cross, to the borders of the pit, to the world of glory; and in sight of those stupendous scenes, let me ask you, “Have you done enough for Him who thus loved you?” What, as the sum total of his efforts for Christ, should satisfy the man who knows and feels that he owes his deliverance from eternal torment, and his salvation to eternal glory, to his amazing and unutterable love? What will satisfy him? Begin afresh from the reading of this address to study your obligations to Christ; to fathom the depth of misery from which he has delivered you; to measure the height of glory to which he is advancing you, all by his cross remember; and then inquire by what new and more emphatic way you will testify your love to Christ; by what new scheme of usefulness you will seek to express the sense you bear of his sovereign and amazing love. Go afresh to him with the prayer of the converted Saul, and say to him, “Lord, what wilt

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thou have me to do?" And wait and watch for the answer.

What would be the result if all professing christians did what they could? What a mass of wealth, of intellect, and of energy, remain yet unemployed for Christ, not only in the world, but also in the church! How many of his professed disciples are doing comparatively nothing; how many more but a little; and how few can even approximate to the character of Mary, and deserve the honour of having it said of them, "They did what they could!" Were all to begin seriously to study, and diligently and prayerfully to employ, their resources for the glory of the Saviour and the spread of his cause, what might not be expected to be the result? Oh, if all the power of faith were called out in believing and importunate prayer for the pouring forth of God's blessed Spirit; if christians, under a deep sense of the utter inefficiency of all means without divine grace, were to give themselves to prayer, and to pray as if it depended on their faith and fervour that the world should be converted; if all rich men were to give all they could of their wealth, and all other persons were disposed to make sacrifices of luxury and comfort, that they might have the more to offer to Christ; if men of intellect, and energy, and influence, were but to consider these resources as belonging to Christ, instead of devoting them to the politics and parties of the world; if all pious females were but to consider the solemn obligations they are under to Christ, not only for his love to their souls, but for the beneficial influence which his religion has had upon the condition of their sex; if all the poor were to give of their little, for the spread of the gospel; if in short it could be

said of all the millions of the disciples of Jesus, each in his sphere, and according to his measure, "They did what they could," how near then would be the answer of the church's prayers in the universal conversion of the world to Christ! Nothing is wanting but for the church to feel her obligations, to prepare herself for the great work by a fresh baptism of the Spirit, to consecrate her energies to the cause of her Divine Lord, and to consider that her great business is the conversion of the world to God; and then the blessing would come.

You, my dear friends, amongst the rest of Christ's chosen and redeemed people, are called upon to give of your substance to Christ in the spirit of faith, and love, and prayer. Sorrowful would be the heart of your pastor, if he saw you wholly taken up in getting wealth for yourselves; and while either hoarding it up to make your children rich, or spending it in the luxuries that constitute "the pride of life," withholding it from the cause of Christ, or niggardly, grudgingly, scantily, yielding it to the urgency of importunate appeals.

Consider, I entreat you, the different results of that property which you spend upon yourselves, and that which you spend upon Christ; the former perishes in the using, the latter acquires an imperishable existence. What you lay out in the comforts and elegances of life, yea and what you lay up unnecessarily, dies with you when you die, and obtains no resurrection, for it has no principle of immortality. You will see it in no form in another world, for it contains no seed that bears fruit in eternity. It will pass away for ever, and nothing of it remain but the remembrance, and the regret, if indeed regret can enter heaven, that it was not spent for God. But the wealth which, under the influence of

pure motives, we devote to Christ will never die; it is immortal and incorruptible, not indeed in the form of property, (for of what use would that be to us in heaven?) but in what is infinitely more glorious and gratifying, in the form of those redeemed and blessed spirits of just men made perfect, whom it has been employed to convert to God. Yes, the men who give their property for the conversion of souls, may be said, in one sense, to transmute it into those living existences of holiness and bliss, which fill the upper world. This, in the best and fullest sense of the term, is "to lay up treasures in heaven;" it is to enrich the celestial city; to increase the glory of the New Jerusalem; and to place fresh gems in the mediatorial crown of the Redeemer. What a motive to liberality! What an incentive to munificence! How does it soften the labour of getting wealth, sweeten and sanctify the enjoyment of it, and compensate for any little sacrifice we may make in parting from it, to recollect that by giving it to Christ, we impart to it a principle of immortality, and add it to the inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away! Dull indeed must be the heart which such a motive cannot quicken; groveling the spirit which such a prospect does not elevate. O christians! how is it that we can cheat ourselves of such heavenly felicity and eternal honour merely to have a little more comfort, luxury, or elegance here? Why do we impoverish ourselves in another world to enrich ourselves in this? How is it that the prospect of seeing our property for ever before our eyes in the forms of glorified spirits; of laying it up around the throne of the Eternal; of adding by it to the splendours of the holy of holies; and multiplying the objects on which the eye

of Christ shall rest with satisfaction, as the travail of his soul, does not induce us to part with more of it for such purposes, and make us willing to submit to every kind of sacrifice? How is it, I say? Just because of the weakness of our faith. We do not believe these facts, or we believe them with a faith so feeble and so wavering, as scarcely to deserve the name.

How much pleading, and remonstrance, and rebuke might be spared; how much of the modern system of combating the spirit of worldliness in the disciples of Christ, and of producing a spirit of liberality, which after all is sluggish, grudging, and reluctant, might be dispensed with; how many of the present devices for getting money, some of them unworthy of the dignity and sanctity of the cause, and nearly all of them a reproach upon its professed supporters, might be abandoned, if christians understood and believed what they professed; if they lived by faith; if their faith regulated their doings, as well as their sayings; if it regulated their doings for others as well as their doings for themselves; and if it also regulated their doings in the way of disposing of their property for the salvation of men's souls. The worm at the root of liberality, as well as of every other virtue, is unbelief; and there it may be detected eating out the strength, impairing the beauty, and preventing the fertility, of the plant.

But before I close this address, I come back again to the subject of love to Christ. I am not urging an abstract liberality, a mere habit of giving, apart from this holy and evangelical motive. I have directed you to the example of one whose fragrant offering was presented by a hand which was moved to the act by a heart that burned with love, and glowed with gratitude to

Christ; and that example I am anxious you should imitate, not only in its act, but in its principle. I want you to make the love of Christ the mainspring of your obedience, as it is of all true obedience; and in order to this, the mainspring must be in your heart, the love of Jesus must beat strongly there. Ah! this, this is the defect of the great multitude of professors in the present day; the love of Christ does not beat strongly there; the love of Christ does not constrain them. True, there is much activity and much liberality, and we rejoice in it, for God employs it for good: but how much of this springs from love to Christ, and how much from the compulsion of example, the force of persuasion, the love of activity, and a spirit of individual and congregational vain glory? Does this liberality flow forth silently, gush out spontaneously, welling up, like some abundant spring, by the secret and powerful law of nature, without the aid of mechanical means; or is it not raised whatever its quantity, with great labour and much pumping? Changing the metaphor, is this zeal kept in vigorous activity by the healthful nutriment of evangelical truth; by the bread which cometh down from heaven; by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God, or, is it not kept alive and active by the various stimulants, cordials, and elixirs, which eloquence or ingenuity supplies?

Female servants of God, have you, like your devoted sister of Bethany, done what you could? Take an inventory of the means which the Lord has put into your hands for honouring him, and then look over the list of your contributions. What proportion do your annual charities bear to the cost of your furniture, your wardrobe, your ornaments, your luxuries? Jesus did

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not withhold from you his most precious blood. What are you willing to do for him? What costly alabaster box have you broken, will you break, for him?

O God! bestow upon the writer and the reader thy grace, that when they meet thee in judgment, they may hear this commendatory testimony from thy gracious lips, "They did what they could."

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

THE subject on which I now address you, is of vital importance to your safety as sinners, and to your comfort as christians; I mean, the life of faith. It is a subject constantly recurring in your conversation and prayers, yet I fear too little understood, still less felt, and in some cases mischievously perverted. I shall begin by removing a gross and grievous misconception, which some have taken up on this momentous topic. To live and walk by faith means, with such persons, nothing more than living in an habitual persuasion that they are christians. This view rests, of course, upon the notion, that faith is a confidence of their own personal interest in Christ. It is common, therefore, for them to speak of a life of faith, as opposed to a life of varying religious feeling. Those times in which we have the most sensible communion with him, and feel our emotions most ardently drawn out to him, are thought by them to have the least exercise of faith. "There is no need," say they, "for faith then; at such times we live by sense; but when all our graces seem dead, and we can see no evidence from whence to draw the favourable conclusion that we are the children of God, then is the time

to walk by faith." Their meaning is, "then is the time to believe all is well, and so rest easy, whether we have the evidence that it is so or not." It is not unfrequently that the language of the prophet is brought forward to support this false view of the subject: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." The darkness here, however, does not mean that which is spiritual, or a want of discernment of our being a child of God, but providential, or a want of external prosperity; in which season it is our duty, of course, to trust in God.

There cannot be a more pernicious or unscriptural notion, one that is more dangerous to the individual who entertains it, nor more discreditable to religion, than to resolve the life of faith into a going forward with the persuasion that we are justified in the sight of God and advancing to glory, notwithstanding the coldness and carnality of our hearts, and the absence of all right feelings towards God and eternal things. That some persons live upon feelings, and put them in place of the life of faith, is very true. If, instead of keeping the eye of the mind fixed on Christ, it be ever turned inward upon the mind itself, pleased with beholding some supposed excellences there; if our consolation is derived from the good we see in ourselves, rather than from the fulness there is in the Saviour; if we imagine that the purposes and dispositions of the Divine mind towards us are as variable as our own emotions; or if while we profess to place all our dependence on Christ, our religious peace and consolation are regulated more by the amount of our emotion, than by our perception of

the work of the Redeemer; this is living upon feelings, and is of course opposed to the life of faith.

There are two passages of the apostle Paul's in reference to the subject now before us, which deserve attention. The first is this: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The other is this: "We walk by faith, not by sight." Between the life of faith and the walk of faith there is no other difference than what lies between a principle and its operation. This is pointed out in another passage where the apostle says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." The life of faith refers to the principle; the walk to its acts and exercises. Both taken together mean, our being habitually influenced in the state of our minds and conduct, not by visible but by invisible objects; the objects which are revealed in the word of God; and of the nature and reality of which we have no evidence but this Divine testimony. Faith is a cordial and practical belief of this testimony, and to live and walk by it, must of course mean our being habitually influenced by the objects which that testimony reveals. It is opposed to corporeal sight, to the discoveries of mere reason, and to the ultimate vision of Christ in glory.

The life of faith may be considered in reference to the various objects which the Scripture reveals.

I. To God. "Without faith it is impossible to please God. He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." It is said of Moses, "He endured as seeing him who is invisible." This is the life

and walk of faith with respect to God; a realizing sense of his invisible presence: such a persuasion, derived from the word of God, of his existence, and of his natural and moral perfections, as leads us to all that conduct which he requires. Perhaps this acting of faith towards God could not be more appropriately described, than by the word used in reference to Enoch and Noah, where it is said they “walked with God.” The expression is striking, and signifies such an habitual sense of the presence of God, and such a reference to him, as a man has of the friend who is walking at his side.

2. See it in reference to Christ. “I live by the faith of the Son of God,” said the apostle. Christ is the great object of justifying, saving faith. Look unto me, believe in me, come to me, is the reiterated, constant invitation and command of Christ, as speaking to us in the gospel. His person, as God-man Mediator, his offices as Prophet, Priest, and King; his perfect atonement, justifying righteousness, and prevailing intercession; his spotless example, holy commands, and gracious promises; his government and kingdom, as revealed in the New Testament, are the glorious objects of our contemplation and belief. To live and walk by faith, is to come daily to Jesus in the exercise of fresh dependence, fresh expectations, and fresh devotedness; it is still to renounce all and every thing but Christ as the basis of our hope; it is to see more of his glory and grace continually, and to rejoice with more joy in his unsearchable riches, and inexhaustible fulness; it is to confess that as time rolls on, and eternity advances, he is all our righteousness and strength; it is to feel that as knowledge increases, and grace grows, still we have

Christ alone as a ground of confidence; it is in all our conflicts, sins, fears, weaknesses, and woes, to repair afresh to him, and just as we came at first, with a full persuasion that we are welcome, and thus ever to derive strength and courage from him; this is a life of faith in Christ, to be assured and to feel that as the branch has no life apart from the vine, nor the members from the head, so we have no spiritual life but as we abide in him.

3. See it in reference to providential dispensations. Christ has told us once for all, "that all power in heaven and earth is in his hands." So minute is the superintendence of his care over his people, that "the very hairs of their head are all numbered." Again and again we are assured that "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." "That all things shall work together for good to them that love (rod, and who are the called according to his purpose." These are the true and comfortable words of Holy Scripture, and the life of faith consists in believing that they are true, and in applying them to all the varying events, and occurrences, and circumstances of our own individual and humble history. Faith believes that in whatever straits and difficulties we may be found God will never abandon us. It says amidst seeming destitution, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." It replies, when all things appear against us, "It is well." It believes that love is at the bottom of all dispensations, however confounding to our wisdom, or disappointing to our hopes. It hushes the murmur, wipes the tear, and suppresses the complaint, by the persuasion that all will end well. It sings, as did good Habakkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in

the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

4. See the life of faith in reference to the second coming of Christ. “Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” Such was the apostle’s description of the habitual frame of the mind of believers in his day. A similar representation we find in another place: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:” as if it were the one great object of their expectation, to wait for the second advent of the Saviour. If some run into one extreme, in the prominence they give to this great event in their meditations and discourses, so as to make it predominate even over the first coming of Christ, the great bulk of professing christians run into the opposite extreme of leaving it out too much. Oh, what are all the future events of time; what are the changes that are to take place in the history of our country, or the world, compared with the advent of Christ, when he shall come a second time without a sin offering unto salvation? What should be so interesting to our hopes, as the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, with his mighty angels, “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.” Illustrious day! Glorious scene! The life of faith consists in contemplating them, and deriving from them the most lively and animated hope.

5. Contemplate the life of faith in reference to eternity, and the glory of heaven. How concisely

yet how beautifully is this expressed by the apostle! "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Oh, what simplicity, and yet what sublimity, of language! It was as if he had said, "Eternity is so clearly revealed to us in all its wonders and glories, and is so vast and magnificent a scene, and withal so near, that we scarcely seem to see the things of time, and have no inclination to turn away from the boundless prospect of immortality, to look after them; and in all our estimates, our feelings, and our pursuits, we are guided and controlled by a regard to things eternal." This is faith put in act, to believe in glory, honour, and immortality; and the life of faith is to let eternity give the stamp and form to our character. It is to treat heaven as a reality, and to let it mould our very spirit. If this divine principle be in our souls, we shall enter into the apostle's beautiful language, and say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight."

This, my dear friends, is the new, and spiritual, and heavenly life you are called by your profession to lead: this is in fact the christian life. It is to this the apostle refers when he says, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life,

shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." How little is this subject understood and felt! How low is this heavenly life, how feeble is the pulse of faith! Do not the great bulk of those who call themselves christians appear to be living far too much by sense? Not indeed that they are immersed in vice or gaiety; but how deeply sunk in worldly care, how taken up with worldly comforts! No matter how pure, and how innocent, any things may be in themselves if they hide scriptural objects from the eye of faith; they are unlawful as to their influence when they do this. Our profession implies a disposition and a habit of seeking our highest objects of interest and delight in things unseen and eternal; a daily converse of the soul with God and Christ, with heaven and eternity. He that is thus walking will not allow himself to be long out of sight of the cross; will not wander far from God in quest of happiness. He will not shut himself up amidst terrestrial scenes, however rational or innocent. He has a new principle in his nature besides sense and reason, for he has faith; and this is a restless, powerful, and craving one, which aspires after something higher and better and more enduring than any thing he can see, or touch, or taste. He is the subject of wants and woes which only faith can relieve and mitigate. Neither sense nor reason can assist him to throw off his load of guilt, or give satisfaction to desires which the world is too poor to gratify. Here therefore on this globe, he finds himself a prisoner, sighing for escape from the dark and limited region which he inhabits; and it is only faith that can open for him the doors, and make way for his excursion into the invisible realities of eternity.

Alas! how small are our attainments in this divine life, how much are we occupied and engrossed by things of time and sense! It is well worth while to ask what you know of this. You are all living by faith or sight; either upon things heavenly, or things earthly. On what is your soul living? What is it that supplies your comfort? Where does your spirit go daily to quench her thirst after happiness, to the broken cisterns of created good, or to the fountains of living waters? Sooner or later, the fullest store of the joys of sense will be exhausted. "All the dear delights of earth are but the brood of time, a brood that will soon take to themselves wings, and, with them that cherished them, fly away. O my friends, it is too common for many to suppose that those who live by faith in the enjoyments of the world to come, live upon mere imaginations. But are they not mistaken? It is- their enjoyments, and not those of believers, that are imaginary. Pleasures, profits, honours, what are they? The whole form only a kind of ideal world, a sort of splendid show, like that in a dream, which when you awake, all is gone. To grasp it is to grasp a shadow; and to feed upon it is to feed upon the wind." Christ and his salvation, heaven and eternity, are the only substantial realities; and these are the objects for which faith lives, and towards which it is perpetually walking.

Receive then, dear friends, the word of exhortation, and seek to possess more and more of this divine life. Understand clearly the nature and operation of that great principle which is the root of all true piety. It is not only as sinners, and for the purpose of justification, that you need faith, but as christians also, for sanctification, consolation, and perseverance. Every act of the

spiritual life is an act of faith; every step in the spiritual walk is a step of faith. The christian's course is not one of doing merely, but of believing. His prayers are the breathings of faith; his works are the actings of faith; his penitence is the tear of faith; his joy is the smile of faith; his hopes are the anticipations of faith; his fears are the tremblings of faith; his strength is the confidence of faith; his submission is the acquiescence of faith. Faith is the eye that looks at Christ; the foot that moves to him; the hand that receives him; the mouth that feeds upon him. It is not only by the activity of obedience, but by the silent and passive power of dependence, that the christian is strong and victorious. This is the reason why so many professors are so worldly and so weak; why they make such little progress, and such small attainments; some of them are so much under the dominion of sense, are so almost wholly given up to a life of sight, that they have neither time nor inclination to look at the things that are unseen and eternal; while others, though far more solicitous and laborious about spiritual things, fix their attention and exhaust their energies, upon toilsome, self-sustained struggles, to the neglect of faith. There is in them no habitual looking to Christ, no abiding in him, no vivid consciousness that all their springs are in him, and that it is from his fulness they are to receive, and grace for grace. Theirs is a life of working, but not of believing; they are lamentably ignorant of the astonishing mightiness, yea, the all-mightiness, there is in the simple act of believing; for what is this, but to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might?

Do not forget that it is not possible to carry on the growth of the christian life, unto the measure of the

stature of the fulness of Christ, apart from this. "It is only when that life is firmly rooted and grounded in faith, that the straight stem of righteousness will rise up, and branch out into the manifold ramifications of duty, and that it will be crowned with the brightness and sweetness of the amaranthine blossoms of love. When moral rectitude is disjoined from faith, there is no trust in it. It may stiffen into pharisaical formality, or ossify into stoical severity; or it may be withered by the blights and canker-worm of expediency; or it may tumble into the sty of Epicureanism, and rot there. When love is disjoined from faith, there is no trust in it. Caprice may throw it to the winds; chance may nip it in the bud; pride may blast it; vanity may eat away its core; prosperity may parch it; distress may freeze it; lust may taint and poison it: the slights and neglects which it must needs experience at times, in a world of frailty and mutability, will assuredly sour and embitter it. Indeed, according to the true idea of christian love, and of righteousness, neither the one nor the other can exist at all, except as springing out of faith. Whereas, when faith is genuine and strong, in proportion to its genuineness and strength will it infallibly produce righteousness and love; a righteousness and love which having a living seed within them will be abiding." A living faith and living works must and do always go together; they cannot live but in union with each other; cut them asunder and they both die. To think of growing in grace, increasing in love, and abounding in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God, in any other way than by faith, and strong faith too, is as irrational as to cut off the branch from the vine, and to expect it, in

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that state, to bear the rich full clusters of the parent tree.

It is by the "Life of Faith," you will bring glory to God. Confidence in the kindness, veracity, and ability of a fellow-creature, affords a pleasure to his mind, and does him honour before others. How then is God honoured, when, upon the credit of his simple word alone, we prefer the invisible realities of eternity, to the visible things of time; and amidst all that is dazzling to sense, gratifying to appetite, and dear to passion, spend a life of self-denial, mortification, and separation from the world; and in some instances die the martyr's death!

Prove yourselves then the children of faithful Abraham, and stagger not at the promises of God through unbelief; but be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Believer, if you are brought into dark and difficult circumstances, instead of allowing yourself to think you may stand excused for the indulgence of murmuring and unbelief, consider it rather as an opportunity and a call for the exercise of faith, and for thus glorifying God. The thicker the darkness through which he calls you to pass, and the more entirely destitute you are of all help from every other quarter, the greater is the opportunity for honouring him, by trusting him with all your concerns.

How blessed to its possessors is the life of faith! "Believing in Christ, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Because thou hast seen me," said Christ to Thomas, "thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." How sweetly does confidence, even in an earthly friend, relieve

the mind from distressing fears and apprehensions; and this relief is in exact proportion to the ability and willingness of this friend to assist us, and the benefits we expect from his generosity. What then must be the relief afforded to the agitated mind of the christian, by confidence in God, reliance on Christ, and the hope of glory. "Great and wonderful is the consolation such a life affords. In all the vicissitudes of life, and the horrors of death, nothing can cheer and fortify the mind like this. By faith in Christ and the unseen world, we can endure injuries without revenge, afflictions without fainting, and losses without despair. Let the nations of the earth clash like potsherds, one against another; yea, let nature herself approach towards her final dissolution; let her groan as being ready to expire, and sink into her primitive nothing; still the believer lives. His all is not on board that vessel. His chief inheritance lies in another soil."

How obvious is this to all! Faith, when the report believed is a joyful one, must be productive of delight. Who can believe glad tidings, and not be made glad? Hence the reasonableness of those exhortations which call upon us to rejoice in the Lord. There is more real happiness in the believer's mind, when in the very midst of poverty and trouble he exercises a lively confidence in God, than the richest worldling on earth enjoys, when surrounded by all his wealth and possessions. To feel our own poverty, emptiness, nothingness, and yet at the same time to feel withal the confidence of faith, our fulness in Christ and our title to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, is one of the most felicitous states of mind we can

attain to in this world, uniting, as it does, the deepest humility with the most exalted and triumphant anticipations.

The life of faith will not last always, but will give way to a life of eternal vision. We are walking by faith to see Jesus as he is, and to be like him. "Thy word," said the psalmist, "is a light unto my feet, a lamp unto my path:" and faith is the hand that holds it as we pass through the darkness of this our earthly sojourn, and the deeper shadows of the grave; but when our spirits emerge into the regions of glory and the realms of immortality, we shall need the lamp no longer, for there is no night there. Oh, what a moment will that be, when the lamp of faith will be suddenly extinguished, not amidst the darkness of eternal night, but amidst the splendours of everlasting day, and the prospects of the heavenly world, and its tiny spark will be lost amidst the blaze of glory pouring from the throne of God! How will the soul endure the scene which shall then burst upon her view?

Be this, then, your prayer, my dear friends, your sincere and earnest prayer, "Lord, increase our faith." Be willing to have the world displaced from your soul, in order to make room for the objects of faith; and be ever ready to come from the dazzling glare of earthly scenes, to feel the steady illumination, and dwell in the calm and holy light, that shine from heaven on your path. Study as well as read the Scriptures, and meditate much upon their contents. Frequent and devout converse with the objects of faith is the best way to have it increased. Watch diligently against the influence of those objects which have a fatal tendency to eclipse its light, to obstruct its operations, and enfeeble

its life, namely, sensual pleasure, eager pursuit of the world, and a too intimate converse with those who mind earthly things.

THE INFLUENCE OF SENIOR CHRISTIANS.

A SUBJECT of considerable interest and importance has often occurred to me, when meditating on the state of the christian church, and that is, the influence which the conduct of its senior members has over those who have lately commenced the divine life. It is obvious, from all the principles of our nature, that this must be considerable, either for good or for evil; and that if it do not encourage and strengthen them in the way, it must enfeeble and dishearten them. It is so fearful a thing to cast stumbling-blocks in the path of a christian brother, and to disturb his peace, much more to endanger his soul, that it becomes us all to take heed to our steps, both for his sake and our own.

You must be aware that those who are but lately converted to God, and have just assumed the christian profession, look with attention and deference to others of long standing in the church, and are apt to make them their patterns and standards. In the army, the veteran soldiers have great influence in training the young recruits, in forming their character, and fitting them for service: in a manufactory, the habits of the workmen have a considerable share in guiding those of the apprentices; and in a family, the younger children imitate the older ones. Thus it is in the church of God, the younger look up to those who are more advanced in age, or in experience. It is very true that

they have a perfect standard in the word of God, which they ought to consult, and to which they ought to seek for grace to conform themselves, without considering what other and older believers do. Instead, however, of studying the nature, and claims, and extent, of vital Christianity in its own inspired records, and imitating the Divine original, they are but too apt to look at it as it is to be seen in their fellow professors, and thus, by copying from a copy, and that but an imperfect one, they go on multiplying the sadly defective exhibitions of practical religion with which the church always abounds. It is not however till they have experienced considerable surprise by their first acquaintance with these imperfect patterns, that they are brought to imitate them.

It has not, I believe, unfrequently occurred, that young converts, in the ardour of their first love, and while little acquainted as yet with what is called the religious world, have looked upon the church of Christ as a sacred enclosure, within which dwelt scarcely any other than a kind of heavenly inhabitants; as a sort of vestibule to the temple above, in which were only blessed spirits, who as they were putting off their earthly affections, and preparing to enter into the presence of their Divine Redeemer, could think or speak of little else than the glory that awaited them; and by whom every addition to their number would be hailed with delight, and welcomed as sure to enhance the fervour of their piety. In such society, these novices expected soon to attain to the full maturity of the christian character, and to ripen into the greatest perfection attainable on earth. They anticipated the sweetest and holiest intercourse, an almost unearthly

spirituality, and an uninterrupted strain of religious conversation in the communion of saints; but, alas! what a woful disappointment did the reality produce; in the sacred enclosure they found worldly-minded professors, almost as intent upon things seen and temporal, as any they had left without the gates; in the vestibule of heaven, they beheld men and women covered with the dust, disordered with the anxieties, and given up to the enjoyment, of earth. They saw little but the world in their conduct, and heard of little else in their conversation. A cold chill fell upon their hearts which seemed, like a frosty atmosphere acting upon a newly exposed plant, at once to check the ardour of their religious affections; and even they, lately so fervent, soon sunk and settled down into the lukewarmness of those among whom they had come to dwell. It is true they expected too much; they had formed a standard for the church militant too nearly approaching that of the church triumphant; but still, even persons with a more correct knowledge of professing christians, and with more sober expectations of what was to be derived from them, have, upon coming among them, experienced much less of the benefits of fellowship than they expected. This should not be. Happily it is not always thus. In our churches are to be found some, who, by their knowledge, piety, and experience, are nursing fathers and mothers of the young christian, and who, by the blessing of God, breathe into him their own spirit.

Owing to the conduct of many senior professors the church of God is kept down in its spiritual attainments, and does not make that advance to the higher degrees of knowledge, faith, and holiness, which might be expected, and which is so much to be desired. I have no need

to prove that the church is not distinguished in our day by the eminence of its spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. It has much zeal, activity, and liberality, and in these things we cordially rejoice, but they are most fearfully mixed up with a prevailing worldliness in many of its aspects and operations; and it may be apprehended that the dazzling splendour of missionary movements, and the bustling scenes of zealous labour, have too much drawn away christians from deep communion with their own hearts, and with the Spirit of God. What a flexible and accommodating morality has infected our business transactions! What an acrimonious and uncharitable spirit has soured the temper of the various denominations towards each other! What a languid faith, and what a feeble fluttering hope, characterize the frame of the bulk of professors! As if missionary ardour might be accepted as a compromise for all deficiencies in the more laborious, painful, and self-denying exertions of the christian life. External action and doing has with many become a substitute for heart-watchfulness, the subduing of sin, and holy communion with the Spirit. And to whom are these deficiencies to be attributed but to the older professors of religion? Were they generally as eminent as they should be; were they patterns of that elevated, consistent, experimental religion, which might justly be looked for from a profession of twenty, thirty, or forty years; were they free from the inconsistencies which mar the beauty and diminish the power of the christian character; were they shining as lights in the world, reflecting the beauties of holiness, breathing the spirit of devotion, and abounding in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God; then the younger brethren and

sisters, as they were born into the family of God, would be likely to partake of their spirit, to follow their conduct, and imitate their character; and a succession of eminent and devoted professors would be maintained.

May I then solicit the serious and prayerful attention of those who have, in age and standing, already attained to the character of fathers and mothers in Israel, or who are advancing to it. Do not dismiss the matter as of no importance, nor let your modesty or your indifference lead you to imagine that your influence is less than I have stated, and that therefore the subject is not worth your consideration. Do not refuse to examine and well ponder it. You are doing good or harm to younger christians. They will consider your conduct, whether you wish it or not. Their eyes are open to what you do, and their ears to what you say, when you little think of it. You cannot retire from observation, and dwell in seclusion so deep as to elude all scrutiny. You must be influential. You ought not to wish or attempt to be negative characters. You are candles lighted, to be put, not under bushels, but in candlesticks, to give light to all that are in the house. Younger professors are continually coming around you, both in the transaction of business, and in the intercourse of friendship, and are imbibing influence from you, whether you intentionally exert it or not. Their character is forming, imperceptibly to you, unconsciously to themselves, under the power of your example. There is no need of your saying, "Act as I do;" nor of their replying, "I will." The influence goes on without such formalities. Their tone of piety rises or falls to the key note you strike; their zeal cools or

grows warm by yours: moral principles fasten or loosen their roots in their hearts as yours appear to be fixed or fluctuating.

I am aware that this influence has limitations, and that many new converts to God set out on the life and walk of faith, with such decision of character, such strong faith, and such ardent love, as to resist the example, and condemn the worldly-mindedness, of many of those who have been long in the way of godliness. They retain their spirituality and devotional feeling amidst much that is calculated to repress them: but to do so they find it necessary to retire from the intimacy of many who have been in Christ long before them.

If you are not aware of the importance of this subject, the pastors of the churches are. They know, and some bitterly lament, the influence of their older members. They see, amidst all their zeal and solicitude to raise the tone of piety in their churches, a counteracting power exerted by many who ought to be foremost in lending their help to forward so desirable an object. I know both clergymen of the church of England, and dissenting ministers, to whom this must be a sore grievance. Pastors labour to a considerable extent in vain, in endeavouring publicly to promote the spirituality of their flocks, if the more influential members of the community do not sustain their efforts in private. Be careful then not to throw stumbling blocks in a brother's way, even in little things. There are two ways in which you may do this:

I. By doing what is positively wrong, or of doubtful propriety. I do not now allude to immorality and vice; but I refer to the lesser violations of christian propriety;

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such for instance as the indulgence of bad temper; offences against love, gratitude, and humility; the practice of those dishonourable artifices which are so common in the modern system of trade; conformity to the world in spirit, entertainments, dress, and amusements; and covetousness, hard-heartedness, and indifference to the cause of religion in the world. Fathers and mothers in Israel, I beseech you, for the sake of the “young men,” and the “little children,” that you abstain from such things. Do not give the sanction of your example, or the aid of your influence, to the spread of a diseased religious profession, in which such leprous spots as these are continually breaking out.

And should there happen to be anything of doubtful propriety, a mere matter of taste or gratification; a matter about which the christian world is somewhat divided; a matter condemned by the more spiritual part of the church; a matter at best half way between good and evil, resting on the very line of demarcation between right and wrong, partly on one territory, and partly on the other; in such a case, the better instructed and more experienced members should abstain from these appearances of evil. Should not they be the first to set the example, and to give out a pattern, of self-denial? Should not they be the leaders of the cross-bearing company? Should not their younger brethren and sisters see how far advanced they are in the virtues of forbearance, temperance, and separation from the world? Should not they lend their aid in training the new converts to that hardy, enduring, self-denying, religion, which is implied in the christian profession? Observe the example of the apostle Paul: speaking of eating meats offered to idols, he says, “Take heed lest

by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." The general sentiment enjoined in this beautiful and generous passage, is an affectionate solicitude on the part of older, and better instructed, and stronger, professors, not to enjoy any gratification, or to do anything, which should have the tendency to pervert the principles, mislead the conscience, perplex the reasonings, or grieve the minds, of such as are weaker or younger in the faith. What, arguments and motives does the passage contain! By misleading such persons we sin against the brethren, wound weak consciences, endanger immortal souls, sin against Christ! Aged professors, read this; ponder it; tremble; and decide.

It is also to be remembered, that it is not merely the whole course of a christian's conduct that has this influence, but perhaps there is one single transaction, different from such as I have just supposed, which is regarded as a sort of test act by younger converts. There is some one decision which he has to make, some single instance which he is to exhibit, some isolated position which he is to occupy, upon the manner of conducting himself in which, many will form an opinion, not simply of his character, but of the rule which they are to prescribe to themselves. His conduct in that one transaction, will perhaps send out an extensive and permanent influence over the whole character of many. If he has grace to act well in that instance, they will be led

at once, in imitation of his example, to adopt a high standard, a lofty model, of christian profession; they will depart with a high notion of what is required in a follower of Christ, and with a fixed and determined purpose to follow whatever things are lovely and of good report. Whereas if, unhappily, he fail, and exhibit a flexibility of principle, and a spirit of compromise, they, from that hour, obtain in his conduct an apology to others, and a quietus to their conscience, for an unscriptural, worldly-minded, and inconsistent profession.

II. You may put stumbling blocks in the way of younger christians, not only by doing what is wrong, but not doing what is right; by a deficiency, for instance, in seriousness, devoutness, diligence, and spirituality. There is a radical defect in the religion of many professors, not in morality, but in spirituality. They do not appear in earnest. Their character and conduct do not bear and exhibit with sufficient distinctness, the impress of the cross, the image of God, the seal of the Spirit, the stamp of eternity, the likeness of heaven. A christian is, or should be, a man who takes not only the form, but the hue, of his character from the "Bible; and that should be a hue of heavenly colour. Now where this to a considerable extent is wanting in older professors its influence on younger ones must be sad indeed. If they hear little of devout conversation from your lips, they cannot of course attach any great value to spirituality of mind. If they see you absent from week-day services, they are not likely to feel it of any consequence to take an hour from business or pleasure, to be there themselves. If they hear you murmuring and discontented, impatient and rebellious; or even if they see you gloomy, cheerless, and disconsolate

in trouble and sickness, how it must tend to diminish their sense of the power and value of religion, and to discourage them in the prospect of affliction, which may be coming upon them! O my beloved friends, do consider these things; and the Lord give you understanding.

These remarks of course apply with peculiar force to such of you as are parents, and are masters and mistresses, and who have fellow members in your own household, among your children and servants. What patterns of godliness such young christians expect to see in us! And what expectations of this kind have they not a right to entertain? Have we any reason to be astonished, or to complain of their low degrees of piety, if ours are not high? Let me remind you that it is not only the unconverted branches of our families that should excite our solicitude, and engage our care, but the professedly converted. While we should be anxious to bring the former under the influence of religion, we should also be no less so, to carry on the others to higher degrees of holiness. Let us ask if 'our conduct at home is of such a nature, as is calculated to make the piety of home flourish around us? Is there that consistency, that spirituality, that amiability, that regularity in private prayer, and that fervour at the family altar, which will encourage, instruct, confirm, and assist, the young disciples which sit or wait at our table?

This subject however does not appertain exclusively to any one class of our senior members, but belongs to them all. The apostle takes it for granted that a christian's attainments and usefulness should be in proportion to the date of his profession: "When for the time ye ought to

be teachers,” was his language to the believing Hebrews. What then ought to be the extent of your knowledge, the maturity of your graces, the depth of your experience, the perfection of your example, the power of your influence, and the measure of your usefulness, who have been planted so many years in the courts of the Lord? What a beautiful record is it in sacred history of Aquila and Priscilla, that this holy pair employed their riper knowledge and their richer grace in instructing the young and eloquent Apollos in the way of the Lord more perfectly! I am not ashamed to avow my obligations to a poor and godly couple, long since gone to their rest, who, by their simple piety, consistent conduct, friendly disposition, and mature experience, nurtured the germ of religion in my heart, and helped to train me up when a young disciple to usefulness in the church of God. They watched me with the solicitude of a father and mother in Israel, instructed me in their lowly cot in the principles of the gospel, relieved my perplexities, gathered out the stones from my path, and aided to establish me in the paths of righteousness and peace. How few of the older disciples of the Lord are thus disposed to open their doors to the young inquirers after truth and salvation, and to act the part of nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the new-born babes in Christ! How useful might be the older female members of the churches, in employing those seasons of intercourse with their younger friends, which are continually occurring, to cherish in their minds the spirit of faith, prayer, and holiness! Instead of this, is not too much of their time spent in useless gossip, frivolous chit-chat, and vain discourse on fashion, dress, and news?

O ye matronly professors, consider how important is the right formation of the female character. Recollect that those young women who frequent your house, listen to your conversation, and are looking up to you as examples, will perhaps one day be like you, placed at the heads of families, and will exert some influence upon the world, through their husbands and their children; and recollect also, that they will be likely to take the tone of their religion, the standard of their womanly piety, from you. Endeavour then to breathe into their souls the spirit of ardent and consistent religion, repress their disposition to vanity, mould them to sobriety of judgment, and train them, as you have opportunity, to elevated sentiments of usefulness. Blessed is that woman, she is indeed a mother in Israel, who by her amiable, cheerful disposition, united with good sense, and engaging manners, attracts the younger females to her society; and who, when they are gathered round her, exerts her influence to render them blessings both to the church and to the world. It is an ill sign for a middle-aged female professor of religion, when the more frivolous of the young are fondest of her society, and the more spiritual retire from it. Perhaps some will reply, "We ought to exhibit religion to young people with a cheerful aspect." Certainly you ought; I wish you to appear ever happy in their presence, the very type of peace; carrying, in the sunshine of your countenance, the index of a mind at rest, and a proof that you are the children of light, walking in light; but this is different from froth, and merriment, and levity. The cheerfulness of a christian, should be joy and peace in believing; rejoicing in the Lord, a serious joy, a joyful seriousness. "Speak thou the words which become sound doctrine, that the aged

women be in behaviour as becometh holiness, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

Let all, then, whether male or female, solemnly inquire, whether they have ever yet sufficiently estimated the importance of the subject of this address. Let them recollect what their own expectations and ideas of older christians were, when they entered the church, and what surprise and disappointment they experienced. Let them consider in what light it may be supposed they now appear to those younger believers who have lately become acquainted with them, and ask themselves if no surprise has been felt at seeing them no more distinguished for spiritual attainments. Let them look round and see if some are not violating consistency, and pleading their example. Let them especially remember, how responsible is their situation, and how fearful a thing it is to be the means of lowering in young believers their ideas of the solemnity and spirituality of the christian profession, and of spreading lukewarmness through the christian church.

Young believers, I would conclude with a few hints to you. Do not expect to find the church of Christ composed of spotless characters. Do not allow yourselves to be staggered almost to halting, by the imperfections you observe in older professors. You will see, in the interior of the church, some things that will perplex you. Still, however, remember that if there be more sin among professors than you expected, there is also more holiness than you see or know. Multitudes of eminent christians are unknown to you, and it is per-

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haps the most inconsistent ones that you happen to know best. Guard against a censorious, suspicious, and arraigning temper. Cultivate the spirit of charity, so beautifully described in 1 Cor. xiii; and be as candid towards the imperfections of others, as a regard to the claims of truth and holiness will allow: and no more. Especially remember to guard against the insidious influence of the defects and inconsistencies of older professors. Adopt as your standard the word of God. Take up your opinion of what religion is, by looking at that, not at the conduct of senior christians, or any christians. He that would form a correct idea of the glory of the sun, must see the luminary as he shines from a cloudless sky, and not as he is reflected, in a distorted form, from the troubled surface of the turbid lake.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

VERY little need be said to prove to you that the duty and privilege of prayer appertain to a believer in Christ, and occupy a high place among the obligations and delights of the child of God. The whole Bible teaches us the importance, necessity, and blessedness, of this devout exercise of the soul. The Old Testament, as well as the New, proves that the spirit of true godliness is a spirit of supplication; and the Psalms of David will ever remain a manual of devotion for the believer, in which he will often find some of the fittest words to pour out the breathings of his heart to God. What I design in this address then is not so much to state the obligations to prayer, as to enforce the cultivation of the spirit of prayer.

In almost all occupations, acts, and habits recurring at regularly returning periods in which a man can be engaged, there are both spirit and form; in other words, the visible action and the animating spirit embodied in that action; hence we speak of the spirit of patriotism, of commerce, of enterprise, of religion, of prayer; by which we mean a something beside the action, and of which the action is but the expression. The idea is taken from the compound nature of man, wherein, besides the outward and visible form, there is the inward and invisible soul, by which the former lives, moves, and acts. Now as there may be the form of man without the spirit of man, so there may be the form of any particular virtue or exercise, without the living animating spirit. The apostle speaks of some who have the "form of godliness, but deny the power [that is, the spirit] thereof." And what is said of godliness as a whole may be said of that particular part of it which I am now considering.

I shall therefore state what I mean by "the spirit of prayer," and then enjoin its cultivation.

For the possession of this spirit it is necessary we should have a large measure of those elements of which all true prayer is composed. There must be a deep, abiding, and impressive sense of want; for prayer is the language of felt necessity. Our sense of guilt, depravity, ignorance, weakness, folly, danger, must be lively, penetrating, and humbling. Without this sense of want, praying is only words, and heartless form, mere hypocritical pretence, a mimicry of devotion: while on the other hand, the more we have of this, the more we have of the spirit of prayer. Is this then our view of our state? Do we carry about with us continually an

affecting consciousness of our numerous and pressing wants? Have we a sense of destitution, always humbling, often afflictive and oppressive? Do we “groan, being burdened,” under a sense of our guilt and weakness? The feeling of fulness and sufficiency, whether of strength or anything else, is the very opposite of the spirit of prayer. The church of Laodicea, which said “they were rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing,” could have had none of the elements of prayer. Poverty of spirit is essential to this.

But connected with this, and arising out of it, there must be a conscious dependence upon God: a habit of regarding him, and looking to him as the source of supply: a feeling similar to what the Psalmist experienced, when he said, “All my springs are in thee.” “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.” “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” “With thee is the fountain of life.” A prevailing habit of dependence upon God, a consciousness that he is our only and all-sufficient resource, is the very spirit of prayer.

To this must be added the exercise of faith and confidence in God, through Christ. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.” Without faith there can be no acceptable worship. “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering,” said the apostle; “for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” We must believe in God’s character as a God of love, delighting to dispense happiness to his creatures; as a God of wisdom and power,

able and willing to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. We must believe that prayer is his own appointed method of approaching him, and that which is agreeable to him, welcome to him, and well pleasing in his eyes; that we can never please him better than when we go with enlarged desires after spiritual blessings to his throne; nor do him greater honour than when we expect large communications of his grace. We must believe in Christ as the only way to the Father, and believe that by this way, and this only, he is ever accessible. Such a faith is a necessary and important element in the spirit of prayer. The stronger and more prevailing it is, the more fervent and delightful will be our supplications at the throne of the Heavenly Majesty. By such views of God and Christ, we shall be irresistibly drawn to the footstool of divine mercy. Our lukewarmness will kindle into holy warmth under such persuasions of the inexhaustible bounty of God, and we shall feel the sweet attractions of his love, dissipating our fears, removing our reluctance, and engaging our confidence. The spirit of adoption, as a fruit of this faith, is also an element of the spirit of prayer. We are to come with boldness to the throne of grace; that is, we are to come in the spirit of a child conscious that he is ever welcome to his Father in heaven. This is beautifully described by the apostle, where he says, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." None can pray acceptably to God, or comfortably to themselves, but in this spirit. Prayer is not the language of fear and dread, but of love and confidence. It is not a groaning extorted by the pressure of mere misery, like the howling of wild beasts, to which indeed

the Lord likens the petitions of wicked men in their sorrows, where he says "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds," but it is the breathing forth of our wants with an affectionate confidence in Him who alone can supply them. The more clearly we realize the character of God as our reconciled Father in Christ, and our relation to him as his children, the more we possess of the element of the spirit of prayer.

An habitual and trustful anticipation of receiving from God, all that he has promised in his word, authorized us to ask, and encouraged us to expect, is another thing essential to this spirit. If God had given us no promises of blessings, no warrant to ask for them, no reason to expect them, prayer, if presented at all, could be offered at best but in painful uncertainty, in gloomy despondency, or in feeble and fluctuating hope. There might by possibility be prayer, but there could not be the spirit of it, which certainly implies a cheerful expectation of being heard, answered, and blessed.

In the absence of these things, however we may abound in the exercises and the forms of devotion, there can be no prayer. They constitute the very soul of all piety towards God, and without them the best composed formularies and the most evangelical sentiments, are but as the statue or the corpse, without the animating mind. They are necessary to all acceptable petitions to God; and the more they are cultivated, the more we shall feel disposed and enabled to pray: they, if cherished in the heart, will make every place an oratory, and produce not merely an occasional, but an abiding intercourse with God.

But another thing intended by the spirit of prayer, is

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a scriptural, intelligent, and deep conviction of the necessity, utility, and value of this exercise; a state of mind the very opposite of that expressed by some of old, who said, "What profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" The design and utility of prayer are altogether set aside, or attempted to be set aside, by worldly and wicked men, and that by various modes of false reasoning: and even lukewarm christians are occasionally entangled in the sophisms and fallacies of such infidel objections. But a man in whom lives the spirit of prayer is little troubled with such cavils and difficulties. He not only bows to the authority of God who has enjoined the exercise, but he sees too clearly the evidences of its utility, and has tasted too sweetly its rich advantages, to stand in any doubt about the matter. He has proved its direct tendency to improve his character, to lighten his cares, to alleviate his sorrows, to subdue his corruptions, and to obtain the blessings which he needed; and therefore by the results of his experience, as well as by the testimony of scripture and the consent of the church of God, he has learned to think highly of prayer. It is in him a rooted conviction that it is not a vain thing thus to serve the Lord. He has learned to consider prayer as the very soul of godliness, and the life of religion; and forms his estimate of the degree of piety collectively or individually possessed by others, by the degree of prayer to which they have attained. With him a man of piety, means a man of prayer; and an eminent christian is one, in whom is an eminent measure of the gift and grace of prayer.

The spirit of prayer means a love to the exercise, and an habitual delight in it. It is that state of mind, or at least resembles it, which in secular matters we call

having a taste for anything, which, in addition to the performance of the thing, implies a delight in the performing of it; which, though it may refer to a matter of duty, converts the doing of it into a privilege, and takes off the idea of compulsion, and hardship, and penance. Prayer is the delight of him in whom dwells the spirit of it. The closet is his beloved retreat, to which he is drawn by an attraction, like that which allures us to the society of a beloved and valued friend in his own home when he is alone. He does not go there to perform a penance, quiet his conscience, and get rid of a task which must be done, and the sooner it is done the better. No. He loves to go and disburden his mind, and express his wants, and breathe out his desires to God. He loves God, and his prayers are his communings with God. It is no other than God, supremely good and glorious, and his God by covenant and engagement, that his soul elevates herself to in prayer; elevates not only her intellect but her conscience, her affections, her sympathies, her whole immortal and ethereal self; not to speculate, but to adore, to commune with, to breathe out her love, and desires, and longings into the very bosom and heart of the High and Holy One. It is to God, through Christ, and by the Spirit's help, that he speaks, and opens his lips in ingenuous confession, grateful thanksgiving, adoring praise, and strong supplication; and there also, while prostrate before the flowing fountain of life, he expands his heart to receive the vital streams of light and love, as they gush from their crystal and perennial source. Now this is joy, and peace, and sacred delight. True it is, that it is not always so. There are seasons when, through the chilling influence of the world, the power

of unbelief, the urgency of care, or the pressure of anxiety, the saint too much neglects his duty and slights his privilege; but still, just in proportion as the spirit of prayer is possessed by any one, is there a love of prayer; and this love is the spirit of it.

Where this state of mind exists in a high degree, there is, in addition to the habit of prayer at stated seasons, a prevailing disposition to blend the exercise of it with all the occurrences of life, and to permeate and season the whole of our character and conduct with its blessed and sanctifying influence. The man in whom it dwells, gives himself to prayer; surrenders up his mind, and heart, and conscience, and life, to its guiding and controlling power. In one sense he literally “prays always,” and “continues instant in prayer.” The morning, and evening, and mid-day visits to the throne of grace, do not satisfy him; nor even “the seven times a day “calling upon God. His heart, like a round ball which needs but the gentlest impulse to set it in motion, requires only the slightest incident to give it a direction towards God in the act of prayer. Is he going into any new situation of trial and of danger? he runs by prayer to God as his shield and buckler. Does he foresee the coming storm of affliction? he places himself by prayer in the refuge provided. Has some premonition of approaching prosperity been granted him? he anticipates its ensnaring influence by fervent supplication. He thus watches unto prayer, looking around him, and before him, for the circumstances which render it necessary and important. And in addition to this also, he lives in the practice and in the confirmed habit of ejaculatory prayer. He seems never to trust himself far from the throne of grace; and by walking with God, realizes

his presence every where. In his house, as he silently surveys his mercies or his trials, he often sends up a short petition for a sanctified use of both; and when seated amidst his children, secretly expresses the desire, "Oh, that Ishmael may live before thee!" As he walks along the streets and hears the blasphemies of the profane, and sees the wickedness of the wicked, he darts a petition to heaven for the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon the people. While his form moves through the crowd, with no visible or audible sign of devotion, he is walking with God and conversing with heaven. In his transactions with men, he still maintains this intercourse with God. Is he provoked, till he begins to feel his spirit growing hot within him? He suddenly controls his rising anger by the power of prayer. Is he injured? He prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Does a sudden temptation assail his integrity, chastity, or mercy? He sighs forth a supplication for grace to resist it. See him in his attendance upon the means of grace: it is not enough that he prayed for his minister and for himself in his closet before he left the house, but on the way to the sanctuary his thoughts go up in prayer to heaven for the blessing which his soul needs. He prays while hearing the sermon, and instead of dissipating by frivolous conversation the impressions it has made on his mind, he seals them upon his heart by silent prayer on his way home. In company he is sometimes in a world of his own, and unheard and unseen is wrestling with God for some person present who needs his intercession, or in reference to some circumstance which the conversation has brought before him. In his silent and solitary walks amidst the scenes of nature he com-

munes with nature's God. When the dispensations of Providence are mentioned in his hearing, whether they refer to the nation at large, or to individuals, or families, he finds a subject of prayer suggested which gives him an errand to God.

In this way the spirit of prayer diffuses itself throughout the whole character and conduct of him in whom it flourishes. It can no more be confined to times, and places, and particular occasions, than the spirit of patriotism, or of philosophy, or of commerce, can be shut up to periodical exercises, and expressions in some special places. No: when the spirit of any occupation or pursuit is in a man, it will be like a part of himself, and will follow him every where, and into every thing. And this applies as truly to prayer as to any thing else.

You mistake, then, if your only idea of prayer be that of an exercise to be performed night and morning, either in pre-composed forms, or in extemporaneous expressions, of a given length, a certain vehemence, or a due solemnity, which being done all is done that is required. Prayer is something more than this: it is the sense of want and of dependence upon God constantly cherished in the soul, and habitually leading to the expression of our desires to him in accordance with his own method of relieving our necessities. Stated times there must and will be for this exercise in the ordinary circumstances of life, and they should be regularly, solemnly, and spiritually observed; but they constitute a very small part of the life of prayer.

The spirit of prayer includes not only sincerity, constant habit, and perpetual preparedness of mind, but also importunity and fervour. It is not merely correct lan-

guage, and evangelical sentiments, and solemn tones, and reverential postures, but strong desires, ardent aspirations, and importunate entreaties. It is "the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man that availeth much." What specimens of this we have in the Psalms of David! Those inspired models of prayer are not mere words, but desires issuing from the inmost recesses of his soul; groanings of his heart, struggles of his agonizing spirit, uttered in impassioned and appropriate language. And what believer has not passed through seasons in which no words of his own sufficiently expressed his intense feelings, and he was dumb until he had recourse to those cries of "the man after God's own heart," as the best outlets of the deep sorrows and ardent wishes of his own labouring soul? By importunity I do not mean loud and clamorous language, much less rude and unhallowed familiarity, or demand and dictation, but the beseeching spirit and imploring heart, which, in many cases, is the "groaning that cannot be uttered," and the faith that takes hold of God's strength. How often, after we have listened to some more than ordinarily importunate supplication, have we felt and said, "That was the very spirit of prayer!" Yea, each of us has had it may be such seasons in his own closet. It was not the flow of words merely, for perhaps he could find none sufficiently expressive and emphatic to convey the mighty wants and wishes that were burning in his heart for utterance: no, it was the struggles and wrestling of his labouring breast after some object of its intense desire, and in reference to which he felt almost prompted and authorized to say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

Such, my dear friends, is what I mean by the

spirit of prayer. Some of you know it by blessed experience far better than I can describe it; but others, I am afraid, know too little about it, and are ready perhaps to consider and to call it mere enthusiasm, or the raptures of a mystic piety. You know better, at least most of you; and happy shall I be if my description of it shall stir you up to cultivate this devotional frame of mind. There is far too little of it in the present day. This fine ethereal temper is but too apt to be lost amidst the bustle and ardour of our stirring age. Blessed be God it is a stirring age; nor would I paralyze an energy, or suppress an effort that is employed for the world's conversion. I would not call home the labourer from the great field of christian zeal, to shut him up in the closet or the cloister of personal devotion; but I would entreat him to make the closet his dwelling place, to which he shall nightly retire to cultivate the spirit of prayer, and from which, with a vigorous and healthy piety, he shall go forth in the morning to his holy industry. I want the church to be fitted for her great calling and commission in the conversion of the world, by an appropriate frame and disposition. Eminent piety is essential to eminent usefulness. It is only in the spirit of faith and prayer, that the church can hope to convert the world.

Let every one enter into this vital subject, for such it is. Your spiritual health must be estimated by the measure in which you estimate the love and practice of prayer. It is soul prosperity, carried out, as it will be, where it really exists, into all the various details of christian holiness. The spirit of prayer is the great antagonist of sin. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," said the Psalmist, "the Lord will not hear me."

Nothing opposes such a resistance and counteraction to the corruptions of our nature as this frame of mind. The fire of devotion will be in us, if it exist at all, as a purifying fire. And what a source of comfort would this indwelling spirit of devotion prove to us! It would give us an abiding sense of the nearness of God, and keep us ever walking on the verge of heaven. We could thus converse with God wherever we go. As soon as we retired into ourselves with a design to breathe out our desires to him, we should find him with us. As soon as we think, so soon are we with God. In the twinkling of an eye we find him. We look to him and are lightened, and the soul finds itself replenished with a divine and vital light that diffuses the sweetest and most pleasant influences through it. How would it soften our cares, lighten our sorrows, and facilitate our duties, if this habitual reference to God pervaded our whole life! How would it smooth our rugged course across this desert earth, thus to draw down upon it the light and the help of heaven!

Dear friends, know your privilege, and cultivate the spirit of prayer: if this be low all is low in the soul; while if this be vigorous all is vigorous.

“Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw;
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love;
Brings every blessing from above.
Kestraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the christian’s armour bright,
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

In the cultivation of the spirit of prayer, it is of great consequence that we recollect that our dependence for the right performance of this, as well as of every other branch of christian duty, is on the aid of the Holy

Ghost. The Divine Spirit is our prompter and helper in prayer, as well as the efficient agent in all the other parts of true holiness. "Likewise," says the apostle, "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." In all these passages very explicit reference is made to the work of the Spirit in prayer. Not however that we are to neglect prayer, any more than we are to neglect any other part of our duty, till we feel a conscious impulse of the Spirit moving us to it; but we are to go continually to the exercise in a state of desire after, and dependence upon, this divine helper of our infirmities. We are not to wait for the Spirit, but to work and pray in the Spirit. It is the Spirit that gives us a just and impressive view of our wants, that produces in fact all the elements of prayer; that stirs up the slumbering graces of the soul; that gives clear and encouraging views of God as the hearer and answerer of prayer; that assists the believer to understand the word of God, and to take satisfactory views of the atonement and intercession of Christ. Consider, then, your need of the Spirit; pray for the Spirit; expect the Spirit; lean upon the Spirit. The spirit of prayer in man, is the production of the Spirit of God. You need a double intercessor in prayer, so great is this act and exercise; an Intercessor for you in heaven, which

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is Christ; and an Intercessor in you upon earth, which is the Holy Spirit: and you have, or may have, both.

Whatever you do in the way of active duty; whatever you give in the way of liberality; whatever you endure in the way of suffering; do not be satisfied with your state; do not conclude that "it is well" with you as a christian, without much of that frame of mind which it is the object of this address to explain and recommend.

ON PRIVATE PRAYER.

"APOSTACY from God begins at the closet door." So said the excellent Matthew Henry; and the experience of multitudes has proved the truth of the remark. A prayerless profession of religion will soon be thrown aside as an encumbrance. To guard you against this fearful state, and to lead you on to higher degrees of a devotional enjoyment, is my present design. The subject of the present admonition is that kind of supplication which we denominate private prayer, because it is performed by each individual in retirement. This species of devotion is inseparable from a state of grace: it is one of the first, one of the plainest and strongest symptoms of spiritual life. A christian sustains a personal relation to God, has personal wants, sins, and obligations, and feels it therefore both his duty and his privilege to go and speak to God alone. To this he is enjoined by the highest authority: "But thou, when thou prayest," said Christ, "enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee

openly.” The word “closet,” in the original, signifies chamber, warehouse, or even cellar; in short, any secret place: and some suppose our Lord designedly employed a word of such latitude, that none might omit prayer under a pretence that they had not a proper place to which to retire. Place is nothing, disposition is everything. “I will,” said the apostle, “that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands.” Blessed privilege! There is no place in which it is suitable for a christian to be found, in which it is unsuitable for him to pray.

Nothing is said in the Scriptures either as to the time, the frequency, or the length of our prayers. Nature seems to point out as suitable, the morning, when we are going forth to meet the duties and dangers, trials and difficulties of the world; and the evening, when we have to review the conduct of the day, and need protection for the night. And how beneficial have many found five or ten minutes at noon given to this sacred exercise. A solemn, though it be a short pause at mid-day, to send up a look to God, a cry to heaven, would prove a sweet refreshment, and a powerful protection. No general rule can be laid down as to the length of our private devotions. This, like many other of our duties under the christian dispensation, is entrusted to our sense of duty, and to our feelings of love and gratitude. It depends in measure on the nature and number of other duties, the peculiarity of our situation, the specific objects for which we pray, the engagedness of our attention, and the intensity of our feelings. Colonel Gardiner, whose engagements were such that he could often command only one season of retirement in a day, used to spend two hours in devotion before he went

out in a morning; to command which, he always rose early; and if it were necessary, as was sometimes the case when his regiment was on a march, for him to leave home before the time allotted to his closet, he would rise at an early hour to secure his usual term of communion with God. Luther thought three hours a day little enough to spend in prayer. Few christians can imitate these men. Perhaps there are few who, if they had much of the spirit of prayer, could not and would not command half an hour once a day; and most, by a proper economy of time, and an abridgment of unnecessary slumber, could secure double this portion. There is little danger, in these days of feeble devotion, engrossing secularity, and active zeal, of spending too much time in the closet; the danger lies on the other side. Every thing connected with religion, except public meetings, (which often have very little of religion in them,) must now be short; short sermons, short prayers, short meditations, short devotion, short books, short religion!

It does not much matter what part of the day is devoted to prayer. Most persons find it convenient to give the morning, before the business of the world commences, and the evening, after it is finished; but some, for instance servants and labouring men, and the mothers of young families, cannot so exactly and independently command and arrange their time, and they must get what they can, and select the time most convenient in their peculiar circumstances. Deeply do I feel for these classes, and most anxious am I, lest, in the urgency of their pursuits, the constant recurrence of their duties, and the wearisome nature of their labours, they should lose the spirit and love of prayer, by being

deprived of much of the opportunity for its periodical and regular performance; and sink into a state of lukewarmness and neglect. Endeavour to keep up habitual devotion in your souls; and as intervals of leisure can be found through the day, steal away to your chamber at any hour to commune with God in secret. "Watch unto prayer," by looking after those opportunities which you may be able to embrace without neglecting other incumbent duties.

Perhaps a few directions for the right performance of this exercise, may be of importance. Do not be satisfied with mere formality. Forget not that you have to do with One who searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men. How indignantly did God complain of the Jews when he said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Nothing is more insulting to God, or more injurious to ourselves, than cold, heartless, formal prayers. Our devotions do us either great good or harm. Insincere and spiritless prayers are a most profane trifling with religion; they are like offering for sacrifices animals which have died of themselves. They are not only unacceptable to God, but harden the hearts of those by whom they are presented. Some persons are made worse by their very devotions. Nothing tends more to abate our reverence for God, or our fear of offending him, than a careless method of addressing him. The servant that can habitually speak to his master in a disrespectful manner, acquires a familiarity, which saps the very principle of obedience. Be solemn, then, and devout in all your addresses to God, for he is a jealous God.

Let your prayers be strictly private. "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door; pray to thy Father which is in secret." There should not be a single human being with you; the presence even of a child, capable of noticing what is going on, should be felt as an hindrance, a restraint, and an embarrassment. You must be alone with God. If prayer were a mere form, this entire privacy would not be necessary; but it is a spiritual exercise; it is the breathing out of the heart to God; it is the mind disburdening herself to God; it is the soul in the confessional with God, where there are sins to be acknowledged, sorrows to be uttered, petitions to be presented, and thanksgivings to be offered, which no ear but his must hear, or ought to hear. It is true, there may be cases in which this absolute privacy, at least for a constancy, is difficult, if not impossible; and in this case, a very rare one, I admit it is better to pray before others, than not at all. But who cannot be sometimes alone? Even where two or more sleep in the same room, that same room is not always engaged, and may be occupied some part of the day by the lover of prayer. Those who content themselves with merely dropping upon their knees before others, and repeating a few words on retiring to rest, or rising in the morning, but who never seek to be alone; who have no desire for devotion strictly secret; who have nothing to say to God, which he alone must listen to, and feel no impulse to speak to him when no one is by, know nothing of prayer: they may maintain the form, but they know nothing of the power, of godliness. The saints of Scripture are represented as going to pray apart. Isaac went by himself to the fields to meditate, and doubtless to pray. Jacob wrestled alone with the Angel at Peniel.

Moses worshipped alone at the burning bush. David's Psalms were most of them prayers uttered in absolute retirement. Daniel prayed in his chamber alone. Nathaniel lifted up his heart under the fig-tree. Peter went up to the housetop to pray. Yea, our Divine Lord went often by himself into a mountain to pray.

Our prayers ought to be specific, varied, and definite. "We should not go to the throne of the heavenly Majesty without an errand and an object. Many people go away into their closets because they must say their prayers. The time has come when they are in the habit of going by themselves for prayer in the morning, at noon, or whatever time of the day it may be: and instead of having any thing to say, any definite object before the mind, they fall down on their knees, and pray for just what comes in their minds, for every thing that floats in their imaginations at the time; and when they have done, they could hardly tell a word of what they had been praying for. This is not effectual prayer. What should we think of any body who should try to move a legislature so, and should say, 'Now it is winter, and the parliament is sitting, and it is time to send up petitions;' and should go up to the legislature and petition at random, without any definite object? Do you think such petitions would move the legislature?" Many people's prayers are nothing else than this going into their room, and saying just what comes into their heads at the time, and hence, their prayers are mere incoherent words, or ramblings of thought, which have scarcely the character of prayer about them; and which if they were penned down, and shown to them afterwards, would cause them to blush that they had ever thus addressed the great and holy God. To guard

against this, it would be well to have a list of subjects of prayer, either in the mind, or drawn up on paper, and one appropriated to each day. The orderly returns of days and nights invite us to this: there seem to be subjects which belong to particular seasons. Saturday evening calls us to confession of sin, and thanksgiving for mercies; Sabbath morning, to prayer for ministerial holiness, and success in preaching the word; Monday morning, to ask for help in duty, and grace to adorn our profession in all the various obligations of social and civil life. Thus each day may have its appropriated subject of prayer and object of specific errand to the throne of God. One day may be specially appointed for thanksgiving, another for adoration, another for petition. One may be set apart for our relatives; another for those who desire an interest in our supplications. All the great christian institutions of the age, our own religious connexions, the universal church, our country, may all, and should all, be introduced, not for mere form's sake, or cursorily and as by accident, but specifically, successively, with a deep interest in their welfare, and a devout recollection that God alone can bless them.

There are many advantages in this. Such a method would lead us actually to pray, whereas a great deal of what goes by that name does not deserve to be so called; it would keep our thoughts from wandering, a subject of incessant complaint with most christians; it would render the exercise more interesting, by giving us an object, and keeping up variety; and it would engage our hearts in a more solemn and sacred manner in the various matters which are thus successively carried by us to the footstool of Heaven. This plan of select

subjects for prayer has been tried by many persons, with vast advantage to the devotional state of their souls. It is not necessary the list of subjects should be fixed and invariable, but be sometimes changed; yet still ever presenting something definite to the mind in her approaches to God. Some new object will ever be supplying itself to the christian in the course of his reading, observation, or experience, which, while it properly becomes the subject of a momentary ejaculation to God at the time, may be treasured up in his mind, for more specific and lengthened supplication at a convenient season.

But if you should not deem it best, or necessary, to keep a list of subjects, and to appropriate them to particular days, still in every approach to God in prayer, let there be a solemn pause, while the inquiry is asked, "What should I now make the subject of my petition at the throne of grace?" The mind would then have some object on which to concentrate its thoughts and feelings. There is a danger, lest a frequency and constant recurrence of the seasons of devotion, should abate in our minds that seriousness and deliberation with which we ought ever to call upon the Lord; and thus the whole business of prayer would sink into a mere form.

Connect with private prayer, the perusal of the word of God, meditation, self-examination, and where there is time for it, the reading of devotional uninspired books, especially religious biography; but as many christians have but limited opportunity for reading, and no book should be allowed to supplant the Bible, it is best for them to allot the few minutes that can be spared for this exercise to the word of God. Read this,

not promiscuously, but in regular course. Do not waste your time in inquiring what portion you should read, "much less adopt the heathenish practice of dipping into the Bible as a lottery book, to try your luck in finding suitable passages."

It is obvious that if a christian would keep up the exercises of the closet with edification and enjoyment, he must make a solemn business of it. The whole matter must be felt to be one of conscience, and of vast importance. He must find time for it, and if his heart be right with God, he will. He will watch unto prayer. It will be matter of contrivance with him to guard against whatever would prevent or shorten these exercises: it will be a grief to him to be interrupted; and in order to have time at command for the duty, he will rise early for this purpose. Perhaps there is not a more common or successful hindrance to private prayer, than late rising from bed. How many, I repeat, slumber away in bed that time which should be spent in supplication to God. Tell me not you have no time to pray, if you have made up your mind to lie sleeping till eight o'clock in the morning. If you cannot sacrifice half an hour's ease to commune with God, to attend to your soul's concerns, to prepare by devotion for the trials and duties of the day, what is your religion worth? How can you be in earnest? How can you expect your soul to prosper?

But there is another direction I would give, and that is, in addition to the usual and regular seasons of prayer, set apart occasional and extraordinary ones, and then, with more than ordinary solemnity and length, enter into the concerns of your soul. Such seasons devoutly observed have wonderful power to check the growth

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of worldly-mindedness, to rouse the flagging spirit of devotion, to increase spirituality, subdue irregularities, and to cast out every unclean spirit from the mind. They invigorate every christian purpose, move the deep fountains of spiritual feeling, launch our spirits on the ocean of eternity, and lead us to commune with its transforming realities. Martin Luther devoted one day every week in this way, and far from finding it tedious, he hailed it as the best of the six. I do not say that many can imitate him in the extent of his practice, but all may in the principle of it. Set apart such seasons as your birth-day, your new birth-day, if it can be ascertained, the last day of the year, or the anniversary of some signal deliverance, or an occasional sabbath evening after the Lord's Supper, as a season of special prayer.

I will now correct a few mistakes into which some have fallen on the subject of private prayer.

The closet ought not to be considered, as it is by many, exclusively devoted to our own personal religion. Private prayer is not to be made selfish prayer. Our own wants, woes, sins, and duties are one object, and indeed the primary one, but not the only one. We should be happier and holier than we are, if we had more love to others, more feeling for the church and the world, and less of individual feeling.

Christians oftentimes do not pray in faith: and yet this is prescribed, and prescribed too, as the condition of success. To pray in faith means a firm persuasion that, through the mediation of Christ, we are authorized to pray; that our prayers are really heard; and that in spiritual blessings we shall have the very things we ask; and in temporal ones those or better. Many persons

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do not care about success through carelessness; others do not expect it through despondency: but faith, after looking up for the blessing, actually looks out for it.

Effectual prayer is not mere clamorous importunity, but believing expectation. We must not knock at the door of mercy and then walk away in despair, but wait in hope.

We must, not allow family prayer to supersede that which is private and personal; any more than we should allow public worship to supersede the sacrifice at the family altar. It is an ill sign for any one that he feels a disposition to make attention to one duty an excuse for neglecting another.

Many think they ought not to pray except they are in a good frame, and feel a strong impulse to the exercise. Our feelings cannot be the standard of our duty. If we adopt the rule of never praying except when we feel strongly inclined to it, Satan and a deceitful heart will allow us but few opportunities. We may as well neglect public, social, or domestic worship, because we are not in a good frame, or do not feel the Spirit moving us, as omit private prayer; nay, we may, for the same reason, as well give up reading the Scriptures, and every duty we owe to God or man, till we are inclined to them. The very want of disposition is a sin which we should go and confess to God, and beg for his grace to warm our cold hearts. The spirit of prayer comes to us in the act of prayer, and not in the neglect of it. I have read of a christian female who was induced to act on this unscriptural rule of praying only when the Spirit moved her to it; and she became the prey and sport of temptation, and was

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for a long time in a state of the most distressing gloom and doubts of her piety.

Some, I am afraid, are putting the regular performance of private prayer in the place of other duties, and making it a substitute for other and more self-denying parts of religion. There are not a few who as regularly go into their closet to pray as the time comes round, and who would not be happy to neglect a single opportunity, but whose predominant love of the world, covetousness, bad temper, or other inconsistencies of conduct, plainly indicate a sad want of true faith.

Do you need motives to induce a more earnest attention to the exercise? How many are at hand!

It is not only your incumbent duty, but the test of the sincerity of your profession. If you do not practise and love the exercises of the closet, and make provision for attending to them, you cannot be a christian. There never yet was a child of God who did not love to be alone with his Father, and pray to him in secret.

What an honour is it to be admitted to a private audience with God; to be closeted with the King of Kings! A subject feels it to be a distinction to be introduced at court on a levee day, though at such a time, and amidst the multitude, he can expect no special attention; but how much richer is the privilege to have an interview and conference with the monarch alone, and there present his petitions, when he has the royal ear to himself!

What a rich reward does the duty yield when rightly performed! How precious is the privilege! To have all restraint removed, and feel that we are at freedom to

pour out the utmost secrets of our hearts, whether of sin, sorrow, or anxiety. You must know this by experience, and how often you have relieved your burdened spirit of its load in that retreat, where neither eye nor ear of man could follow you. Read the biographies of eminent christians, and there learn the value and the sweetness of private prayer. "I would not," says a lady in her diary, "be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds. I never enjoy such hours of pleasure, and such free and entire communion with God, as I have here; and I wonder that any can live prayerless, and deprive themselves of the greatest privilege allowed them." "In prayer," says Henry Martyn, "I had a most precious view of Christ, as a friend that sticketh closer than a brother! I hardly know how to contemplate with praise enough his adorable excellences. Who can show forth all his praise? I can conceive it to be a theme long enough for eternity. I want no other happiness, no other sort of heaven." Brainerd in his journal records: "I spent an hour in prayer with great intenseness and freedom,- and with the most soft and tender affection towards mankind. Oh! it is an emblem of heaven to love all the world, with a love of kindness, forgiveness, and benevolence. My soul was sweetly resigned to God's disposal of me. I confided in him that he would never leave me, though I should walk through the valley of the shadow of death." How often did Dr. Payson write in his journal: "Had a sweet season of prayer this morning, and felt fervent love to my Saviour, and desires that he might be glorified." But why should I multiply examples, or refer you to others? If you are christians as well as professors, your own experience, I repeat, confirms the privilege of prayer.

Some of your happiest, holiest seasons on earth have been spent in your closets. There you have communed with God; there your cares have been lightened, your sorrows alleviated, your fears dissipated, and your souls invigorated. There you have conquered the world, subdued your foes, mortified your corruptions.

Think what an influence secret prayer has upon your whole spirit, and temper, and conduct. "God's morning smiles bless all the day." Account for it as you may, I believe the fact is unquestionable, that private prayer so regulates and tranquillizes the mind, gives it such a balance, self-possession, and reliance on Divine aid, that it happily fits a person for the performance of his most common duties, and enables him to accomplish more, and do it better, than he otherwise could. "What but prayer gave Nehemiah such firmness in building the walls of Jerusalem amid insults and opposition? What else enabled Daniel to brave the lions' den? Sir Matthew Hale, that upright judge, in his letters to his children, says, "If I omit praying and reading a portion of God's blessed word in the morning, nothing goes well with me all the day." Boerhaave, the celebrated Dutch physician, said, that "his daily practice of retiring for an hour in the morning, and spending it in devotion and meditation, gave him firmness and vigour for the whole day." Dr. Doddridge used frequently to observe, "that he never advanced well in human learning without prayer; and that he always made the most proficiency in his studies when he prayed with the greatest fervency."

What examples, then, recommend this practice. But what are these to the example of Christ? He also was not only a man of sorrow, but a man of prayer.

“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witness’d the fervour of his prayer.”

And can you have the mind of Christ, and be partakers of his spirit, if there be no love to prayer?

Permit me, then, in conclusion, to ask you: Are you in the habit and love of private prayer? Have you stated and regular times for this duty, and do you keep them? Are you suffering the cares of a family, the engagements of business, or the pursuits of labour, to interfere with this exercise? Have you special seasons for prayer? Do you enjoy the devotions of the closet? Have you the spirit of prayer? Have you ceased to pray? If so, why? Is it through the indulgence of sin, the pleasures of the world, or some mistaken view of duty? Oh, do examine. The soul that is neglecting private prayer, is in an awful state of backsliding from God. Are you in such a state happy? Are you ready for death, meet for heaven? Can you be willing to have it recorded against you in the book of God’s remembrance, “This is the man that once knelt to me in his closet; asked for pardoning mercy; and sued for an interest in his Saviour’s love; but afterwards shut his closet door, no more to open it; broke his most solemn vows; committed again the sins for the pardon of which he prayed, and turned away from the Saviour.” Oh, my dear friends, return, return speedily to prayer!

SELF-EXAMINATION.

SELF-EXAMINATION is a duty enjoined upon us both by reason and Scripture. Observe with what vehemence the apostle enforces it: “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye

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not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates? This, recollect, was addressed to professing christians, and is an exercise in which all trae believers have ever practised themselves. No one can be really in earnest about the salvation of his soul, who never looks with solicitude into his spiritual state.

There are two ends for which this duty is to be performed; to ascertain first, the sincerity and reality of our religion; and secondly, its condition: in other words, to inquire whether we are in the faith, and also in what degree we are bringing forth, or neglecting to bring forth, its fruits: analogous to what takes place in the conduct of the careful tradesman, who inspects his affairs to find out, in the first place whether he is solvent; and in the next what is the amount of his profits, and how by avoiding past errors, or making up discovered deficiencies, he can increase his prosperity. So a diligent, watchful, careful, professor, is anxious to know not only that he is a christian, but how his religion can be improved and increased. It is true, some are happily partakers of so large a measure of the well-founded assurance of faith and hopfe, as to have few doubts about their state: and indeed little cause for them. They have so much of the spirit of adoption, as constantly to enjoy the witness of the Spirit of God, that they are his children. It is not so however with all christians; and even those with whom it is, may occasionally examine with profit the state of their souls, if it be only to increase their confidence in the reasons of the hope that is in them.

How momentous is the question, "Am I really a child of God? What consequences hang upon the decision of such a matter! The very possibility of

self-deception here is truly horrifying. To wake up from the sleep of death in hell instead of heaven, and find that we have made a mistake which requires an eternity fully to understand, and an eternity adequately to deplore! Such a mistake is made, it is to be feared, by multitudes in every age. And when we consider the deceitfulness of our hearts, our proneness to self-love, and the easiness of making a profession in this tranquil age of the 'church, there is such imminent peril of a fatal error in our own case, as should send us all to our closets, our hearts, our Bible, and our God, to examine whether we "be in the faith." It is a matter which none should take for granted.

If we examine ourselves, it must be by some rule, and the only one of any authority in this case is the word of God. The Holy Scriptures are the only touchstone which God will acknowledge. They are the balances of the sanctuary; the legal standard in the assay office of heaven: all that will not stand this test must be thrown aside, as reprobate silver. To the law and the testimony then must be our appeal. Our faith must be tested by the gospel; our practice by the law; and our spirit and temper by the mind of Christ. He is the model, the pattern, the measure, by which all his followers are to be examined, for both law and gospel are embodied in him.

I will now lay down some rules, considerations, and cautions, with respect to this important business.

I. Do not examine yourselves only by your own notion of what a christian is and should be, and be satisfied if you come up to that; because that notion may itself be wrong. Many frame to themselves an exceedingly inaccurate idea of what is included in

religion; and yet if they possess this are quite contented. This is what the apostle calls, “comparing themselves with themselves,” and has led in innumerable cases to self-delusion and self-destruction. Before you are satisfied then with the conclusion that you answer to your own idea of a christian, take good care to examine by the Bible whether that idea itself be a scriptural one.

2. Do not examine yourselves merely by the creeds and catechisms, the formularies, rites, and ceremonies of any particular church; or by the sentiments, opinions, and criteria of any individual uninspired writer; or be satisfied if you imagine you come up to these standards. Such tests need themselves to be tried, for they are all fallible. The Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of christians. Uninspired works may be used with advantage as helps, but not as infallible standards.

3. Do not be satisfied with the good opinion of others upon your state. Some persons are too prone to get rid of their fears, and to take refuge in the favourable estimate formed of their piety by those who rank high in their view for judgment and experience. It is more safe, in some cases, to regard the sentiments of those who are prejudiced against us. Your friends cannot see your heart. Their kindness to you and affection for you may lead them to form the best opinion they can, and their love to you may make them blind to defects which are incompatible with sincere piety, or at any rate, with that which is eminent. Besides, their own religion may be so defective and inconsistent as to give easy credence, for their own sakes, to the reality of yours. Do not be flattered into self-deception.

4. Do not consider that all is right because you are

admitted to the Lord's Supper upon the examination of a minister or others, and conclude that your Christianity is sincere because your profession has been admitted to be credible. There is a path to the bottomless pit, leading from the sacramental table, trodden by thousands!

5. Beware of judging of yourselves, by partial and detached views of your conduct. To this we are extremely prone. Ever ready to depart from universal regard to the ways of God, we are disposed to rest on some one action, or set of actions, as an evidence that all is well with us, and flatter ourselves on this ground, that we are the servants of Jehovah. It is conceivable that many may be inclined, from taste, situation, interest, or other circumstances, to some one branch of christian duty, who are lamentably remiss in others, the obligation of which, though equally strong and plain, is unfelt and resisted by them. Self-examination must embrace the whole of the divine law, and the whole of our character.

6. Do not, in default of present evidence, go back to past experience, and coupling this with perverted views of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, conclude that you are christians, although there be no satisfactory existing proofs of your faith and godliness. When the conclusion is drawn from past instead of present evidence, and the awakened conscience is hushed again to slumber by the opiate of such a sentiment as, that once a child of God, a child of God for ever, the delusion is awful, and the consequences are likely to be dreadful and eternal.

7. Do not take up the business of self-examination in order to quiet a conscience feeling the burden of its guilt, and to free the soul from painful apprehensions

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of the wrath of God. If you have not known the gospel scheme of salvation by grace, and justification by faith; or having known it, have fallen into sin, and thus lost the peace and comfort of your mind; your duty, and the way to quietness and assurance, is not to set about looking into your heart, and back upon your past conduct, to find out evidences of a state of grace; or to seek the judgment of others, who in ignorance or in kindness, may endeavour to lull your solicitude, and flatter you into a good opinion of your state, by reminding you of former zeal, and telling you that God often in sovereignty withdraws from his people because they cannot bear uninterrupted comfort; but instead of this, to apply at once by faith to the blood of Christ that cleanses from all sin. You are to be directed to the cross, and to be required to believe the testimony that Christ will cast none out that come unto him. If this does not relieve you, God has provided no other ground of comfort, and you ought to beware of seeking any other, either from yourselves, or from your friends. Self-examination is never to be put in place of the exercise of faith; nor is it intended or calculated to give relief to the burdened sinner, or to restore the comfort of a trembling backslider.

8. Do not be satisfied with a conclusion that rests upon the lowest possible degrees of evidence in your favour. Our faith is susceptible of various degrees of strength, and its fruits may be brought forth in greater or less abundance. It is a fearful problem for any man to attempt to solve, to try with how little religion he may be a real christian, and go to heaven. Do not compose yourself to sleep with the idea, that though you are not so eminent as some others, and even

have many glaring defects and inconsistencies, you are right in the main. It may be so; for weak faith is sincere faith; and little grace, real grace: but how difficult it is for us to determine, when faith is so weak, and grace so feeble, that they exist at all! Christ hath said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." If, then, the test of discipleship be much fruit, it is unsafe to rest our conclusion upon a little.

9. Enter upon the work of examination with the double purpose of increasing both your joy and your holiness. Religious comfort, joy and peace in believing, is of immense consequence, not only to your happiness, but your safety. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Religious joy makes duty cheerful, trials light, temptations powerless, and worldly amusements insipid. It is of importance, therefore, to increase it; and the self-examination of real christians, by revealing the evidence of their sincere belief, produces this increase of the joy of faith. But where this end is not answered, and disclosures are made calculated to produce an opposite effect, holiness may be promoted; for it is never to be forgotten that improvement is one great end of self-scrutiny. He that examines the state of his heart and life, ought to do it with a view immediately to correct what is wrong, and to supply what is wanting.

10. No one should be satisfied with his own self-inspection, but, by earnest and believing prayer, should entreat of God to search him also, and to make known to him his real condition. That man knows not the deceitfulness of his heart, nor is he duly impressed with

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the danger and consequences of self-deception, who does not occasionally, with intense solicitude, present the prayer of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I cannot with sufficient earnestness press this subject upon your attention; I mean the deceitfulness of the heart, as a motive not only to self-examination, but also to the calling in of God's searching inspection of our hearts and conduct. Our ignorance of ourselves is so great, and so common, that the old heathen precept, "Know thyself," was supposed to be a revelation from Heaven. The folds of deceit in which sin often lies concealed, are so many, and so complicated, that no man who has the least regard to his purity of heart, or the safety of his soul, will cease to cry unto God, and to implore his most inquisitive scrutiny. There is no such impostor in the world as the human heart, none whose machinations are so cunning, whose devices are so numerous, and whose deceptions are so fatal.

Ask then afresh, and with deep solemnity at the present time, the momentous question, "Am I a sincere christian, or only a professor?" Set apart an additional hour, to inquire into this great subject. Oh, what are all other questions compared with this, but as the small dust of the balance? By all the value you bear for your soul, or your soul's salvation, I entreat you, in the most solemn manner, to take up this matter, and spread it before the Lord in prayer. Take the following questions as a test:

Have you a consciousness' that you really believe in Jesus Christ, and are depending upon him, and him alone, for salvation? 1 John v. 10.

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Do you bring forth the fruits of faith, which are the fruits of the Spirit, as set before us by the apostle? Gal. v. 6, 22–25. Acts xv. 9. 1 John ii. 15; v. 4.

Do you love God supremely, practically, habitually? 1 John v. 1–3.

Do you love the children of God, for God's sake? 1 John iii. 14.

Are you complying with the apostle's direction in 2 Peter i. 5–10? On what principles do you act, those of the world, or of the Bible? What is your predominant object, time or eternity, the world or salvation?

2 Cor. iv. 18. Do you deny yourself for Christ's sake, or are you seeking only self-gratification? Matt. xvi. 25, 26.

How do you employ your talents of property, intellect, influence? For God or self? Rom. xiv. 7–9. 1 Cor. vi. 20. Phil. i. 21.

How do you bear your afflictions? With submission or repining? Rom. v. 3.

But I will now suppose the great question settled, and that you have no serious reason to doubt that you are "in the faith;" still you have to examine into the degree and state of your religion; for it may be very defective where it is real. In what condition then are you at the present time? Are you growing in grace? Have you sought and obtained an increased effusion of Divine influence? Has the heavenly shower come down in its season? Have the dispensations of Providence, both in a way of judgment and mercy, been sanctified to you? Have you improved well your sabbaths? Where is the fruit of all the sermons you have heard? What are you the better for the religious culture you have enjoyed?

My dear friends, examine your conduct. Inquire how you have sustained your various relations, and have discharged your various duties. Masters and mistresses, have you been kind to your servants, just as to their wages, watchful over their souls? Servants, have you been honest, diligent, obedient, respectful, devoted? Fathers, have you kept up family religion with punctuality, seriousness, and affection, being careful of the spiritual welfare of your children? Children, have you been obedient, loving, dutiful? Tradesmen, have you been just, generous, true, faithful to your engagements, and considerate to your workpeople? Ye rich, have ye been liberal, humble, heavenly? Ye poor, have ye been contented, submissive, trustful? Ye aged, have ye been cheerful, weaned from the world, communicative to the young? Ye young, have ye been modest, active, useful? As professors, have you been careful to avoid little sins, to maintain a tender and enlightened conscience, a brotherly feeling, and a spirit of charity.

Think not however, that self-examination is only an occasional duty. It should precede every approach to the Lord's table: "Let a man examine himself," says the apostle, "and so let him eat." Let no man presume to eat the bread and drink the wine of the sacred supper, till he has taken the candle of the Lord, which is the word of God, and searched every nook and corner of his soul for sin, with as much earnestness as the Jews are said to search their houses for any particle of unleavened bread before the passover. Let every communicant, either on the Saturday evening, or on the Sunday morning, before coming to the commemoration of the death of Christ, solemnly and anxiously examine what sins he has to put away.

It should be interwoven with all our reading of the Scriptures, and hearing of the gospel; and, indeed, with the whole series of our actions. It should be a nightly exercise at the close of each day. Pythagoras, the heathen philosopher, said to his disciples, "Let not sleep seize upon your senses before you have three times recalled the conversation and accidents of the day." Seneca, another pagan, said: "At night, when the light is removed, and all is hushed and still, I make a scrutiny into the day, and hide nothing from myself." And now hear the language of a christian bishop, on the necessity of this evening exercise. "If we consider the disorders of every day, the multitude of idle words; the great portions of time spent in vanity; the daily omissions of duty; the coldness of our prayers; the indifferences of our spirit in holy things; the uncertainty of our secret purposes; our deceptions and hypocrisies, sometimes not known, very often not observed by ourselves; our want of charity; our not knowing in how many degrees of action and purpose every virtue is to be exercised; the secret adherences of pride, and too forward complacency in our best actions; our failings in all our relations; the niceties of difference between some virtues and some vices; the secret, undiscernible passages from lawful to unlawful in the first instances of change; the perpetual mistaking of permissions for duty, and licentious practices for permission; our daily abusing the liberty God gives us; our unsuspected sins in managing a life certainly lawful; our little greedinesses in eating, and surprises in the proportions of our drinkings; our too great freedoms and fondnesses in lawful loves; our aptness for things sensual, and our deadness and weariness of spirit in

spiritual employments, besides an infinite variety of cases of conscience that do occur in the life of every man, and in all intercourses of every life; then shall we find that the productions of sin are incredibly numerous and increasing, and the computations of a man's life intricate and almost inexplicable; and, therefore, it is but reason we should sum up our accounts at the foot of every page; I mean that we call ourselves to scrutiny every night, when we compose ourselves to the little images of death." Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living*.

By frequent examination we shall anticipate and avoid temptations, and be guarded against being surprised into great sins. A spirit of self-inspection must ever promote the kindred disposition of christian vigilance: just as he who is often afraid a thief may be in the house, and searches every room to find him, will be likely to close and make fast the doors to keep him out for the future. And even where a great sin has been committed, and in part concealed, examination will drag it out into the light, expose all its aggravations to full view, and by the sorrow, shame, and abhorrence which it inspires, will prevent its repetition, and stop that which is but an act from becoming a habit.

This practice will not only tend to prevent the repetition of great sins, but the accumulation of little ones. It will not only keep the polished surface of the renewed soul free from broad dark blots, but from those innumerable little specks which dim its lustre, and diminish its beauty. Multitudes of our minor acts of transgression are likely to be forgotten with the moments in which they are committed, if not detected and confessed at the time. "He that depiseth little things,"

said the son of Sirach, "shall perish by little and little."

Frequent examination of our heart and conduct will help more than any thing to keep our consciences tender. "He that is used to shrink," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "when he is pressed with a branch of twining osiers, will not willingly stand in the ruins of a house when the beam dashes upon the pavement. And, provided that our nice and tender spirit be not vexed into scruple, nor the scruple turned into unreasonable fears, nor the fears into superstition, he that by any arts can make his spirit tender, and apt for religious impressions, hath made the fairest seat for religion and the unaptest and uneasiest entertainment for sin and eternal death in the whole world."

This habit will tend to keep up that of penitence and humility, which enters so largely and essentially into the spirit of vital godliness. Ordinarily, few professors of religion fall into gross and scandalous sins, and hence there is danger of acquiring a degree of self-complacency in their own character as injurious as it is ill-founded. But the disclosures of lesser faults made by this introspection which I am recommending, will be so many and so affecting, as to check all tendency to spiritual pride, and to promote a healthful and becoming self-abasement. How low in his own eyes must that man lie who takes anxious cognizance of those faults, which, though hidden from other men's observation, a slight examination must reveal to himself! Humility is the offspring of self-knowledge, and this is acquired only by the diligent study of our own hearts. The penitence of many, if kept alive at all as it ought to be, must be maintained by such acquaintance with

themselves. They have been happily preserved by the grace of God from those foul offences which torture the soul with the agonies of remorse; their tears must flow, if they flow at all, not over the sins of open backsliding, but over those defects, infirmities, and transgressions which do not strike the eyes of the world, and are not clearly seen even by their own, till sought after: and as our repentance and confession ought to be as particular as our transgression, we must give ourselves to examination, to know how particular that ought to be. Frequent examinations will discover to us, and help us to put away, those sins which, if not removed, (the guilt of them through faith in Christ's blood, and the power of them through the help of God's Spirit,) will be sure to find us out, and trouble us in the dark hour of affliction, and the still darker hour of death. Many things which do not strike us in the season of health, life, and prosperity, are noticed with terror and alarm in the dark chamber, and upon the bed of death; iust as many objects which we do not notice in broad daylight, fill us with alarm in the dark and at night. It is a painful thing to carry a load of unpardoned, because unthought of and unconfessed, sins to scenes of trial, and to the last conflict. Frequent and diligent self-examination will prevent this.

On all these grounds, and a few others, were there room to state them, I most earnestly enjoin the ever-recurring duty of self-examination.

And now, dear brethren, "yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,

which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." "As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Resolve, by God's grace, this shall be the holiest and the most useful year of your whole life; then it will be the happiest; and then, though it should be the last, it will be to your emancipated spirit as the year of release, of jubilee, and eternal salvation.

SELF-RENUNCIATION.

THE apostle Paul teaches this important duty by the following awakening and impressive appeal: "Know ye not that ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

What is intended in these words is, that through the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ, as an atonement to Divine justice for human transgressions, all who believe in him are freed from the curse of the law, and the dominion of sin, and are both justified and sanctified. The christian is thus a bought man, a captive redeemed by price. It is in this sense the whole church is called the "purchased possession." Yes. And what an idea! I repeat it, a believer is a purchased man! And at what

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price has he been bought! All the jewels which adorn and enrich the crown and sceptre of the British monarch; with all the others that compose the regalia of all the sovereigns of the Eastern or Western World, are of no more worth in the redemption of the poorest widow in the church of God, than the dust of the street. Nothing but the blood of the Son of God could purchase a single soul. What then must be the value of the soul; and oh, what must be the worth of its salvation!

How obvious is the inference! How forcible the question, "What, know ye not that ye are not your own?" How is it possible you should be, if you have been bought? In what sense a christian is not his own is explained to you by another portion of Scripture, "None of us liveth to himself." Do enter very seriously, and solemnly, and deeply, into these two impressive passages, "Ye are not your own;" "None of us liveth to himself."

It is for you to recollect that the renunciation of self, as well as of sin, was one of the solemn transactions of that scene, and that time, when you bowed by faith at the foot of the cross, received mercy through Jesus Christ, and yielded yourselves to God. You then abjured, not only self-righteousness, but self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-living. Self, as a supreme object, was in every view of it renounced. Self till then had been your loftiest aim; self-love your highest affection; but then you transferred your aim and your affection to another object. The christian has no right to ask what he will do with himself; or on what he will bestow himself, or how he will employ himself. He is no longer at liberty to inquire how he shall spend

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his faculties, his time, his property, his labour, and his influence; for he is not his own, he is bought with a price. He is not to live for fame, and please himself with the applause of his fellow creatures; nor for riches, and please himself with increasing wealth; nor for health, and please himself with the glowing energies of a sound body; nor for taste, and please himself with the pursuit of literature, science, or the arts; nor for relative enjoyment, and please himself with an agreeable circle of friends; nor for ease, and please himself with unmolested quiet: in short, he is not to consider himself as his own master to please himself supremely in any way, or his own property to employ himself on his own account, and for his own benefit. He is not to imagine that personal gratification is to be his end and aim, for the accomplishment of which he may lay down his own schemes, select his own course, and pursue his own methods, as if he had an independent and irresponsible right to himself. Self is "the old man" to be crucified with Christ; the body of sin to be destroyed; the corrupt nature to be put away; the law in our members to be resisted; the lusts of the mind to be subdued. Self is the enemy of God to be fought against; the interest rivaling Christ to be put down in our soul; the instrument of the devil to be opposed. Self is the most subtle, the most stubborn, the most tenacious foe with which grace has to contend in the soul of the believer. It lives, and works, and fights, when many other corruptions are mortified, and is the very citadel, the last strong hold, of Satan in the heart which is reduced to the obedience of faith. Why do believers murmur at the painful dispensations of Providence, and find submission so hard an achievement? Because self is disturbed in its enjoy-

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ment. Why are they so easily offended, and experience such difficulty in showing forgiveness? Because self-esteem has been wounded. Why are they covetous? Because self is gratified by its increasing stores. What is vanity, but the indulgence of self-love? Ambition, but the exaltation of self? Pride, but the worship of self? Why are they so reluctant to give their time and labour for the good of others, and the glory of God? Because they want it for ease, and the enjoyment of self. Why are they peevish, querulous, and discontented with the little annoyances of life, which are every where and continually occurring? Because they want to settle down in unmolested ease, and undisturbed quiet, to enjoy themselves.

But is this right? Is not this living as if we were our own? Is not this living for ourselves? Is not this forgetting that we are purchased property, belonging to another? My dear friends, do consider this subject. Weigh well the import of the condition of christian discipleship, as laid down by our Lord: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Self-denial, not self-pleasing, is our business; and the evidence of our being disciples is in exact proportion to our disposition thus to take up our cross. If we are coveting ease, quiet, soft indulgence, luxurious gratification, and are dissatisfied, and discontented, and litigious, and peevish, because we cannot please ourselves, or get others to please us, as the supreme end of life, how can we dream that we are the disciples of Him, of whom it is declared, he "pleased not himself;" especially since it is said, "Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus?"

For whom then are we to live, and whom are we

to please, if not ourselves? Who is to come in the place of self? God. And for this obvious reason. We are God's; God's servants; God's property. Many of you have hired servants, both in your houses and in your shops, with whom you have contracted to have so much work in return for so much wages paid. To their bodily labour, to their time, in short to their whole energies of body and mind, up to the stipulated amount of work, you have therefore an undoubted and equitable right: and if instead of living for you, they live for themselves; if instead of seeking to please you, they seek to please themselves; if instead of making it their aim and business to serve you, they make it their aim and business to enjoy and gratify themselves, you consider them dishonest, and yourself defrauded. Apply this to God. You are his, not only by the right of creation, or preservation, but by the more sacred right of redemption. You, your body, soul, time, talents, property, influence, are all his, bought and paid for by the price of his Son's most precious blood. He is for ever following you with his demand, and pressing it upon you. He does not allow it to lie in abeyance. He does not permit it to sleep and be forgotten, but is ever saying, "Ye are not your own, ye are mine." He says to you in his word, "Ye are mine." He bids his ministers enforce the claim every sabbath. He collects you around the sacramental table, where the symbols of the body and blood of the Lord, with silent yet impressive demand, say to you, "Ye are bought with a price; ye are therefore not your own, ye are God's."

Nor can you be at a loss in what way the claim of God is to be acknowledged and met, for this is specified: "Glorify God in your body and in your

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spirit, which are God's." You cannot of course add to his glory: the glowworm might as well think of adding to the effulgence of the sun. A worthless bit of tin, or glass, cannot increase the rays of the great luminary, but it can reflect them. So the believer, though he cannot increase the glory of Jehovah, can manifest it. God is glorified, when he is acknowledged, loved, served, imitated. The glory of God consists of his attributes, especially his moral perfections of holiness, justice, truth, love, and mercy. Hence the imitation of these in the conduct of the believer glorifies God, for these attributes in him are the same in kind as in God, though infinitely less in degree, and therefore they are the rays of God's glory falling upon his spirit, and reflected by him before the eyes of mankind. An apostle, speaking of the great spiritual change wrought in the soul of a real christian, calls it a participation of the "Divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. Now as God is always glorified when he is seen, the very manifestation of him being to his own praise, he is glorified by his people, because he is seen, very imperfectly I admit, but in some measure, in their holy character. Hence man was said to be created in the image of God, and is now new-created in that same image, in conversion. A christian is God's witness, image, representative, in the world; and his great business is, by an imitation of God's attributes, to remind men of God; and to teach them who and what He is.

But the apostle specifies how this is to be done. "Glorify God with your body;" by all its limbs, organs, and senses, for all are his. Glorify God by chastity; by temperance; by industry in your calling; by reverence in worship; by giving up your whole frame to the ser-

vice of piety and charity; and by resigning it, without murmuring, to the attacks of disease, the stroke of death, and, if called to it, to bonds, imprisonment, and martyrdom, for the cause of Christ. Thus even the body can be used by the soul, which animates it, as an instrument for glorifying God. Even the corporeal frame, inhabited, sustained, and directed as it is, by a rational mind, may be employed to the praise and honour of its Creator. Dust though it be in its origin and destiny, it may rise to the dignity of glorifying God. From it, as an instrument of many strings, the renewed and sanctified spirit may bring out sweet music to God, such as he will accept, and be well pleased to hear. Christians, give your bodies to God, to magnify his name, and greatly honour him. Oh, do not consider them as a mere collection of organs, appetites, and senses to be gratified and pleased for their own sakes; as favourite menials to be pampered; as stately forms to be adorned, decorated, and admired; but as part of yourselves, to be yielded to God, and made to be instruments of righteousness unto him.

The body, however, is only a part, and that the inferior part, of our compound nature, with which we are to glorify God: the spirit, the immaterial and immortal spirit, must also be thus employed. Our understanding, in the contemplation of his glory; our will, in choosing him as our chief good; our affections, in loving what he loves, and hating what he hates; our memory, in retaining his doctrines and precepts; our conscience, in directing, warning, and reproving us for him. It is the soul, the immortal soul, that receives his image. Then indeed we glorify him, when a holy mind shines forth in all the beauties of a holy character; when there is

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that in us and about us, which reminds men of God; when everything about us seems to say, "Come, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." "We cannot be acting up to our obligations, unless we are compelling those who observe us to say, either to themselves or others, "That man, I see, fears God, and is aiming to please him. When I forget God, he reminds me of him; what I am ignorant of concerning God, he teaches me by his character; when I sin against God, his conduct rebukes me. I am afraid of him; I venerate him, and yet I do not feel easy and happy in his presence. There is something awful about the goodness of his actions."

To produce such an impression, what unvarying sanctity, what rigid morality, what deep humility, what profound submission, what gentleness and meekness, what holy cheerfulness, what tender piety, what diffusive liberality, must there be in our conduct! Oh, what manner of persons ought we to be, and must we be, to remind men of God, and give them some idea of what he is! What exemplary holiness should there be in that character, which we presume to hold up to the world, and say: "See, this is the image of God!"

Now, my dear friends, you are to glorify God. All your purposes, aims, objects, plans, wishes, and prayers, must be gathered up in that one petition, "Father, glorify thy name." But does it occur to you, what a prayer that is, as presented not only by you, but in reference to you! He must have great grace, who, with a clear understanding of its meaning, can present it in sincerity. Are you then willing that God should glorify himself in you, and by you? If so, you must impose no conditions; dictate no terms; lay down no

plans; make no exceptions; but leave all this to him. Such a prayer means, "Lord, how thou wilt, what thou wilt, when thou wilt, only let me glorify thee." You must be prepared to do it, either by sickness, or health; by success, or failure in business; by settling down in ease and quiet by your fireside, or striking your tent, and becoming a wanderer to the ends of the earth; by the world's smile, or its frown; by the soft and silent flow, or by the roaring torrent and dashing cataract of your history; in the society, or after the loss, of your friends; by a long life, or an early death. Are you prepared for this? Will you, now that you understand it, present the prayer, "Father, glorify thy name?" Can you, will you, do you, put yourself in God's hand, saying, "o God, I am not my own: I am thine; serve thyself in me, and by me. Provided thou grantest me grace to bear as well as do thy will, I am content to do it in any situation, and in any circumstances?"

This is obviously your duty; for you are not your own, but God's. Think, I entreat you, of the sacred and tender obligation which comes upon you by the manner of your redemption, thus to live. How many claims are comprised in that one, "Ye are bought with a price!" Justice demands it of you, for he has purchased you, and at how immense a price! To take what belongs to man, is robbery; but to take what belongs to God, is sacrilege. Gratitude demands it of you. What blessedness has God conferred upon you by redeeming you: from what degradation, misery, and eternal woe, he has saved you; and to what honour, happiness, and eternal glory advanced you! Interest demands it of you. How can you be so highly honoured, so happily for yourself employed, as in glorifying

God? What losses should we not willingly sustain; what sufferings endure; what labour maintain; what self-denial exercise; what enjoyment forego; what mortification inflict, in order that we may glorify God? Imagine that some unobservant, unreflecting individual, who had passed all his days without ever contemplating the glory of the sun, were, upon seeing his rays reflected from the glossy wing of some insect floating in his radiance, to turn with delighted admiration to the great luminary as the source of what he now beheld, and he were ever and anon, from that time, to gaze with new pleasure and astonishment on the orb of day; what an honour would seem to have been conferred on that little creature, to have led one rational mind to an acquaintance with the most glorious of all God's works. But what is this to the honour conferred upon a redeemed and sanctified man, a child of dust, an heir of sin, and woe, and death, so to live as to reflect from his character the rays of the Divine glory as they fall from the great Fountain of life, and light, and beauty, and thus cause eyes to see, and hearts to love, and tongues to praise, Jehovah, which, in regard to his excellence, had, hitherto, been blind, cold, and silent.

But what I now dwell upon as the strongest of all claims upon us to glorify God is this, love demands it. That you should glorify God is the very end of your redemption. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and

rose again.” I do not now lead you forth to the vast field of creation of which you form a part, and remind you of the claim founded on the power that made you and all things. I do not place you in imagination upon the borders of the flaming pit, from which there is no redemption, and as the howlings of lost souls, and the smoke of their torment, ascend up for ever and ever, remind you of the dreadful award of justice upon those who will not glorify God. But I conduct you to Calvary at the hour of crucifixion, and as you gaze upon the Son of God, hanging on the cross, while the blood is flowing from his wounds, and he is exclaiming, as from the lowest depth of his agony, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? I ask you what is the true meaning and design of that wondrous scene? It is Jesus Christ paying, in groans, and tears, and blood, the price of your redemption. It is Jesus Christ thus and for ever establishing his right to your whole self, your whole life, and your whole property. It is Jesus Christ advancing the amount required to deliver you from every claimant and enemy, and ratifying his right to your entire temporal and eternal existence. What a robbery of God, what a felony upon heaven, is it to attempt, or even to wish to live for yourselves! Which of you can make the daring attempt, or cherish the unjust, ungrateful wish? And yet how prone are we to this! How much of this wicked sacrilege is going on! How many professors, in opposition to claims so sacred, so tender, and so strong, are living for their own ease, enjoyment, and aggrandizement! How few do we see who seem to be sensible of the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ! How few, who enter as they should do into that admonition, “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatso-

ever ye do, do all to the glory of God!" How few, who connect the glory of God with the whole course of their conduct, as the end of every action, the ultimate object of all they do! How few, to whom it is matter of plan, forethought, purpose, and calculation, to lay out themselves to be holy, useful, and successful in leading others to think upon God, and inquire after him! What laborious exertion, and constant scheming, and ingenious contrivances, to obtain wealth, do we behold! What aspirations after that which is elegant, fashionable, and genteel! What consultations and calculations about ease, comfort, and enjoyment! How intent are parents to amass wealth for their children, to form advantageous connections for them, often without due regard to their spiritual and eternal welfare! And when, through the good providence of God, men have been successful in business, and are about to retire upon their accumulations, how solicitous are they to select a pleasant locality, a respectable community, a popular minister, instead of a situation where they may do good, and strengthen the hands of some faithful preacher of the word labouring amidst great discouragement! Alas, how applicable are the words of the apostle to the present generation, "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's!"

My dear friends, study afresh your obligations. Rise each morning, designing to glorify God by all the varying circumstances of the day; and each night, as you lay your head upon your pillow, ask the question, "Have I glorified God to day?" Enter every new situation, meet every new trial, engage in every new effort, saying, "Father, help me to glorify thee." Consider every place a scene for this duty, the shop, the

house, the market, as well as the house of God. When sinking down from this high purpose, and in danger of becoming self-indulgent, worldly-minded, and intent upon ease and gratification, cast a look at the cross, and listen to the reproving words which come from it: "Ye are not your own." Act so as to give sincerity, meaning, and emphasis to an expression, the truth and reality of which have been questioned by the ignorant and profane, and the whole resolved into cant and hypocrisy; I mean, the phrase, "glorifying God." How has this sublime expression been abused; to what low and selfish, secular and sectarian, ends has it been prostituted; how has it been employed to sanction deeds, and to cover motives, which the scripture condemns, and the mind of God abhors! Rescue it from degradation; roll away from it reproach; and convince those who never utter it but with a sneer and a taunt, that amidst many to whom it is mere religious verbiage, there are some who feel the claims of redeeming mercy, and who, by a life of obedience to the word of God, and conformity to his image, are seeking to glorify their Father who is in heaven; and who, sensible of their utter insufficiency of themselves for a work so difficult and so high, are engaged in fervent, constant, and believing prayer for the necessary aid of the Holy Spirit.

READING THE SCRIPTURES.

THE subject of this address is a very common one; for I do not hunt after novelties, but desire to stir up your pure minds in the way of remembrance. Curiosity may be gratified by what is new, but improvement is

likely to be promoted by a more devout and practical consideration of what is old. We all know more than we do; and we should be more solicitous to reduce to practice what we already know, than to acquire still more of mere theory. My object now is to point out to you, and enjoin upon you, a profitable method of reading the Scriptures.

What an inestimable treasure is the sacred volume! Well does it deserve the emphatic title by which it is distinguished from all other works, as "The Bible," which means the book. Yes, it is indeed the book: the one, and only book for man, as an immortal creature, a lost sinner. It is a book containing God's thoughts, expressed in God's words; or as the great John Locke said, in a description, the comprehension and beauty of which have never been surpassed, "It has God for its author, salvation for its object, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its contents."

What a blessing ought it to be accounted, that we have this divine revelation in the form of scriptures, that is, writings, and not merely in oral tradition; that the Divine communications have been translated from the original languages into our own mother tongue; that we are delivered from the tyranny of the Church of Rome which denies the unrestricted use of the Scriptures to the people; and that they are now cheapened down, by various means, so as to be within the reach of the poorest individual. Never was the Bible so low in price, as it is now. It is the cheapest of all cheap books, in an age distinguished for cheap books. Never was the Bible so much talked about as it is now. Sunday schools have produced readers; and Bible Societies have produced purchasers. Ours, by way of

eminence, above all that have preceded it, may be called, so far as these things go, "The Bible age."

From the very nature of things preaching has some advantage over reading; for not only are difficulties solved, seeming contradictions reconciled, and hidden beauties disclosed, but the combined effect of reasoning and rhetoric, aided by the countenance, gesture, and voice, must at once awaken and sustain attention, instruct the judgment, captivate the imagination, impress the heart, and excite the conscience. It is therefore of unspeakable importance constantly to hear the word preached; for faith comes by hearing; and the preaching of the cross is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe. But still it is an indolent and injurious relinquishment of our own inestimable privilege and indefeasible right to search the Scriptures for ourselves, entirely to substitute hearing for reading; and those persons will be found to be the most profitable hearers of the word who are its most devout and diligent readers.

It cannot be denied that much of the religion of the present day is the piety of association, publicity, and excitement. The closet is a dull scene compared with the place of public resort; the silent page of Scripture a dull teacher compared with the living voice of the eloquent preacher; and our solitary self dull company, compared with the trooping multitudes of the great congregation. But still, no one can be an eminent christian, however frequently, admiringly, or pleasantly, he hears his favourite minister, who does not converse much with his Bible in secret. He that would grow in grace and in knowledge must commune daily with prophets and apostles, through the medium of their own

inspired productions: he must drink largely of the pure living waters and undiluted milk of the word. It will be found to be a weak and sickly piety, unfit to meet the exigences, to cope with the difficulties, and to maintain the conflicts, of the christian life, that depends for its support, exclusively, upon the hearing of sermons; or the reading of magazines, tracts, and reviews. God's word is the food of the soul, and there is more of concentrated nourishment in a single text of Scripture, when it is drawn out by the digestive process of meditation, to strengthen the heart of the believer, than in many pages of uninspired, though otherwise attractive, and even instructive, composition. God's words are life, and they are spirit. Read the pages of christian martyrology, and while wondering at the noble heroes that stand before you, and admiring their deeds of deathless fame, you will find the secret of their strength in their intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures; they were Bible christians, and not mere sermon christians. If you were but deeply experienced in the ways of God on the one hand, and the devices of Satan on the other, you would easily remember times of conflict and of peril, when the perusal of a single chapter, or even the pondering upon a single verse, without the intervention of a human teacher, sounded like the voice of God, and seemed like the coming into your soul of a portion of his omnipotence. If you would relish the uncorrupted sweetness of the word; if you would realize all its strength-giving efficacy; if you would grow to the strength and stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus; if you would be valiant in the fight of faith, you must be much in converse with God alone through the medium of his own blessed word.

Is not this precious privilege too much neglected by many of you? Does not the Bible lie upon the table, or the shelf, unopened, for days, yea weeks? What excuse have you to offer for so ungrateful a return for this inspired book? Perhaps you say it is a difficult book to understand. That there are dark, and, to ordinary readers, inexplicable passages, I admit; but how much is there that is easy to the feeblest capacity: and how much that to one little accustomed to read the word appears dark, would brighten and unfold its meaning upon a more spiritual, more devoted, and habitual attention. Diligence, prayer, and a holy state of mind, will unlock to the inquiring believer most of the hidden treasures of inspiration. Those who complain of the darkness of the Scriptures are generally those who have devoted the least time and attention to the study of them. Many uninspired books are difficult to those who only dip into them occasionally, but become easy to the very same persons when studied with care. There is such a thing as becoming, by long examination, familiar with an author's style and manner, just as our protracted acquaintance with an individual enables us to understand the drift of his remarks better than we did at our first introduction to him. The aid of a commentary may be of service to those who have leisure to peruse it, and the means of purchasing it. Some may now be bought almost as cheap as a Bible without notes used to be.

But, perhaps, you say you have not time. Not time to read the Bible! Not time to read the book of God! a book written by God to you, and for you, and of you! the only book which can make you wise to salvation! Have you time to eat, and drink, and sleep? And have

you not time to read the Scriptures? Have you time to read letters from your friends, and no time to read letters from God; time to read the newspaper, and not time to read the Bible? Do you not feel ashamed at the idea, especially when actually put into language? You must find time; and, if in no other way, by redeeming it from sleep, business, recreation, conversation, and other pursuits. How much time would it take daily to read, even with serious attention, a whole chapter? As to the generality of christians, how many precious fragments of time which are actually wasted, might be gathered up from other occupations, to be employed on this high and holy engagement!

Probably you wish for some directions for your Bible-reading. A delight in the exercise is the best guide. He that is in love with a book scarcely needs a rule to assist him in the perusal of it. He will carry it about with him if it be portable; make himself acquainted with the author's design; take it out when a few minutes' leisure present themselves; store its contents in his memory; think of them often; and apply them as occasions may present themselves. Love to read the Scriptures, and you will be sure to read them with profit. A real lover of his Bible cannot be an unprofitable one. But if you still wish assistance, take the following rules:

1. Read intelligently as to the design of the sacred volume. If you do not set out with a clear perception of an author's design you will be in the dark all the way through. And what is the design of the Bible? As it respects God, it is to reveal himself, not simply in the Unity of his essence, but also in the Trinity of his personality. It is God in Christ, reconciling the world

to himself, not the Creating, but the Redeeming God, that is the great purpose of revelation. It does reveal, and clearly reveals, God as the Creator: but this is subordinate in purpose and plan to the exhibition of God manifest in the, flesh, redeeming a lost world from sin, Satan, death, and hell. Christ, as the medium of making God known, by the salvation of man, is the end of the Bible. "Search the Scriptures," said he to the Jews, "for they are they which testify of me." Christ is the Alpha and Omega of revelation. The ceremonial law was the shadow of which he is the substance; the prophets testified of him; the Old Testament history contains the records of his ancestors; the Psalms of David celebrate his praises; the evangelists wrote the narratives of his life and death; the epistles contain the development of his doctrine; and the apocalypse unfolds his future victories over his foes, and the splendour of his reign to the end of time. All the lines of revelation centre in Christ. In all your studies of the word keep this in mind. Without allegorizing what is plain matter of fact and nothing more; without spiritualizing what has one didactic and literal import and that only; still remember that the general design of the Bible is to testify of Christ, and to reveal the moral character of God through him. But a second design of the Bible regards man, and it is through this glorious revelation of God to restore him to the Divine favour and image, which he lost by the fall. Redemption through Christ is not simply to save us from hell, but to restore us to God; not only to his love, but to his likeness. Justification by faith in Christ is to the end that we may receive sanctification by the Spirit; and if we have these, glorification follows

as a consequence. Bear in mind this design in reading the Scriptures. Be ever looking for the object of faith, which is the death of Christ; for the object of love, which is the image of Christ; and for the object of hope, which is the coming of Christ. Remember that the Scriptures are given to form a particular character; a character which is distinguished by three things, holiness, spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness. You must read to get this character, to maintain it, to perfect it. The Bible is a mould into which mind, and heart, and actions, fused, shall I say, by the fire of holy love, should be poured, so as to bring out a character corresponding to what is there revealed. You must read to drink into the spirit, to catch the temper, to imbibe the very genius, of the record. It should be a frequent reflection with you, yea an habitual one, as you take up the Bible to say, "This book is intended to form in me a particular character, to fashion my whole self after a prescribed manner; and am I, by reading it, and studying it, answering this end? Have I a Bible-character? Is my mind a Bible-mind: my heart a Bible-heart: my life a Bible-life? As the seal impresses its own image upon the melted wax, has the Bible impressed its own character on me? Do others see the fruit and effect of my study of the Scriptures, in my likeness to the Scriptures? Do I not only read comments, but am I one, a living, speaking, acting Bible?" These questions are appropriate and momentous, and show for what purpose, and in what way, you are to peruse the sacred volume: not only for consolation in trouble; not merely for directions in particular emergencies; much less, merely to gratify curiosity in knowing its contents, or to furnish yourselves for theological

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controversy; but to acquire a holy and heavenly character.

2. Read reverentially, remembering it is the word of God. Let there be a "Thus saith the Lord," sounding in your ears. Realize the fact that it is God speaking to you in every page. Read with that awe, and reverence, and trembling, with which you would listen if Jehovah were speaking to you with an audible voice. I do not like to see the sacred volume treated with disrespect or irreverence, even in the manner of dealing with, or handling, it; nor is the feeling superstitious, for though there is no sanctity in the paper and printing, there is in the contents of it; and as we are governed by the association of ideas, we are in danger of losing our reverence for the contents, if we treat with disesteem the vehicle which conveys them. How would it aid us in the perusal of the Scriptures, if we paused before we opened them, and reflected thus, "I am now going to hear God speak to me!" Into what a posture of reverential attention would such a consideration place us! How would it solemnize our minds, check our levity, and prepare us to receive the truth in all its powerful and holy influence!

3. Our perusal of the Scriptures should be habitual and constant; and not merely occasional and accidental. Some rarely take up the Scriptures except in season of trial or difficulty, or at a time of leisure, to while away an hour which they know not how otherwise to dispose of. This shows a great neglect, not to say contempt, of the Bible. The Scriptures should be, "The christian's own book," and his "every day book." There never is a day in his history when he does not need them, and should not use them. David describes the good man as

one who delights in the law of the Lord, and meditates therein day and night: that is, every day and night Never let a day pass without reading a portion of Holy Scripture; and ever consider that one duty of the day, and an important one too, has been neglected, if the practice has been omitted. The truth of Scripture is the food of the mind, and we should be as a regular in the meals of the soul, as in those of the body.

4. Read the word of God privately. Do not satisfy yourselves with what you hear at family prayer. You want opportunity for meditation, self-application, self-examination, self-reproof, self-stimulus, and indeed, the whole business of self-improvement. If you would perform this duty effectually, and enjoy this privilege spiritually, you must have leisure and convenience to pause and ponder; to say, "My soul, mark that! Thou art wanting in this duty, or committing this sin. This is a message from God unto thee. This promise, great and precious as it is, belongs to thee! This consolation is for thee! Look at that glorious object of faith! Contemplate that boundless prospect of glory! "Ah, you know not the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear him, if you know nothing of this retirement, nothing of this self-communion over the Bible.

5. Do not read at random, or trust to accident, as the Bible may open, for the portion you peruse; but read consecutively. You must not dip for a passage; or pick and choose for some comfortable text. This occasions a waste of time, and leads to the neglect of a large portion of the Scriptures. Read regularly through some portion of the word. Here, perhaps, a question will be asked, whether it is desirable, and a duty, to read

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regularly through the whole Bible. I reply, that some parts of the books of Moses, which contain what may be called the municipal laws of the Jews, were intended, if not exclusively, yet principally, for that people, and as they do not so much concern us as other parts, they need not of course be so often read: but even these are calculated, when read with a devout mind, to produce, as they were intended to produce, an impression of the holiness of God, the evil of sin, and the necessity of purity both of mind and conduct. Still it must be admitted, that there are other portions of Scripture, whatever important ends these were designed to serve, which tend far more to general edification than Numbers and Leviticus. While the Old Testament is by no means to be neglected, especially the Psalms, Proverbs, and the Prophecies, yet more time should be given to the New Testament. Without intending to disparage any portion of the Holy Scriptures, all of which were "given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness," I may observe, that the parts which should be most frequently read, are the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah, in the Old Testament, and the Gospels and Epistles in the New. These should be read through in regular order; but still allotting more time to the New Testament than to the Old.

To those who have much time at command, the Scriptures should be taken up as a book of sacred science, as well as daily practice, to be studied with much devout and solicitous research. Its chronology, geography, natural history, together with the history of the text, all may become matter of pleasant and

profitable investigation. And what so worthy of it, as that book which boasts of a Divine authorship, and was written by the finger of God. Home's "Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures," is a compilation of inestimable value, and tri those who can afford to purchase it, and have time to read it, will furnish a wide and instructive range of holy and delightful inquiry. How agreeable an exercise is it to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and to unlock the treasures of the Old Testament by the key of the apostolic writings; and thus to trace the harmony of God's gracious dispensations to the children of men, as centering in the person and work of his Son. As to the study of the symbolical and unfulfilled prophecies contained in the books of Daniel, and the Apocalypse, this, to all who have leisure, is not only a legitimate, but a commendable subject of study, provided they conduct their inquiries with humility, draw their conclusions with caution, hold their opinions with a recollection how liable they are to err, and express their views with that diffidence which the multitudinous varieties of sentiment on this obscure topic seem to require. But on other, and plainer subjects, there ought to be with all christians, more of what is very properly called the searching of the Scriptures. How superficial is the acquaintance of many with this Book of books! How little do they know, (because they as little inquire after,) the mind of the Spirit! Where is the wish, the effort, and the plan, to be mighty in the Scriptures? It is not enough to have a verbal acquaintance with them, to have them stored in the memory; though this may be of great service in scenes of sickness and feebleness of sight, when reading is difficult or impossible: but what is requisite is an

acquaintance with their spiritual import, and a skill and facility in applying them to all the varieties of the Christian's situation and experience. For this there must be time, conscientiously set apart, and diligently employed. It will not do to satisfy ourselves with a few snatches of the Bible in moments of haste; it will not do to be content with a text taken from some "daily portion;" it will not do merely to learn and repeat a single passage a day. Oh, no, we must be much alone with the Bible, and give ourselves to the delightful task of poring over its pages. Still however it becomes us to recollect, that it is not knowledge alone we should seek, but holiness. It is with this precious food of Divine truth, as it is with the nutriment of the body, there is both pleasure in eating it, as well as strength derived from eating it; but it is the latter that is to be regarded as the ultimate end.

6. Let it not be your aim to read much, but to read well. To read well, is to read with understanding, with meditation, with feeling, to consolation, to improvement. A single verse thus read is better than a whole chapter carelessly and formally gone through. Some persons set themselves the daily task of reading so many chapters, and would feel very unhappy if the task were not performed; but this is all; there is no inquiry into the meaning, no meditation, no self-application. They know no more when they have finished what they have been reading about, than if they had not read it at all. Always look at the heading or title of a chapter before you begin to read it, that you may know what is the design of it; then connect each verse with this design of the whole chapter, and the whole chapter with the design of the whole epistle. It

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would greatly help you to understand the epistles, if you ascertain first their design, and occasionally read through a complete epistle at once, observing its own natural divisions, independently of the chapters which are sometimes very injudiciously divided.

7. It is important if you would profit, to mix faith with reading, as well as hearing. The apostle has beautifully expressed this, where he says, "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Though it is the word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, it cannot work in us without faith. The reason why it works so little in the way of holiness, consolation, and zeal, is because there is so little faith. It is often read by believers themselves without faith; there is not an act and exercise of faith in it at the time; no felt sense of the truth of the chapter that is thus read; no deep conviction, no practical persuasion, of the divine authority and power of the promise, command, invitation, or threatening, which may be before the mind. There is the principle of faith in the Bible as a whole, but not the exercise of faith, at that time, and in reference to the part of the Bible then read. What an impression would the word always produce on us, if we paused to make these two reflections: "This chapter is God's word to me now, and all his words are true!"

8. We should read the Scriptures with earnest prayer for the teaching of the Spirit. The teaching of the Spirit is not to be expected apart from the word, nor a right understanding and impression of the word apart from the teaching of the Spirit. Divine influence

is not to be sought or looked for in the way of granting us a new revelation, or new faculties, but in the way of a right direction of our present faculties, to understand the revelation we already possess. That which makes this influence necessary is not a defect in the Bible, but in ourselves. The Bible, as a revelation, is all that is necessary: "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul:" but there is a defect of the spiritual, though not of the mental, organ in us as to receiving its light. It is no fault of the sun, that a blind man cannot see the luminary. Our judgments are affected by the state of our hearts. Hence we are liable to err in our minds, because of the imperfections of our hearts. Our corruptions send up exhalations into the higher regions of our minds, and thus the atmosphere around us becomes cloudy, and prevents the rays of truth from shining into our souls. Hence the need of praying, "Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." We shall none of us have any more spiritual understanding than the Spirit gives us; but he will give us as much as we seek by earnest and believing prayer. To grow in grace and in knowledge, we must consult both the book and its divine author; the one by study, and the other by prayer. What a privilege should we esteem it, in reference to a human author, if he were to say, "When you want any information on any point of my work, come and ask me for illustration and explanation." God does say this to us in reference to his book. His Spirit reveals to us his mind and will in the Scriptures. Hence those striking prayers of the apostle, which we find Ephes. i. 17, 18; Col. i. 9.

THE DUTY OF MEDITATION.

THE subject I call you now to consider is the duty and benefits of meditation. This is not unfrequently either alluded to, or enjoined in the Scriptures. In describing the good man, David observes that “his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” Jehovah, in giving his instructions to Joshua, thus addressed him: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.” What was Joshua’s duty is ours: the very possession of the Scriptures implies an obligation, not only to read them, but to meditate upon them. Meditation means close and continuous thought upon some selected subject. It is much the same as contemplation, musing, or what, in popular language, is called revolving or turning over a subject in our mind. Pious meditation then is a devout pondering upon some religious topic. This, it must be at once confessed and lamented, is an exercise of religion, to which, however important it may be, few addict themselves. “And it is a very great cause of the dryness and expiration of men’s devotion, because our souls are so little refreshed with the waters and holy dews of meditation. We go to our prayers by chance, or order, or by determination of accidental occurrences; and we recite them as we read a book, and sometimes we are sensible of the duty; and a flash of heavenly light makes the room bright: but our prayers end, and the light is gone, and we are as dark as ever. We draw our water from standing pools, which never are filled but with sudden showers, and therefore we are dry so often;

whereas, if we would draw water from the fountains of our Saviour, and derive them through the channel of diligent and prudent meditations, our devotion would be a continual current, and safe against the barrenness of frequent droughts.”

Meditation may be considered as either occasional, habitual, or deliberate. By occasional, I mean that turning of the mind to religious topics, and indulgence of pious reflection, which is awakened by some subject which produces an unusual impression upon the mind. Even this, though it be but rarely indulged, is better than absolute thoughtlessness, as it may end, and does end in some cases, in permanent attention to eternal realities. It is to be regretted that many professors of religion have little more than such rare and unfrequent seasons of holy contemplation.

Habitual meditation means a prevailing and abiding disposition to seize all occasions, to avail ourselves of all opportunities, and to employ all means, to keep up a train of pious thoughts and emotions in the mind. In this view of it it has a close affinity to spirituality of mind. It is a blessed art thus, by a kind of spiritual chemistry, to extract the spirit of devotion from all we meet with in our daily experience. Our Lord, when he came upon earth, spiritualized almost everything that came before him, and founded most of his parables and discourses on passing occurrences and surrounding scenes. It is the mark of a renewed mind to see God in everything, and trace up everything to God? The scenes of nature may thus become, and should become, the occasion of frequent, devout reflection. “Who can look on “the spangled heavens,” or the variegated earth, without feeling invited to indulge

in meditation upon the wisdom, power, and goodness of God? It was in reference to these that David exclaimed, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." My meditation of thee shall be sweet. We should look upon the wondrous fabric not merely with the eye of a poet or philosopher, but of a christian; and as we gaze upon the scenes of creation, worship God in the temple of nature. Meditate, my friends, on his glories, till in the deep warm musings of your thoughts the fire of devotion kindles, and your love and adoration go up like a stream of incense before his throne. Let every stroll into the country be a walk with God, a religious service, a means of grace, and an aid to improvement. Every excursion amidst the scenes of nature, if thus pursued, would begin with admiration, be continued with delight, and end with praise.

The dispensations of Providence are another appropriate subject of habitual meditation, whether they relate to the government of the universe at large, to the history of our globe, to the destinies of our nation, or to our own individual concerns. Let all that we read, hear, think, or observe, of the ways of God to man lead to pious reflection. Let us hear the voice, observe the hand, trace the footsteps, wait for the decisions, and admire the schemes, of the Almighty Ruler of nations. There is providence in everything, chance in nothing. In reading newspapers, listening to reports, noticing the occurrences which are perpetually transpiring on the great stage of our country's or the world's affairs, let us not do it as politicians merely, to see who will be uppermost in the struggle of parties;

nor as merchants, to see how the tide of commerce flows; nor as philosophers, to mark the progress of science; but as christians, who know that Christ is head over all things to his church, and who are watching the development of all the scenes of the mighty drama of this earth's moral history. Christians, be meditative men. Look, I repeat, for God in everything. Listen for heavenly voices and divine lessons. Amidst the clamour of parties, the strife of tongues, the confusion of conflicting passions, often retire from the arena to solitude, and give yourselves to silent meditation. Ponder all these things in your heart. Let the ear of contemplation hearken for the still small voice that speaks from heaven.

But I now direct your attention to deliberate, set, and solemn meditation, as a duty of the closet, as connected with reading the Scriptures, and as an act of devotion. The subjects of meditation in this view of it are twofold: First, ourselves. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Next to communion with God, the most profitable communion is with ourselves. We should often be alone with ourselves, making our own heart and all its contents, the objects of our serious contemplation. Our past history, our present state, our future hopes and prospects, our sins, our temptations, our afflictions, our escapes, our dangers, should all be the subjects of frequent, fixed, and devout thoughtfulness. This is what the worldly man cannot endure: like the fabled basilisk which is said to be killed by seeing his image reflected from a glass, such a man cannot endure to behold his soul as it is seen in the glass of the mind. His object is not to see himself, or to be alone with

himself, or to hear the voice of his own conscience speaking to himself: this he dislikes and dreads, and, therefore, he runs to company, to hide himself from himself. But you, as professing christians, must be much engaged in the business of self-contemplation; it is useful, and it is necessary. Secondly, You are to meditate upon the Scriptures; and these should be the chief matters in which your mind should be so exercised. Meditation is more than reading, it is pondering: it is somewhat different even from studying, for that means simply knowing; whereas meditation means revolving what we do know, to apply it to the purposes for which it is communicated; it is the prolonged devotional attention to the sacred volume, as either read by ourselves, or explained by others.

I must say something of the seasons of meditation. It is a part of our closet exercises, an accompaniment of our private prayer. Every believer ought to find some time for it. Of course the length and frequency of that time must depend in a great measure upon circumstances. How appropriate an exercise is it for those who are called to long periods of Solitude: how would it beguile their dreary hours, to fix upon some portion of holy Scripture, and let their thoughts dwell upon it turning it over and over in their minds, and looking at it in every aspect in which it can be contemplated. Such thoughts would often prove more instructive and perhaps more agreeable, than company. How fit a season are the wakeful hours of night. To repeat the passage already quoted, "Commune with your heart upon your bed, and be still." When the curtains of darkness are drawn around us; when the busy noisy world is still; and every thing invites to contemplation

how profitable and solemn might be your meditations upon the word of God. A season of Sickness, when the pain, or languor, is not so great as to distract and disturb our thoughts, is eminently appropriate to this sweet and soothing exercise. How delightful is it to have the sick chamber, and the hours of lonely woe, cheered by the presence and the heavenly music of this "cherub contemplation," as one of the poets calls it. By the means of holy meditation, martyrs have rode upon this cherub's wing to heaven, and have seemed to drop their chains upon earth; or have paced their dungeon as though it were a bower of paradise. And how many of the suffering children of God, shut in by disease from the outer world of sense, are by this means dwelling in the regions of faith and hope; and when deprived of the society of earthly friends, do thus come to "the innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." The Sabbath is a season for this holy exercise; a season of which every christian should eagerly avail himself. It is this which causes him to be in the Spirit on the Lord's day. The sabbath is the liveliest type of heaven; a short abridgment of the everlasting rest which remains for the people of God. Now the work and employment of heaven is a sweet mixture of contemplation and praise. Imitate, then, the blessed in heaven, who in silent adoration gaze upon the matchless glories of Jehovah, and so give new tone to their praises, when in choral anthems they magnify his holy name; and then retire again to enjoy, in solitary ecstasy, what they have seen and heard in company around the throne. How precious a means does the day of rest afford for lengthened

pious reflection! The alternation of services from public to private, and from private back again to public, prepares for this exercise, and assists its performance; the sanctuary furnishing, in the sermons which are preached, topics for reflection, and the closet giving opportunity to remember, to review, and apply them by meditation. Oh, let not even the fragmental portions of the sacred day be lost, but let all be gathered up and appropriated to this occupation. Let every part of this consecrated season which is not given to the public worship of God's house, be devoted to private meditation upon his word. Waste not those solemn, precious, and important hours in sleep, in worldly conversation, or in the pleasures of the table.

I will now lay down a few rules for your direction in the performance of this duty. Some things are necessary to dispose and enable you to engage in it.

Maintain a good conscience; a conscience cleared from the guilt of sin. Be at peace with God, through faith in the blood of Christ. "If our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence towards God." If we have not the testimony of our conscience in our favour, meditation will be no pleasure. Old naturalists believed that when the elephant comes to the water to drink, he soils the stream, that he may not see his own image reflected: thus it is with guilty consciences, they cannot bear to look in the clear waters of meditation, lest they should see their own native form reflected.

Labour after great purity of heart. Not only seek to have the conscience kept clear from the guilt of sin, but the heart from its defilement. "A soiled glass yields no clear representation of things: so when the heart is polluted with the filth of sin, it is not fit for

this duty." It is the holy soul that loves to converse with a holy God, through the medium of his holy word; and the holier that soul is, the sweeter will be its reflections upon the topics of Divine truth. Sin corrupts the taste, and produces a vitiated appetite, so that the word, though sweeter to the pure mind, than honey and the honey-comb, is nauseous and sickening to the corrupted palate: and such a palate loves not to ruminate in silence upon holy truth.

Treasure up in your mind a good store of spiritual truths. Commit much Scripture to memory. Have the Bible in your mind, as well as in your hand: it will help your meditations. Acquire correct theological views of Divine truth; for, as Dr. Bates says, "Truths in the soul are like gold in the ore; meditation coins the gold, and brings it forth in holy discourses and pious actions. Whereas where there are no spiritual mines in the soul, it is no wonder the thoughts coin dross and vanity."

Keep down worldly-mindedness, and that engrossing power of the world which would take all your time from devotion to give it to business. If you will give your whole heart and your whole day to the world, it is an obvious truism there can be no possibility of meditation.

Cultivate habitual spirituality of mind; it is the parent of which meditation is the offspring.

Discipline your mind to habits of attention and abstraction. Endeavour to acquire increasing command and control over your thoughts. The difficulty which many find to fix their thoughts, may be lessened by practice.

In this way prepare for the blessed exercise; and

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then take the following directions for its actual performance.

As to the end and object of meditation, let them invariably be practical. I am not recommending mere religious reverie. Some minds are delighted to let their thoughts flow on, unchecked and uncontrolled, without order and without coherence, and gratify themselves with this wild Eolian music of the fancy. This is not what I mean: there is much time wasted by christians, in such loose, rambling and unconnected reflection on divine things. Nor do I mean the mere reading of the Scriptures in order to know their meaning. This I allow is a duty, and an important one too, but it is not the duty I now enjoin. Study, is to find an unknown truth; meditation, is to ponder on what is already known: the end of study is information; of meditation, emotion or practice: study, like a winter's sun, gives light but little heat; meditation is like blowing up the fire when we want not the blaze simply, but the heat: in study we acquire spiritual wealth; in meditation we enjoy its benefits. Nor do I mean that enthusiastic state of mind, which some mystics call contemplation; meaning thereby something distinct from thinking upon God and Christ, holiness and heaven, as they are revealed in the Scriptures;

“A kind of vision or intuition, consisting in unions and adherences to God: the prayer of quietness and silence; an immediate entry into the orb of God, and a resolution of all our faculties, into sweetnesses, affections, and starings upon the Divine beauty: carried ou to ecstacies, raptures, suspensions, elevations, abstractions, and apprehensions beatifical. They that pretend to these heights call them the secrets of the kingdom, but they are such which no man can describe; such which God hath not revealed in the publication of the gospel; such for acquiring which there are no means prescribed- and to which no man is obliged, and which are not in any man's

power to obtain; nor such which it is lawful to pray for or desire, nor concerning which we shall ever be called to account. It was, therefore, an excellent desire of St. Bernard's, who was as likely as any- to have such altitudes of speculation, if God really dispensed them to persons, holy, fantastic, and religious: 'I pray God to grant me peace of spirit, joy in the Holy Ghost, to compassionate others in the midst of mirth, to be charitable in simplicity, to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to mourn with them that mourn; and with these I shall be content: other exaltations of devotions I leave to apostles and apostolic men: the high hills are for the harts and the climbing goats; the stony rocks and the recesses of the earth for the conies. It is more healthful and nutritive to dig the earth and eat of her fruits, than to stare upon the glories of the heavens, and live upon the beams of the sun: so unsatisfying a thing are rapture and transportations to the soul: it often distracts the faculties, but seldom does advantage to piety, and is full of danger in the greatest of its lustre. If ever a man be more in love with God by such instruments, or more endeared to virtue, or made more severe and watchful in his repentance, it is an excellent gift and grace of God: but then this is nothing but the joys and comforts of ordinary meditation: those extraordinary, as if they have no sense in them, so are not pretended to be instruments of virtue, but are like Jonathan's arrows, shot beyond it, to signify the danger the man is in to whom such arrows are shot. But if a person be made unquiet, inconstant, proud, pusillanimous, of high opinion, pertinacious, and confident in uncertain judgments, it is certain they are temptations and illusions, so that as our duty consists in the way of repentance, and acquisition of virtue, so there rests our safety, and by consequence our solid joys; and this is the effect of ordinary, pious, and regular meditations.'

This is as true as it is beautiful, and the state of mind thus caused, is altogether different to what I am now recommending, which means nothing more than the exercise of the understanding upon Divine truths, as they are revealed in the Scriptures, and for the express purpose of having the heart impressed, the will subdued, and the life governed by them: in short, of being made holy by them. Every part of Divine truth is revealed to make us holy. There is nothing purely speculative, or merely scientific in the Bible: all is revealed to produce

in us the fruits of righteousness, which are through Christ unto the glory of God; and we must be careful to fall into this design, in the use we make of it. We must meditate upon Divine truth, not as a traveller who is passing through a beautiful country would contemplate its splendid scenery, merely to delight his eye and gratify his taste, but as an artist does, who in addition to the pleasure which he finds in surveying the prospect, is employed to take a drawing of the whole. In meditating upon the glories of God, we are to seek to be changed into his image; in meditating upon the work of Christ, we are to believe, and trust, and love him; in meditating upon the evil of sin, we are to hate it; in meditating upon the beauties of holiness, we are to acquire them; in meditating upon heaven, we are to grow meet for it; if we meditate upon promises, we are to believe them; upon invitations, to accept them; upon threatenings, to tremble at them; upon consolations, to receive them; upon commands, to obey them. Mere admiration, however ecstatic; or knowledge, however clear; or soarings, however lofty, are not enough; there is something to be done. "Meditation is the searcher out of all instruments to a holy life, a devout consideration of them, and a production of those affections, which are in a direct order to the love of God, and a pious conversation. It is to all, that great instrument of religion, whereby it is made prudent, reasonable, orderly, and perpetual."

As to the subjects of your meditation, let them be all in conformity with this design. Let your thoughts be engaged rather upon what is plain, simple, and practical, than upon what is lofty, difficult, and speculative. Do not attempt to soar into the clouds, or to plunge into

the ocean; a disposition to scale the inaccessible heights of truth, manifests rather the promptings of curiosity, than the impulses of piety. The simplest truths of the gospel, like the plainest food for the body, are both the most digestible and the most nutritive. High speculations upon Divine things, resemble the cedars of Lebanon and their rocky heights, which are lofty but fruitless; while the fundamentals of Christianity are fertile as the valleys which are covered with the lowly corn and creeping vine. Hence it is that many poor and simple christians thrive more in holiness than some of more education; the former being content to meditate upon subjects which are more profitable for practice, while the latter are intent upon those which only serve the purposes of speculation. A popish writer has this remark, "That an old simple woman, if she love Jesus Christ, may be greater than Bonaventura, who was one of the most learned of the schoolmen, and called the 'Seraphic Doctor.'"

Let your meditation be suitable to your circumstances at the time. When you set apart any special season for the purpose of contemplation, this is always to be borne in mind, and indeed so it ought to be generally. If you are in trouble, meditate on those abundant topics of consolation which are presented in the word of God: if burdened with a sense of guilt, on the mediatorial work of Christ: if rejoicing in the assurance of hope, upon the warnings against spiritual pride: if in prosperity and wealth, upon the unsatisfying and uncertain nature of riches: if tempted, upon the evil of sin and the consequences of committing it, and also on the intercession, power, and grace of Christ: if afraid

of death, upon the promise of Christ to meet you in the dark valley. It will always be profitable to let your meditations thus run in the channels of your condition. And as a motive to this duty, think of its advantages. In no other way can we discover the hidden beauties, taste the luxurious sweetness, or extract the nutriment of God's holy word. There are some persons whose minds fly over this garden of the Lord, like the birds of the air, and are in no sense the better for what it contains; while others pause and ponder what they read, and are like the industrious bee which extracts honey from each flower. It is thus all the graces are nourished: faith is weak unless fed by meditation on the promises; love is lukewarm, unless kindled by meditation upon Divine mercy; hope dull and lifeless, until it ascends by meditation to the top of Pisgah to survey the promised land; patience becomes weary, unless by meditation upon the power of God, and the benefits of affliction, and the shortness of time, it is fortified; joy is apt to sink, unless invigorated by meditation upon Christ; filial fear is likely to grow careless, unless stimulated by meditation upon God's threatenings; zeal becomes indolent, unless roused by meditation upon the Divine commands; but all these graces are aided and strengthened by holy contemplation. And while it improves our graces, it gives power and influence to all the ordinances of religion. Without meditation, the reading of the word is likely to be unfruitful, and the hearing of it unprofitable. Why are professors so cold, wandering, and ineffectual in their prayers, but because they do not exercise themselves to holy thoughts? David associates prayer and this holy

exercise, yea, seems almost to make them identical, when he says, "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation;" "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight;" evidently implying that prayer is but the utterance of previous meditation. The Lord's supper is pre-eminently a season of meditation, for much of its time is spent in silent thought. And oh! what solemn and impressive musings are indulged, while we are thus gathered round the Lord's table.

Apply yourselves, then, my dear friends, to this delightful exercise. Do not allow politics or business, sloth or ease, company or recreations, to divert your attention from it. Remember how important a part of christian duty is the right ordering of the thoughts, and the employment of the understanding. Do not allow the difficulty of the duty to deter you. All things become easy by practice, and this among the rest.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF SINS.

OUR minds when we approach the table of the Lord, should be filled with various graces, all of them holy; so as to render our devotion like the cloud of incense in the temple, which was compounded of many ingredients, all of them exceedingly precious, and all of divine appointment. Deep humiliation for sin should be one of them, accompanied, of course, but not extinguished, by faith in the great sacrifice for pardon. It is an interesting and momentous question, "In what way should the mind of a professing christian be affected by

a sense of his sins?" In answering this question I shall classify his sins.

I. There are the sins of his unconverted state: those which he committed before he was justified by faith in Christ. If he really be a believer as well as a professor, he has received from God the full, free, everlasting forgiveness of all these. Jehovah holds up the book of his omniscient justice, in which these were once written down against the transgressor, and says to him: Behold, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins/" Now since God has thus cancelled the debt, and will have nothing more to do with these sins; since he regards them as though they had not been, and treats us as if we had never committed them, may not we have as little to do with them as God has, and think" no more about them than he does? Certainly not, and it would be abusing his great mercy if we did so. What then have we to do with them, and how should we regard them?

We are not to remember them in any such manner, as would seem to imply that they are not forgiven. The burden of guilt should be lost from the conscience; the tormenting sense of it should cease; and the mind should really confide in God's declaration, "I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done." There should be a sweet consciousness of pardon, an assurance of God's forgiving love, the witness of his Spirit concurring with the testimony of our own, that we are received into favour; such a persuasion of forgiveness as gives peace, and diffuses a holy serenity through the soul. There should be no looking back upon the past with still shuddering horror, as if it were

to be reckoned for, however dark the scene may have been, for God no longer "requireth the past." And then, of course, we should not ever be praying for the pardon of those sins, as if they had not been pardoned. Many professing christians seem never to arrive at a confidence that their sins are forgiven. To be ever importunately supplicating that forgiveness which God has bestowed, savours of great ignorance of their state, or great disbelief of God's promise. What would a kind parent feel and say, if an offending, yet penitent and pardoned child, were ever to be coming to him, and with tearful entreaty to look in his face and say, "Dear father, do, do forgive me?" "Forgive you, child," would the father say, "I have forgiven you. Cannot you believe my word? Have I not treated you and in everything behaved towards you as though I had forgiven you? Your continued importunity for pardon wounds my paternal love for you." And is it not thus with your heavenly Father? Ought you to be ever praying for the pardon of already pardoned sins, as though they were still written against you? Instead of this, you ought to abound in peace, and gratitude, and love for the forgiveness you have received. True it is, that when you have fallen into fresh sin, so as to make it doubtful to you whether you were formerly sincere in your professions of repentance towards God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; or when you have sunk into such a state of lukewarmness as raises the same doubt; in either of these cases, such believing prayers, for the pardon of all the sins of your past life, are very proper; but for a believer, who is not in either of these conditions, but who is walking humbly with God, to be ever doubting of his acceptance, praying

for his justification, and looking back with dismay upon the sins of his state of ignorance and unbelief, is to deny himself the comfort which belongs to him, and to withhold from God the tribute of gratitude which is due to him for the exceeding riches of his grace.

But still a believer has much to do in other ways with even his pardoned sins. He must ever remember them: they must not be to him as though they had not been. He must ever remember them: to magnify the mercy which forgave them, even as the blessed apostle Paul did; 1 Cor. xv, 9. 1 Tim. i, 12-16. He must remember them often, to confess them afresh to God, especially at seasons set apart for deep and protracted humiliation. Confession is by no means incompatible with the fullest sense of pardon. The child who has received his father's forgiveness, and knows he has it, may still ever and anon say to him, and will please him by the expression, "O my father, though you have forgiven me, and I do not doubt it, I must again repeat my sorrow that I have so offended you." It seems as if even in heaven, we could scarcely forbear in this way to remember and confess our sins. You may look back upon them for the purpose of producing that deep humiliation and self-abasement towards God, and that profound humility in the sight of man, which are so essentially necessary to the formation of the christian character, and such bright ornaments of it. Never, no never forget, that though you are a child of God, you were his enemy; though now you are a justified believer, you were a condemned rebel, and are still a pardoned sinner. Look back often and penitentially till you feel that though a throne of glory is preparing for you in heaven, the dust is your station upon earth.

Call to recollection the lengths in iniquity you ran; the aggravations which attended your sins; and the patience which was manifested by God in bearing with you. Far from you be that manner of looking back upon your past sins, and of speaking of them, which is seen in many, who seem almost to glory in the greatness of their transgressions, and to manifest a sort of pleasure in talking of them, under the pretence of magnifying the grace of God in pardoning them. Remember your sins, also, to produce caution. The very kind of sins you committed before conversion, you are likely, without watchfulness, prayer, and God's help, to commit after it. Grace changes your moral nature, but not your physical one. It alters your spiritual relations and circumstances, but not your civil and social ones. You have the same body, appetites, and propensities; perhaps the same situation in life; and consequently the same temptations: remember your former course, therefore, to see how you fell, and how you are liable to fall again. The working of your deceitful hearts, the artifices of your spiritual foes, your lapses, your surprisals, and your sinful compliances during that dark period of your life, when you knew not God, may be of immense service to you now, when you profess to be the children of light. It is a dreary waste, a moral blank, on which the eye loves not to dwell, and over which the heart aches; but still it is a scene not barren of topics of improvement: materials in abundance may be gathered from it, to produce a grateful, humble, watchful, and devoted life.

Thus let your past history come up often before you, not to rob you of peace and joy in believing; not to put out the light of your soul; not to take from your bosom

the roll of your assurance; no, the sins of that period are all clean blotted out for ever; are cast into the depths of the sea, never to be weighed up; are none of them reserved by God to bring against you again. But let the past be reviewed, to mingle with all your blessed confidence of acceptance with God, a spirit of penitence, and meekness, and circumspection.

II. Another class of a professed christian's sins, are those which he still sometimes commits through a want of watchfulness, and the power of temptation. Backsliding from God, in all its degrees and stages, is, alas! no uncommon thing in any age, or in any section of the christian church. That triple alliance of the world, the flesh, and the devil; "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" is but too often successful against the high-minded, self-confident, and unwary professor. We witness in our own time, as well as read upon the page of inspired history, many melancholy falls of those who call themselves by the name of Christ; and it is well, and an unutterable cause of thankfulness to sovereign grace, if we do not give sad proof of such frailty in ourselves.

To those who have fallen I say: Beware of a self-defending, self-excusing spirit. You will never either repent of your backslidings or return from them, as long as this spirit is in you. Do not endeavour to find out extenuating circumstances, nor gain peace from doubtful palliations. Your safety, as well as your duty, lies not in thinking the best you can of your case, but the worst. God will never justify you till you condemn yourself; nor ever speak pardon from his throne, till you cry, "guilty," from the dust. Confession is the only way to peace: the sin will lie like a burning coal

upon your conscience, till it is acknowledged with ingenuous grief to God. So David found it, as you will learn by reading the thirty-second Psalm. Confession of sin is like opening a vein, and letting out blood from an inflamed part of the body; it will give considerable relief to a wounded, bruised, and feverish conscience. "Do not, instead of this, endeavour to gain peace by persuading yourself that there is nothing in what you have done inconsistent with the reality of grace, the sincerity of your profession, and the character of a christian. It is a delusive opiate to say, "It is merely one of the spots of God's children, and need not give me much concern."

Equally beware of brooding over your guilt in an unbelieving and desponding frame of mind. You have fallen, but not irrecoverably: you have sinned, but may repent, believe, and arise. Some passages of Scripture may here be presented to you as pre-eminently suited to your case: I can only refer to them, and beg you to turn to them, and read them, not only with a penitent but a believing mind; Psalm li.; cxxx. Jer. ii.; xxv.; xxxii.; xxxviii. Hos. xiv. Luke xv. But, perhaps, one short passage, after all, may contain in it more to relieve your conscience, to restore your confidence, and to establish your comfort, than more lengthened portions; then read, ponder, and apply to your own case, in all the assurance of faith, that precious declaration of the apostle, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." That one brief, simple proclamation has saved thousands of broken-hearted penitents, wounded spirits, and trembling self-reproaching backsliders from despair; and no wonder, for there is enough in it to drive despair out of our

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world, and shut it up in hell, its native place. Faith, backslider, faith is as much your duty as repentance; and whatever you may think, there can be no true repentance without it. Honour God's law and justice by repenting; but, at the same time, honour his mercy and his gospel by believing. Glorify the great and good Physician of souls, and his precious balm for wounded spirits, by believing he can heal the backslider, as well as the yet unpardoned sinner; that he can cure a second, yea a third time, as well as a first; that he can bring back from a relapse, yea even a repeated relapse. Do not limit the mercy of his heart, the skill of his hand, the efficacy of his blood, by doubting of his ability or willingness to pardon you. You offend him as much by doubting, as by sinning. He taketh pleasure, not only in them that fear him, but in them that hope in his mercy. Read, in addition to all that I have quoted, that exquisite passage in the prophecies of Micah, "Who is a God like unto me, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." These wondrous words were addressed to a backsliding people; and they are preserved upon record to encourage backsliders, down to the end of time, to forsake their sins, and hope for mercy. Every word is intended to send hope into the backslider's heart. Only believe, then, and thy sins will all be forgiven thee.

"Be contented with nothing short of a full and complete restoration to hope and peace. Till you have recovered that holy rest and

confidence in God, that sweet peace which arises from confessing our sins with faith upon the head of the gospel sacrifice, there is no security against their revival. Sin is to be opposed, not only by direct resistance, but by opposing other principles to it which shall overcome it. It is not by contending with the fire, especially with combustible materials about us, that we shall be able to quench it, but by dealing plentifully with the opposite element. The pleasures of sense will not be effectually subdued by foregoing all enjoyment; but by imbibing other pleasures, the relish of which shall deaden the heart to what is opposite. It was thus that the apostle became dead to the world, 'by the cross of Christ.' Do not, therefore, reckon thyself restored till thou hast recovered communion with God. David, though the subject of deep conviction, was not content without gaining t! is important point. Till then the poison would still at times be rankling in his imagination. Hence arose the following petitions: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' Make these petitions thy own; and if God grant thee the thing that thine heart desireth, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." Fuller on Religious Declension.

Let the restored backslider, in all his deportment, cultivate and manifest a spirit becoming his condition. What profound humiliation before God; what gentleness and meekness towards man; what a penitential sense of his failings; what gratitude and love to his Restorer; what watchfulness, circumspection, and caution through all coming time; what entire dependence on the grace of the Holy Spirit for future holiness; what anxiety to avoid whatever led him astray from God; what diligence in the use of all appointed means for security, should he cultivate and manifest!

And who is there that has not been guilty of the sin of backsliding, if not in conduct, yet in heart? Let not my remarks be considered as applicable only to those who have disgraced their profession by public scandals; they are comparatively few: but how many are there upon whom the eye of the Searcher of hearts looks down as having departed widely from him in

secret, and to whom the directions of this part of the address are fearfully applicable. Many will be found, at last, to have backslidden from God, who never broke their connexion with the church, and were never suspected by their fellow christians to have left their God.

III. There is a third class of sins appertaining to all believers. I mean, those daily infirmities which are found in the best of men. These include the sins of ignorance, inadvertence, omission, defect, and negligence, which are continually being committed in such numbers, and which though they may not impeach the sincerity, impair the lustre, of a christian profession, and keep the believer from the high degree of sanctity which it is his duty to obtain. These are the sins alluded to by the Psalmist, when he says, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." Few christians are sufficiently aware of the number, magnitude, and amount of their imperfections. They admit as well as know that they are far off from perfection, but how far they little imagine. The first thing, therefore, for them to do is to become more intimately acquainted with the daily sins of their hearts, lips, and lives.

How is this knowledge to be acquired? By closely and devoutly studying the holiness of God. The perfection of the Divine character is the best glass in which to see reflected the imperfection of our own: and the sinfulness of man never comes out so fully and so impressively to view as when seen in contrast with the holiness of God. Accustomed to look on the imperfect displays of spiritual excellence which are to be found in the church, and imperfect indeed they are, and on the total want of all that is holy in the men of the world,

we are apt to form very low ideas of what is required of us, and at the same time to entertain too high ideas of what we have attained to: and thus, comparing ourselves with ourselves, and with each other, we have neither the knowledge of our sinfulness, nor, of course, the due humiliation on account of it, which we ought to have. It is only when we fix our gaze upon the Holy One, and contemplate his infinite purity, that we become properly sensible of our deep depravity, and our still remaining corruption. This was the effect of a clearer manifestation of God's glory upon the mind of Job. He who had been considered, and called, a perfect man, comparatively, thus describes the influence upon his mind of a clearer manifestation of the Divine glory: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." A similar effect was produced on the mind of the prophet Isaiah, by the vision of God's majesty in the temple: "Woe to me; for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

A clear and impressive view of the purity, spirituality, extent, and perfection of the law, will have the same effect in discovering to us our numberless and great imperfections. By that law every thing sinful is forbidden, even to an unholy feeling; and every thing holy is required, even to absolute moral perfection. Oh, when the blazing, searching light of that holy rule of action shines into and fills the mind, what corruption is disclosed/what depravity is unveiled! Our sins appear like the particles of matter which float in the sunbeam that enters a dark room, small perhaps as

compared with actual vices, but absolutely innumerable. Study God's holy character, then, and his holy law, and you will soon find out that your sins are more in number than the hairs of your head.

Do not think lightly of these sins, nor excuse them on the ground of their comparative smallness, and because they are found in the best of men. It is true they ought not, except they are indulged, defended, and allowed to remain unopposed and unmortified, to unsettle your confidence in Christ, and your hope of personal interest in his salvation, for if assurance could rest only on perfection, who could possess it? But what deep penitence should they produce, what profound humiliation before God! Here is matter for daily abasement, confession and prayer. If a pardoned sinner, conscious of being such, need not pray while this assurance is in his mind, for the forgiveness of the sins of an unconverted state, he may still daily and hourly pray for the sins of a converted state. If he need not to ask God as a Judge to justify him, he has cause to ask God as a Father to forgive him; if he has not to ask for the curse to be removed, he has to solicit that the rod may be averted. Though we are not to conceive of God as actually looking after causes and grounds for the condemnation of his children, but as knowing their frame, and remembering that they are dust; still they are never to lose sight of their imperfections, or to cease abasing themselves before him on account of them. Far remote are this humiliation and penitence, from a spirit of bondage and dread; it is the lowliness and meekness of a child, who does not doubt his own sonship, or his father's love, but who has such a sense of his father's excellence and claims, that he is

even disposed to condemn himself for the defects of his gratitude and love, of his devotedness and obedience. His sense of his daily sins does not take from him the peace of believing, but it sends him to the throne of grace with tears of penitence, mingling with those of joy.

How prevailing an ingredient in the composition of the christian's character should humility be. For what is he? A pardoned rebel, and still the subject of innumerable imperfections. How inconsistent with such a character is pride of every degree and every kind, and how preposterous and absurd, as well as wicked! How lowly should he be, and how softly should he walk! How strangely must he forget what he was, and how ignorant must he be of what he is, if his heart is lofty, or his eyes be lifted up!

How much is there yet to be done in the work of sanctification, and how diligently should we be employed in doing it. If even an apostle could say of himself, "Not as though I had attained, or were already perfect/' how much more truly and emphatically may we say the same thing. What a height of holiness is there above our head which we have not yet reached; and what a depth of obligation we have scarcely yet sounded. How much is there yet for us to do, by the help of God's blessed Spirit, in these hearts of ours. Yes, in these hearts; for to shut out sin from the life may after all be but a refined selfishness, if there be not equal solicitude to put it out, and keep it out, from the heart: for vice would degrade us and disgrace us in the estimation of our fellow christians, and fellow men; would in consequence be felt as a calamity, as well as a crime; and may by possibility be avoided on other grounds than a

love of holiness for its own sake. If therefore, it is only great sins we are seeking to avoid, while we give ourselves no concern about mortifying and avoiding lesser ones; if it is the life only we are striving to keep pure, while the heart is left uncleansed and unwatched; if it is the sins of commission only which trouble us, and not those of omission, we are certainly deceiving ourselves, and what seeming holiness we possess, is for the love of self, and not for the love of God. Dear brethren, bear about with you a sense of those lesser sins, which though they do not disprove your conversion, diminish your sanctification, and hinder your perfection. Feel like a person who, though he had no loathsome defilement about his dress, which would render him an object of disgust to all who witnessed it, was conscious that there was much dust, which, though it did not render him offensive, would blemish his garments, and was therefore anxious to remove it. Watch against little sins; pray against them, yea, pray to understand them, and to see them, for many are so dull and indistinct in their spiritual vision that they do not properly discern them. A professing christian's state may be much more accurately tested, and safely decided upon, by the way in which he is affected by them, than by his feelings towards greater ones. Natural conscience, the force of education, and a regard to his own reputation, may induce an abhorrence of "presumptuous sins;" but the detestation, dread, and mortification of "secret faults," is a pretty sure indication of a mind under the illumination, and a heart under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

How much you need the help of the Divine Spirit, and how earnestly should you pray for it, to keep alive a

due sense of your daily sins! The number and frequency of them have a tendency to produce a hardness of heart and an obtuseness of conscience, which greatly hinder your sanctification, and from which nothing can effectually preserve you but the grace that cometh from above.

How delightful is the prospect of that state, where there will be no past sins unpardoned, no present ones committed, and no future ones dreaded; and how habitually should we contemplate it! Nothing will remain there of sin but the remembrance of it, and even that will be of a kind which will not interfere, in the smallest degree, with the fulness of joy in God's presence, but will in fact give new raptures of gratitude and love to the blessed, who, in the possession of perfect holiness and perfect happiness, fall before the throne of Him from whom they have received both, saying, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

PROOFS THAT AFFLICTION HAS BEEN SANCTIFIED.

THE subject of my present address is peculiarly appropriate to many. Few are the travellers to heaven who do not pass through the land of Bochim, and the vale of tears, in their way. Blessed are they; and more blessed will they be, who, being chastened by the hand of their heavenly Father, are thereby made partakers of his holiness. The afflictions and consolations of ministers are often made subservient to the good of their people. The apostle has beautifully expressed this, 2 Cor. i, 3, 7. I would not be a sterile thorn in

the garden of the Lord, but a fruitful vine, and bearing the more for the pruning of his severe but infallible kindness; and “I desire fruit that may abound to your account.” May it be granted me to teach you by example as well as precept, not only the active virtues, but the passive graces of our holy religion; and both by what I suffer and enjoy, may I be made more effectually the comforter as well as instructor of the sorrowing portion of God’s chosen family.

The proof of a sanctified affliction begins to show itself while the trouble lasts. Though it be very true that it is “afterwards,” (when it is gone by,) that it yields “the peaceable fruits of righteousness” in their maturity; yet as there can be no fruits where there have been no blossoms, so in this case the buds of spiritual improvement must be seen during the season of affliction, or there will be no ripe fruits afterwards. A right frame of mind rarely comes on when the trial is over if it does not commence while it lasts. The seeds of improvement, like some grain, must be sown while the showers are falling and the ground is wet, or they will not germinate and yield a crop. “While the tear is yet in the eye, the earnest desire after sanctification must be in the heart. Let not sufferers therefore put by the wish, and suspend the effort, to get good, till the visitation of the Almighty has passed away. A child who is not while under chastisement brought to reflection, and to the beginning, at least, of a becoming disposition, is rarely brought to it when the rod is laid aside, and he is restored to his fellows, in all the joyousness of boyish hilarity. The reason why trials are so generally unproductive of spiritual effect is because the sufferer postpones his attempts to render them beneficial

till days of prosperity return, and then he is too busy and too happy in the enjoyment of his altered circumstances to call to remembrance the wormwood and the gall.

Hence, a striking proof of sanctified affliction is deep anxiety, studious efforts, and much earnest prayer, that it may be blessed for the good of the soul. The only solicitude of a worldly man and of a worldly-minded professor of religion, is to get out of trouble as fast as he can, and any how; but that of a consistent, spiritual, and growing christian, is to get out of it only in God's time, by righteous means, and with holy fruits. When there is a real inward desire, (and not the mere profession of such a wish,) that the trial may be sanctified, and that it may not be removed till it is so; when there is a willingness to remain in the furnace, however long the time and fierce the fire, till the dross is separated, and the gold refined; when there is a disposition to say, "Lord, smite till the folly is beaten out of thy wayward child. Give not over till thou hast restored me to thyself, since the sorest word thou couldest say to me, would be, 'Why shouldest thou be stricken any more?' and my chief blessing, not to have it said of me, 'Let him alone:' "this is sanctification. If the soul be in that state, it has got good, and is getting it still. Here is God's end in afflicting accomplished, which is, that we may be partakers of his holiness.

But just look at a more detailed description of the state of mind of those who are really benefiting by affliction.

They recognise the hand of God in it, whether it come direct from him, or through the medium of second

causes. "It is the Lord," they exclaim. "It comes from God. Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it? I am dumb, and open not my mouth, because thou, O God, hast done it." Yes, they do not wander about amidst the briars, torn and lacerated, seeking after second causes, but go and lie down at once on "the soft green" of the doctrine of providence. Then, as they recognise the hand that smites, they are equally forward to acknowledge the design. "This is for my good, I know, because I am told that all things work together for my good. I do not see how, but that is not my business: all I know is, it will be so, for God has said it. He intends to make me holier by this affliction. He is bent upon my improvement. He thinks me, shall I say, worth and worthy of being chastised? Yes, I receive it as a message from God to me, saying, 'See how important holiness is in my people, since I call you to suffer so much in order to promote it.'" Nor does the christian's recognition of God stop here, for it goes on to the principle from which the dispensation proceeds. "This, yes, even this is love," says the believer, whose affliction is sanctified. "Even through the cloud I so clearly perceive the smile, not only of peace, but of affectionate tender love, on the countenance of that Father who holds the rod, as to be constrained to run into those very arms which chastise me. I resolve all into love. I know that in faithfulness he has afflicted me. Love cannot act unlike itself. I could sooner believe a mother would torment her child, than that God would his."

Notwithstanding these views, still the sufferer has his sins brought to remembrance. "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not

offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." This is his language; and in answer to his prayers, God shows him his sins, his defects, his rebellions, his backslidings, and he is deeply abased and humbled before God. Confession, purposes of amendment, plans of improvement follow. Oh! it is a blessed sign of good, when the sufferer is taken up with a sense of sin; when not only the past life is reviewed with a more searching scrutiny, and a more rigid exactness, so that sins passed over on former occasions come out more distinctly and impressively to view, but when the chambers of imagery in the heart are laid open, and the soul grows in accurate and humbling acquaintance with itself. All this is quite compatible with our recognition of God's love to us. Yea, the more we are assured of God's love, the more clearly do we see our sins.

Connected with all this, and in some measure implied in it, is deep submission to the will of God. A quiet bowing down, and lying still at the feet of God; a giving up of ourselves to his disposal, willing that he should determine for us; a patient endurance of lengthened visitation; a grateful recollection of what is left, in place of the mournful calculation of what is lost; a quieting consciousness that God has exacted of us less than our iniquities deserve; in short, such a disposition under the rod, as seems to say, "Any thing from thy hand; any thing with thy smile; anything but thy frown."

A readiness to dwell upon our mercies, especially our spiritual blessings, is a fine evidence of a holy state of mind. It is delightful to hear the sorrowful believer

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talking of his mercies, and thus setting one thing over against another.

Such is the proof of sanctified affliction which is furnished by the conduct of the sufferer while his trouble lasts. If, on the contrary, the mind be wholly absorbed with a sense of sorrow; thinking only how it may be removed, and caring nothing about improvement; if there be no remembrance of sin, no desire after holiness; if God, as the source and sender of the affliction, be forgotten, and the mind dwell exclusively with peevishness and reproachfulness on second causes; if there be, though not words of complaint murmuring and rebellion, yet thoughts and feelings that imply something like a sense of unmerited hardship in the visitation; there can, in such a case, be no benefit derived from the affliction; there is the bitterness of the medicine without its salutary effect; the pain of the chastisement, without the compensatory result in the improvement of the conduct.

I now go on to set before you those proofs of affliction being sanctified which are furnished by a christian's conduct after the trial is removed.

1. If, when the hand of God is withdrawn, and prosperity again returns, the views, feelings, and purposes remain which the soul entertained in the season of darkness; if, for instance, there be the same solicitude for spiritual improvement, and, even amidst the glow of health, the tranquillity and repose of altered circumstances, and the freedom from apprehension for the future, there be still a prayerful and anxious desire not to lose the benefit of trouble, but to be made more holy and heavenly; there is every reason to believe that

the visitation of God has left a blessing behind. The passing away of severe trial leaves the soul so buoyant and joyous, so prepared for the feelings of earthly delight, and possessed of such a capacity for the most vivid enjoyment, that if amidst such circumstances, there be sobriety of mind, seriousness of spirit, solemnity of manner, prayerful anxiety after increased spirituality, there has been affliction sanctified. Yes, when such devout aspirations after conformity to God's will and image survive the night of sorrow, and still live, and grow, and thrive, under the sunshine of prosperity, the beneficent end of the chastisement has been indeed accomplished.

2. "When one of the first businesses that are attended to after the return of prosperity, is to put in execution the vows that were made, the plans laid, and the purposes formed, in trial, when defects in duty are immediately supplied, sinful practices discontinued, discovered corruptions mortified, and languishing graces revived, then good is certainly gained by suffering. It is indeed a blessed sight, and a proof of growth in grace, when the soul, liberated from the prison of its distress, goes straightway and most diligently to the work of increased sanctification. Perhaps few professors are ever greatly afflicted without some purposes of amendment being formed, as well as convictions of the need of it being felt. But how many of them forget their vows, abandon their plans of improvement, and become as lukewarm, worldly, and careless as ever, when the Lord is pleased to turn their captivity! Some few however there are of the mind of David, who said, "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings, I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered when I was in

trouble.” There is a proper custom, prevailing in all sections of the christian church, of publicly acknowledging in the house of God any special mercy received at his hand. It is to be feared that with many this is nothing more than a mere form; and that by others, who are really sincere, and even ardent at the time, it is regarded, or at any rate observed, as if it were a kind of composition for, and clearance of, all other obligations to increased holiness imposed upon us even by our own declarations and promises in the hour of affliction. If however this religious observance be faithfully employed, as a means to fasten upon the heart and conscience the obligations of the season of sickness, and to summon the soul to the business of renewed devotedness to God, it may be truly concluded that the affliction has done its own proper work.

3. When besetting sins are mortified by trial, it is a good sign, and this is a sign not unfrequently exhibited by God’s afflicted people. Almost all of us have such sins, and there is not ordinarily the anxiety and labour for putting them away which there should be: they are indulged, instead of being resisted; and gain strength by such indulgence, and most sadly disfigure our character and disturb our peace. Prosperity, like sunshine upon weeds, often causes them to grow apace; and then God in great mercy sends adversity, like frost, to kill them. Upon a bed of sickness, and in other trials, they are often remembered, understood, seen in all their sinfulness, lamented, confessed, and mortified. Nothing can be a darker sign than for a professor’s conscience to be so dull and drowsy during a time of trial, as to leave him unadmonished respecting these predominant sins; but it is sometimes a blessed fruit of tribulation,

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that they are weakened, if not eradicated. It is worth any amount of suffering to secure this result. Happy the christian who comes out of the furnace, with his dross removed by the lire. No matter what he has lost, if he has gained freedom from these inward enemies of his peace and purity.

4. Increasing deadness to the world, and growing spirituality of mind, are another proof of the same result. The love of the world is the great snare of the church in every age of time, but especially in the present unmolested circumstances of the christian profession. Worldly-mindedness is now the prevailing sin of christians. We see them on all hands too eager to make themselves happy on earth, and seeking their enjoyments, if not in the sinful amusements of the world, yet in its innocent and home-bred comforts. They look not at things unseen and eternal, but at things seen and temporal. Theirs is too much a life of sense, refined it is true from its grossness, but still a life of sense, rather than a life of faith. Hence there is "a needs be for manifold temptations," if not to separate them and keep them separate from specific and gross sins, yet to lift up their affections to things above, and to lead them to seek their happiness from faith hope and love, from God the fountain of life, from Christ the Redeemer of their souls, and from heaven the object of their expectations. When the world has been crucified to us, and we have been crucified to the world; when we have been taught its vanity and emptiness as a portion for the soul; when we have lost much of our anxiety to obtain its possessions, and of our dread of losing them; when we have been taken off from the folly of hewing out broken cisterns that can

hold no water, and led more to the fountain of living waters; when we have lost our dependence on our comforts and possessions for happiness, and feel and rejoice in a glorious independence upon created good for bliss; when there is really and truly a conscious elevation of soul towards God and things divine, then, then we have evidence that we are improved by our trials.

5. In some persons we discover a striking and beautiful mellowness of character, as the result of God's chastening hand. The roughness, harshness, obtrusiveness, and loftiness of their conduct, which once rendered them annoying and offensive in their intercourse with their fellow christians, are rasped off, and a sweet gentleness, humility, meekness, and softness of manner and a tenderness of spirit have come in their place. There is now a suavity in their speech, a mildness in their look, and a kindliness and cautiousness in their manner, which tell us how their haughty spirits have been broken, and the loftiness of their minds brought down. An unwonted loveliness has been spread over their character, a holy amiability has been infused into their temper, and their stubborn self-will has yielded to a kind consideration of the wishes and feelings of others, which convince all around them, how much the Spirit of God has done in them, and for them, by the afflictions they have endured; how the plough and the harrow have broken up the stiff soil, and pulverised the hard clods of their stubborn nature, and prepared it for the growth of the precious seed of the kingdom.

6. A clearer view of the glory of Christ, and a deeper sense of his inestimable preciousness, are evidences of growth in grace under affliction. The design

of all God's dealings in his providential dispensations, in the scheme of redemption, and in the work of his Holy Spirit, is to bring us to Christ, to enlighten our minds in the knowledge of him, to lead us to a more simple dependence upon him, and to endear him more and more to our hearts. If then amidst the decays of health, we have learned to feel his value more as the Physician of souls; if amidst the loss of property, the worth of his unsearchable riches has been more correctly estimated; if at the grave of earthly friends, we have been drawn closer to him the Friend of sinners; if amidst the gloom and desolation of earthly scenes, the glory of the cross has shone forth with a new and surpassing lustre; if amidst privations and losses, otherwise trying and distressing, we are brought to adopt the language of the apostle, "Having Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, I have all things, and abound, all things are mine, for I am Christ's, and Christ is God's:" in this case, also, the affliction has answered its end; for that trial cannot have been in vain which has revealed to us the glory of the Saviour, and made us more evangelical, both in our sentiments and in our feelings. Clearer views of the importance of gospel truths, and a richer unction from them imbuing the heart as the fruit of sorrow, are convincing proofs of benefit from God's chastening hand.

7. Less dread of future trials, with a stronger trust in God for support under them, is another evidence of the same fact. We have most of us (till they are removed by God's grace,) a timidity, dread, and desponding feeling about afflictions, which make us afraid to encounter them. We turn away from them with dis-

may, as if there were no power which could support us under them, no wisdom to guide us through them, and no grace to comfort us in the midst of them. The very shadow of an approaching affliction makes our coward hearts tremble, and causes us to cry out in unbelief, "How can I endure it?" We thus dishonour God by our guilty fears, and show a weakness of faith exceedingly dishonourable to us. To be cured of this weakness and disease by affliction, and to rise out of it strong in faith, and firm in trust; to feel our fears subsiding, and our confidence in God established; to see new chastisements preparing for us, to be endured as soon as the present ones have ceased; to behold the clouds returning after the rain, and fresh storms gathering to beat upon us, when those which have lately spent their fury upon us retire; and yet to be able to say, "I will trust and not be afraid, for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength; and he will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon him, because he trusteth in him;" is a genuine mark of improvement by God's dispensations. God's design in chastening us is to bring, us to confide in him. He demands our trust, and is honoured by it, and it is really no small part of our sanctification; and he that goes forward from one cross to another, strengthened by the past to meet with greater courage the future; who can trust himself and all he has with greater calmness to the disposal of God, with less apprehension for the result, has not been visited in vain by the hand of God.

8. A more entire consecration of the soul to God's service in general, and to some special service in particular, is also a proof of sanctified affliction. How

delightful a spectacle is it to God, to angels, and to men, to see a christian rising from the bed of his own sickness, or returning from the grave of a near relative, in the spirit of the hundred and sixteenth Psalm: and while his eyes are yet moistened with tears, and his heart soft with sorrow, yielding up himself afresh to the claims, the service, and the glory of God; and instead of being paralyzed with grief, or taken up with enjoyment, setting himself apart by a new dedication to God! How beautiful is the language of the Psalmist in the review of his deliverance, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds!" This is the language of sanctified affliction. When the christian is seen giving himself afresh to the service of God, in a more devoted attendance upon all the means of grace, private, domestic, and public; when his liberality is greater, and his zeal more ardent; when he seems anxious, inventive, and laborious to show his gratitude and love by new acts of devotedness, and former measures of service will not content him, it is a convincing evidence that he has derived benefit from tribulation.

9. Increased sympathy for others in their affliction, is a proof that our own has done us good. In some cases sorrow hardens the heart, and makes men selfish; it draws off all their attention from others, and concentrates it on themselves. This is a dark sign; nothing can be a stronger proof that trials have done us harm, and not good, than that they have blunted our susceptibilities, hardened our hearts, and put all our tears in requisition for ourselves; nor, on the contrary, can there be a more convincing evidence that they have bene-

fited us, than an increase of sympathy, and a greater readiness to weep with those that weep. It is a delightful exhibition of a mind softened and sanctified by affliction, to see a person, on recovering from it, still holding in remembrance the wormwood and the gall, and instead of giving himself to selfish enjoyment, going forth, with quickened sensibilities to succour the distressed.

Such are the evidences of sanctified affliction.

May they be found in you, my dear friends, and in your pastor. Trials abound in this world; it is a vale of tears. Happy will it be for us, if we shall emerge from it at length into that blessed region, where God shall wipe away all tears from every eye. "I reckon," said the blessed Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose." With such internal consolations as the gospel affords, such peace as passeth understanding, what external tribulation may we not endure, and endure not only with all long-suffering, but with joyfulness? It is beautifully said by Archbishop Leighton, "All outward distress to a mind thus at peace, is but as the rattling hail upon the tiles to him that sits within the house at a sumptuous feast." Dread not affliction, or at least dread far more being left to grow worldly and sinful, for want of it; or being suffered to endure the pain of it without reaping the benefit of it. The losses, the pains, the disappointments, of the present state, if

blessed for our spiritual good, will all meeten us for the state where there shall be no more sorrow nor crying: the drops of sanctified grief are the seeds of immortal joy. There will soon be a last tear, but never a last joy. Fix your heart upon holiness as a preparative for heaven, and be little concerned at what expense of present ease and possessions it be obtained, so that it is obtained. The first look at Jesus as he is, and the first moment spent in heaven, will make ample amends for the longest and the saddest life on earth. Abound in hope, a lively hope of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Be much in prayer for the presence and help of the Spirit of God as a Comforter. Without his aid the least trial will distress you, and with it the greatest cannot crush you. God is able to succour, as well as save, to the uttermost; and none of us can tell what, in either case, the "uttermost" of a God can do.

SORROW FOR THE DEATH OF FRIENDS.

I HOPE I shall not be thought by any to be indelicately obtruding my personal sorrows upon public attention. I am sure I shall not by you, who are the primary objects of these Addresses, if I again allude to the situation in which I am placed by a mysterious but all-wise Providence. If I refer to the event that has now befallen me, it is not to move your sympathy, for this has already flowed towards me in full tide, and in every variety of soothing attentions, both before and since the stroke of separation; and for it I thus publicly return you my sincere gratitude: but it is for

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a still higher and holier purpose, to promote your spiritual welfare. If the ordinary afflictions of life should be improved by us for our good, surely the deeper sorrows of the grave should be eminently conducive to our soul's present and eternal welfare. When it is not possible for us to derive any further benefit from the life of our friends, we should be tremblingly solicitous to receive it from their death. When their own vital selves are no longer before us in all the beautiful form and activity of a holy example, and nothing remains of them but their tomb and their memory, we should render those precious remains subservient to our spiritual improvement. This is the best, the only compensation for their loss.

When a holy and beloved object of our affection is removed by death, we ought to sorrow; humanity demands it, and Christianity (Christ wept at the grave of Lazarus) allows it: and the man without a tear, is a savage or a stoic, but not a christian. God intends when he bestows his gifts, that they should be received with smiles of gratitude, and when he recalls them, that they should be surrendered with "drops of sacred grief." The Creator made the soul of man liable to sorrow for wise and beneficent purposes; and the susceptibility ought not to be ruthlessly torn up by the roots, but directed in its exercise by reason and religion. The work of grace, though it is above nature, is not against it. The man who tells me not to weep at the grave, insults me, mocks me, and wishes to degrade me. I do weep; I must weep; I cannot help it; God requires me to do so; and has opened a fountain of tears in my nature for that purpose; and it is the silent, pure, unsophisticated testimony of my heart to the excellence of the gift he gave

in mercy, and in mercy, no doubt, as well as judgment, has recalled. Without sorrow we should not improve by his correcting hand; chastened grief is like the gentle shower, falling first upon the earth to prepare it for the seed, and then upon the seed to cause it to germinate; though wild, clamorous, passionate sorrow is like the thunder shower of inundation, that carries away soil and seed together. Can we lose the company of one whose presence was the light and charm of our dwelling, whose society was the source of our most valuable and most highly valued earthly comfort; whose love, ever new and fresh, was presented daily to us in full cup by her own hand; who cheered us with her conversation; bore with our infirmities; solved our doubts; disclosed to us in difficulty the path of duty; and quickened us by her example; is it possible, I say, to lose such a friend and not sorrow?

But then though we mourn, we must not murmur. We may sorrow, but not with the passionate and uncontrolled grief of the heathen, who have no hope. Our sorrow, however deep, must flow noiseless and still in the channels of submission. It must be a sorrow so quiet as to hear all the words of consolation which our heavenly Father utters amidst the gentle strokes of his rod; so reverential as to adore him for the exercise of his prerogative in taking away what and whom he pleases; so composed as to prepare us for doing his will as well as bearing it; so meek and gentle as to justify him in his dispensations; so confiding as to be assured that there is as much love in taking the mercy away, as there was in bestowing it; so grateful as to be thankful for our mercies left, as well as afflicted for the mercies lost; so trustful as to look forward to

the future with hope, as well as back upon the past with distress; so patient as to bear, with unruffled acquiescence, all the aggravations that accompany or follow the bereavement; so holy as to lift the prayer of faith for Divine grace to sanctify the stroke; and so lasting, as to preserve through all the coming years of life the benefit of the event which in one awful moment changed the whole aspect of our earthly existence.

When grief impairs the health and preys upon the constitution, it is “the sorrow of the world which worketh death;” when it closes the ear to the words of consolation, and the eye to mercies left; when it paralyses the energies, and benumbs and stupifies the mind, so that incumbent duties, personal and relative, domestic and social, civil and sacred, are neglected, and the soul does nothing but lie down upon the sepulchre to weep; when it refuses to be comforted, even with all the consolation of the gospel: then it is a sorrow unworthy of the honourable name which the christian bears.

But it is not against too long and too deep a sorrow that some need to be admonished, but against a too short and too superficial one. Nothing promises more, and too generally yields less improvement and benefit, than the death of friends. At their decease life loses its charm; society, occupation, and favourite tastes, no longer possess any attraction; the pall that covers their dear remains extends its dark folds over all things else; and every hope is entombed in their grave. Things temporal fade and are lost amidst the glory and grandeur of things eternal. Invisible realities displace from the imagination the shows and shadows of the visible world;

the tie that binds us to earth is cut, and our spirit seems set loose to rise to heaven and glory. For a while we hear the voice that comes from the tomb. The edifying and exemplary life, the triumphant death, the kind and pious counsels, and the tender or affectionate farewell of a beloved companion, for some days or weeks employ our thoughts or engross our conversation. We can talk and think of nothing else, as long as our sorrow remains. But, by degrees, the world which seemed dead, corrupted, and loathsome, recovers its life, its health, its attractions, and its power. Time abates the violence of grief.

“By degrees new connections are formed, new projects are devised, new pleasures are pursued; the stream of reflection is diverted into other and far distant channels; the heart plunges as deeply as ever into worldly hopes and fears; the fondness for what was lately pronounced vanity and vexation of spirit, is revived: thus the tears shed for departed friends have been shed in vain, and they who were stricken of God and afflicted, hearken no longer to the voice of the rod, and reap no lasting fruit from correction.”

It is wisely ordered, I know, that the poignancy of sorrow should be abated by the lapse of time, and that the mind by its elastic power should rise from beneath the first pressure of overwhelming calamity, else the ever opening grave would soon paralyse the whole frame of society. Still it must be confessed and lamented, that in too many cases the grief of the mourner is too evanescent, either for a just tribute to the memory of departed excellence, or for his own spiritual improvement. If departed spirits could be spectators of what is doing upon earth, and were susceptible of the feelings of their mortal sojourn, it would surprise and grieve them, in some cases, to see how soon the grass grows around their sepulchre, and the foot turns from it into

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another path; and it should check our vanity and curb our expectations of posthumous honour and affection, to think how soon our names will be pronounced without a sigh, and our history be forgotten amidst the new objects that rise to occupy our place.

But it is now time to consider the lessons to be learned by the death of christian friends.

I. How dreadful is the nature of sin! Sin is the parent of death; and death the first-born of sin. What must be the parent, when the offspring is so hideous and so terrific? Who can have watched the harbingers of dissolution, “the groans, the pains, the dying strife,” and have seen all this in the dying christian too, without being struck with the fearful nature of man’s revolt from God? True, “the mortal paleness on the cheek” is associated, almost irradiated, with “a glory from the soul,” just as the rays of the sun, falling upon a mean and even unsightly object, may conceal its deformity from an observer at a little distance; but death in itself, and by itself, is horrid and revolting: and to see all this inflicted, I repeat, upon a christian, a saint, a child of God, an heir of glory; to see no way even to the kingdom of God, to the realms of immortality, but this dark valley of corruption, earth, and worms, this gives us a most impressive idea of the dreadful nature of sin. Grace triumphs, I admit; the soul rises superior to its situation, sees the glimpses of glory in that low dark situation, and echoes amidst the groans of expiring nature the song of the redeemed. Yes, but this is the victory of faith over death; this is grace triumphing over sin. Take away what grace does; and all that pertains to death itself is as awful in the most eminent believer, as in the most confirmed and blaspheming infi-

del. Death, as to its physical effects, cannot change its nature, though, in the death of the christian, sin and grace, in their effects, are often presented in wondrous conflict and in glorious contrast. How such scenes should enlarge our views of the malignity of sin, and embitter our hearts against it! O sin, sin, what hast thou done!

2. But what a glorious view does the death of christians give us of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great peace maker with God through the blood of his cross; as the destroyer of death; the prince of life; the restorer of immortality; the compassionate high priest of his people; their companion and helper in the mortal conflict; and their conductor to celestial glory. There it is: his mediatorial office: his redeeming work; his soul-saving power; his abounding mercy; not in a sermon, not in a book, no, not even in a verse or page of the New Testament; but in the glorious result and reality, embodied in that dying saint, set forth in that dissolving yet imperishable believer. Hear the comfortable words that fall from the lips of the departing christian, as his voice almost lost in death still praises God, and sends forth expressions which seem more like the first sounds of the cherubim's song than the last words of mortal man. See the peace that spreads over the countenance, and the sparkle that lights up with joy the eye that is growing dim in death. What is it all? how is it all? Whence this tranquillity on the verge of the grave, this confidence in the near prospect of meeting a holy God, this voluntary surrender of life, this fearless tread down into the dark valley, this resolute plunge into the vast abyss of eternity, the act of the soul herself in loosening all the ties which bound her to

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earth, and laying hold of a hand that is lifting her up to the skies, this longing after holiness, as if the atmosphere, not only of the world but of the church, was not pure enough for her to breathe; this reaching after the presence of a glorified Saviour; this sweet spirit of ineffable charity, which casts back its smiles on the world it is leaving, and which covets to be in a world of pure unmixed love? I say, what is this? "O Redeemer of our lost, and sinful, and miserable world, this is thy love's redeeming work, the glory of thy cross, the fruit of thine agonies, the travail of thy soul." Yes, this is religion; it is faith, hope, love. It is a scene that presents the work of grace on earth, and as much of the work of glory as can be seen on earth. Does it not prove the reality of religion? Is it not an evidence of the truth of the Bible? Is there any thing like it, can there be any thing like it in the region of imposture? Is it not too holy for falsehood, too elevated for delusion, too sober for enthusiasm? What a view does it give us of the excellence and power of religion! Never does it shine brighter than in such a dark scene as this; never does it appear stronger than in this scene of weakness; never more beautiful than when thus surrounded with all that is repulsive in disease and death. Next to a seraph spirit before us in the robes of light and immortality, the dying believer, triumphing by faith and hope over the last enemy, is the brightest specimen of our holy religion.

My dear friends, do not be afraid to die. Trust the conqueror of death with your soul not only for living duties but for dying agonies. Seek more and more of that religion for the actions of your lives, which you

saw putting forth its power and beauties at the deaths of your friends. It is a mistake, and a dangerous error, to suppose that God intentionally reserves the joy and peace of believing for a death-bed. He is willing to give us grace to enjoy all this peace now. It is our own fault that we are not thus blessed as christians while engaged in the affairs of life. If faith, and hope, and love, can do all this for dying saints, they can do the same things for living ones. And this is one use we should make of such scenes, to quicken our graces, to shame us for our lukewarmness, to cure us of our worldly-mindedness. Dying saints are patterns, not only for other dying saints, but for living ones. Our exclamation, on witnessing such, should not only be, "Let me die thus," but "Let me live thus." "Let me be thus holy, thus heavenly now. I cannot wait till I die for this grace, I want it now; I will seek for it now; I must have it now." And you may.

3. The death of christian friends should impress on us, even as it shows us, the vanity of the world. All that poetry ever wrote, even the most mournful and pensive of its strains, all that philosophy ever argued, or morality ever taught, conveys no such view, and is calculated to produce no such impressions of the emptiness of the world, as the desolate chamber, the vacant place, the deserted chair, the painted resemblance of some dear object of our heart's affection. It is at the tomb of that loved lost friend the world stands stripped of its false disguise, and is presented to us as a shadow. Gloom now covers every thing. Scenes that once pleased, please no more; favourite walks are shunned, or re-trodden only to remind us of the dear companion that once shared their beauties with us.

Seasons return, but not to bring with them the delights with which the presence of one beloved object associated them. We go about in the bitterness of our spirit, crying, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity and vexation of spirit;" and are ready to sigh for death to relieve us from the tedium of existence and the sense of vacuity. Be it so; it is all true. The world is empty, and it was intended by God that it should be as to satisfying bliss. It is a cistern, a broken cistern, that can hold no water. God told us so, but we would not learn it from testimony, and now we must learn it by experience. Since we must learn it, if we cannot be taught by faith, we are in mercy taught by feeling. Oh let us go to the fountain which is full, flowing, open. It is a fountain of living waters too. If there is emptiness, nothingness in the world, there is fulness in God. He makes angels happy; he makes perfect spirits happy; he made Christ's human nature happy; he makes himself happy, and cannot he make us happy? Is there enough in him to satisfy millions of millions, and not enough to satisfy us? Let us crucify the world: there is more happiness in a crucified world, than in an idolized one.

How then should we die to the world! I know that faith is the consecrated means of gaining this victory. I know that it is amidst the glory of the cross and of heaven that all the twinkling and artificial lights of this world, like the gaudy lustre of an illumination, expiring as the sun rises in splendour upon the earth, should fade away and become invisible. I know that one clear, impressive, heart-satisfying view of Christ crucified and glorified does more to wean our affections from things seen and temporal than the bleakest and dreariest aspect of this sublunary scene; but still, it is

well to press everything into the work and service of our mortification to things seen and temporal. It is well to feel how much less there is on earth to love; how impoverished and disfigured and unattractive it has become by the removal of that which constituted its loveliest charm; and therefore how much less worthy it is of our regard than it was. If our hearts cannot die to the world anywhere else, let them be crucified at the tomb of those we love.

4. From the death of our friends we learn how important it is to discharge our duty well to such as remain. Perhaps no one ever yet committed to the tomb an object of his dear affection, without some reproach for not having duly appreciated its value while the blessing was possessed, or for not having treated it with sufficient tenderness and attention. The magnitude of our mercies seems to be best seen by the shadows they cast behind them as -they retire from us; and our obligations to promote the happiness of our friends are never so well understood as when the opportunity for discharging them is for ever gone by. The most sincere, ardent, and unvarying affection, when its object is removed, finds out how much more could have been done for its happiness than was done. Many and sad are the regrets which we pour out at the sepulchre of our friends, for not registering proofs of their regard which at the time made little or no impression upon us; for acts of disinterested and devoted service which were received with too much coldness or ingratitude; for duties neglected which might have been performed; for opportunities to give pleasure which were suffered to pass by unimproved; for words too sharply spoken, or unkind feelings too hastily indulged. Such

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injuries, often more imaginary than real, though sometimes true, can never be repaired, and it is the sting of sorrow that they cannot; for the grave has closed over the subject of them. That grave, however, sends forth a warning voice, "Go perform every duty in love, in season, and in measure to the friends that remain; do now what thou wilt certainly wish thou hadst done, when the time for doing it is at an end. Perform every office of benevolence, discharge every duty of affection, while it can be performed. Beware of being guilty of that neglect, or of doing that hurt to another, which his death may make it impossible for thee to redress. Whatsoever thy hand finds to do for the good of thy friend, do it speedily with thy might; for thy friend may die, and there is no work or device in the grave. Thy tears of regret, thy confession of unkindness, thy wishes for reparation, will not meet him there."

5. We should check the selfishness of our sorrow by rejoicing in the present felicity of our departed friends, and thus make their decease a means of promoting in our minds the virtue of disinterested love. They are with the Lord, where they longed to be, and are fully blessed in the enjoyment of his love. Have we not love enough for them, to choose that they should remain where they are? They have looked on the beauties of the New Jerusalem; they have fallen in lowly adoration and ecstatic joy before the throne of God; they have seen the glory of the Lamb; they have eaten the fruit of the tree of life, and drunk of the crystal stream that flows from the living fountains of waters; they are perfect in holiness, happiness, and knowledge; and would we pluck them from such bliss, and imprison them again in our world and in the flesh, merely to solace us, to

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wipe away the tears from our eyes, and to weep with us when we weep? Let us better discipline our hearts. Let us go up in faith and in imagination to rejoice with them, since they cannot come down to weep with us. This is moral discipline; it is cultivating the generous, disinterested, and benevolent affections. It is high and difficult virtue; the last triumph of affection; and the profoundest exercise of love.

6. Let us learn the duty of sending our hearts after our friends to heaven. If their removal has impoverished earth, it has enriched heaven; and though the presence of Christ is the sun of the celestial world, and the Lamb is the glory thereof, yet the apostle speaks with joy of our gathering together unto Jesus, of our coming to the spirits of just men made perfect, and of the joy and crown of rejoicing which our friends will be to us on the day of our Lord. Surely, it will be no small joy to meet those in heaven whom we loved on earth; and though Christ is the great magnet that draws all holy hearts to paradise, yet even our blessed and glorified friends are not without a certain and legitimate though inferior influence of the same kind.

7. We should imitate their virtues. It is a lovely propensity of our nature which leads us to forget the failings of departed friends, and hold fast the remembrance of their excellences. Those whom we were perhaps but too apt to censure while they lived, we are willing to canonize when they are dead. Their decease has invested their character with new beauty; and their virtues appear to us, even as they are presented to us by memory, to have caught and to reflect some of the light of heaven to which they are ascended. And indeed this in many cases is the fact,

for we see such a maturity of spiritual graces, such a measure of the beauties of holiness in their last days, as plainly show that the rays of the excellent glory have fallen upon them ere they have emerged from the dark valley. Oh let us follow their footsteps. When the first tears of sorrow, through which it is difficult to see anything clearly, are wiped away from our eyes, and the stupor or the tumult of the mind has subsided into the reflective silence of acquiescence, let us set their pattern before us, and learn what we ought to be, and what we ought to do. Let us, while the recollection of them is fresh, and before the tints of their picture are faded upon the memory, copy into our character all the excellences of theirs. Let ours be not only a sorrowing but an imitating love; assured that no remembrance of them is so honourable to their character, or would please them so well, if they could know it in their celestial sphere, as an attempt to resemble them in all that is worthy of imitation.

8. Let us comply with their holy wishes, their devout requests. One wish there was, not only cherished in the heart, but expressed with the dying accents of that dear saint who has lately departed from the midst of us, and that was, that her decease might be a dispensation of love to us in the way of increasing our spiritual attainments. "Give my love to the church, that church I so much love, and tell them to be a pattern and example of holiness to all the churches round." How often, in the privacy and fellowship of grief and prayer in her sick chamber, have I wrestled for this. Amidst what tears and sobs have I implored that her approaching death might be as life to the church. Shall it not be so? Ought we to let so much spiritual wealth be taken

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from us, without endeavouring to make up the loss by an increase of our own piety? Members of my church, sheep of my flock, souls committed by the Holy Ghost to my spiritual oversight, let us all seek to have the dispensation sanctified for our spiritual good. Let the sepulchre of your pastor's wife unite with his pulpit, at the base of which it is placed, to give emphasis to the admonition, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation." You loved her, and you still honour her; gratify her dying wishes, and the last wishes of dying friends, you know, and especially such wishes, of such a friend, are sacred; fulfil her parting request, and be a holy people. Let us seek a revival of true religion among us. Let each purpose to have the affliction, for you all feel the event to be such, eminently blessed. Look each sabbath at her tomb, it stands before you all; you can scarcely look at the pulpit without seeing the grave, from which she being dead yet speaks, and says, "Be a pattern of holiness to all the churches round." Be every heart her monument, and this her epitaph.

ATTENDANCE ON WEEK-DAY SERVICES.

OUR souls, like our gardens, need diligent and constant culture: without it, weeds grow fast, and flowers droop and wither. Religion is a business for all times, all places, and all engagements. It is intended to regulate and sanctify every thing, to change the whole man into a burnt offering unto God, and the whole life into a service for Christ. There is no place of which we can say, "God is not here;" no time in

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reference to which we can affirm, "God's demands upon me are now suspended;" and no occupation so remote from moral obligations, that we can declare, "God takes no cognizance of this." This should be our abiding reflection,

"Within thy circling power I stand,
On every side I find thy hand:
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
I am surrounded still with God."

This is religion: a solemn, devout, practical recollection and sense of the presence of God. This is what by a most expressive and emphatic phrase, the Holy Spirit, with reference to the world's patriarchs, calls "walking with God," but viewed as a privilege it was not confined to Enoch and Noah, and as a duty was not obligatory upon them alone. How holy and how happy is that man likely to be, who, wherever he is and whatever he is doing, finds himself in the presence of the Holy One of Israel: who, however desolate and forlorn, however remote from every other friend, however perplexed with difficulty or oppressed with care, however assailed by temptation or harassed by anxiety, has only to open the eye of faith, and to behold God near with all the resources of wisdom, power, and love!

To maintain this realizing sense of the Divine presence is one part of the design of the means of grace and the ordinances of religion. Surrounded by objects of sense, engaged in the pursuits of business, and living in constant intercourse with our fellow creatures, how necessary is the sabbath and how important are its solemn occupations to keep alive in the soul a practical belief in God! With what difficulty, but for that

blessed day, would even the renewed heart maintain a due sense of its relations and duties to God, and its dependence upon him! But alas, how soon are the impressions of the sabbath effaced, its convictions stifled, and its resolutions forgotten, amidst the returning and urgent engagements of worldly affairs! The current of secularity seems, in many cases, only dammed up for a season, to flow with greater violence, when the temporary impediment is removed: or to change the metaphor, the mind wearied by the cares of business, instead of gaining fresh strength on the sabbath for its spiritual interest and conflicts, employs the sacred day, in innumerable instances, only to recruit its jaded energies for renewed efforts after wealth. It is sad indeed to employ the house of the living God only as a place of repose, where the soul recruits its strength for more devoted service in the temple of Mammon. Hence then the necessity and vast advantage of carrying on, to some extent, the exercises of social religion through the week. It is true there is the duty of private devotion, and there is also the altar of family religion; but they are not enough to hold such truant hearts as ours to the service of God, and therefore all sections of the christian church, and all denominations of professing christians, have thought it incumbent to hold week-day services of social religion. Papist and protestant, churchman, dissenter, and methodist, have all confessed the necessity of them, to keep up a due sense of religion in individuals and in the community. Nor can any thing be imagined more likely or more effectual, to break down the idea that piety is a matter exclusively confined to the sabbath day, and to impress it upon the hearts

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and conscience of the feeble, as an every-day concern. I like to hear the bell tolling for worship on a week-day; it seems to say, "Serve the Lord at all times." I love to see the people of God come cheerfully, gravely, devoutly, and earnestly; wending their way through the busy or thoughtless crowd to the house of prayer, saying in effect to the multitude around them, "Come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." I love to see the portals of the sanctuary open of a week evening, and while the doors of the theatre, the concert, and the tavern are thronged by the lovers of pleasure, sending forth the voice of wisdom, saying, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Give your attendance then upon week-day services.

I admit there is no express command for them to be found in the New Testament: they do not rest on statute law, as the observance of the sabbath does. But is nothing our duty unless positive injunction can be pleaded for it? Are not general principles in many cases sufficient, as containing particular obligations? You are not commanded to keep holy the first day of the week instead of the seventh; or to attend twice on the sabbath to hear sermons; but do you not feel it your duty to do so when you can, because it is conducive to your edification, and is one way of carrying out the obligation of keeping holy the sabbath? That we are commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, is matter of plain fact: here is a general

rule laid down without any specification of times, or seasons, or frequency; and surely this general rule implies an obligation to assemble as often as we can, without infringing on other rules, or violating other obligations. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Here is the promise of Christ's presence, given generally, but encouraging frequent meetings, as convenience may allow. In very many matters, such as the amount of property to be given to the cause of Christ; the amount of time to be devoted to devotional exercises, only general rules are laid down, and are left in the hand of love to be worked out at such times and in such measure as opportunity may allow.

"To object to meetings that tend to edification; to doubt their obligation, because not expressly commanded, demonstrates the low standard of the objector's piety; as if every step beyond the measured way were unwillingly trodden: every farthing above the stipulated payment grudged. The language, fairly interpreted, is this: 'I cannot find it in my heart to serve God beyond a given point; that ascertained, all the rest is my own.' And is this christian experience? Is this love? Is this, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee?' Cold indeed must be the heart that can reason thus, and apply the stipulations of worldly policy to the service of Him, who loved us and gave himself for us."

This then is the obligation of such services; their obvious tendency, as I shall presently prove, to edification, and their exact accordance with, yea, their carrying out of, general principles, which are explicitly laid down in Scripture. And moreover all this is strengthened by apostolic practice. "We are told concerning the first disciples, that they were "continually in the temple, praying and blessing God;" and again, that they "continued daily with one accord in the temple." This was the age of primitive and ardent piety; a type of the

decision, fervour, and devotedness which should characterise the followers of Christ in every age. This was the church's first love, before it was chilled by the contention, secularity, and earthly-mindedness that followed it. To the christians of those days nothing would be more repugnant to the glow of their feelings, to the intense ardour of their renewed souls, than the endurance of long and tedious days of engrossing worldliness, stretching between the seasons of their solemn assemblies. Oh for the intensity of their devotion, the ardour of their love, the tenderness of their affection, the aboundings of their liberality, the fervour of their prayers, and the union and harmony of their hearts!

I will now place before you some of the rich and numerous advantages of a constant and spiritual attendance upon such services.

1. It will be no weak test of the depth, and indeed of the reality of your piety, and furnish delightful evidence of the sincerity of your faith. To go with the multitude that keep holy the sabbath, and enter with joy into the courts of the Lord, is far less conclusive on these points, than the practice I now recommend. Many who are totally destitute of spiritual religion, do this. Even they would not incur the reproach of profaning the day of God, by devoting it to worldly business or pleasure. What proof then is it that you love the habitation of God's house, and take pleasure in his service, if you are there on those days only, which you could not, with the smallest regard to reputation, spend any where else? Where can you go on the sabbath, but to the sanctuary? What can you do with your time on that day but employ it in this manner? It is but a weak proof of love either to God, his worship, or his saints, to

give to them only those hours which could not be otherwise engaged. But to feel such a love as makes you willing and pleased to take a portion of time from business, recreation, and self-indulgence, to hear the word of life, to breathe the air of devotion, and enjoy the communion of saints, seems one evidence, at least, of a heart renewed by grace.

2. What a sweet and tranquillizing occupation is it to the christian pilgrim, weary of the cares and perplexities of life, tired with the heat and burden of the day, and harassed by the sins and follies of his fellow creatures, thus to refresh himself in the cool of the evening, with the calm of the house of prayer, the hallowed fellowship of his companions in travel to eternity, and the communion of his God! How composing to his ruffled spirit, and how cheering to his jaded soul, to wander along the banks of that river whose streams make glad the city of God, and lose in its soft murmurs the toils of the day! How agreeable to close the ledger and open the Bible; to lose the hum and jargon of commerce in the songs of devotion; to exchange the society of the worldly and the wicked for that of the righteous; and after having all day looked at things seen and temporal, then to look beyond the narrow and cloudy horizon at those which are unseen and eternal! Is not such a duty a rich privilege also?

3. It helps to perpetuate the impressions, and to preserve the benefits of the sabbath. How many, at the close of the day of rest, think with a sigh on the coming morning, when the short and sacred respite from toil and labour will be over, the world with all its thorny cares return, and the solemn musings, the devout aspi-

rations, and the deep impressions of the holy day will be ended and dissipated. How desirable is it then to keep alive the feelings, purposes, and plans of spiritual improvement which were called up by the sermon and the sanctuary. "Alas," says the christian, "that when raised by the solemnities of public worship on the Lord's day to an unusual height of devotional feeling, and rapt into something like a joy unspeakable and full of glory, by the exhibition of the truth as it is in Jesus; that all this is to be followed, disturbed, and destroyed, by the secular pursuits, cares, and anxieties of the next morning! Oh that it were always sabbath!" So it will be in heaven: and even upon earth, sabbath day views and feelings may be rendered more abiding and influential than they are, by a devout attendance on the week-day services. Some ministers recapitulate the leading thoughts of one or two of the discourses delivered on the preceding Sunday, a practice calculated not only to instruct the mind, but to call up the emotions and revive the enjoyment which the first and full delivery of them awakened.

4. It checks the growth of worldly-mindedness, and tends to keep down the engrossing power of things seen and temporal. Necessarily occupied through the day, and from day to day, in attention to earthly things; with not only the hands full but the heart too, of worldly business; with the mind kept on the full stretch on the subject of profit and loss; and thus led, almost without choice or design, to form an over estimate of the importance of such matters, till the soul of the professor resembles his shop, and is full of the din and solicitude and eagerness of trade, how salutary and how admonitory it is to quit for an hour in the

evening this busy scene, to look at other objects, to engage in other pursuits, and to call up other feelings, and those all of a holy, heavenly, and eternal nature. How calculated is such an exercise, by checking the otherwise ceaseless tread of worldly thoughts and feelings in the soul, to prevent the heart from being beaten into that hard, cold, stiff, and barren worldly-mindedness, which characterises the devoted follower of mammon! How often has the believer, after a day's worldly occupation, during which he has been much excited by alternate hopes and fears, as he sat listening to a sermon on the vanity of earthly things, and the glory of heavenly ones, felt grieved, astonished, and humbled, that he should allow his mind to think so much of terrestrial, and so little of celestial things! How often has he there seen and felt the unsoundness and sinfulness of some customs and maxims, which have been admitted into the commercial ethics of modern times, and has determined to abandon them! How often has he been stopped from making a bargain, and fulfilling a purpose, which, had they been completed, would have brought guilt upon his conscience, what, ever property they might have placed in his pocket!

“No snare like the world for catching away human hearts from the concerns of their eternity. How soon do we get entangled in its works, and become the easy prey of the devil! But to frequent the house of God, to break in upon worldly avocations by oft repeated visits thither is the sure method of disentangling the perplexed spirit. Go to the summit of a lofty mountain, and looking round on the spectacle of sublimity which the landscape presents, will it be possible at that moment to feel the burden of cares which lies in the almost invisible locality below? Will not all be forgotten in the contemplation of grand and august objects? So here, ‘the hill of God is a high hill, as the hill of Bashan,’ and the spirit that places itself but a

little while on its summit, throws off its burden, and prepares for flight. Thus is the mind refreshed, and returns to the duties of life every way better prepared to discharge them than before.”

5. It tends to elevate the tone, and invigorate the strength of our piety. What we want, is not only morality, though there can be no piety without it, and the morality of a christian should be far above that of the worldling, for it should be rigid, unbending, minute, generous, self-denying: but this is not all he should do, and be, and exhibit: he should not only be the man of honour towards his fellow men, but the man of devotion, of spirituality, of piety, towards God. He should have the religion of the closet in association with that of the shop. His heart should point God-ward and heaven-ward; and the way to this is to be much in devotional exercises. We cannot ascend into the higher, and purer, and less cloudy regions of our holy religion; we cannot live by faith; we cannot see the glory of the Lord; we cannot enter into the cleft rock, and see Jehovah pass by; we cannot thus find heaven begun upon earth; without taking pains and making sacrifices and giving ourselves to the matter as of vast importance to us. We must not content ourselves with just as much time devoted to religious exercises, and just as much attention given to public worship, as will quiet conscience, and satisfy the demand of others as worldly as ourselves; but we must give ourselves to these things; we must sow beside all waters; we must be content to give up a little more of the minding of the flesh than some do, who are professors notwithstanding, in order that we may be more devoted in minding the things of the Spirit. It is the diligent soul that is made fat; the soul that feeds well, with keen appetite,

and at regular intervals, on the provision of God's house, even of his holy temple.

6. It is an encouragement and a stimulus to others. What is beneficial to us, is equally so to them. They can no more neglect the week-day opportunities without suffering loss than we can. If we are faithful to ourselves, and are diligent in the ways of the Lord, we shall probably be the means of drawing them with us and after us; while, on the other hand, as evil example is still more contagious than good, our negligence will make them negligent. Oftentimes one careless professor going home to enjoy himself, or going to take his walk in the country, or continuing unnecessarily long at his business, has been met, and has felt reprov'd, by the example and the words of another on his way to the house of God: the reproof in some cases has had its desired effect, and the carelessness of one has been removed by the earnestness of the other. On the other hand, how ready have younger christians been to plead the example of older ones, Christians are not sufficiently aware of the importance of example, and of their responsibility for their influence. How would piety flourish in churches, and all the glowing beauties of holiness spread over them, and shine out from them, if all their members were to give themselves up to a diligent, constant, and spiritual attendance on week-day services of religion!

7. How it encourages the heart of the faithful pastor to see his flock gathered around him, valuing his instructions so highly as to sacrifice a portion of that time which they could otherwise spend in business or pleasure, in order to attend them!

8. What a proof is it to the world of a christian's

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earnestness in the pursuit of salvation, and what an admonition to the multitude who are so intent upon the pursuit of wealth and nothing more as to grudge even the sabbath to the service of religion, and are ever exclaiming, when will it be over, that we may buy, and sell, and get gain! What an impressive voice does a large congregation, assembled on a week-day evening for religious instruction, send forth to the neighbourhood in which it is found, saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you!"

I will now mention some of the difficulties, hindrances, and excuses, which lead to a neglect of such services, and which in the opinion of many justify that neglect.

Tradesmen often say they have no time; they cannot leave their business. The truth is, they will not. I am aware that it is not, and could not, by any contrivance and forethought, be always made convenient for tradesmen, especially shop-keepers, to be at the house of God on a week-day evening; but could it not be oftener done than it is? Would not a settled purpose, a good plan, and a little preparation, generally leave the way open for such persons to the sanctuary? Is not enough time given to the world if its concerns are carried on till seven o'clock in the evening? If there be a party to be joined, or some public business to be attended to, cannot tradesmen find time for this? Oh! brethren, try, try. Be anxious to throw off the cares of the world time enough to be found in your place at the house of God on the evening of the weekly service.

But your residence is too far in the country to enable you to attend. Then why go so far off? Why

sacrifice the pleasure and improvement to be gained in the sanctuary for rural scenes? The modern taste for a country residence is making sad work with piety. How many are there who on this account can attend only one public service even on the sabbath! And has it not proved a snare in other ways to many, leading to a neglect of their trade, and to expenses which their income was not adequate to meet? Your salvation, professing christians, your salvation is, or should be, the great business with you; and every thing else should be subordinate to it.

Some who will read this address are the mothers of large families, and imagine they find in their domestic and maternal cares an insurmountable obstacle to attending such services as I now recommend, and a sufficient excuse for neglecting them. I readily allow that in many cases this plea is admissible. Duties cannot be in opposition to each other. There is no religion in neglecting a dependent family, and allowing home to be a scene of confusion, even though it be to attend public worship; and if this must be the result, your judgment and conscience being witnesses, your way is clear, and the place of your duty is home. But be quite sure that you could not by method, diligence, preparation, and judicious delegation, attend to every duty of home, and yet leave opportunity for one weekly visit to the sanctuary. I have known mothers and mistresses who were patterns of devotedness to home duties, and at the same time were exemplary in their attendance at the house of God. The devoted mother wants an occasional relaxation from her assiduities; and what so refreshing, as an hour spent in the house of God?

A more difficult case is that of the wife, whose

husband is inimical to religion altogether, and especially so to its week-day engagements. Constant attendance can hardly be expected in such circumstances; and many thus situated must forego the privilege, and seek to make up by renewed diligence in the use of the private means of grace, the loss they are compelled to sustain of the public ones.

Labouring men, I am aware, are under strong temptations after a hard day's toil to imagine that they are too tired for a sermon, and that they will be excused by God for going home to spend the evening in their own house, instead of His. In many, very many cases, this is not an excuse merely, but a sufficient reason for their neglect; their labour is so great, and so exhausting, as to utterly incapacitate them for that mental application which is necessary for a profitable attendance upon the means of grace. In this case the gracious Redeemer himself makes the same defence for them as he did for his slumbering disciples, and says the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Suffer then, dear brethren, the word of exhortation on this important subject; renounce all excuses; endeavour to be in a state of mind which shall not prompt you to seek after them. Be in earnest, far more in earnest than the generality of professors are, about your soul's concerns. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Hunger and thirst after righteousness. Live the life of faith. Set your affections not on things on the earth, but on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Be not satisfied with mere external religious decorum, and a consistency in which neither the world, nor your fellow professors, can see a flaw. Let your conversation be

in heaven; feel and act as the citizens of the celestial state. Walk with God; rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed; and steadily look at eternity. In order to keep up such a state of mind, comply with the admonition of this address. Let it be matter of conscience, not of taste merely, to attend the week-day services. You need them; and they will help and bless you. Be regular in your attendance. Do not let it be a mere occasional thing to be there when an admonition has been delivered on the sabbath calling upon you for the performance of this duty, or when something extraordinary is to be heard. This is the case with too many. We see them sometimes, but oftener miss them. Be it with you an ordinance fixed as the sabbath; keep the evening free from all occupation; make no other engagement. When invited to something else, say, "No, that evening is given to God." "The diligent soul," I repeat, "shall be made fat." This is diligence. May it be yours.

JUSTIFICATION.

IT was ever my intention, an intention which I have hitherto carried out, to make these addresses almost exclusively practical; yet there is one doctrine of so much importance, and by too many so imperfectly understood, that I have determined to make it the subject of the present tract; I mean the Justification of the sinner in the sight of God, by faith alone, without works. This is not only a doctrine of the gospel, but it is the gospel itself. It was emphatically called by Luther "The article according to which a church stands or

falls;" and as it was by preaching this great truth he effected the Reformation, so it is by a scriptural knowledge and stedfast belief of it, that we shall be most effectually protected against the insidious attacks of popery, and all the modifications of it, which have sprung up of late under the designation of puseyism. There never was an era in the history and progress of evangelical religion, when it more behoved its professors to be well grounded in this all important doctrine, than at the present day. It is necessary not only vaguely and loosely to believe it, but thoroughly to understand it, and to be able to state it clearly, profess it boldly, defend it scripturally, and recommend it forcibly. Nor is this all; for it must not only be an article of the creed, but a principle in the heart; a matter not only known, but felt; it must be a vital, experimental, and influential truth, leading first to joy and peace in believing; next to all boldness towards God; and then to all holy conversation and godliness. If it be merely an article of faith, only a matter of religious science, it will do us no more good than any other science.

I. Let us ascertain the general or etymological meaning of the term. To justify, signifies to declare a person just, and to treat him as such. It is a forensic word; that is a word borrowed from courts of law. It supposes a man to have been accused of some crime; that the charge has been investigated and found false; and that he is then declared innocent, or just. This is the origin and meaning of the term: and that it is used in the New Testament in some such sense as this, (with such modifications however as I shall presently point out,) is evident from the fact that it is by the sacred writers opposed to con-

demnation. "It is God that justifieth. "Who is he that condemneth?" "The judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences to justification." As words and things are sometimes better known by considering their opposites, you will more clearly understand the meaning of justification by recollecting that it is the state opposed to condemnation. Now all these passages, by thus opposing it to condemnation, clearly prove that the word is forensic in its meaning and use in the New Testament. In this law-sense of the word you will see at once that it does not make a man righteous, but declares him to be so: it does not signify taking away from a man's heart or conduct any sin, or love, or practice of sin, but taking from his character the imputation of sin. Bear this in recollection; that it does not signify a personal, but a relative change.

In this sense it is also used in common discourse. If we have brought an accusation against a person, and he proves it to be incorrect, we say to him, "I justify you; I pronounce you righteous." So if we are falsely accused, we say, "I can justify myself: I can obtain a declaration that I am in this case righteous or just."

II. Let us next inquire into the scriptural meaning of the blessing which is set forth by this term. Now we know very well that the writers of the Scriptures do not always employ words with a rigid and strict adherence to their etymological import, but with considerable modification of their original meaning. It is so here. That the word is still used in a forensic sense is evident from its being opposed to condemnation. It cannot mean making an individual personally holy, because this is not the idea opposed to condemnation,

but must mean bringing him in some way or other into a state that is opposed to condemnation. Remember, the gospel speaks of the justification of a sinner; of a man acknowledged to be guilty. This presents a difficulty; for how, it may be asked, can a sinner, allowed to be such, be justified? Does it not seem to be a contradiction in terms? Here, then, I come to show the difference between legal justification and evangelical justification; the former as practised in a court of human justice, the latter in the court of Divine justice and mercy. In the former, the verdict of acquittal rests on the proofs of the man's own innocence. He is pronounced just because he is shown to be so: the justification proceeds on the ground of his own righteousness. Such a man is not pardoned, in any sense, for he was not guilty. Were the judge to say, "Go in peace, you are forgiven;" the justified individual would reply, "My lord, I do not ask for pardon, and cannot accept the sentence in this light. I am innocent, and demand justification on the evidence of my righteousness."

But you perceive that this will not apply to the sinner, and to his evangelical justification, for he is acknowledged to be guilty, and his acquittal must necessarily include in it the idea of pardon. We are now prepared to see what this blessing means in reference to him. The Assembly's Catechism thus defines it: "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." Now you observe that the forensic sense is put forth prominently in this definition. Here is no personal

change described; no making the individual holy; but a relative change set forth, that is, his being pardoned, and received as righteous through the righteousness of another, even Christ's. Considerable discussion has arisen among divines, whether pardon and justification mean precisely the same thing, and may be used convertibly. Certainly the apostle seems to represent them as if they were. In Romans iv, 5, we find him thus speaking: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." He then in the next verse quotes, in proof of this, the thirty-second Psalm, thus: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven." Now, as the Psalmist uses the word forgiveness, and not justification; and yet the apostle quotes the passage as proving that David, by speaking of forgiveness, proves justification; it certainly does look as if he considered the two as meaning the same thing; and if so, it has been said, we have no need to be more minute in our distinctions, and more precise in our theological definitions than he is. It is unquestionably true that the two are never found joined by the conjunction and; it is no where said, in speaking of the benefits we derive from Christ, forgiveness and justification; and, moreover, both are ascribed to the same procuring cause, the blood and righteousness of Christ, and to the same receptive act, that is, faith.

Perhaps the only distinction we are authorized by scripture to state or to conceive of, is this, that while the word pardon in itself means simply the blessing of the remission of sins, without any reference to

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the way in which it is bestowed, justification includes in it, by a rich and beautiful comprehension of meaning, the bestowment of the blessing in a way that is accordant with the principles of righteousness or moral government; or if, in addition to this, any thing more be intended, it is that justification means our first transition from a state of wrath and condemnation, to a state of favour, an act which of course cannot be repeated; while pardon, abstractedly considered, may be repeated as often as we sin afterwards.

Many eminent divines, however, consider pardon as distinct from justification; the former including nothing but a remission from deserved punishment, while the latter implies something more; that is, a renewed title to life eternal, as a reward of righteousness. Pardon, they say, would place the sinner only in such a state that no charge would lie against him, but then he would have no title to the reward of righteousness, till he had obtained it by performing, for the appointed time, the whole obedience required of him. Still it may be asked, whether, in the scriptural use of the word pardon, it does not imply all that is contended for in the meaning of evangelical justification. The whole of our salvation is represented as summed up in it thus: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." See also Acts xiii, 38, 39, and Romans iii, 24-26. In these passages the forgiveness of sins and justification seem to be used synonymously. If any however think otherwise, I have no controversy with them.

To make the nature of justification as clear as possible, I would lay before you now what it is not.

It is not any thing pertaining to predestination, but something that intervenes between that and glorification. "Whom he did predestinate, them he called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Some persons, the Antinomians for instance, talk of our being justified from eternity; but as we are justified by faith, we cannot be justified before faith. Neither is it an impression upon, or a manifestation to, the mind of the pardon of our sins, for this is to confound it with assurance. Neither is it any change wrought in, or upon, the spiritual state or disposition of our souls by the Holy Spirit, for this is to confound it with regeneration. Neither can it be any alteration in our spiritual condition, wrought in us, as the Roman catholics and puseyites contend, by our baptism, because faith is essential to it, and this cannot be exercised by an unconscious infant. But it is what I have considered it to be, the act of God in forgiving all our sins; thus delivering us from the condemnation of the law; introducing us into his favour; and giving us a title to eternal life, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith. Observe how many things are here comprehended.

I. The Justifier is God himself. He it is who pronounces the gracious sentence of pardon and acceptance, first in the court of heaven, and then reveals it, by the witness of his Spirit, to the conscience of the believer.

II. The ground of justification is the blood and righteousness of Christ; without any distinction between his active and passive obedience, as if the former, consisting of his holy actions, entitled us to heaven, while the latter, made up of his sufferings, delivered us

from the curse of the law. His obedience was one and entire, extending through his whole life, and terminating in his death. What is called his active obedience, was much of it passive; and what is called his passive obedience, was truly active. We cannot distinguish here, neither does the Scripture. It is entirely for the sake of what Christ did and suffered in life and in death, constituting his righteousness, that we are justified, without any admixture of our own works. That we are justified by the righteousness of Christ, and not in any sense by our own works, is evident from the justice of God, which does not admit of a sinner being accepted on the ground of his own righteousness, for this would be to destroy his law, and subvert his moral government: from the testimony of Scripture, which explicitly declares that it is not by works, but by grace through faith. Rom. iii. 20-31; v.; viii. 1-4; x. 1-4; Gal. ii. 16-21; iii.; Ephes. ii. 5-9. In all these passages it is as explicitly declared as language can utter the sentiment, that our works have no share whatever in the justification of the soul in the sight of God.

Against this, three objections are raised: 1. That the apostle speaks only of ceremonial acts, or works of ritual observance, such as circumcision under the law, and other ceremonies under the gospel, but not of moral acts. In reply to which it may be remarked, that the opposition in these various passages is not between works of one kind, and works of another kind, but between works and faith. Now moral works are as much opposed to faith, as a ground of justification, as ceremonial ones; and it is evident that all works are excluded. The argument of the apostle, Gal. ii. 21, that "If righteousness come by the law, Christ is

dead in vain," is as conclusive against one kind of works as another; for though we could not be justified by ceremonial observances, yet if we could by moral ones, what need was there of Christ dying? And the apostle explicitly mentions the moral law as that by obedience to which we could not be justified. Rom. iii. 20: vii. 7.

2. We are also reminded that if Paul says we are justified by faith alone, James says we are justified by works. In words these inspired writers seem to contradict each other, but not in sense. They are speaking of two different cases, and use the word justification in two different senses. Paul is speaking of the justification or pardon of a sinner when he first comes to God; and this is by faith without works: James is speaking of the justification, or approbation and acceptance of a believer, of one who professes to have already received pardon; and his justification is, his being approved by works. A sinner, as such, is justified by faith alone; a believer, as such, is proved and accepted as a believer, by works.

3. We are reminded, as another objection to justification by faith without works, that believers are promised that their good works shall be rewarded. This is very true; and an encouraging truth it is, that not even a cup of cold water shall go unrewarded; but this is not and cannot be the ground of justification, inasmuch as it is subsequent to it. It is the good works of believers that shall be rewarded; but no good works can precede faith; and when a man really believes, he is at once justified, without waiting till he has obeyed the law of love. And even the reward that the christian will have comes to him for the sake of Christ; and so his

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reward is, in some sense, Christ rewarded for what his people do through his grace working in them. Such, then, are the objections which have been brought against the doctrine of justification through the righteousness of Christ alone, and such the answer to them.

III. But there is yet another thing to be considered, and that is the business of faith in our justification. We have considered the nature of it, and have seen that it is pardon in a way of righteousness, or our introduction to the favour of God; we have considered the ground of it, which is exclusively the righteousness of Christ: but though our own works have no share in this ground, which consists entirely of the righteousness of Christ, what is it, so to speak, that places us on this ground? Faith. We are justified by faith. Observe by or through, but not for faith. Believing is no more meritorious than doing. Faith does not constitute the justifying righteousness, for that is Christ's, but is the grace that receives it. It is true it is said, that "Faith is counted for righteousness:" but that means not as relating to itself, but as relating to Christ. It is by uniting us to Christ, thus making us legally and reputedly one with him, in virtue of which, what is his is thus reckoned to be ours, that we receive the benefit of it, and that faith justifies. It lays hold of Christ, and appropriates to ourselves all that is in him for the benefit of his people. Thus it is by faith, that it might be by grace.

Such is Justification. It is of importance to keep up a clear and definite understanding of its wide distinction from, and yet inseparable connexion with, sanctification. Unless we perceive these, all will be confusion in our minds; we shall understand neither the scheme of re-

demption, nor the meaning of the word of God. They are ever united, but are essentially distinct in their nature. Justification is God's mercy in pardoning the guilt of our sins through the blood of Christ; sanctification is his grace in subduing the love and power of our sins by the work of the Holy Spirit; justification restores us to God's favour, sanctification restores God's image to us; justification precedes sanctification, sanctification is the fruit and evidence of justification; justification is complete at once, sanctification is progressive; justification is like the pardon of a criminal, sanctification is like the healing of a patient: it is the union of both these which constitutes a present salvation. It may be illustrated thus: Conceive of a man in prison under sentence of death, and at the same time dangerously ill of the jail fever. If the monarch pardon him, this is not enough for his safety and happiness, for he will die soon of his disease, unless it be cured. On the other hand, if the physician cure his disease, it is of little consequence unless the monarch give him a reprieve; for though he get well of his disorder, he must soon suffer the penalty of the law; but if he be both pardoned and cured, he will be completely saved. It is thus with the salvation in Christ Jesus; it provides by justification for our reprieve from the sentence of eternal death and at the same time provides by sanctification for our moral health. By the fall, man became both guilty and depraved; justification takes away our guilt, sanctification removes our depravity.

Let your minds, my dear friends, be perfectly familiar with the meaning, difference, and relations, of these two important words; they are the keys to unlock the whole mystery of our redemption, showing us what the fall of

Adana rendered necessary for our salvation, and what Divine grace has provided to supply the want; these, ending as they ever do, where they are really possessed, in glory everlasting, make up all that is included in the blessing, which with such simplicity and sublimity is in the gospel called life: "He that hath the Son hath life:" life legal in justification; life spiritual in sanctification; life eternal in heavenly bliss. In other words, the title to divine life; the principle of this life; and the everlasting enjoyment of it.

But there is one thing still to be considered, before we thoroughly understand this glorious truth, and that is, its consistency and harmony with grace: for if the sinner is received to the favour of God, and obtains his title to eternal life, through the atonement, and cannot be received in any other way, how is this a system of grace and mercy? If a satisfaction were rendered to Divine justice, and we are pardoned in virtue of that, how is it all of grace?

"Cases," says Mr. Fuller, "may be supposed, in which the ideas of grace and atonement would be inconsistent: (1.) If the atonement were made by the offender himself, by his enduring the full penalty of the law, his deliverance would be a matter of right, and there would be no grace in it. But, as in the case of murder, it is not in the sinner's power to make atonement for himself, and survive the punishment. (2.) If the sufferings of another could avail for the offender, and he himself were to provide the substitute, his deliverance might be a matter of right, and there would be no grace in it- (3.) If justification through the redemption of Christ were not only consistent with justice, but required by it, it must, I think, be allowed, that every idea of grace is excluded. But God was not by any principle of justice required to save sinners; it is an act of pure mercy to do so at all: yet if he purpose to save, then his justice requires an atonement. (4.) If in justification the sins of transgressors were not only imputed to Christ, but could become literally and truly his, and his righteousness, instead of only being imputed

to them, could be conceived as really and literally theirs, then whatever grace there might be in the providing and accepting the substitute, there would be no room for forgiveness, and justification would be an act of justice, and not of grace."

Here, then, is the grace in justification, notwithstanding it is on the ground of atonement.

It was grace, rich, free, boundless grace, to save sinners at all, even through an atonement. God was under no obligation to us to do so; he might have consigned the whole world to endless misery, and not have allowed of the salvation of sinners, by substituting the innocent for the guilty.

It was still richer grace to provide himself the substitute.

It was the richest of all grace, the brightest glory, that when no other substitute would avail but his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, God should be willing to give him up to the death of the cross for us.

It is grace, in that our pardon, acceptance with God, and title to eternal life, are all founded upon the blood and righteousness of Christ.

It is grace, in that God calls us to a participation of the blessings of salvation by the power of his own Spirit, and by the same grace preserves us to glory.

Justification on the ground of atonement, then, instead of being inconsistent with grace, is its glory and triumph. If the atonement were intended to make God merciful, instead of only making way for him to appear so in a manner consistent with the principles of moral government; if instead of being the contrivance, fruit, and expression of the Father's infinite love, it were to be exclusively ascribed to the interposition of the Son, by which Divine anger was transformed into pity, and

the flames of vengeance were quenched in the blood of his cross, we could not speak of being justified freely through the grace of God. But when the whole emanated from the benevolence of God the Father; and when in his pity for the apostate race of Adam he determined to give up the Son who had been in his bosom from eternity, that he might justify the ungodly through his righteousness, and thus be at once the just God and the Saviour; this is grace, the wonders of which will fill immensity with its glory, and eternity with its praise.

And now behold the connexion which another glorious doctrine has with your justification, I mean the true and proper Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ: for if our justification proceed on the ground of atonement, then must that atonement be equivalent in value, that is, in moral effect, to what the punishment of the whole human race would have been, had they suffered in their own proper persons; and what but a sacrifice of infinite value could have accomplished this end; and who but a Divine person could have offered such a sacrifice?

Give your attention, then, my dear friends, to these great and glorious truths. Into these things the angels desire to look. They are the substance of the gospel; the marrow of Christianity. Do not hand them over to divines, or consider them as themes for the pulpit only. They belong to you, as well as to your ministers: they are not the deep things of theology, which require great intellectual powers to understand them; but they are the food of your souls, the bread of life, the source of joy and consolation, and such as the babes in Christ may understand and receive as milk. Exult in

the idea of justification: there is more than music in the word it is to the believer a sweeter sound than liberty to the slave, health to the sick, pardon to the condemned, life to the dying. If you believe in Christ, look up with joy and confidence; the clouds that envelope the throne of God, however dense and dark, contain no elements of vengeance, send forth no thunders of wrath, and flash no lightnings of destruction against you; but are full of mercy, and will break in blessings upon your souls. If you are justified by faith you are at peace with God: in such a state you may meet affliction with comfort, encounter death without alarm, and go on to the day of judgment without dismay. He that justifies now will not revive the sentence then; but will make your justification terminate in your heavenly and eternal glorification.

RELIGIOUS JOY.

I DEVOTE this address to the consideration of a topic intimately connected with your present happiness as christians; I mean, "Religious Joy;" which follows justification; for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Before justification we have no right to joy, and after it no reason for misery. The spirit of true religion is essentially a spirit of pure and elevated joy, and it is thus distinguished from superstition, which is essentially a spirit of gloom, fear, and abject sorrow. Situated as the believer is between one paradise lost by sin and another restored by grace, he may be expected to

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combine in his experience the seemingly opposing states of mind described by the apostle, where he says, "sorrowful yet always rejoicing:" and the tears which he sheds for his transgression, however numerous and penitential, should still be irradiated with a predominant smile of delight, and appear like dew-drops sparkling in the sun. The most superficial acquaintance with the Bible must teach us that it is a book to make us happy, as well as holy. The two Testaments are like two ministering angels sent down from heaven to conduct the child of sin and sorrow to the fountain of peace. Even the older economy contains innumerable exhortations to the people of God, to rejoice and be glad; yea, "to cry out, and shout for joy." And if a believer when placed amidst the clouds and shadows of the Jewish dispensation, where he could not but be awed by the thunders of Sinai, and oppressed in no small measure with the spirit of bondage, was called upon to rejoice, how much more may such a frame of mind be expected in the christian, on whom the Sun of righteousness has risen, and poured the noon-tide brightness of his glory! The christian then ought to be a joyful as well as a righteous man. His religion should not only adorn his character with the beauties of holiness, but array his countenance with the smile of peace. Yet how few seem to rise to this privilege. If we look into the Bible, we might expect to see all who really believe it, and live under its influence, so many happy spirits, carrying about with them the springs of their own felicity, independent alike of the joys and sorrows of mortality, neither greatly elevated by the one, nor much depressed by the other: and yet when we look at the great bulk of professors of religion,

we are sadly disappointed, and even in reference to their happiness as well as their conduct, are led to ask, "What do ye more than others?"

By religious joy I do not mean simply the joy of religious people, for all their joy does not answer to this description; but I intend the joy produced by religion. It is that holy peace which is the result of Divine truth, understood, believed, and contemplated. It is not the mere exhilaration of animal spirits, the joyousness produced by good health, worldly prosperity, friendship, or taste. Much of the christian's enjoyment upon earth is produced by those susceptibilities and possessions which belong to him as a man: and this portion of his gratification is perfectly innocent; but it is not properly speaking religious joy. True it is that his spiritual delight may and does blend itself with his more common pleasures, sweetening, sanctifying, and elevating them all; and may indeed itself be somewhat modified by them; but still it is of a different kind. It is the joy of faith, of hope, of love: it is joy in God, in Christ, in holiness, in heaven. It begins when the trembling sinner, after a season of unrelieved anxiety and oppression on account of his sin, loses the burden of his guilt at the cross: and in that case it is altogether the joy of faith; it continues to increase as he advances in holiness, and is then the joy of love, united with that of faith; it is sustained amidst all the trials of earth, by the prospect of heaven, and then it is swelled by hope, adding its influence to that of faith and love. This is religious joy, that agreeable and comfortable state of mind, which is produced by the believing contemplation of the great objects of revealed truth, of God, in his nature, attributes, pro-

vidence, and covenant relations to his people; of Christ, in his person, work, faithfulness, and grace; of the promises of Scripture; and all this strengthened by the joy resulting from the testimony of a good conscience, the consciousness of growing holiness, and the assurance of hope. Such is religious joy, not necessarily a state of great excitement. Occasionally, indeed, it does rise into a strong and elevated emotion; it is more than peace, it is delight; more than delight, it is ecstasy. The saints have sometimes soared on the wing of rapture into the element of devotion so high as to be far above the ordinary altitude of religious experience. But the physical nature of some scarcely admits of this excitement at all, nor can any bear it long. It should be recollected that the differences of our mental temperament and constitutional susceptibility will much modify even our religious feelings. The joy of some believers, as to the emotion itself, will be much stronger than that of others, without there being any clearer understanding of the objects that produce it, any stronger faith in them, or any greater practical influence of them; but simply because there is strong physical susceptibility of excitement and emotion. Hence the necessity of suggesting the remark that emotion alone is a very equivocal and deceptive test of personal piety. Religious joy is ordinarily a calm, unruffled, feeling; a composed and serene state of mind. It is usually denominated peace, and though unspeakable and full of glory, because it is produced in part by the hope of celestial bliss, it is still not a torrent but a tranquil river flowing through the soul, noiseless in proportion as it is deep; or, changing the metaphor, it is a sweet sabbatic rest, diffusing a feeling of joyous repose over

the heart, rather than filling it with the tumultuous exhilaration of a festival.

“It is that peace of which the Saviour spoke, when being about to leave the world, and wishing to comfort his sorrowing disciples, he said, ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;’ his peace, the sweet serenity of mind which he enjoyed himself, and in the enjoyment of which he went forward in the performance of every duty, and met, with such calm dignity, such entire self command, such cheerful resignation to the Divine will, the overwhelming trials he had to endure.”

From all this it must be evident that spiritual joy is a very different thing from what some people would wish to represent it, who, imagining that religion has been disparaged, as it certainly has been, by the gloom and sourness of some of its professors, oscillate to the opposite extreme, and attempt to justify a lamentable degree of frivolity, merriment, and lightness, by the excuse “that religious people ought to be cheerful; and that this is the way to win the people of the world to piety.” So indeed they should be cheerful; but then it should be with the joy of their religion. Nothing spectral in appearance, nor sepulchral in tone, nor ascetic in habit, nor cynical in spirit, should characterise a christian; he is a child of light, and should live, and act, and speak as such; he should be like one of the sons of the morning dropped from paradise, and bending his way back to it again, and bearing the trials of earth, with the recollection of his happy destiny, and the prospect of his future glory: he should have something of the bliss of heaven, but withal much of its seriousness too.

I shall now inquire into the reasons why so little of this joy is experienced by the majority of christian professors. I assume that the multitude have far less

than they might and should have. Look at the prosperous among them, and whence does their joy arise? From religion, or from their good spirits, their health, their family, their friends, their success, and home enjoyment? Look at the afflicted: how oppressed with care; how tortured with anxiety; how overwhelmed with sorrow; how cheerless for the present, and how hopeless for the future, do they seem to be! How few appear to have the peace that passes all understanding, the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory! The Bible tells the world that the springs of happiness gush out from the hill of Zion, at the foot of the cross, and so they do: but how little do many who profess to have drunk the living water, appear as if they had been at the crystal stream, and were satisfied with it!

Why is this? Is there in reality not enough in the objects of religious truth to yield this joy? This cannot be, for they have comforted millions in the vale of tears, in every variety and degree of human woe; they are the rejoicing of spirits made perfect; the bliss of angels, and the joy of God's own heart. Is it that the sources are inaccessible to them? No: they are open to every child of God. Is it that God is unwilling to impart this joy to them; that in a way of sovereignty he has withdrawn it? No: it is a mistake to suppose that God, by any positive act of his own, hinders our peace or extinguishes it; that in a way of sovereignty, and not as a chastisement for sin, but for the purpose of trying and exercising the graces of his people, he withdraws from them what is usually denominated sensible comfort, and causes them to experience darkness and despondency. "This view," says Dr. Wardlaw, "has long appeared to me not a little hazardous.

It is too much calculated to make believers well pleased and satisfied with themselves, in circumstances which ought to excite them to self-jealousy, and searching of heart. It seems to me at once more safe, and more spiritual, to regard the want of peace and joy as invariably (except where there is a physical cause in a nervous constitution), arising from and indicating something wrong in, the spiritual temperament of our minds, some sin, or some defect in ourselves. It is of essential consequence for us to be impressed with the conviction that if we are destitute of peace and joy, the cause is in ourselves, uniformly and exclusively in ourselves. It is not that God has withdrawn from us, but that we have withdrawn from God.”

The true causes of the want of religious joy in professors are the following:

Some are professors only, and though they have a name to live, are dead; and being destitute of faith, are destitute, of course, of all joy and peace in believing. Let the joyless christian search himself, and ask if he be anything more than a christian in name.

Many do not want this joy, at least they do not greatly covet it. They certainly would have some kind of enjoyment; they desire to be gratified; but it is only the joy of friendship, of health, of success in business, of a comfortable home, and a quiet fire-side that they long for; not the peace of believing, not the pleasure of communing with God, not the delight of holiness and hope, not the felicity of a sense of pardoned sin, and the gratification arising from the exercises of devotion. When do they go to God in prayer, saying, “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: thou hast put gladness in my

heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased; for with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall I see light?"

Great mistakes are made by many in reference to spiritual joy. Some imagine it is only a privilege to be hoped, waited for, and expected in a way of sovereign favour; but not a duty to be performed. That it is a duty is evident from the frequency with which it is enjoined, as well as promised. We are commanded to "rejoice in the Lord," and nothing hinders us but our want of faith. If it is our duty to believe, it is equally our duty to rejoice. It is a sin as well as a grief to be cheerless. True, it is a work of the Spirit, a gift of God; but so are faith, love, and holiness. Some imagine that though it is both a duty and a privilege for others, yet not for them. Why not? The source of joy is in the promise not in yourselves, and it is to be drawn out by faith; and is not the promise as much to you as any one? Some are waiting for that which perhaps they will never have, a degree of rapture of which their frame is scarcely susceptible. They are supposing that religious joy means something mystic, ecstatic, almost seraphic; some rapt frame which leaves them at a loss to determine whether they are in the body or out of the body; and they are not contented with the calm, sweet, serene enjoyment of peace. Some have not attained to the full assurance of hope, have not received the witness of the Spirit; and because they have not the joy of assurance, reject that of faith; or because they have not the joy of a strong faith, spurn that of a weak one. Some are waiting to rejoice till they have attained sinless perfection, forgetting that they are never to rejoice till then they will never

have peace till they get to heaven; and thus show by such a delay that they are rather looking to rejoice in themselves than in the Lord. Oh! how numerous are the machinations of Satan to keep God's people from being happy, when he cannot keep them from being holy; how numerous and how subtle are the methods by which he causes the children of light to walk in darkness!

Limited knowledge of the scheme of redemption, and the great truths of the gospel, is a common hindrance to spiritual joy. As the source of religious comfort is in the truth, we can receive that comfort only in proportion as the truth is understood and believed. In the minds of many good people there is much confusion of thought; much mixture of law and gospel; a want of clear discrimination between justification and sanctification; and an equal want, of course, of discrimination between grace in God and merit in man. They are ever looking for marks and evidences in themselves, instead of looking to Christ; and find more to distress and harass them in the least ascertainable imperfections in themselves, or in a single dull season of prayer, than in all the fulness of grace in the Saviour to comfort them. By thus dwelling continually upon himself in the way of gloomy despondency the christian is apt to acquire a sickly, feeble, morbid cast of piety. It is not humility, penitence, and an aim at something better of which he cannot have too much, but discontent, wretchedness, and hopeless sorrow. Christians, study as well as read the gospel. Labour to comprehend the system of salvation by grace through faith. Penetrate to the bottom, as far as possible, of that wondrous word grace; and especially

grow in the knowledge of that glorious union between justice and mercy which is established by the death of Christ.

Christians are kept back from joy sometimes by being afraid to let their religion make them happy. Even though they do not deny in words that they have some right and reason to rejoice, and that it would be no presumption in them to be glad in the Lord; yet they seem afraid to go to any high degree of spiritual delight lest it should "exalt them above measure." There are times when most christians have a more vivid and delightful sense of divine truth, when there is an unusual transparency of the soul's atmosphere, through which the eye of faith discerns spiritual objects with unwonted distinctness, and when the soul seems instinctively to exult. The note of praise is struck with new strength, and the heart is beginning to swell into a fullness of delight. At that moment a surmise creeps over the soul, "I must restrain these feelings; they will endanger my humility, inflate me with pride, and expose me to Satan's aim." All is now checked, and the mind which was invited to soar, cowers down, and dooms itself to creep.

Sin damps religious joy, and ought to do so. I do not now mean immorality, for that puts it quite out; but the lesser workings of our corruption, the sins of the heart, the sins of the tongue, the sins of the temper. Sins known only to God and conscience. Sins of omission and of defect. Sins that do not unchristianise us, any more than they excommunicate us. Such sins unopposed, unmortified, do, and must, prevent or diminish our joy. They may not, like the choke-damp, put out

the light of our religion altogether, but they surround it with an impure atmosphere, a thick fog, which prevents its light from shining upon the heart.

And connected with this, I may observe that the religion of many is too feeble altogether; they are too worldly, too lukewarm, they live too far from God, to derive much joy and peace from their piety. Religious joy, is joy in God, in Christ, in holiness, in heaven; and when, therefore, the professor lives so little in the closet, communes so little with his Bible, attends so little to the frame of his own mind, and lives so far from God, that he doubts himself, and others doubt for him, whether he love God or not, it can be no wonder that his religion does not make him happy. The religion of some persons is just enough to make them miserable. It spoils them for the world, without meetening them for the church. Their profession is an incumbrance upon them, and is in the way of their enjoyment. These are men who are so taken up with the world, that they do not want the joy of religion, and are unwilling to cast out a single earthly care or enjoyment, though it were to make way for all the consolations of the Spirit.

My dear friends, let me now entreat you to avoid these hindrances, and to seek after more of that heavenly, holy, happy frame of mind. Pray for it, for it is a fruit of the Spirit. Be much in converse with your Bibles, for it comes in the way of understanding, believing, and feeling the truth. Find time for private, silent meditation, for the truth will not be so seen by a hasty glance as to affect the heart. Seek to have your faith strengthened, for your joy must ever be in proportion to your faith. Watch against sin, for sin is like water to the flame of joy. Cultivate all the branches of holiness;

for holiness is happiness. Keep company with those who have learned to sing the Lord's song, and are going on their way rejoicing. You must have eminent piety, if you would have happy piety. Religion is life; and it is a vigorous life, not a sickly declining life, that is a happy life: it is light, and you know a mere spark will not enliven a room, but a flame: it is water to the thirsty, and it is not a drop, but a draught, that will please and satisfy. Be diligent, yea, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Do you need motives for this? How many are at hand!

There is your own happiness. You are not to be indifferent to this. God wills you should be happy, and has most abundantly provided means to make you so. You must enter into his design and strive to be joyful. God loves to see his children happy, and does not allow them to be indifferent to their own peace.

Think of the aid your joy will afford you in reference to all your other duties. It will shed an influence upon everything. It is this that will make you hail the Sabbath with delight, that will draw you to the throne of grace with boldness, enable you to read the Scriptures with pleasure, and render your sacramental seasons times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The sanctuary, the closet, the Bible, and the Lord's table, will all be in shadow, and appear gloomy, if joy be absent; but this will shed light upon all, and place them in sunshine.

Joy will assist you in the warfare of the christian life, and cause you, like the traveller that sings on his journey through the forest and the plain, to beguile the tediousness of your way with the songs of the Lord. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," said Ezra, when

he checked the sorrows of the Jews, and laid down a principle as applicable to the christian life as to any other enterprise: and what great or good thing under the sun was ever achieved without joy? In the working out of our salvation, there must be not only “fear and trembling,” but hope and joy. Religious joy is the oil to the wheels of obedience. This it is that braces up the soul for action, and carries it forward through difficult and self-denying duties.

How can we best vanquish the world, that ever and every where present foe, which comes in so many forms, and with such specious pleas, but by a heart already well pleased with its own happiness in Christ! This is the world’s vanquisher; and how easy, how perfect is its triumph! The heart by holy joy rises above the world, sees it below covered with smoke and dust, and finds itself in a brighter, purer, happier region, with the cloudless sun overhead, and all around filled with his glory. What has the world to offer comparable to that which a rejoicing faith has found in Christ? What has ambition to offer that can vie with this? He who is rejoicing in hope of an incorruptible crown of life and glory may spurn the favour of a prince, and put aside as a bauble, the crown itself.

And then think of the importance of this joy in the dark season of affliction. Many of you have no other joy, and will you not covet this? If religion does not shed its light upon your spirit you are in total darkness. And this can illuminate the darkest scene of human woe: it has irradiated the dark abode of poverty, the gloomy chamber of affliction, the desolate abode of the widow, the dreary dungeon of the captive, and made the martyr sing on the scaffold, or at the stake. Habakkuk’s

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exulting strain has been uttered by multitudes; and amidst blighted harvests and empty stalls, they have joyed in God, and rejoiced in the God of their salvation. Mourners, dry your tears, and hush your sobs, and dissipate your fears at the cross, and before the throne. With nothing else to rejoice in, you have God, Christ, and salvation; and is this nothing?

You are called, in this extraordinary age, to the great enterprise of the world's conversion; and in order to achieve it, you must make sacrifices of time, money, and ease. And how is this to be done? A happy church will be a working church. Nothing great, (I repeat it because of its importance,) was ever yet achieved under the sun, but by a heart glad and free. It is the joyous mind that aims at great things, expects great things, and accomplishes great things. The apostles and first disciples, though persecuted men, were joyous men. They counted it all joy even to fall into divers temptations. They astonished the world with the spectacle of moral heroes, who could smile at bonds, imprisonment, and death, and who could go singing to meet the lictor's rod and axe, and to encounter the lions of the amphitheatre. Religion appeared in all its power and glory as a superhuman principle, a something heavenly and divine, in such a scene; and many were converted to the faith by the martyr's joy as well as by his testimony. Christians, imitate these examples. Do not tell the world you are happy, but appear so. Verity the assertion by your own experience, so often made and so often expressed by christians themselves, that the church of Christ is the seat of blessedness. Be you a refutation of the world's slander upon religion, that it is a sour, unhappy, gloomy spirit, a spectre coming from

the place of tombs, and a cruel superstition haunting and infesting the abodes of the living. A happy church would, almost by its very appearance, without any labour, convert the nations. The mountain of the Lord's house, towering above the hills, radiant with peace as it reflected the beams of the Sun of righteousness, and verdant with holiness, would attract the eye, and guide the feet of the weeping, wandering tribes of the earth to itself, as to the place of repose. The first beams of the millennial morning will be seen in this heavenly effulgence resting upon the church. Wherefore be happy christians as well as holy ones. Exemplify in this, as in every other respect, the spirit of the gospel. Be like your Divine Master, in the purity, simplicity, and joyfulness, with which you devote yourselves to the service of mankind. Bring more of his serene and happy spirit into your work. Let your piety be seen by all to be a perennial fountain of peace and joy to your own soul, under the various appointments of Divine providence here. Anticipate the felicities of heaven here below. You stand in the porch of the celestial temple: appear like men who not only hear the songs within, but expect soon to see the everlasting gates thrown open to admit you to God's presence where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore.

PRAYER AND PRACTICE.

I NEED not prove to you that prayer, as a duty, is essential to christian conduct: and, as a privilege, is equally indispensable to christian enjoyment. All con-

sistent professors of religion give themselves to this devout exercise. They pray in the closet, at the family altar, and in the house of God. Their petitions are copious, comprehensive, and seemingly earnest. What solemn professions they make to God, what ardent desires they express, what numerous blessings they seek, what strong resolutions they form! Judging of ourselves by the prayers we pour forth in secret, or of each other by the utterances we hear when we meet with one accord to make our common supplication known, we may very properly say, "What manner of persons ought we to be?" If we pray so, how ought we to live? What kind of people must we be, to be up to the standard of our prayers? And ought we not, in some measure at least, to reach this standard? Should there not be a harmony, a consistency, a proportion, between our practice and our prayers? There are many rules and standards of our conduct, or rather the one rule and standard is presented in various aspects in the Scriptures. The moral law, demanding perfect love to God and man; the moral character of God as revealed in his word; the example of our Lord Jesus Christ; the principles drawn from the Bible, and implied in our profession of religion, are all so many declarations of what we ought to be, and to do. Looking at these, how we are struck with our short comings, and with what deep humiliation ought we to confess and mourn them! But I now direct you to another rule and standard, and that is, your own prayers. Do you indeed act as you pray? Do you understand the import, and feel the obligation of your own petitions? Do you rise from your knees where you have asked and knocked to seek? Do you really

want, wish for and endeavour to obtain an answer to your prayers? Does God see, and do men see, that you are really intent upon doing, and being, what you ask in prayer?

I need scarcely inform you that the designs and uses of prayer are many besides being a means of obtaining necessary blessings. It is intended to do homage to God as the fountain of being and bliss; to express our dependence upon him; to be a solace to our own minds, and also to be a means of personal improvement. Our prayers are to act upon ourselves; they have, or ought to have, great power in the formation of character and the regulation of conduct. This is too much forgotten. The moral influence and religious obligation of prayer are too much left out of sight. It is plain therefore that, much of prayer is mere words; we either do not understand, or do not consider, or do not mean, what we say. This is an awful consideration; for if it be true we play the hypocrite before God, and insult him by the offerings of feigned lips. Can we endure the thought? It is time to consider such a subject, I mean the moral obligation of our own prayers, and to institute a comparison between them and our practice.

Let us review our prayers under two heads.

I. Such as relate to ourselves. I can only make a selection of subjects, but a few will be sufficient. How fervently we sometimes pray for the salvation of our souls, as our one great business in life, adding also an entreaty that we may ever consider it as such. Well, do we make it so? Do we go from praying to acting, and to 'Jive for salvation, for heaven, for eternity? How common is it for professors to pray for victory

over the world by faith; to be delivered from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; to be enabled to set their affections on things above, and not on things of the earth; and to be dead to things seen and temporal, through the life that is hid with Christ in God; and yet all the while they are as obviously eager to amass wealth, to multiply the attractions of earth, and to enjoy every luxurious gratification as possible. Nothing is more frequent than petitions to grow in grace: but where is the diligent use of the means of growth; where the habit of constant and lengthened retirement for prayer, meditation, self-examination, and reading the scriptures? Is it not as though they expected the good seed of the kingdom to grow and thrive amidst thorns? They pray for the mortification of their corruptions, and for their crucifixion with Christ: then of course they ought to have their eye fixed upon their heart, to watch against the least rising of sin; to repress the first movement, and crush a thought or feeling of iniquity; they ought to labour as they would do to eradicate a vigorous and rapidly-spreading weed in their garden, or to resist and heal a growing disease in their constitution. But do they? Are there all the efforts after mortification, the weeping, wrestling, and ceaseless labour after the destruction of sin, which their prayers would lead us to expect? A prayer is very frequently put up for consistency in the christian profession; this is a petition that is urged with every appearance of sincerity and fervour, as if he who uttered it, and all who joined in it, were most anxious never to do the least thing, or even to say a word, that would cause the enemies of religion to taunt professors with their inconsistency. And yet

perhaps the very individual who has expressed, or the hearer who has joined in his earnest breathings after grace to be consistent, will, the next morning, by some dishonourable transaction in business, and, it may be, in dealing with some who were present the previous evening, do that which would disgrace a man of the world. Spirituality of mind is the subject of innumerable prayers from some who never take a step to promote it, but, on the contrary, are doing all they can to make themselves carnally minded. How many repeat that petition, "Lead us not into temptation," who, instead of most carefully keeping at the utmost possible distance from all inducements to sin, place themselves in the very way of it! How often do many repeat that other petition in our Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;" who yet feel little disposed to pardon those that injure them, and rarely from the heart forgive the trespasses of their neighbours! We should recollect that a person of a resentful and unforgiving temper, by the use of such a prayer, shuts the ear of God against his own cry for mercy, and moves the arm of Omnipotence for his destruction; for if he ask to be forgiven, only as he forgives, and at the same time revenges instead of pardoning offences against himself, what is this but petitioning for vengeance instead of clemency? Professors ask to have the mind of Christ, and to imitate the example of their Lord; but where is the assiduous endeavour, the labouring effort, to copy this high model, in its self-denying condescension, its profound lowliness, its beautiful meekness, its indifference to worldly comforts, its forgiving mercy, its devotedness to God? How often do

we pray to be delivered from evil tempers and irascible feelings, and yet indulge them on every slight provocation, and take no pains to subdue them! But it is unnecessary to multiply the illustrations of the want of consistency between our prayers and our practice, in reference to our own individual concerns as christians. Alas! alas! who must not blush and be ashamed for his hypocrisy before God? Who must not smite upon his breast, for this his iniquity, and say in deep humiliation and contrition, "God be merciful to me a sinner?"

II. Let us now compare our prayers and our conduct in reference to others. We pray for the conversion of our children. What fervent petitions are breathed out for the seed of the righteous! Well, and how are these prayers followed up? By the serious, regular, and devout maintenance of family prayer? By clear instruction, affectionate counsels, faithful warning, and above all, a consistent exhibition of the beauties of holiness in ourselves? Do our children see in us, and hear from us, all that can recommend religion, and that is calculated to win them to piety? Or, on the contrary, do they not place our conduct and our prayers in contrast, and think, if they do not say, that it is a pity their father does not act more as he prays?

All consistent members of a christian church, of any denomination, pray for its prosperity: but is it enough to say, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces: for my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee?" This should be followed up with a peaceful, judicious, and unwearied effort to promote the good of the community. But is it?

The minister is the constant theme of supplication;

his health, comfort, and usefulness are the topics of seemingly beseeching entreaty. It would appear as if every one was his helper, comforter, and fellow-labourer. A stranger would imagine that he had none round him but such as were laying themselves out to promote his happiness, and his usefulness. What conduct there should be to comport with such prayers! What active men these praying men should be! How anxious might they be expected to be never to grieve his heart by unkindness, never to hinder his usefulness by neglecting, much less refusing, any thing by which it could be promoted! And yet is it not too true to be denied, that these prayers have, in some instances, been the cover of the greatest indifference, and even of the most active unkindness?

Professors pray for the aboundings of brotherly love, and the undisturbed peace of the church. How fervent are their expressed longings after the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace; and their entreaties that no root of bitterness may spring up to trouble the brethren, and thereby many be defiled! Now such prayers bind them, of course, to follow after the things that make for peace; to abstain from every action, every expression, and every look that would prevent or disturb it; and so to demean themselves as to unite the hearts of the brethren more closely together. To pray for love, and to nourish enmity; for peace, and to promote faction; for union, and to encourage division, is gross hypocrisy. Every one who prays for charity should exemplify it; and he who invokes the spirit of concord upon a community should be the first to open his heart for its reception. It is most affecting to observe how little some professors seem to be bound by their own prayers in this particu-

lar. It would appear as if they thought that their petitions for love and peace were designed for others, but not for themselves; as if while they prayed that others might be the friends and promoters of charity, they had a dispensation to indulge in wrath, malice, and uncharitableness. It is quite time that the different sections of the universal church began to think of their prayers, as well as of their arguments; and to remember how much they pray, and how little they do, for peace; how much they invoke the descent of the celestial, dove-like Spirit, and how much they do to grieve, and drive him away, by their uncharitable conduct.

But I come now to another instance of disagreement between prayer and practice; and that is seen in the petitions presented for the revival of religion. Who does not often ask for this; for a spirit of more fervent, glowing, self-denying, and consistent piety, to be spread over the church of God, and for more numerous conversions of impenitent sinners? We continually hear this petition ascend from the lips of our brethren, "Lord, revive thy work in the midst of us;" and it might be looked for that it would be attended with corresponding efforts to obtain the blessing that we thus seek. Yet many pray for revivals of piety, who take no steps to promote them. Do they begin with themselves, and endeavour that their own religion may be revived? Do they remember that the quickening of the whole consists of the quickening of the parts of which it is composed, and that it is obligatory upon them to seek that it should begin with themselves, and that to gain the answer of such prayers, they ought also to bestir themselves for the conversion of others? A

revival can be expected only in the way of general activity: it must not be left wholly to ministers: there is something for every body to do; and if in this way, and in this case, doing be not added to praying, the latter savours much of hypocrisy, or of unmeaning words. To pray for the conversion of souls, and do nothing by direct efforts to achieve it, is shocking inconsistency.

Then think, my dear friends, what frequent and abundant prayer there is for the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, and the conversion of the world to Christ. I do not mean to say that we yet pray enough, but I do mean to say, that we pray more than we act. Our prayers, I know, are far behind our obligations, but I equally know that our exertions are far behind our petitions. It is recorded somewhere, that a minister who was collecting money for a public religious object in some town in America, upon asking an individual for an introduction to some of his neighbours, received from him the name of one, with this remark: "If you were to hear that man pray for the conversion of the world you would imagine from his fervour and copiousness, that he was ready to give all his fortune for accomplishing the object of his desire; and yet when called upon for his benefaction he doles out but the merest pittance of property." The minister called on this inconsistent professor, laid his case before him, and after much entreaty, received a dollar or two for its support, a sum very far below the importance of the cause, or his means and obligations to support it. Upon this the applicant told him what he had heard about the fervour of his prayers, and, after contrasting them with the scantiness of his beneficence, expostulated faithfully

with him on the gross inconsistency of his conduct. He saw, at once, the impropriety of his behaviour, confessed that it had never occurred to him before, and immediately and considerably enlarged his liberality. Is not this a common case, except in its results? Is there not often the same contrast still to be seen, of men generous and abundant in prayer and at the same time niggardly and grudging in their contributions? They pray as if they really wished and wanted the world to be converted, but they give as if they would rather it remained as it is. But who can wonder that this is the case among laymen, if the example is set them by the preachers of the word, and by those who lead the devotions of the assembly? The minister prays, every sabbath, for the conversion of the world; what then if he be a rich man, or approaching to it, ought to be his liberality? His prayers are very abundant; so ought to be his liberality. If covetousness be exhibited in the pulpit, who can wonder that it should find its way into the pew? But whether we are ministers or laymen, we are, by our very intercessions, placed under solemn obligations to an abounding beneficence, that is, if we would be consistent; for to plead with God for the salvation of the heathen abroad, or for the conversion of souls at home, as if it were the object which lies nearest to our heart, and for which we are ready to give up all we are and all we have, and to calculate and scheme how little we can give, to avail ourselves of every sordid plea, and every plausible excuse, to keep our money in our pockets, is an odious exhibition of disgusting insincerity. It may be that this matter has not hitherto occurred to some who will read this tract; but it can no longer thus escape their observation, and they will see the necessity, from

thenceforth, of curtailing their prayers, or enlarging their contributions: it will remain for them to say which side of the alternative they will take.

Thus, my dear brethren, you perceive that the sincerity of a professor of religion is tested by his prayers; and it must be so, and ought to be so, if those prayers are to be considered anything more than mere unmeaning forms, or the offerings of feigned lips: for God answers our supplications, not by miracle, or by interpositions of his providence, (which would leave us nothing to do but to stand still and see the salvation of God,) but by engaging and blessing our own instrumentality. Prayer is not a substitute for human action, but the connecting link between our doings and God's blessing. If we pray for temporal success, comfort, or health, we must, and we do use the means; and if we pray for pardon, we must repent and believe; if for sanctification, we must watch and resist temptation; and if for the conversion of others, we must use the appropriate means, that is, we must make direct efforts and give our property. We are commanded to seek, as well as to ask, and in all those cases where anything can be done, and ought to be done, by us, to neglect to do it, and to content ourselves with petitioning God, however numerous or fervent our requests may be, will receive from him no other answer than that which he gave to Joshua, when he said, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?"

Praying is a very solemn engagement, and should not be so trifled with; but it is awfully trifled with when it is treated as if it imposed no obligation upon us in reference to the objects for which it is presented. God has said he will be sanctified in all them that draw

near to him; but is this to sanctify him, to offer prayers which we do not wish or mean should be answered? Is this to serve him with reverence and godly fear and remembrance that he is a consuming fire, to importune him for an object, and from that moment care nothing about it, and do nothing to obtain it? How indignantly did he reproach the Jews for their feigned devotions, where he said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me!" "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."

Bear, then, in constant and practical recollection that prayer is a solemn and holy thing, the effect of true piety, and intended and designed, when properly performed, to increase its own cause. We should be the better, not only through our prayers, as a means of obtaining blessings from God, but by them, on account of their own influence upon ourselves. Even in this view there is no ground for the question and cavil of wicked men, "What profit should we have if we pray to him?" It is profitable, when sincere, not only by the external advantages which it brings, but by the internal power which it exerts. Every part of it has a salutary tendency; it improves the character, as well as comforts the heart; it exerts a counteracting influence on whatever tends to injure the soul, and a beneficial effect on all that is calculated to do it good. Prayer is Adoration; and what is so adapted to produce profound and habitual veneration for God, as the contemplation and praise of his infinitely glorious perfections? Prayer is Confession

of sin; and when is sin more apt to melt the heart into the soft relentings of godly contrition, than when carefully recounted to Him against whom it has been all committed, with a spirit awed into reverence and submission by the pure majesty of the Divine presence? Prayer is Supplication for blessings needed; and what a sense of dependence, what a feeling of want, what a confidence in God for supplies, is this exercise likely to produce! Prayer is Intercession for others; and how does it cherish all the feelings of kindness, pity, benevolence, and universal charity! Prayer is usually attended with Thanksgiving for mercies received, and its breath fans the spark of gratitude till it is kindled into a flame of pure and ardent love. Prayer resists the influence of the world, raises the soul out of the region of things temporal, and places it within sight and attraction of things unseen and eternal. Prayer gives efficiency to all the other means of grace; and thus is continually, by its own tendency and power, producing a favourable influence upon our character and conduct. Let us, then, beware of insincerity in our prayers and in all other matters: for it is very obvious that there is amongst professors of religion, who are not really hypocrites altogether, too much of petty hypocrisy in the details of their profession.

This is a serious charge, and ought not to be hastily, much less, falsely, made; but is it not too true to be denied, and too obvious to be concealed? We are none of us, perhaps, sufficiently impressed with the solemn obligation to be careful in the use of our tongues, to weigh our words before we utter them, so as to speak nothing which we do not mean in the very import that will be conveyed by them to the hearer; and to

remember them, after they have gone from our lips, so as to feel the bond they impose upon our conduct and our conscience. Speech next to reason is man's highest glory and distinction, and even reason without speech would be of little service: how tremblingly anxious, then, should we be, never to make our talking powers the vehicle of deceit, the veil of hypocrisy, or the medium of unmeaning compliment! To be insincere in our talk with our fellow-creatures; to ask for favours we do not wish to obtain; to solicit an interchange of offices we do not covet; to utter compliments we do not mean; to acknowledge obligations we do not feel; to lavish praises which we know are ill-deserved; to appear anxious for friendship which we do not want, is a lamentable and criminal inconsistency, which is but too common among professors: but how much more guilty is all this unmeaning prattle when addressed to the holy and heart searching God! Hence the admonition of the apostle, "Let every man be slow to speak;" and the still more impressive exhortation of the wisest of men, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? for in many words there are also vanities: but fear thou God."

Among the many confessions of our sins, and supplications for pardoning mercy, which we are, or ought to be, continually laying before the footstool of God's throne of

grace, the following should have a place: "Lord, forgive our misuse of the faculty of speech; pardon our unmeaning, insincere, and deceptive language towards our fellow-creatures, even where it is not our actual intention to lie; and especially forgive our unmeaning prayers, and our insincere devotions; which though they be not the offspring of designing hypocrisy, are the effusions of ignorance, carelessness, and formalism."

Wherefore, dear brethren, not only give yourselves to prayer, but yield yourselves up to the power, direction and control of your own devotions. Do not, from any thing I have said, be induced to pray less, but to do more. Do not lower the standard of your prayers, but elevate the standard of your practice. What you have to do is to be men and women of prayer, and then to let your character be cast in the mould of your prayers. We all see things most clearly, and feel them most impressively, when we are prostrate before the throne of God, and in his presence: let us realise his presence every where, and at all times; then shall we be likely to be the same persons in action, as we are in devotion, and glorify our Father in heaven, not only by what we say to him, but by what we do for him.

SPIRITUAL IDOLATRY.

THE apostle John closes his first epistle with the following tender and solemn admonition, "Little children keep yourselves from idols." Those to whom he thus addressed himself had been converted from Paganism, and needed to be cautioned against relapsing into

their former idolatry, and against every practice which would in the smallest degree seem to countenance it. There is no need that I should warn you against this sin in its literal import. You have never bowed the knee to a graven or molten image, and never will: but is there no such thing as Spiritual Idolatry? The first commandment of the decalogue says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The meaning of this precept (which is the foundation of all religion) is not merely that we should not acknowledge any other God besides Jehovah, but also that we should treat him as God, that is, love him with all our hearts, serve him with all our lives, and depend upon him for our supreme felicity. It is obvious that this, as well as prayer and praise, is the worship he requires. The bending the knee, whether to God or an idol, is of no value but as the expression of the state of the mind and heart at the time. The affections are a much more sincere and expressive homage than bodily attitudes and outward forms of devotion. Hence it is obvious that whatever we love most and are most anxious to retain and please, whatever it be we depend most upon for happiness and help, whatever has most of our heart, that in effect is our God, whether it be Jehovah or Jupiter, or whether it be friends, possessions, or our own dispositions or selves. Is it not, therefore, to be feared that the hearts of many professors are going too much after other objects of worship than God, and need the admonition, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols?" Of these objects of spiritual idolatry there are many classes.

1. There are the idols of the heart. Self is the great idol which is the rival of God, and divides with him the worship of the human race. This is "the

image of jealousy which maketh jealous," even in the temple of the Lord. It is surprising and affecting to think how much self enters into almost all we do. Besides the grosser form of self-righteousness, which leads many unconverted persons actually to depend upon their own doings for acceptance with God, how much of self-seeking, self-valuing, self-admiration, self-dependence is there in many converted ones. How covertly do some seek their own praise in what they professedly do for God and their fellow-creatures! How eager are they for the admiration and applause of their fellow-creatures! How much of self, yet how little suspected by themselves, is seen by Him who knows them better than they know themselves, at the bottom of their most splendid donations, and most costly sacrifices! What admiration do some cherish of their religious experience, their painful conflicts, their deep sorrows, their lively joys, their full assurance! With what feelings complimentary to themselves do they meditate on these exercises, or relate them to their friends! How much do some dote on their blameless conduct, their spotless character, and the estimation in which they are held by the church and the world: they make an idol of their reputation. I knew a venerable man who attained to the age of seventy in blameless conduct, and was esteemed for his sanctity by all who knew him, and then fell into odious immorality. On being asked if he could trace his fall to any ascertainable cause, he replied, "I was proud of my reputation, and Satan taking advantage of this state of mind, tempted me, and I was taken in the snare of my own pride." In how many ways does self steal away the heart from God. How subtle are its workings, how concealed its move-

ments, yet how extensive is its influence. How it perverts our motives, lowers our aims, corrupts our affections, and taints our best actions. How much incense is burned, and how many sacrifices are offered on the altar of this idol.

2. Next to these come the idols of the house. Our relatives, next to God, demand and deserve our regard. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, are not only impelled by instinct, but commanded by God, to love one another. It is the law of nature and of revelation. These dear objects of our affection, and all the tender charities and kind offices which arise out of the ties that bind us to them, are the sources of the purest and most lawful enjoyments upon earth. The poet has beautifully said,

“Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that hast survived the fall,
Thou art the nurse of virtue.”

But the love we bear our friends must be subordinate to that we cherish for God. He must have the throne of the heart, and they must rise no higher than the footstool. If we depend upon those dear relations for happiness more than upon God’s favour; if in calculating our possessions, and adding up the sum total of our enjoyments we place them first; if in felicitating ourselves upon what we have we turn to them before God; if we dread most the loss of them; if we feel that nothing could make us happy if they were removed; if we go daily and hourly to them alone for gratification; if they are enjoyed solely by themselves, and for themselves, apart from God; if instead of leading our hearts to God, they hold them from him; if we are more solicitous to avoid what would endanger their con-

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tinuance, than what would endanger the continuance of God's favour; if the temporary interruption of their enjoyment affects us more than the loss of the enjoyment of religion and religious privileges; if upon their removal we feel forlorn and desolate, as if we had lost our all, or imagine that such would be our state in the event of such a calamity, then is it but too plain, that they are our idols, and that we are worshipping them.

How evident is it to all but themselves, and at times suspected even by them, that many husbands and wives are to each other as God! Their reciprocal smiles are more to them than the light of God's countenance; and their reciprocal love more to them than the loving-kindness of their heavenly Father. And how many parents need the simple exhortation of the old writer, "Beware of the little idols in white frocks." I would not have parental affection diminished. Who would abate the vigilance, and tenderness, and ceaseless labours of maternal love? Who would interfere to arrest the care which is necessary to guard, and feed, and train those little helpless beings, who are so dependent on a mother's eye, and arm, and heart? But I would remind every mother, she has a God to love, and serve, and please, as well as a child; a God that is in himself, and ought to be to her, infinitely more than that lovely son. And if all her thoughts, feelings, purposes, and aims, flow in one undivided current to that child, is he not her idol? God will not be, ought not to be, forgotten and neglected, even for a husband or a wife, a parent or a child. Nor has he rendered it impossible for us at the same time to love him supremely, and our earthly relatives adequately. The two things are not

incompatible. Multitudes of husbands and wives have loved each other tenderly, and yet have loved God supremely. Multitudes of parents have loved their children judiciously, fondly, laboriously, and yet have loved God supremely. Suffer, then, the word of exhortation; beware of suffering your hearts to be too much engrossed by those dear objects of your best earthly affection.

In some cases it is not so much any one object at home, but home as a whole, that steals the heart from God, a comfortable home, comprising relatives, a commodious house, plenty, health. The pleasures of the domestic circle are some of the sweetest known on earth; and he who has a happy home has to resist one of the most powerful rivals and competitors with God for his heart. In returning from the scene of his daily toil, to a quiet habitation, greeted by the smiles of a devoted wife and affectionate children, with plenty on his table, and ease in his mind, oh! what danger is he in of feeling that he has little need of God's favour or heaven's glories to make him happy; of saying, or at least feeling, "This is my temple, my God, my heaven."

In some cases, a splendid house and gardens, elegant furniture, and all the appendages of wealth, are the idols in which the heart delights, and the affections luxuriate. How vain is the proprietor of his beautiful domain: what a pride he takes in it. As he walks about his paradise, his spirit is elated within him: to keep it in order and beauty is the study of his mind, and the happiness of his life. Amidst all his prosperity, God is too little thought of, and less enjoyed. His possessions lead him not, as they should do, to the Giver

but detain his soul from her divine centre and rest. It is a paradise, but it is also an earthly one, in which he rather communes with the visible world, than the invisible God: it is a scene where he looks not at things unseen and eternal but at things seen and temporal. Such are the idols of the house.

3. There are also idols of the shop. Some religious people are blessed with a prosperous and thriving trade, or lucrative profession; they have perhaps acquired a name, an established reputation, an extensive credit, their profits are considerable, their property increases, their respectability rises, their neighbours look on, some with envy, others with surprise. How dangerous to the soul is this state of things. Such a business often becomes a too successful competitor with God for the heart. These prosperous tradesmen are apt to embark their whole soul in their concern; it is their happiness, their dependence, their one chief solicitude. They admire their success, value themselves on account of it, watch it with a most acute sensibility, tremble if any thing looks like a symptom of change, see with distressing jealousy the incipient prosperity of others in the same line, felicitate themselves on the greatness of their returns, exalt themselves upon the solidity of their credit, and the esteem in which they are held by the world, go to the scene of their success with conscious pride, in short, their soul is bound up in their trade, it is their idol, they in effect say to it, "Thou art my God, save me." But where all this while is their religion? Did they ever possess any? If so, it is lamentably low, lukewarm, and feeble. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." Let such men know, they cannot

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serve God and mammon. The Spirit of God, like the glory of the Lord, departing from the temple of Jerusalem, will retire from such a heart, for it has become the seat of an idol, which has his altar, and his service, and his worshipper there.

4. There are idols of the world, idols which the children of this world worship, and in whose worship the children of light sometimes unite. What crowds are continually assembled in the temple of fashion, that light but graceful deity of taste and elegance! What costly sacrifices of modesty, sobriety, time, money, usefulness, are offered on the altar of the graces! The study, solicitude, and happiness of many to a great extent depend on matters of fashion. A recognised defect of taste would more distress them, than a breach of truth or justice; a conscious want of elegance be a far more serious matter than a want of piety or mercy; and to be behind any of their gay neighbours in some new mode of dress, furniture, or style of living be far worse than to be lacking in honour, generosity, or gratitude: fashion is in short the god of their idolatry; before which, however frequently they go to church or chapel, or with whatever fervour they repeat their prayers, their hearts bow down, and pay their homage. And is there no undue devotion paid to this idol by professors of religion? Is there not at any rate a turning aside from God to visit the shrine of this fantastic goddess? How anxious are some good people about gentility, elegance, and fashion. See them in their dress, in their furniture, in their entertainments, in their late hours. Hear them in their conversation about what is new, tasteful, splendid. Behold them even in their religion, choosing fashionable systems, places, preachers,

parties, and exercises, and regulating even their homage to God by fashion. And could you search their hearts as God does, and observe the solicitude, the contrivance, the plans and purposes, which are cherished there to shine, to excel, to be admired, to be thought persons of elegance and good taste, to be admitted to be the first of their circles for what is fashionable, you would recognise, at once, the idol at whose altar they often bow with the multitude. How much more concerned are they about these matters than about spirituality of mind, mortification of sin, the cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit, and meetness for heaven! The simplicity that is in Christ is gone from such minds. God is perhaps their God; but they linger so much, and so often, and so long, about the temple of fashion, that it is a doubtful matter whether their hearts are true to him or not. They are so anxious to get as near as possible to the people of the world in their general habits as to leave it a question whether they do not belong more to them than to the people of God; or, if they cannot give up the Lord, it is evident they want to serve him in the priestly dress, and with the rites of their idol.

Literature and science are, with many, the supreme good, and so the gods of their minds and their hearts. How many almost worship knowledge, and the means of obtaining it; not indeed the knowledge of the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, but the knowledge of nature! Nature is their deity, and this globe the temple in which they adore her. Even some good men who have a thirst for information, a love for books, a taste for science, carry this too far, and are in danger of being more enamoured by what is intellectual, than by what is moral; and of deriving their happiness too

much from the things seen and temporal, amidst which they are led by the senses, than from things unseen and eternal, which can be apprehended by faith alone.

5. There are the idols of the sanctuary. Even in God's house, as in the temple of old, there are other objects set up for worship beside himself and above himself. There, where he should be supreme and alone, are to be found altars raised, and offerings presented to his rivals. What subtle homage is paid to human names and human systems; and how much do we hear from some about the Fathers, and from others about Luther and Calvin, Wesley and Whitefield. What a cry is raised by multitudes in this day about the church; I do not mean the church of England, but the church universal. We hear more from some about the church, which is but the body, than about Christ, who is the Divine Head. The church is with them Christ visible; and the visible Christ seems to be more thought of, and spoken of, than the invisible Christ. The influence and authority of the latter is by these persons delegated to, if not supplanted by, the former. The church is the great object of their faith and confidence, and hides from their view, or goes far towards hiding, the Redeemer of the world himself. The sacraments are more talked of than the gospel, more relied upon, more inculcated, more exalted, than justification by faith. A human priesthood, though in their view designed to reflect, eclipses the lustre of, that which is divine. Human standards of opinion and faith are raised to all but an equality with the only perfect, infallible, and authoritative one: in short, on arriving at the house of God, instead of finding him alone presented to their attention in the simplicity of his own truth and worship; instead of making him the alpha

and omega, before which the mind and heart are to lie prostrate, they bow before various other objects, all pretending to lead to him, but which in fact interpose between him and the soul, and turn away the attention of the worshipper from Jehovah Jesus, and share the throne with him.

Others again convert the preacher into an idol. Ardently attached to some favourite minister, they can relish the truth only as dispensed by him; and all others are neglected, if not contemned. No prayers excite their devotion but his; no sermons instruct, please, or edify but his. When he is not in the pulpit no matter who is. Their religion and their religious comfort depend all on him. The clearest elucidation of truth, the grandest views of the Divine character, the fullest exhibitions of Christ, the most consoling manifestations of heavenly glory, are nothing except from his lips; in this case, the man is converted into an idol, and it is he that is worshipped, and not God.

Alas, alas, in how many ways does the heart of man go astray from God; and out of what materials does it construct its idols! It aggravated the sinfulness of the idolatry of the ancients, that they paid their worship to such low objects, and changed the glory of God into creeping things. And how does it increase our folly and guilt that we do the same.

My dear friends, let me admonish you to worship God alone. Give your heart, your whole heart to him. Is it not your sin, and ought it not to be your shame and your sorrow, that you bestow so much of your affection upon other objects, and so little upon him: that you treat him so little as such a God deserves, and claims to be treated? Recollect he is God, God in Christ: God

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reconciled, your father, your portion; all glorious and all gracious. Think how you ought to love him, with what entire, ardent, constant, devoted affection. It would seem, when we consider his glory, as if it would be the easiest thing in the world to love and serve him, and the hardest thing in the world to love any other objects; as if it would be impossible so to get out of the sight, and beyond the attraction, of his glory, as to have time, inclination, or ability to take an interest in any thing else than in his favour which is life, and his loving kindness which is better than life; as if with the hope of his favour through Christ as our portion, we should really no more want any other object or source of delight, than the condemned criminal does besides the royal pardon, or the starving man the supply of food. Amazing littleness, that with an infinite God to love, we should be so taken up with the finite, and many of them the really minute, objects of this world; and that with his love to us as our river of pleasure, we should be so dependent for bliss upon the drops of earthly enjoyment that ooze and trickle out from created good. How offensive this must be to God, who knows, and who alone knows, the ineffable glories of his own nature! How ungrateful must it appear to him when he has opened this fountain of living waters for us, to see us turn away from it, to hew out broken cisterns that can hold no waters! How insulting to him to see a relative, a trade, a house, a minister, exalted into a rival claimant for the heart, and receiving that affection, confidence, and devotedness which are due to him! Remember he is a jealous God: and as among men jealousy is inflamed to the highest pitch by seeing an unworthy and insignificant object preferred, so God will, and must, resent our

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preference to him, of such objects as this world at best can present.

Our sin in this matter is our punishment. "They forsake their own mercy," said the prophet, "who observe lying vanities." This is as true of spiritual idolatry as it is of that which is literal. "They that forsake the Lord shall be ashamed." To turn from God to the creature; to place our dependence upon, and seek our happiness in, the latter instead of the former, is only to prepare for ourselves the bitterness of disappointment, vexation, and self-reproach: it is to turn from the sun to the taper, whose light soon expires in smoke and noisomeness; from the full and flowing fountain to the clouds without rain, and the wells without water. The experience of others, as well as our own, demonstrates that, generally speaking, our severest trials, our most painful inflictions, come from those objects which we have loved and served at God's expense. It is just and wise in God, as a salutary warning to us in future, and as a caution to others, that our idols should become our scourges.

Creature love, when excessive and indulgent, and to the neglect of God, must draw away the strength of a renewed heart, and impoverish the soul of her spiritual wealth and prosperity. To many it is perfectly evident that their religion, under the weakening and withering influence of this undue regard to some worldly object, has sunk to a mere form; they have a name to live but are dead; and if they reflect at all it is in some such strain as the poet's:

"What peaceful hours I once enjoy'd,
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill."

Through the deceitfulness of the heart, we are very apt to be imposed upon by the pure and lawful objects which, in some cases, are thus idolized, lawful I mean in themselves, and sinful only in the excessive degree in which they are regarded. As professors of religion you do not and cannot love and worship sin. The children of this world may do this, and exalt their vices into gods: your idols are many of them virtues, or objects in themselves quite innocent. You may and ought to love your relatives; you may and ought to value your business, home, ministers, and ordinances of religion; and these things become sinful only when loved more than God. Here lies the difficulty, to keep them in due subordination to him; and the deceitfulness of the heart takes advantage of this difficulty, to blind us to the distinction between lawful and unlawful love, and to hurry us over the line of demarcation.

Let me, my dear friends, earnestly admonish you to give this subject a deep and due consideration. Examine your hearts. Does not the charge of spiritual idolatry appertain to you? Is there not some object, or class of objects, that has come between God and your souls? Have you no idols? Has your heart departed from the Lord? Search the mind, the house, the shop, the sanctuary, the world, and see whither it has gone, and what you have exalted into a competitor with God. Be faithful to yourself. Is there not something for which God has a controversy with you? Ask yourself what it is you trust in, look to, depend upon, for happiness. Do you indeed look through and above all to God? Is God your centre, rest, and dwelling place? Is Christ more to you than every thing else? Is it he that is precious? Is he the chief among ten

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thousand, and the altogether lovely? Is he the sun that makes the day of your prosperity, the moon that enlivens the night of your adversity? Is he your riches, your friend, your home, your pearl of great price? Say, dear brethren, is God really God to you, loved and treated as God should be? Ask yourselves if while you are praying for the downfall of idols abroad, there are none to be pulled down in your own hearts and houses; if while you are seeking the conversion of the worshippers of the Hindoo deities, you have not need to be converted from the worship of self and mammon? Be humbled, deeply humbled, for this your sin. How low many live as christians. Seek for more grace to give your heart, your whole heart to God. He demands it, will take no denial, and allow of no excuse for the refusal. In his sight, it is of little consequence by what object this demand is set aside; there is not so much variety in the shades of criminality as many are led to suppose: the object may be more decent, and more lawful in itself, but the affection with which it is loved is still an illicit one.

In conclusion, I say to you, adopt the language of the poet in another part of the hymn already quoted:

“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.
“So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame,
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.”

A NEW YEAR'S SOLEMN WARNING.

STANDING as you now do upon the threshold of another year, and looking with something of curiosity and suspense, if not with anxiety and dread, upon the dark curtain which wisely and mercifully conceals the future from your view, it becomes you in deep seriousness to inquire and consider, not only what may happen, but if you are prepared for the worst that can happen; for though there is one sense in which we ought not to take "thought for the morrow," there is another in which we ought. It is as much our duty wisely to provide for coming time, as it is to abstain from unnecessary, useless, and distressing solicitude. Concerning many the decree is fixed, and the sentence gone forth, which was denounced on Hananiah, "This year thou shalt die." This may be the case with any one of the readers of the present address, and therefore every one of them should seriously reflect upon such a possibility,

This year you may die, for you must die some time, and that time may as likely come this year as any other. This year you may die, because you have no revelation from God that you shall not.

This year you may die, because you are ever and every where exposed to the causes that take away life.

This year you may die, because life is the most uncertain thing in the world, and you have not the assurance of a single moment beyond the present.

This year you may die, because some among your friends and acquaintances have died; and all the liabilities to death still remain for the rest who yet live.

This year you may die, for it is all but certain that

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many of the readers of this address will die this year, and why not you?

This year you may die, although there is now no indication of approaching death; for many during the past year have been cut off, and many during the present year will die, who may now seem very likely to live; and why not you?

How many then are the probabilities that before next new year's day your place will be vacant in your family, in the scene of your daily occupation, and in the house of God! Ought not this to induce a habit of solemn, pensive, devout, practical, profitable, reflection? Bring home the thought. Take up the supposition, and say, "Yes, it is possible, by no means improbable, that I may die, this year."

Permit me, on this supposition, to ask you a few questions.

Are you really prepared for your end, come when it may, by genuine faith, the new birth, a holy life, and a heavenly mind? Or are you a mere nominal professor, having a name to live, while, you are dead? Are the fruits of a living branch in the true Vine brought forth by you? Do you recognise in yourselves, and do others see in you, the marks of a state of grace? Put the question to your own hearts, ask yourselves, "What am I? Am I a spiritual, heavenly, humble, waiting, working servant of God? Am I really crucified with Christ, dead to the world, ripening for glory? Is there any thing heavenly about me? Is my assurance well settled, my joy established, my temper sanctified, my walk consistent? Am I thus ready for death, and like one waiting for the coming of the Master, with his loins girt about, and his lamp burning?"

Do with your grave open before you inquire into this matter. Are you living as you would wish to be found when the summons comes? Is your soul in that state in which you would desire it to be found when death strikes you? Are you, in your devotional habits, your temper, your general behaviour, as you should be with eternity so near? Would you like to look up as you are, just as you are now, while reading these lines, and see your Master at his coming? Would you die as you are?

Is there no part of your conduct as a professor, which, upon the supposition you may die this year, you should alter? Nothing in the family, the closet, the shop, the church, the world, you should amend? What, death so near, and nothing to be done to meet it with confidence and joy?

I now, in addition to these questions, lay before you some suggestions. If you die this year, not only all your plans, projects, and business of a worldly nature will stop, but all your advantages of a spiritual kind, all your means of grace, all your opportunities of salvation, all your aids to improvement, all your possibility of growth in grace, cease for ever. Your last sabbath, your last sermon, your last sacramental season, your last prayer, will all be witnessed by the present year! This year you are to arrive in heaven or hell, and to know the meaning of that glorious, or that dreadful word! This year to see the end of time, and the beginning of eternity! How solemn! So soon to have your profession tested, not by man, but by God; so soon to be found by the King coming in to see the guests clothed in the wedding garment and approved, or destitute of the necessary robe, and cast into outer darkness! How many false

professors will be unmasked this year, and appear with astonishment and horror, both to themselves and others, as self-deceivers formalists and hypocrites! How, many in reply to the plea, "Lord, Lord, I have eaten and drunk in thy presence;" will hear the dreadful response, "Depart from me, I never knew you:" and thus find there is a way to destruction from the communion of the church. What you are when you die this year, that you will be for ever; the seal of eternal destiny will be put upon you. From that time you will have no opportunity to correct mistakes; no second trial; no privilege of alteration. Your last words in time, and your first in eternity, might be, "I must be what I am for ever." All your anxieties, and doubts, and fears, about the reality of your religion, are about to be confirmed or dissipated, for ever. This year you are to be proved as awful an example of self-delusion, or as blessed an instance of well-founded hope as the universe contains. The grand secret, if secret it yet be, is about to be disclosed, whether you are a child of God, or of the devil. Within a few months, perhaps weeks, that next moment after death which fancy in vain attempts to paint, is to arrive to you, and, waking up in eternity, you will shout with rapture, "Then I am in heaven!" or utter with a shriek of despair, and surprise, the dreadful question, "What, am I in hell?" What a year are you entering upon then supposing you are to die before it closes! What disclosures are you about to witness, what discoveries to make! Many will grow rich this year; many will sink into poverty; many will be united in marriage; many will be separated from their friends by death; many will leave their country and embark for a foreign land, but you will die, and what is all else to this?

On the supposition that you are prepared for death by simple faith in Christ for justification, by the regeneration of your heart through the influence of the Spirit, by a holy life, a heavenly mind, what consolations stand connected with, and are included in, the decree, "This year thou shalt die!" There is, I know, a dark side of death; the antecedent sufferings, and mysterious nature of dying, the separation from near and dear relatives, and, perhaps, the leaving them without friends or wealth to the care of Providence; the departure from the visible to the invisible world; the leaving the body, the dear companion of the spirit, in the tomb, the quitting of scenes of usefulness and enjoyment, all this, close at hand; all is trying to humanity, nature shudders. But grace turns to the bright side, and very, very bright it is. There is the promised presence, and all powerful support of Him who hath abolished death by his crucifixion, and brought life and immortality to light by his resurrection and ascension; of Him who can make a dying bed "soft as downy pillows!" there is the release from all the evils of sin the parent evil, and from sickness, poverty, toil, care, fear, sorrow the dismal progeny. Yes, the last pulsation which leaves the heart still speeds the soul away for ever from every fruit and effect of the fall. O believer, lift up thy head, for thy redemption draws nigh. What, this year, so soon, to shed thy last tear over sin and sorrow! This year to feel the last corruption, and to be agitated by the last anxiety! This year to experience thy blessed emancipation from all the countless ills that flesh is heir to! So soon to rise from the vale of tears, to the mount where God shall wipe away all tears from thy eyes: so soon to leave the

field of conflict, cease the fight of faith, and lay aside the soldier's armour for the victor's crown! Nor is this all: heaven is more than negatives, it is life eternal, glory everlasting, immortal honour, it is the perfection of our nature in knowledge, holiness, and love; it is the presence of God, the vision of Christ, the society of angels, the communion of spirits made perfect; and death introduces to all; death is the dark avenue to ineffable, and to what would now be, insufferable, splendour, the rude and repulsive gate that opens into all that the Father hath devised, and the Son procured, and the Spirit promised, to them that love the Triune God. Believer, if thou die this year, how near thou art to the Lamb in the midst of the throne, to the living fountain of waters, to the crown of glory, the golden harp, the white robe, and the palm branch of victory! This year, to approach the jasper walls, to pass through the pearly gates, to walk the golden streets, to worship in the temple of the Lord, and partake the glory of that bright world in which Jehovah dwells! This year to be imparadised in the presence of God! And is it possible that it can be so near? Transporting thought! Blessed man! Thou art now upon the mount, looking at the promised land with Moses, and soon thou shalt with Joshua pass the Jordan, and go in to take possession. The days of thy mourning will soon end. Though now for a season, if need be, thou art in heaviness through manifold temptations, yet that season is speedily to close. Only a few more days of toil, only a few more nights to wet thy couch with tears. Go forward with courage and confidence. Death is formidable only when in front; the moment you have passed him, you will look back upon him as upon

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an angel of light: the stream may be dark, and the water deep; but it is narrow, fordable, and once crossed, it will never have to be crossed again. Have you not often in thought, if not in speech, congratulated those whose fetters of sin and tattered garments of flesh have been put off, and who have entered into liberty, and life, and joy, saying, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord?" And how soon are you to be among them, and be objects of congratulations to others! There is nothing then in this sentence, "This year thou shalt die," which should dismay or distress you.

I now lay down the following appropriate Directions and Counsels.

Act upon the supposition that this may be your closing year. How appropriate is the admonition of Solomon, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." Whatsoever is to be done, or ought to be done, whatsoever thou canst find to do, do it. Look about, and consider what in the hour of death you will wish you had done; or if you could look out of your grave after you had entered it, what would you regret you had not done, for your own soul, for your family, if you have one, for your friends, for the church, or for the world? What would you do, if you knew for certain this were your last year? Think how you would then act as regards your personal religion. How laboriously you would mortify remaining corruption; how carefully you would watch against sin; how anxiously you would examine your soul, with a view to supply every defect; how regular and earnest your prayers would be; how constant your attendance on all the means of grace;

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how diligent and strenuous your endeavours after universal holiness! You would say, "O my soul, thou hast but a few more months to grow in grace, to die to the world, to meeten for heaven, to do any thing for thine own eternal welfare, to gain a lofty seat in glory; and wilt thou not be diligent to the very last exertion? Wilt thou not lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset thee, when thou art so near the end of thy race? Wilt thou be lukewarm, careless, negligent in any thing, when so near eternity? Up and be doing, 'knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep;' for now is thy salvation very near."

Should you think so much about the world, its pleasures, or its business, or its honours, when you are about to leave them so soon? What will they be to you this day twelve months? What will it matter to you whether you were rich or poor, whether you were successful or unsuccessful? And will you not abate your undue anxiety when so near the end of your worldly pursuits? What, carry your solicitude about business and profit to the grave's mouth, and die in the act of determining to be rich and great? Will you, when so near your interview with God, to receive his frown or smile, be so solicitous to gain human applause, the honour that comes from man, and the distinctions of society? What will these things do for you in the dark valley, and beyond it?

And as regards your conduct to others. Parents, what will you do, can you do, ought you to do, for your children, with only a few months more to pray for them, to teach them, to warn them, to save them from hell, and to persuade them to accompany you to heaven?

So soon to leave them, mothers, will you not travail in birth a second time for them, not now for their bodies, but their souls? Christians of property, think how soon all your opportunities to spend for God and his cause are to cease, and the last shilling to be given by you, and your wealth to pass to other hands, which, perhaps, will not part with any of it for those interests which are so near your hearts. What should you give, now that your giving is so nearly over? Should you meet any proper appeal with a sordid plea, a false excuse, an angry refusal? Should you be covetous with an open grave before you, and worship mammon on the edge of the dark valley? Can you act the part of the unfaithful steward when in a month or two you are to be called to the account? Professors of influence, health, energy, who can do much in various ways for Christ and his cause, for the salvation of men, and the building up of the church, with what vigour should you apply yourselves to the interests of religion, the kingdom of God: how firmly and emphatically should you echo, as your own fixed, intelligent purpose, the words of your Lord, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work." You should put forth all your energies, as one who sees that his sun is touching the horizon, and who must soon lay down his implements of labour, but who has yet much to do. After this year, on the supposition of this address, you can dry up no more widows' tears, no more call forth the blessing of them that are ready to perish, communicate no more knowledge, convert no more sinners from the error of their ways, and save no more souls from death. Sunday school teachers, look upon your children, and think how soon you are to leave

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them. Tract distributors and christian visitors, look at the ignorant families on whom you call, and think how soon you are to visit them no more. All ye that do any thing for Christ, think how soon you will do no more. And ye that do nothing for Christ, think how soon you are to appear in the character, and before the Master, to hear the doom of the slothful servant that hid his Lord's talent in a napkin. Oh, what work ought to be crowded in a year, in a last year of a professor's life!

Whether however you die this year or not, you must die some year; and compared with the millions of millions of years, measuring eternity by the revolutions of time, what is the longest life, even that of Methuselah, if it could be attained, but a moment, and the twinkling of an eye? Remember the apostle's impressive admonitions, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

I cannot enforce this address with words more solemn and appropriate than those of the eminent Joseph Alleine, the author of the *Alarm to the Unconverted*, who in his beautiful and striking letters to his people, written from the jail into which he had been cast for conscience sake, has one entitled, "Look out of your graves upon the world," and which concludes thus:

"Labour to get right apprehensions of the world. Do not think

these things necessary; one thing is needful: you may be happy in the want of all outward comforts. Do not think yourselves undone if brought to want or poverty: study eternity, and you will see it to be little material to you whether you are poor or rich; and that you may never have such an opportunity for your advantage in all your lives as when you put all to hazard, and seem to run the vessel upon the rocks. Set your enemies one against the other; death against the world; no such way to get above the world, as to put yourselves into the possession of death. Look often upon your dust that you shall be reduced to, and imagine you see your bones tumbled out of your graves, as they are like shortly to be, and men handling your skulls, and inquiring 'Whose is this?' Tell me of what account will the world be then, what good will it do you. Put yourselves often into your graves, and look out from thence upon the world, and see what judgment you have of it then. Must not you be shortly forgot among the dead? Your places will know you no more, and your memory will be no more among men, and then what will it profit you to have lived in fashion and repute, and to have been men of esteem? 'One serious walk over a churchyard,' as one speaks, 'might make a man mortified to the world.' Think upon how many you tread, but you know them not. No doubt they had their estates, their friends, their trades, their businesses, and kept as much stir in the world as others do now. But, alas! what are they the better for any, for all this? Know you not that this must be your own case very shortly? Oh, the unhappiness of deceived man! How miserably is he bewitched, and befooled, that he should expend himself for that which he knows shall for ever leave him! Brethren, I beseech you, lay no stress upon these perishing things, but labour to be at a holy indifference about them. Is it for one that is in his wits to sell his God, his conscience, his soul, for things that he is not sure to keep a week, nor a day: and which he is sure, after a few sleepings and wakings more, to leave behind him for ever? Go and talk with dying men, and see what apprehensions they have of the world. If any should come to such as these, and tell them, 'Here are such and such preferments for you; you shall have such titles of honour and delights, if you will now disown religion, or subscribe to iniquity.' Do you think such a motion would be embraced? Brethren, why should we not be wise in time? Why should we not now be of the mind of which we know we shall be all shortly? Woe to them that will not be wise till it be to no purpose! Woe to them whose eyes nothing but death and judgment will open! Woe to them who, though they have been warned by others, and have heard the world's greatest

darlings in death to cry out of its vanity, worthlessness, and deceitfulness, and have been told where and how it would leave them, yet would take no warning, but only must serve themselves to be for warnings to others! Ah, my beloved, beware there be no worldly professors among you, that will part rather with their part in paradise than their part on earth; that will rather part with their consciences, than with their estates; that have secret reserves in heart to save themselves whole, when it comes to the pinch; and not to be of the religion that will undo them in the world. Beware that none of you have your hearts where your feet should be, and love your mammon before your Maker. It is time for you to learn, with Paul, to be crucified to the world."

But now on the supposition, which certainly is true with respect to the greater part of you who will read this address, that you will not die this year, I admonish you to purpose and prepare to live more than ever for the glory of God, the welfare of your souls, the salvation of your fellow-creatures, and the good of the church. It is at once the duty and privilege of a christian to be always ready to live or die.

Examine the past years of your life, to see what defects are to be supplied, and what sins are to be put away for the future. Deut. viii. 2. Psa. lxxxvii., cxxxix. 23, 24. Job xxxii. 31. 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

Make a fresh surrender of yourselves to God, and renew, at the commencement of another year, your covenant engagements with God through Christ, to be his peculiar people, and to shew forth his praise. Psa. iv. Rom. vi., xii. 1 Pet. iv. 1-7.

Keep in mind the great end of life, and redeem the time for the purpose for which it is given: and that end and purpose are to honour God by a constant pursuit of salvation, and a growing meetness for heaven and eternity. Let the purpose and plan of the apostle be yours, and say with him, "For me to live is Christ, and to die

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is gain.” And consider every day of all this coming year as lost in which something is not done for the Lord that bought you. Phil. iii. 17–21.

Let it be your great concern this year to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Pet. iii. 10–18.

Seek to get some spiritual good from every thing that may happen to you this year, and enter into the gracious design of God, which is to render every thing conducive to your real welfare. Phil. iv. Rom. viii. 28.

Let your failings in past years be instructive for the future, as showing how you are likely to be ensnared, and to be led into temptation. Matt. xxvi. 41.

Endeavour to make the trials through which you have passed, and the help you have obtained from God, a ground of confidence and hope for the future. Psal. cxvi.

Do not anticipate evils that may never happen, but calmly and confidently trust yourselves, your concerns, your families, your all, to the care and keeping of your heavenly Father. Matt. vi. 25–34.

Remember that though you may not die this year, you must die some time, and therefore never let the subject be long absent from your minds. Live as at the grave’s mouth; die daily; feel yourself a stranger and pilgrim upon earth; and be ever looking on with faith and hope to the time when you will die, and go home to God. Psal. xc. Eccles. xii. 2 Cor. v. 1–4.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

I CALL you now to consider the subject of growth in grace, 2 Pet. iii, 18.

The word grace is one of the key-terms of Holy Scripture, frequently occurring, and by the knowledge of which much of the import of the whole volume is unfolded. It signifies favour, free and unmerited. "By grace (favour) are ye saved," Eph. ii. 8. This is the primitive, prevailing, generic, sense of the word, and is its meaning in such passages also as the following, and many others: Rom. xi. 5, 6; Eph. i. 2, 6, 7; ii. 7; Titus ii. 11; iii. 7. But as in the ordinary use of language we sometimes call the effect by the name of the cause, the word grace is often applied in Scripture to several things which are the consequences and operations of Divine favour; thus the aids of the Holy Spirit are called grace, as in that passage, "My grace is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor. xii. 9; also 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. In the passage under consideration, it has a meaning somewhat different from either of these, yet related to them, and signifies holiness, as the fruit and effect of God's grace: and the exhortation to grow in grace is a beautiful, comprehensive, and instructive way of saying, grow in holiness, advance in piety. True, there is a sense in which a believer may grow in the favour of God itself, as well as in its effects. It is said of Christ in his youth, that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." God loves his people with a love of complacency: he delights in them on a twofold account; first, because of the work of his Son, which is upon them for justification: and secondly, because of their spiritual graces, inasmuch as these are the work of his Holy Spirit; and therefore the more he sees of this work in them, the more he must love them. On account of their relation as children, he loves them all equally;

but as regards their spiritual condition, he loves them in proportion to their degrees of conformity to himself. Hence they may grow in his favour continually, that is, one person may have more in him that God loves than another, and that same person may have more in himself that God approves at one time than another. But since this supposes, as its ground, a growth in holiness, which is the object of Divine complacency, it brings them to that view of growth in grace, which is the meaning of the passage, and the design of this address; I mean, advance in piety. The explanation of the text is very instructive with regard to several general principles.

1. True religion in the soul is the work of God: it is the operation of God himself as the efficient agent, whoever and whatever may be the instrument of it. It is the grace of God in us.

2. All God's dealings with men in regard to religion and its benefits are the result of pure favour. Man as a sinner merits nothing, and can merit nothing: it is grace that reigns throughout his whole salvation.

3. God's favour shines as brightly in sanctification as in justification. God's grace is as rich and free in delivering us from the power of sin, as from its punishment. God as effectually blesses us and as truly loves us in the work of his Spirit as in the work of his Son.

4. Sanctification is a progressive work. Growth necessarily implies progress. We cannot be more justified at one time than another, for justification admits of no degrees; but we can be more sanctified at one time than another, for sanctification admits of all degrees.

5. Inasmuch as every operation of God's grace is designed to bless us, sanctification is as much a christian's happiness as justification, since it is no less an effect of Divine grace than that, and consequently to grow in holiness is to grow in happiness.

I now come to the exhortation, and admonish you to grow in grace. This implies, of course, that you have grace, for otherwise you cannot grow in it. Regeneration is incipient sanctification; sanctification is the progress of regeneration. The former is the birth of the child of God, the latter is his growth. Without life there can be no growth. Stones do not grow, for they have no vitality; and the heart of man before regeneration is compared to a stone. Are you convinced you are born again of the Spirit? That your heart of stone is changed into warm, vital flesh? It is to be feared that the reason why so many professors never grow is because they have no principle of vitality. If you do not grow, you may question if you are born again, whether you are anything more than the picture or statue of a child.

Perhaps some will ask what are the signs of growth. Here I would remark that growth may be considered either as general, in reference to the whole work of grace in the soul, or to some particular part of it. If we consider the former, I reply, that it is evinced by a general improvement of the whole religious character; an increasing, obvious, and conscious development of the principle and power of spiritual vitality in all its appropriate functions and operations, an increase in the vigour and purity of religious affections, so that the heart is really more intensely engaged in religion; the

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inward life is more concentrated, sprightly, and energetic: so that the christian has more of youthful vivacity in the service of God, and is actuated by a more intense and practical ardour. In this state, Faith becomes more simple, unhesitating, and confiding, less staggered by difficulties, less beclouded by doubts and fears, and more able to disentangle itself on its way to the cross from self-righteousness, and dependence on frames and feelings. Love to God, though it may contain less of glowing emotion, has more of fixed principle, is more prompt, resolute, and self-denying in obedience. Joy in believing, if it have not so much occasional rapture, has more of habitual, calm, and tranquil repose. Resignation to the will of God is more absolute, and we can bear with less perturbation, agitation, and chafing of mind, the crossing of our will, and the disappointment of our hopes. Patience and Meekness towards our fellow creatures and fellow christians become more conspicuous and controlling. At first, the believer can scarcely ford a shallow of troubles, but at length he can swim in a sea of them; formerly he was oppressed by the lightest injury, now he can bear a heavy load; once he could scarcely endure the unintentional offences of his friends, now he can forgive and pray for his enemies. An increase of humility is a sure and necessary sign of growth. At first we were ready to think many worse, now we are as ready to think all better than ourselves; then we saw some defects in ourselves, and they appeared small, now we see many, and they are magnified: then we knew little but the sins of our conduct, but now the corruptions of our hearts are continually abasing us. He that is growing in humility is

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growing indeed; for the growth of grace is as much downward at the root, as upward in the spreading and towering branches.

“Other virtues aspire upwards, but humility looks downwards. We say of the others, the higher they grow the better, but humility is best at the lowest. Faith and hope have a holy ambition, they look not lower than heaven, nothing can content them but an immortal crown; but humility pleaseth herself with a low dejection, and you shall find her with Job in the dust, in that school of morality. Yet even there she grows, and that in the favour of God; the deeper she roots, the higher she sprouts.”

Zeal increases with every thing else, and he who grows in grace, advances in love to God’s service, being more Constantin attendance upon God’s house, advancing from pleasure on sabbath-day ordinances to delight in week-day ones, and from regular private prayer to habitual ejaculatory prayer. The beauty and purity of external holiness advance in proportion to internal spirituality and heavenly-mindedness: and the profession becomes more and more free from the spots of even God’s children. Conscience, instead of becoming more dim in its vision, acquires greater power of perception to discern the criminality of even little sins, and a greater delicacy of taste to loathe them. Liberality becomes more diffusive, and covetousness is mortified by a longer acquaintance with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Charity, that heavenly virtue, without which the greatest gifts are but a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal, bears not only a richer crop of blossoms, but of good ripe fruits; and from loving a few, and those of our own party, we go on to the spirit of the apostle, and say, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;” and they who are outgrowing the prejudices of party and of ignorance, and are rising higher and higher in

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the strength and stature of love, give, perhaps, the fullest proof of all, of growth in grace.

This is general growth in grace; for grace comprehends all other virtues: it is the genus of which all christian virtues are the species. Faith is grace; penitence is grace; love is grace; and so are patience, humility, and zeal: so that when we are called to grow in grace, we are not restricted to any particular disposition, but enjoined to practise them all.

But there is also a particular growth, or a growth in some particular branch of christian duty, to which I would now direct your attention, as of some consequence, and that is our advance in those things wherein we are more than ordinarily deficient. Almost all persons have, in addition to their other sins, some one which may be called their besetting sin, or some neglect which may be called their prevailing deficiency. Now the mortification of these sins, and the supply of these defects, should be considered as our especial aim, object, and duty; and nothing can more decisively mark our improvement in religion than the putting away of these habitual corruptions, and the taking up of these neglected branches of christian obligation. And as deception lies in generals, I am persuaded that many who use this phrase, not only in conversation but even in prayer, and who suppose that they are sincere and earnest in asking to grow in grace, are at the same time taking no pains to mortify each his besetting sin; and while holding some vague and indefinite notions about spiritual advancement, forget that, to grow, means for each to put away that one sin especially. If a person be constitutionally covetous, passionate, or proud, to grow is to become liberal, meek, and humble. If he has neglected family prayer, or the

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week-day services of religion, or the right discharge of any social duty, or private prayer, to grow in grace means in his case to supply that defect. And perhaps, we can better ascertain whether we are growing by inquiring into the state of our souls with regard to these besetting sins or defects, than by examining the wide range of the whole christian character. In going round the whole circle of duty we are apt to become confused, and we therefore arrive at no definite conclusion, but in concentrating our attention upon one point, we can better determine whether or no we are making progress. If we are growing in this one point, we are in all probability growing in others: and, on the other hand, it is this general growth that aids us in the particular one, just as the cure of one specific disease in the body is aided by the improvement of the general health, and the cure of the specific disease reacts on the general health.

I shall now point out the means of growth. And here it is of importance that I should remove a too prevailing mistake, I mean the supposition that as growth is carried on by the influence of the Holy Spirit, it is a matter of pure sovereignty on God's part to grant it, and of privilege on ours to enjoy it. God's Spirit, I admit, is necessary, but he has promised to grant it in answer to believing prayer; and if we have it not, it is because we do not ask it, or we ask it amiss. It is therefore our duty, as well as our privilege to grow. It is in a sinner's duty to live, it is a believer's duty to grow. The promise of the Spirit does not constitute the ground of obligation, but only provides the efficient means of discharging it.

There are some methods which God uses, besides those which we ourselves are to employ, to which for a

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moment I would advert. Sometimes he afflicts his people; severely and variously afflicts them: and what for? To promote their growth in grace. "Every branch in me," saith the Saviour, "which beareth fruit, he purgeth (pruneth) it, that it may bring forth more fruit." It is delightful assurance to the sorrowing disciple, and withal instructive and directory, to be told that affliction is only a pruning-knife to cause the vine to grow the better, and to be more fruitful. Afflicted christian, are you then growing in grace in your sorrows? If not, you are losing the very end of them.

Having heard what God does, now hear what you are to do for your spiritual growth. In speaking of the means which you are to employ, I will illustrate the subject by a figurative, though I hope not too fanciful representation. Taking up the very common simile by which a christian is set forth in the word of God, I mean a fruit-bearing tree, I will show what is essential to the growth and fruitfulness of such a plant.

It must be planted in a good and congenial soil. This is your privilege, for you are planted in the courts of the Lord's house, in the church of the living God, and this, like a rich and fruitful soil, contains all advantages and helps for growth: here are public ordinances, and returning sacraments, which you should constantly, devoutly, and anxiously attend: here is the communion of saints, which the more you cultivate, the more you will be strengthened: here is doctrine to instruct, pastoral oversight to guard, and discipline to correct. Value and improve your church privileges, then, if you would advance in piety.

The growth and fruitfulness of a tree depend much upon proper nutriment being supplied to its roots; and

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so does the growth of the christian; and that which nourishes the root of his piety is the word of God, daily read, correctly understood, cordially believed, spiritually meditated upon, and judiciously applied. The apostle, when setting forth the growth of grace by another metaphor, says, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Good books alone will not do; hearing sermons alone will not do; we must have the pure word. The reason why the trees in the garden of the Lord do not grow to greater height, stature, and fruitfulness, is because the soul is not sufficiently fed by knowledge: these two are united in the precept, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" we are to grow in grace and in knowledge, which means by knowledge.

A tree requires pruning if it grow and flourish; and so does our soul. We must mortify sin. Grace cannot grow in a heart where corruptions are allowed to sprout in rankness and luxmuance. Could a vine flourish and bear fruit, if all kinds of parasitic weeds were allowed to spring up and entwine around its branches? Impossible. Just as impossible is it for piety to advance if the corruptions of the heart are permitted to reign un mortified. It is of heart-sins I now more particularly speak; sins of temper and disposition, pride, envy, jealousy, malice, revenge, impurity; sins of distrust, rebellion, unbelief, discontent; too many of which are often found in the hearts of professors. Vain and hypocritical are all prayers and wishes for growth in grace, if we do not assiduously apply ourselves to the crucifixion of the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof. And we must also crop the luxuriance of our earthly affections.

If a delicate and tender tree flourish, it must enjoy the watchful care of the gardener. He must feel anxious for its growth, often examine it, and remove from it whatever would hinder it from thriving. It must be protected from injury by the violence of man and beast; devouring insects must be removed, and all noxious things must be kept off and put away from it. Nothing is so delicate and tender as grace in the soul of man. It is a heavenly exotic, and exposed to numberless injurious influences, and requires therefore the most anxious and ceaseless vigilance of its possessor. No duty is more frequently enjoined in Scripture than watchfulness; none is more needed. The increase of piety must be matter of deep and trembling solicitude.

The light and warmth of the sun are essential to the growth of vegetable life, and those trees flourish most which are placed most fully in the solar beams. And is not Christ the orb of our spiritual day, the Sun of righteousness, whose effulgence is necessary to our growth? Place yourself, then, in the warm, bright splendour of his beams, by the contemplation of his glory, and meditation upon his love. Grace grows best near the cross. Let your religion be full of Christ. Dwell upon his Divine glory as God; his perfect holiness as man, and as our example; his mediatorial office and work as Prophet, Priest, and King. Daily come to him by faith. Yield your heart to his constraining love. Feel him to be precious as he is to them that believe. Search for him in the Scriptures. Look for him in ordinances. Make him the alpha and omega of your thoughts. The more your minds are conversant with Christ, the more your piety will increase, for he is the sun that ripens us.

Nor can vegetable life be preserved without moisture. Running streams, and fruitful showers, and the dew of heaven, are necessary to it. In allusion to this God has promised the dew of his grace, and the pouring out of his Spirit, as the early and the latter rain. It is only as the Spirit of God helps us by his influence that we shall grow, but this influence will be granted to any extent we desire and ask for in believing prayer. The promise of the Spirit is to make us not indolent, but diligent; give yourselves then to prayer, and let the burden of your prayers be for more grace. "Prayer," says an old author, "is a key to open the gate of heaven, and let grace out: and prayer is a lock to fasten our hearts, and keep grace in." In vain do we expect those alms of grace for which we do not beg.

And now, dear friends, examine yourselves. Are you advancing in the Divine life? Is it your desire, your constant and earnest desire to grow, or are you contented to be as you are? Do you feel this to be more and more a matter of solicitude, and are you even afraid of being no holier than you are? Do you hunger and thirst more than you did after righteousness? Do you take more notice of God in every thing than you did, in providential dispensations, and in the means of grace? Is your religion more vigorous at the root, and more abundant in its fruits? Do you grow, not only more tenderly conscientious in little things, but more universally conscientious in all things? Is your piety while more retiring for private exercises more diffusive in its public influence; does it come more abroad with you out of your closets into your houses, shops, and parties? Does it dwell with you more at home, and journey with you more constantly from

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home? "Does it buy and sell for you, and has it the casting vote in all you do?" Are you more punctual, lively, serious, 'and happy at ordinances? Do you abound more than you did in the most self-denying duties of religion? Are you more resolute in mortification, more ready and patient in cross-bearing? Is your conscience more quick to discern sin, and more easily wounded by it? Do you find your sorrows to arise more from your sins and less from your trials than you did? Do you find the spirit of love gradually supplanting the spirit of fear? Are you more zealous, liberal, and public spirited than you were? Try yourself by these things. These are signs of growth, clear, decisive, unequivocal.

Do you need motives? How many are at hand. Since growth is the law of life, what strong proof can you have of life without growth? Growth is both your duty and your privilege. Think of the advantages you possess for growth. Consider how long some of you have been planted. Remember what God expects from all his culture. See how much others have outgrown you. Recollect how soon growing time will be over; and how exactly the degrees of glory in heaven will be proportioned to the degrees of grace upon earth.

Professors, I beseech you be not satisfied with much talk about religion, and little practice.

"It is no good sign for a tree when all the sap runs up into the leaves, and is spent that way; nor in a christian, when all his grace is thrown off in words. What are leaves to the fruit? Rather give us fruit on a low shrub, than a tree that can reach the clouds, with nothing but leaves. The cedary tallness of some trees with a glorious flourish of leaves is goodly to the eye; but the kindly fruit of the lower plants is more acceptable to the taste. The eminence of some notoriously zealous professors may make them much admired; but

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the good fruits of mercy in men, silent, and less notable, makes them more beloved. The former may grow in applause, but the latter grow in grace: and this growth, O Lord, give me and my people.”

THE DIFFERENT DEGREES OF GLORY IN HEAVEN.

My dear friends, I now propose to discuss the question of the different degrees of glory in heaven. The felicity of heaven, set forth in general terms, will consist of the absence of all evil, both natural and moral, such as sin, and all its bitter fruits, death, disease, labour, care, sorrow, and pain; and the presence of all good suited to man, as a rational, moral, social, and immortal creature, such as the perfect holiness of his nature, the presence of God in Christ, the society and converse of blessed spirits, and that service and honour which God may appoint to the holy inhabitants of the place. A question arises, Will its inhabitants be equal in all respects in honour and felicity? I think not.

All real christians will be in heaven, and possess in substance its chief felicity, as well those who are converted on a death-bed, as those who yield themselves to God in their youth; as well the believer who lives and dies in unmolested ease, as the martyr: all will be equal as to their deliverance from every kind of evil; all will be with Christ, see God face to face, and be perfectly happy: but still there will be circumstances connected with their heavenly state, that will raise some higher in the scale of splendour and blessedness than others. While, therefore, there will be many things in which the felicity of the redeemed will be common; it

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will be common in its object, the blessed God and the adorable Redeemer; in its subject, all the powers of the glorified body and soul; in its duration, which will be eternal; in its security, since all will be sustained by the Divine faithfulness; and in the full satisfaction of soul, which each will possess according to its capacity; yet there will be some peculiarities and distinctions attaching to the more eminent servants of God. We may not be, and indeed are not, able to say with precision and in all things, in what these peculiarities will consist, but we know that they will exist. We can conceive of a larger capacity for happiness in some than in others, just as there is a greater capacity for enjoyment in a man than in a child, or in one man than in another; yet all will be perfectly happy, according to their powers of receptivity. Vessels may be of various measures, yet all full. Heaven may consist of a graduated scale of rank, station, and service; and one glorified spirit may be fitted for a higher post, a more important service, than another; yea, doubtless it will be so. Hence we can conceive that perfection in all can comport with variety, and exist in different degrees.

I will now consider the principle on which this difference will proceed, and by which it will be regulated. It will not be a capricious arrangement, a mere arbitrary appointment: nothing that God does, either in nature, providence, or grace, is of this character. Every thing he does, he performs according to the counsel of his will; there is a reason for everything, a principle according to which everything is done. Now this applies to the case before us. In allotting to some a higher degree than others in glory, God proceeds on some principle, and what is it? Not worldly rank,

some subjects and paupers will probably be higher in heaven than their monarchs; not literary or scientific renown, some untutored rustics may be elevated above scholars and philosophers; not even success in converting souls to God, if it be unattended with a proportionate degree of pure motive and consistent piety; some obscure but eminently holy ministers, will have a brighter crown than others whose popularity God may in a way of sovereignty employ for extensive usefulness. Character, conduct, motives, as known to the omniscient God, will be the rule. We cannot find a better, a more intelligible representation of the subject, than the one usually employed, "Degrees of glory in heaven will be proportioned to degrees of grace on earth."

We now see an obvious difference among God's people. Here are some called in the morning of their existence who spend a long day in the service of God; there are others called by grace at the last hour of life; here are some whose circumstances of ease and comfort call for little sacrifice or self-denial, there are others who follow Christ to bonds, impi'isonment, and death: here are some who though really regenerated make small progress in sanctification, and evince so many imperfections, and so much worldly-mindedness, as to render their profession doubtful and suspicious, there are others, who have overcome the world by faith in a most conspicuous manner, and by their eminently holy and consistent conduct bring much glory to God: here are the grudging, the indolent, and the money-loving, there the liberal, self-denying, and laborious. Now I contend that according to these differences on earth, there will be corresponding differences in heaven. The proof of this will be found in the following arguments.

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1. It is set forth in the following scriptures. Even the Old Testament asserts the fact. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Our Lord, in his sermon on the mount, encourages his persecuted followers to endure, by this consideration, "Great is your reward in heaven." "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." The parable of the pounds teaches the same fact: the good trader with ten pounds gained rule over ten cities; and the diligent possessor of five pounds gained five cities. In speaking of the righteous at the last day, the apostle says, as "one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead." The applicability of this passage, I know, has been disputed; and it has been considered as intended only to set forth the contrast between the earthly body and the resurrection one; but this can I think hardly be sustained; there may be differences of magnitude, but not contrasts between the stars. Nor can the apostle mean to limit the difference to the degrees of bodily glory, but to set forth the varied distinctions of splendour of every kind, with which the righteous will appear at the last day. To the same effect are all those passages which speak of the awards of the final judgment, when "every man shall receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10;

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Rev. xxii. 12. How decisive is the language of the apostle, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "This I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." How clear and how impressive are such statements, that our life is a seed-time for eternity; that all our conduct is the seed sown, and that the harvest will be according to the seed we sow, in kind, quality, and quantity.

2. I now subjoin other considerations to prove the fact of different degrees of glory. There will be certainly different degrees of misery and disgrace in hell, as is evident from Luke xii. 47, Rom. ii. 6-16; and why not then different degrees of felicity and honour in heaven? Observe the manner in which the apostle speaks of the different rewards of the ministers of the gospel; "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. If any man's work shall abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." If this be true of ministers, it is no less so of all professors.

But this appears equally clear if we consider the nature of those things of which our heavenly felicity will consist. Part of our happiness will arise from the recollection of what we have done for Christ. Memory will supply much of both the torment of hell, and the

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felicity of heaven: and they who have most to remember will be most happy. Our future happiness or misery will thus, in a great measure, arise out of our conduct here. Every holy action will be the seed of felicity. Did not Paul, when drawing near his end, look back with delight and gratitude, yet with humility, upon his apostolic life, when he exultingly exclaimed, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And if such joy was lawful and proper before death, what will be the delight of looking back in heaven upon a life of service upon earth; of retracing all the way in which Divine grace has led, sustained, and sanctified us; of reviewing our temptations, conflicts, and triumphs! And this joy will be in proportion to the cause which produces it. Another part of our felicity will arise from the approbation of God and Christ. This is evident from his representation of the solemnities of judgment. How blissful to see him smile upon us! To hear him say, "Ye have done it unto me. Well done, my good and faithful servant. Well done. I saw every action of piety, every struggle with temptation, every tear of penitence, every gift of property, every expression of sympathy with a suffering brother, every labour, and every sacrifice. I know thy works, and now I reward them by this public testimony." How rich a reward! And of course it must be in proportion to the conduct which will secure it. Another source of our celestial bliss will be the proofs and the fruits of our usefulness in the cause of God and of immortal souls. The misery of the wicked in hell will arise in no small degree from seeing around them, in that world of despair, those whom they had led thither by their evil principles, active efforts, and

seductive example: by a similar law, the felicity of the saints in heaven will receive everlasting accessions from hearing the songs, and witnessing the raptures of those whom they were the honoured instruments in saving from death and conducting to glory. What must be the heaven of such men as Whitefield and Wesley, and of other less distinguished servants of Christ, in beholding before the throne so many whom it was their unutterable privilege to lead thither! Not dissimilar in kind, though of course less in degree, will be the joy of all who lay out their property, spend their time, or sacrifice their ease, in endeavouring to increase the number of the saints, and thus people the realms of glory with redeemed spirits. Surely, surely, there must be an honour and a bliss in reserve for the eminently zealous, devoted, and self-denying, which will not be experienced in the same degree by those who do little for Christ.

Do not all these considerations, then, sustain the fact that there are different degrees of glory in heaven? Can we conceive of heaven without it? Does it not prove itself to every man's judgment? In every community on earth, from a family to a state, there are different services, and different posts, which must be sustained by various persons, according to their various degrees and kinds of fitness: and why should it be otherwise in heaven? They surely form an inaccurate, low, and unworthy idea of that blessed world, who consider it only as a place where all are in every respect alike, all are equal, and all pursue an unvarying sameness of occupation. It is of vast importance to connect at any rate the idea of state with that of place; and to remember that repentance, faith, and holiness, are not so much a condition of heaven as a preparation for it;

and that regeneration and sanctification are rather the commencement of and meetness for, glorification, than mere prerequisites for it.

I come now to answer the objections which some who have not well considered the subject sometimes bring against it. Is it not opposed to the parable of the labourers hired to go into the vineyard, all of whom received the same wages, whether hired at the third or the eleventh hour? I answer, this parable had nothing to do with the subject; its design being, not to represent the distribution of rewards and punishments in a future state, but the calling of the Gentiles to become fellow-heirs with the Jews, in the same church state and gospel privileges.

Does it not set aside salvation by grace, and justification by faith without works? Certainly not. The matter may be stated thus. Nothing performed by a creature, however pure, can merit eternal life. God may freely lay himself under an obligation to reward the obedience of a holy creature with everlasting life, and his so doing may be fit and worthy of him. Man having sinned, the promised good is forfeited, and death becomes the only reward of which he is worthy. God, having notwithstanding designs of mercy towards rebellious creatures, sent forth his Son to obey and suffer in their place, resolving, as the reward of his undertaking, to bestow eternal life on all who should believe in him. God, for his Son's sake, not only accepts of all who believe in him, but of their services also. There can be no rewardable action done by us at all till we have believed in Christ, and are justified without works; and even then the different degrees of reward that follow are all granted for the sake of Christ. It is not the result of

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any worthiness in us, but of Christ's merits. It is therefore a reward wholly of grace, and not of debt, from first to last. "I am persuaded this view of the subject, while it excludes all boasting, affords the greatest possible encouragement to be constant, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."*

If there are different degrees of glory, will not this be a source of envy and jealousy? It would if we carried our present imperfections to heaven; but in a world of perfect love to God, and perfect love to our fellows, those passions cannot exist. Heaven will be so full of love as to leave no room for any thing else to live-there. Nor can I conceive of a higher, nor indeed in such a state of a lower, exercise of this God-like feeling, than to rejoice in the divine award, which elevates to a degree of glory above us those whom we shall then perceive and acknowledge to be more meet for it.

If all are perfect, it may be said, how can there be different degrees? All are perfect according to their capacity, but all have not the same capacity. Two diamonds may be of the same purity and brilliancy, yet they may be of different sizes and value.

"I have often," says a devout writer, "represented it to my own thoughts under this comparison. Here is a race appointed; here are a thousand different prizes purchased by some prince, to be bestowed on the racers, and the prince himself gives them food and wine according to what proportion he pleases, to strengthen and animate them for the race. Each has a particular stage appointed for him, some of shorter, some of longer distance. When every racer comes to his own goal, he receives a prize in exact proportion to his speed, diligence, and the length of the race; and the grace and justice of the prince shine gloriously in each distribution. Not even the foremost of the racers can pretend to merit the prize; for the prizes were all paid for by the prince himself; and 'twas he appointed the race, and gave

* See an admirable sermon of Mr Fuller's on this subject.

them strength and spirit to run: and yet there is a most equitable proportion observed in the reward, according to the labour of the race. Now this similitude represents the matter so agreeably to the apostle's way of speaking, when he compares the christian's life to a race, 1 Cor. ix, 24; Gal., v. 7; Phil, iii, 14-16; 2 Tim. iv, 7; Heb. xii, 1, that I think it may be almost called a scriptural description of the present subject."

This representation, though not perfectly parallel to the case before us, as none can be, serves well enough to illustrate the subject.

A question has sometimes been asked, "Whether it is proper to hold up this subject as a motive to christian diligence? "Why should it be questioned? How can it be doubted? Is it so held up by our Lord and his apostles? We need not pretend nor attempt to be wiser than they. Had not Moses "respect to the recompense of the reward? "In the full conviction that I act scripturally, I propose it to you, my dear friends, as an inducement to zeal, diligence, and self-denial, in the service of the Lord. I do not abuse the doctrine, as some have done, in enumerating the peculiar virtues to which high rewards are assigned in the heavenly world, and reckoning among them the monkish practices of celibacy and austerity. Nor do I enjoin a selfish, mercenary notion of merit; for I know salvation to be all of grace from first to last: nor would I check those sentiments of profound humility which lead you to feel, as well as say, that the lowest seat in heaven is infinitely more than you deserve; but I would remind you, because the scripture does so, that the greater proficiency we make in divine knowledge, and in real holiness, according to the means and helps we enjoy; the greater fidelity and diligence we show in discharging the duties of our particular station as members of society, and of

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the church; the more laborious we are in the improvement of the talents (whether ten, five, or one) intrusted to our care; the more we abound in fruits of righteousness, and the more zealous we are in those good works for which we have opportunity and capacity; the more self-denying we are for Christ's and conscience' sake; the more stedfast we are in resisting temptations; the more we glorify God by the exercise of faith and patience in the sharpest trials; the more active, liberal, and ready we are to make sacrifices for the cause of God and the salvation of souls; the more we cultivate love to our brethren and charity to all; the more we excel in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness; and the more we clothe and adorn all our other graces with humility and lowliness of mind, the greater will be our future reward, the higher we shall rise in glory, the more fitted shall we be to serve God in some exalted station in the heavenly world. And I wish to impress the sentiment very deeply upon your minds, that this will not only be the result of gracious and equitable appointment, but that it is the tendency of superior piety itself, to prepare us for such distinctions. I believe that there is far more close and intimate connection between a state of grace and a state of glory, than many imagine. "We all need a meetness for, as well as title to, heaven: and although every one is meet for it who is truly regenerated and none else, yet the more we are sanctified the more meet we are for higher services in our Father's house; where, as well as in the church on earth, there will be use and employment for vessels of gold as well as of silver. There are many professors whose attainments in piety are so slender, whose graces are so languid, whose religion is blended with so much

worldly-mindedness, who are at so little pains to grow in grace, that if they are true christians at heart, and should gain admission to glory, they seem to be qualified for only some low place in the kingdom of heaven.

How mighty should be the influence upon our mind and conduct of such a subject as this! How should it check our sloth, and rouse and quicken us to all diligence and perseverance! What an impression should it give us of the importance of our present situation and our present conduct! We are fearfully made, and still more fearfully placed. Every thing we do is a seed of futurity, and must bear eternal fruit. All our actions, words, and volitions, are ripening into heaven, or hell. Can we be insensible to the solemnity of our situation? Shall we be anxious only to grow rich for time, and neglect to grow rich for eternity? Shall we be intent only upon amassing wealth upon earth, and forget to "lay up treasure in heaven?" Shall we be eager to enlarge and improve the inheritance which is seen and temporal, and be careless about enlarging that which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away? Men are ambitious enough, and we in general perhaps among them, to rise in the world, and to attain to secular pre-eminence: let us copy this propensity, but by faith transfer the solicitude to eternal objects, and strive to be great in the kingdom of heaven: If there be prizes of various degrees of value, why should you not contend for one of the nobler ones? Why should you not covet earnestly the best gifts? While you acknowledge, with the truest lowliness of mind, that you are unworthy to sit down on the threshold of heaven, still press forward to a seat far nearer to the Saviour's throne and feet. Seek to glow and shine like the seraphim in glory, and at the

same time emulate them in deep prostration of soul, under a sense of your utter unworthiness before God.

How loudly and impressively does this subject speak to you who are young professors, and who are just setting out in religious life! Blessed is your privilege, in being called so early into a state of grace, and thus being invited by the sovereign mercy of God to add to the weight and the jewels of that crown which, if you are faithful unto death, is for ever to sparkle on your brow. Estimate duly your opportunity. Your future life, as regards any earthly object which you can contemplate, is but a shadow; yet as connected with another world is of unutterable importance. I will not ask if you will spend your days in folly and sin, you have renounced these things; but I ask will you spend your life for worldly wealth and comfort, to the neglect of growth in grace? How rich may you grow in grace here, and glory hereafter! What treasures may you lay up in heaven! Let no ordinary degree of holiness satisfy you: no small measures of piety content you. In signal devotedness and usefulness in the church militant, prepare for such services in the church triumphant, as shall display the immensity of divine grace, and the riches of divine power. Seek eminent holiness first, for its own sake and the sake of God who enjoins it, and then you will find in the end, that eminence in grace conducts to eminence of glory.

I am decidedly of opinion that a conviction of the truth of this subject, and an habitual meditation upon it, would do much to elevate the tone of piety among christians, and keep up, yea greatly quicken the spirit of zeal and liberality. It is not only a depressing, but a dangerous notion to hold, that weak faith being still

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true faith, and little grace real grace, they who have but small measures of either will reach heaven as certainly, and rise as high in it, as those who make greater attainments. This may seem to savour of a disposition to exalt the mercy of God, but its tendency is to abuse it; and under the appearance of deep humility to promote indolence, lukewarmness, and worldly-mindedness. It is a ruinous and fatal experiment to try with how little religion we can reach heaven. If it be the language of humility, as it oftentimes is with some that use it, to say, "They shall be content with the lowest seat in glory," it is, in other cases, the utterance of indolence and indifference. The question, however, is not what we deserve, but what we are invited to possess. We deserve nothing but hell; but we may have not only heaven, but an abundant entrance into it. God is inviting us to seek "more grace "here, that he may lavish upon us more glory hereafter: and all he gives will, in one sense, flow back to himself again. They who receive most from him will render most to him. Higher degrees of glory while, as regards ourselves, they will enlarge our capacity for happiness, will, as regards him, prepare us in a more eminent manner to enjoy, serve, and honour him. For his sake then, as well as your own, grow in grace, that you may rise in glory.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

MY dear friends, I propose in this address to make some remarks on the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, and to lay down some rules for the right obser-

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vance of this solemn and affecting ordinance. You cannot fail to be struck with the truly spiritual nature of the christian religion, and the contrast to Judaism which in this view of it, is presented to the careful observer. Speaking of the law of Moses, the apostle says, "It stood in meats and drinks, and divers washings, (baptisms,) and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." Hence also the terms of depreciation in which he speaks of the ceremonial law, calling it the "flesh," "the elements of this world," "beggarly elements," "the letter," and other designations of similar import. These rites and ceremonies, with all the visible pomp and splendour of the legal worship, were solemnly obligatory upon the Jews, because enjoined by God, and were proper for the church at that time, for it was then in a state of non-age, of childhood and pupilage, and was not prepared for the full and clear revelation of unveiled truth: it was taught by those shadows, as by a kind of hieroglyphic bible in the hands of a schoolmaster. But when Christ came, who was the substance of this shadowy system, truth was no longer to be taught principally by ceremony but by doctrine; not by rites, which however gorgeous were still obscure, but by explicit and plain declaration. This is the true distinction between Judaism and Christianity; the truths taught are the same in both, but the manner of teaching is essentially different. This is the meaning of the expression, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The word "truth" here stands opposed, not to falsehood, but to shadow. So again, our Lord in his discourse with the woman of Samaria, tells her that the hour was coming when sanctity of place, as the seat

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of divine worship, would be abolished, and men would every where worship God, who is a Spirit, "in spirit and in truth;" that is, he would be worshipped not only in sincerity with the heart, for such worship God required under the law, but with spiritual offerings of truth, instead of ceremonial and shadowy ones. Hence a disposition to multiply or to exalt ceremonies in religious worship now is to misunderstand the nature of the Christian dispensation, and go back again to Judaism: to go down from our high standing as the disciples of Jesus, the Great Teacher of a spiritual system, and become again the pupils of Moses as our schoolmaster in the preparatory school of rites and ceremonies. This is one of the errors of Popery, which is in this respect the Jewish form of Christianity. It lays great stress on the external circumstances and corporeal instrumentality of religion. Unlike the apostles, it makes matters of time, place, and manner essential to godliness; it aims to hold the soul in subjection, not so much by faith in invisible realities which are apprehended only by the reason, as by the aid of objects which appeal to the senses and the imagination: it thrusts man between the soul and God; hides the priesthood of Christ behind a human priesthood; and makes the communication of grace inseparable from matter and manipulation. Popery addresses itself to the senses, and not to the mind; it is not content with a worship of spirit and truth, but must have fuming incense, matchless painting, exquisite music, and a gorgeous and imposing ceremonial. And this its advocates tell us is to render their worship worthy of the great God to whom it is offered. Worthy of God! As if he who is spirit could take peculiar pleasure in silver and gold, purple and

fine linen. But did he not ordain these things, or something like them, under the law? Yes; but not under the gospel: and he ordained them under the law, not on their own account, as if they were worthy of his august nature, or could convey adequate ideas of himself, but simply because they were a shadow of good things to come, and intended, as being considered the most glorious of earthly things, to convey an impressive idea of the excellence of spiritual things under the gospel. Amidst all the grandeur of the Jewish temple and its worship, this very glory was a confession of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. And what is all that contention going on in our day, by many who are not Papists, for the efficacy of sacraments; for altars with lighted candles upon them; for crucifixes and bowings; for saints' days; for rites, ceremonies, and outward observances; what is it, I say, but a substitution of the flesh for the spirit; bodily exercises for the living spiritualities of the heart, and which teaches men to be religious without being godly! Never forget, my dear friends, that you are placed under an eminently spiritual economy, and that the religion which God demands of you, and delights in and will accept, is a religion of the heart; a religion of penitence and faith in Christ, love to God, hope of heaven, hatred of sin, charity to man, all existing in the soul as so many pious affections, called forth in the actions of a holy life, and uttered in words of prayer and praise; and that for the support of these, he has instituted the ordinances of his house and the other means of grace. These ordinances, and these only, we are to observe in such manner, and for such purposes, as he himself has prescribed. We have no more right

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to enlarge the design of God's ordinances, than we have to multiply their number. We must take them as they are delivered to us, and use them for the ends laid down, without investing them with any new character, or directing them to any new purpose; and ever recollect that their object is defeated, when they are rested in as ultimate ends, and not used as means to holy affections, and a godly life. As tests of our submission to the will of God; as adapted to suggest pious reflection, and promote spiritual feeling; as calculated to bring before our minds the great objects of faith and of hope; as intended to quicken our love, which is the principle of all acceptable obedience; and in these views of them, as ordinances with which God has promised, when they are rightly observed, to connect the communications of his grace, they are of inestimable worth; but when raised above this, and made channels exclusive, and essential to the communication of grace from the Divine fountain, they are exalted beyond measure, and instead of leading the soul on to God, detain it from him. How inferior even the sacraments are, in some views of them, to the preaching of the gospel, may be learned from the conduct of our Lord, John iv. 2, and of the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 14-17.

I now go on to consider the Lord's Supper, and a due observance of it. For a right attendance on this interesting ordinance, it is indispensable you should have a clear understanding of its nature and design. Perhaps a few lines may be well devoted to an explanation of the terms by which it is designated. In the New Testament it is called the "Lord's Supper," 1 Cor. xi. 20; because instituted by Christ, and in commemoration of him: "Breaking of Bread," Acts ii. 42;

as expressive of one of its principal acts: "The communion of the body and blood of Christ," 1 Cor. x. 16; which signifies that those who thus commune together are. spiritual partakers of the body and blood of Christ. To these have been added, by men uninspired, other terms, such as "The Eucharist," which comes from a Greek term signifying "thanksgiving," because, like Christ, we give thanks in receiving it; the cup of blessing, for which we give thanks: "The Sacrament," which comes from the Latin word sacramentum, and meant the military oath of fidelity, which the Roman soldiers took to their general. This term, so much used, is thus borrowed from Paganism, and is no great favourite with those who in their phraseology wish to keep close to Scripture. Much less proper is it to call the communion table the altar. This is Popish. An altar supposes a sacrifice; it was designed for this purpose, and had no other use. Now it is very consistent for the Roman Catholics to call the communion table an altar, because they believe that a true and proper, though unbloody sacrifice, is offered up every time mass, which means the Lord's Supper, is celebrated: but for Protestants, who profess to reject this Popish notion, to speak of "the altar," is improper and inconsistent. Let us, then, confine ourselves, as much as possible, to the phraseology of the Scriptures, and call it the Lord's Supper, or the Communion.

The Lord's Supper serves various uses. It is, like baptism, a standing witness for the authenticity of the Christian history: it was instituted at the time of our Lord's death, has been continued in uninterrupted observance ever since, and could not have been palmed upon the world by imposture, at any subsequent period.

It is a permanent and strong proof to all Christians of the Divinity and atonement of Christ; of his Divinity, for if he be not God, the Deity is excluded from this prominent christian observance, which would be therefore on this account a species of idolatry paid to a creature. It is an announcement of the atonement exhibited by his blood as the means of the remission of sins, and it exhibits the unity of the christian church. "We being many," says the apostle, "are one bread (loaf);" many parts of one loaf.

But the more specific design of the Lord's Supper, is to commemorate by the assembled church the death of Christ as a sacrifice of atonement for sin. It is of importance here to ascertain the precise view we are to take of what we actually receive, when we partake of what are called the elements, that is, the bread and the wine. The Papists contend that by the prayer of consecration offered by the priest, the bread and the wine are transubstantiated, that is, their substance is changed into the true body, soul, and Divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the receiver of the bread and wine, truly eats the body, soul, and Divinity of Christ. This astounding absurdity is called transubstantiation. The Lutheran church rejects this, but adopts another absurdity almost as great, called consubstantiation, by which is meant that the true nature of bread and wine remains, but that with it the true nature of Christ is in some way or other united. Then come those Protestants who contend for what is called the real presence; by which is intended, that Christ is mystically present in or with the bread and wine. But it is in their souls, and not in the bread and wine; it is in their minds, wills, and hearts, as they receive the bread

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and wine, to render the reception thereof strengthening comforting edifying, to strengthen their faith in the thing signified, as they receive the sign. This is sacramental grace, and sacramental efficacy; grace from God the Holy Spirit, accompanying the reception of the elements, and blessing to the soul this appeal to the faith of the christian through the medium of his senses. The eucharistic emblems, then, are emblematic and commemorative; the whole of their design and benefit, as to themselves, is to remind us of Christ, and their efficiency for this purpose is the work of Divine grace. They are nothing, however duly administered, apart from the state of mind of the receiver. They are truth in emblem, and as truth alone, thus presented to us, they do us any good; the gospel is truth in significant words, and the sacraments, as they are called, are truth in significant emblems: and, in both cases, it is the truth, whether in words or signs, that is blessed by the Spirit of God to the soul. It is not as a sacrament having some mystical efficacy in itself, some spiritual power in the bread and the wine, that the Lord's Supper is a benefit to the soul; but it is as a significant emblem of the body and blood of Christ, offered in sacrifice for sin, that it does any good to the soul of the receiver. Thus the same exercises of mind must be carried on in partaking of the Lord's Supper as in hearing the gospel; we must, at the time, attend to the truth conveyed, this we must understand, by this we must be instructed comforted and edified through faith; the bread and the wine can do us no more good, with whatever superstitious reverence received, if our minds are not directed by them in faith to Christ crucified, than the words of Scripture upon

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the tongue can do us good without any intelligent notions of their meaning in the mind. When we meet at the Lord's table, then, it is to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ; to be put in penitent, believing, loving, grateful, obedient remembrance of him. In this state of mind we are to go to the table of the Lord, not to expect grace in some mystical way and manner, because a minister regularly ordained says to us, "Receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ:" but in the way of understanding and believing the truth of Christ's death for sinners, so impressively set forth by the broken bread and poured out wine. This is what the apostle calls "discerning the Lord's body."

There can be no doubt that the participation of the Lord's Supper was designed, not only to be an act of communion in Christ's body and blood with his chosen and redeemed flock, but an act of personal communion also between the individual recipient and our crucified Lord. Then does the soul of the believer seem to have all its inlets opened for the flowing in from the Divine source of the fulness that is in Christ Jesus. It is then the attention is arrested with peculiar power, the judgment made clear for the perception of truth, and the heart softened to receive its deepest impression. It is at his table that Jesus makes himself known in the breaking of bread, and leads the astonished and delighted disciple to exclaim in glad surprise, "It is the Lord." What streams of grace have then descended, at the solicitation of believing prayer, from the Holy Spirit! And in the simple acts of receiving the significant emblems of bread and wine, the intelligent christian has entered deeply and joyfully into the meaning of those

wondrous but much abused words, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." The glorious truth of Christ's body broken, and his blood shed as a sacrifice for sins with all the grace to render it a means of light, life, and joy, came on, and spread through the soul, as the lips received the symbols of the sacred realities. There needed no such mystery as any incorporation of the presence of Christ with the bread and wine, that inconceivable blending up of what is spiritual with what is material; much less, if possible, of any such absurdity as the transmutation of the elements into the person of the Saviour. The soul realized in itself the vitalizing presence of its Divine Lord, in a manner far above all the apprehensions of unenlightened, unsanctified reason, but not opposed to all its powers of analysis and sober conclusions. Were it possible to conceive of such a thing as eating the body and blood, soul and Divinity, of Christ, and such an intercommunion between the material and spiritual part of our nature as that what is received into the stomach should benefit the soul, what could it do more for the believer in the way of personal and religious benefit, that is, in the way of holiness, love, and-joy, than he is conscious of in the reception of bread and wine, viewed as the mere symbols of the body and blood of the Saviour?

This view may be too plain and simple for those who wish to exalt the ministry into a priesthood; and it may be too intelligible and low for those persons who have a love for the mystic and the marvellous; whose piety is rather a thing of the imagination, than of the judgment, heart, and conscience; and who are more pleased with

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the alternate awe and ecstasy of superstition, than with the intelligible and tranquil peace of simple faith; but for the spiritually-minded christian, who walks by faith, and desires to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, its simplicity is, next to its scriptural authority, its highest commendation. All beyond it savours more of the fathers, than of the apostles, and presents the accumulating corruptions of traditional and ecclesiastical authority, rather than the purity of the faith once delivered to the saints. Observe, then, my dear friends, what you have to do when you assemble to partake of the Lord's Supper, to remember Jesus Christ. And what concerning him should you remember? What should you forget? Remember his Divine nature, as the brightness of his Father's glory, and as God over all; his incarnation, as the Word made flesh; his various and complicated sufferings in body and soul; his agony in the garden; his atoning death upon the cross; his resurrection for our justification; his ascension into heaven; his sitting at the right hand of his Father; his perpetual and prevailing intercession; his second advent to raise the dead, judge the world, and receive his people to himself. Blessed topics! Delightful employment to think of them. Approach the table at each time of access, with new and deeper penitence for sin, livelier faith in Christ, more fervent gratitude, more intense love, with more entire self-consecration to God; and, at the same time, with more charity to the world, and more brotherly kindness to the church.

Do not seek nor covet the mere exercises of imagination; as if you could derive no benefit unless Christ was seen by the eye of fancy, hanging, bleeding, and expiring on the cross. The Catholics have crucifixes

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for the bodily eye, and many Protestants covet something like them for the eye of the imagination: but the proper exercise of the mind at the time of receiving the Lord's Supper, is faith, not fancy; faith in the doctrine of a Saviour crucified for the sins of the world. It is not the emotion produced by a tragedy, which is appropriate at that solemn scene, but the affection awakened by believing the report of some act of suffering love on our account. There should be a sweet mixture of sorrow and joy; of love and gratitude; of faith and hope. All the elements of true piety should be called into active and harmonious operation. Superstitious awe and dread, mystic and unintelligible raptures, are inappropriate at that scene, where faith looks back to the first advent of Christ, when he paid down the price of our redemption, and hope anticipates his second appearance, when he will come without a sin-offering unto salvation.

Follow the apostolic directions, and tremble at the apostolic warnings. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily," that is, ignorant of its design; from improper motives; in an irreverent manner; living in the commission of known and unrepented sin, or in the neglect of known duty; holding anger with a brother, or malice to any other, "shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," that is, shall be guilty of profaning the signs of the body and blood of Christ, and treating with contempt the crucified body itself. "But let a man examine himself." Let him at his first and every subsequent approach, inquire into his object, motives, and general state of mind in coming to the Lord's table; let him pause and ask himself, whether he understands what he

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is about to do, why he does it, and whether he is doing it in a right state of mind, in penitence, faith, holiness, and love. Let examination precede every approach to the table: set apart some time on the Saturday evening, or Sabbath morning, when a solemn survey of the conduct since the last observance of the Supper took place, and an inquisitive scrutiny of the present state of the heart, shall be instituted, that with due knowledge of your sins, deep penitence on account of them, lively faith in the blood of Jesus for renewed forgiveness, and fresh application for the Spirit's aid in newness of life, you may take and eat. Do not rush thoughtlessly and irreverently to the table of the Lord. A christian I know should be always prepared: but is he? Alas! no: then let him, by solemn meditation, examination, and prayer, prepare for the sacred observance, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation," that is, judgment or condemnation, "to himself:" bringeth down upon himself the displeasure of the Lord; yea, if he be in a state of sin, or ignorance, and continueth therein, and repenteth not, he does eat and drink damnation, in the fullest and most awful sense of the term. Every sin brings condemnation upon the soul, if not repented of, and unworthily receiving the Lord's Supper among the rest. None will more certainly perish, and none more awfully, than the sinful observers of this ordinance. Such persons do "not discern the Lord's body," that is, they do not distinguish the design for which Christ died, and do not therefore either truly believe it, or practically comply with it, but go on in sin, notwithstanding they comply outwardly with an institute, which, as it represents the death of Christ for sin, binds them to depart from sin. Fearful

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idea! To prostitute the Lord's Supper by receiving it while living in known sin; and thus to oppose the design of Christ's giving his body to be broken, while outwardly observing that ordinance in which his death for sin is set forth.

My dear friends, at each approach to the table, blend in the state of your mind, a joyful celebration of the means by which you are delivered from the guilt of all past sin, and as joyful and hearty a celebration of the means by which you are to be delivered from the power and dominion of all future sin. Enter into the full meaning of the word redemption, as including not only deliverance from the punishment of sin in hell, but from the present tyranny of sin on earth. As you take the cup, realize in it the solemn pledge which every receiver gives, of a life of holy devotedness to Christ.

Nor let your remembrance of Christ be confined to that scene of devout commemoration. That act is not to be regarded as releasing you from every other, but as binding you to every other kind of remembrance. Remember Jesus Christ habitually as your Saviour, for your comfort, and as your example, for your guidance. When, through the power of temptation and the want of watchfulness, you have fallen into sin, remember him with compunction and contrition, and yet with faith, as willing to receive the penitent backslider. Remember him in solitude, as a companion ever near; amidst the death and inconsistency of relatives or acquaintances, as a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother; in the dark hour of sorrow, as a Divine Comforter; when tempted, as your succour and shield; and in the last hour of mortal conflict, fix your mind upon him, as the conqueror of death, the destroyer of the grave, and the

Lord of eternity. Never let a day pass in which you have not some thoughts of Christ to comfort, quicken, and edify your soul.

Among the rules for his daily conduct which the pious, though visionary Lavater suspended in his study and seriously read every night and morning, the following is far from being the least important:—

“I will not do or design any thing which I would omit, if Jesus Christ were standing visibly before me, or which I suppose he would not perform, if he were in my situation, I will, with the assistance of God, accustom myself to do every thing in the name of Jesus Christ; and as his disciple, to sigh every hour to God for the blessing of the Holy Ghost, and be always disposed to prayer.”

Happy the believer who thus remembers Jesus Christ. This is spiritual religion, and for this purpose we approach the table of the Lord, not to confine our recollection of him to that one scene and season, but that we may there gain strength and grace to remember him habitually.

THE CHURCH'S DUTY TO THE WORLD.

MY dear friends, the lovely month of May, the season of nature's energies and man's hopes, when all is verdure, bloom, and beauty, is fitly chosen for the anniversary meetings of our various religious institutions in the metropolis, because it presents the worlds of nature and of grace in striking harmony: for what are all these societies, but the vernal hopes of a lost world, proofs that its wintry season is passing away, and that the principle of spiritual fertility is beginning to flow in a thousand channels, through its dreary and desolate wastes. Never

through the whole year are missionary matters so generally and so much the topic of conversation as now. London, during this month, is a scene of holy festivity and sacred convocation, "Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." And let those who are prevented from going up hold fellowship in spirit with their more favoured brethren, and "pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love her." Let them say, "Peace be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces: and for their brethren and companions' sake, say, Peace be within thee." Let the whole religious public be one vast communion of missionary feeling, some by hearing the sermons and speeches, others by reading the reports of them; and all, in a spirit of devout and fervent supplication, praying, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

It is delightful to consider that all denominations of evangelical christians have their missionary societies, and hold their meetings at this season: and it is a token for good that all are engaged in this work of the Lord. Christians, however differing at home, are still struggling for the conversion of the world abroad; and it is a proof that God has called them to the work of converting the world to himself, that, though they may break away from each other, they cannot break away from this. Though often drawing their swords against each other, in the way of conflicting opinions, they are all turning them against the common foe, and marching if not in one closely united phalanx, yet in separate bands, to pull down the strongholds of Satan. Protestantism is at length aiming to be what popery always was, a con-

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verting body. Yes, the man of sin claims to be the apostle of Christianity for the whole earth. Romanism is one vast mission body, to extend the dominion of the crucifix, though not the doctrine of the cross. Its mission house is the Vatican, its president the pope, its directors are the propaganda community at Rome, its missionaries are the Jesuits, and its field is the world: its energies are prodigious, its success is alarming; and, flushed with hopes revived by the spread of its errors in England, and some conquests abroad, it is exultingly anticipating the subjugation of the world. It has hitherto boasted that it was the only religion that aimed to be, or could be, universal; and now, on perceiving the efforts of protestantism to be its rival in this glory, it is roused to new zeal, and is going to wrest from us, if possible, the ground we have won in distant lands.

Modern missionary societies have now been in operation for nearly half a century, and it becomes a question worth asking, whether all has been done that might have been looked for from the length of time employed, the amount of money expended, the myriads of sermons preached and meetings held, and the thousands of lives sacrificed. I say, No. I do not underrate or undervalue what has been done. But at this rate of going on the world can never be converted to Christ. Is there not something wanting yet to give efficiency to our efforts? There is. And what is it? I answer, The church of God has not only not yet done its duty, but has been too willing to devolve that duty on any that would take it off her hands. It is not simply a want of more money, and more missionaries, though more of both are wanting, but of something else. When I consider what has been done in some cases by a single

missionary, in spreading Christianity over a vast tract of country, or through a whole tribe of people, I must be led to conclude that something else than more men and more money is wanting; and that something is the holy, believing, and prayerful energy of the church. Has the church taken up the cause as it ought to have done? Certainly not. It has been willing, I say again, and has too much attempted to shift it from itself to whomsoever would take it up, to little children, to Sunday schools, and to the people of the world. Here I do not intend or wish to insinuate that it is wrong to accept the money of worldly people, or to interest the minds of children in the cause of christian missions, by no means; but what I am anxious to impress upon the minds of professing christians is that it is especially their work to convert the world to God. It is the business and solemn duty of the church to extend the kingdom of Christ in the world; and whatever auxiliaries she may call in, or whatever means and instruments she may employ, she must stand forth prominently and visibly, as the leader of the work, and not be lost sight of amidst the various agencies called into the field. It is a work for which the church alone is thoroughly qualified, and into which the church alone can fully enter; for the accomplishment of which she received her existence and endowments from her Divine Head, and neglecting which she ceases to be what the church of the living God was intended to be, loses her light, her energy, and her honour, and will present a scene of ruin and desolation, amidst which nothing is visible but the awful inscription, Ichabod, the glory is departed. God is continually saying to the church, "For this purpose have I raised thee up, to show forth my glory, and to

be my salvation to the ends of the earth: “and forgetting this, his sublime commission, she is unfaithful to her calling and false to her trust.

In the beginning, the mother church at Jerusalem sent out the word of the Lord to all the nations of the earth. From other churches, as they were successively planted, and became centres of action, sources of illumination, and instruments of conversion, the work still went on, and nations were subdued to the obedience of the faith. In modern times we have had a beautiful revival of the apostolic spirit and plan for the conversion of the world, in the Moravian body, which is, in fact, in the truest sense of the term a missionary church, which considers itself called to this work, and is ever engaged in prosecuting it; and which presents in its spirit a beautiful example of pure, simple, fervent zeal, to all other denominations. The protestant churches forgot for ages their true character as evangelizing bodies, and contented themselves with luxuriating in the privileges of religious liberty, and in the unmolested enjoyment of the means of grace; and rich in the privileges won for them by patriots in battle fields, and martyrs upon the scaffold and at the stake, gave up the world’s conversion, to enjoy their repose beneath their vines and their fig trees.

I cannot help thinking that when our societies commenced about half a century ago, if the cause had less of publicity, it had somewhat more of sanctity than it now has: it had not been presented so fully to the world, but it was exhibited more prominently to the church; and though its voice was not heard so loudly without in the streets, in the chief places of concourse, in the opening of the gates, and in the city, it spoke

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with a voice, if not so eloquent, yet perhaps more solemn and impressive, in the sanctuary. I am not here condemning modern plans for interesting "those that are without," but only expressing a solicitude lest those that are within the church should feel their obligations in any measure lessened, or their responsibility in any measure lightened, by the various efforts that are made to interest and engage the public. My solicitude is lest the platform should rise higher than the pulpit; the speech produce a distaste for the sermon; the orator be more loved than the pastor; eloquence be more depended upon than prayer; the public meeting have more power than the congregation of the faithful; the church be set aside for the committee; experienced christians resign the work into the hands of juvenile societies.

In the present state of embarrassment into which the various institutions are thrown, by the deficiency of their funds, which of course is obviously the result of the extent of their operations, the friends of missions, both home and foreign, are asking in dismay, "To what new quarter shall we look for help, and what new method shall we try to obtain it?" And in answer to this, one is suggesting one scheme, and another, another. I say, appeal to the church, call out her energies, enlighten her judgment, make her feel her responsibility. Lay the cause upon her conscience. Tell her it is her business, her duty, her honour. The church, as such, is not yet instructed in her position, her obligations, her advantages. Like Saul, she is hidden among the stuff and the people. She is lost amidst the crowd; or at best she is very disproportionately sharing the work with others. She does not

take her proper standing, does not feel her weighty obligations. "It is an awful fact," says the late Mr Ward, of Serampore, "that the spirit of missions has to christianize the church, before the church can christianize the world."

The church, as such, has not yet, as it appears to me, risen en masse, with all its mighty resources of faith, prayer, piety, property, and influence, and taken the field in good earnest; it is yet, as to the main body, only marshalled on the parade, or engaged in review, where amidst the glittering of arras, the thunder of artillery, the waving of banners, the sounds of martial music, and the marching of troops, there is much of the show and the noise of military movement; but the tug of war is not come, the shock of battle is not felt, and the trophies of victory are not seen. "But it may be said, these are vague generalities; what is it you want the church to do more than it is doing? Here, then, is my answer.

1. I want an intelligent perception, a deep conviction, and frank acknowledgment from all its members, that it is in deed and in truth the church's business, and must not, cannot be delegated to others. That call in, and appeal to, whom and what we may, the whole weight of responsibility of the cause must rest with her.

2. There must be an humbler confession that the church, as such, has not done her duty, but has forgotten too much her character, design, and obligation to extend herself throughout the earth; that, taken up with the world, its interests and enjoyments, she has been unmindful of her Lord's command, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; that she has been willing to let who will take up

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the cause as her substitute; and that though she has given much property, it has been rather to quiet conscience, than out of strong affection, and as a sort of compromise, for so much money given, to be released from all other claims and further work.

3. There should be an admission in the articles of the christian profession of the obligation of every christian to live for the world, to pray for the world, and to seek the world's conversion. It ought to be one of the questions proposed to those who are about to make a profession of religion, "Will you consider yourself, by your profession, so bought with the price of Christ's blood that one of the objects of existence is to live for the world's conversion?"

4. There is wanting the sense of individual obligation, ever following each professing christian through his whole life. I have said much upon its being the duty of the church, and of its being laid upon the conscience of the church. But what is the church? A collection of individuals. Take away these individuals and there is no church. The church, in its collective capacity, can have no conscience. The conscience of the church is the conscience of its individual members. Every member, in this sense, is the church, and ought to feel the whole weight of the cause resting upon himself. Every christian ought to feel as if the conversion of the world depended upon him, upon his faith, his prayers, and his liberality. And so it does in measure. He is not to ask what his neighbour can or should do, but what he can and should do. He is to measure his doings not by his neighbour's but by his own obligations. He is to consult his means, his opportunities, his conscience. Every thing about him is individual. He is an in-

dividual, a complete personality; he is called and redeemed as an individual, and as an individual will be judged. As an individual he must exert himself. He must not say, "Yes, it is the duty of the church, I own it;" but he must say, "It is my duty." He must not lose his individuality in that abstraction, the church.

5. To promote a missionary spirit must be considered one branch of ordinary clerical duty. We pastors have no right to restrict our solicitude and care to particular parishes and congregations. In one sense, our parish is the world, and our congregation the whole population of the globe. An awful responsibility rests with us. We must not wait for the anniversary of our local society, and the coming of the annual sermon, as if the missionary fervour were to be kept up by an annual pulpit coruscation from an eloquent stranger, or an exhibition of fire-works upon the platform; but by the equable and constant warmth of our own zeal, communicated to the people in our own social circles, and especially from the pulpit. We, the pastors of the churches, must be the deputation from God, without waiting for, or depending upon, the deputation from the metropolis. The want is in the pulpit, in our own pulpit ministrations.

6. The church must increase its piety. It is called to a great work, and it must prepare itself for its business. A dispensation is come upon it, and it is not ready. Eminent piety is essential to eminent usefulness. Our zeal has outstripped our godliness, and notwithstanding its blaze, the flame has been fed by other materials than the oil of piety; and is consequently in danger of going out, waning, or not shining with a steady and permanent light. To change the metaphor, the strength and stability of a plant lie in

the healthiness of the root: now the spirituality of our pastors and churches is the root of the missionary cause: and however rapidly for awhile the cause may grow, it will soon droop and wither if the roots be not in a good state. The church must begin the conversion of the world by the revival of itself. She is a shaft in the quiver of Emmanuel, but is not yet, as she must be, a polished one. She must be more meetened for his use, before he will extensively employ her for the accomplishment of his benign and magnificent purposes. We are not spiritual enough yet for this high and sacred commission. We are not mighty enough in prayer, strong enough in faith; or sufficiently lowly, humble, and self-denying. We seem yet to have touched only the secularities of the cause, for we are not holy and heavenly enough for any thing else.. We do not enter the holy of holies by our interceding spirit, that we may come forth from thence, and bless a waiting world.

7. The church must depend more upon principle and less upon excitement; more upon conscience and less upon imagination. It is impossible to look with entire complacency upon all that is done, or upon the manner of doing it. How much is there from which Paul, were he again upon earth, would turn with sorrow and aversion, if not with indignation. Perhaps the time is coming, when we shall do without the flaming placard side by side with the play-bill, where the theatre and the sanctuary contend for public notice by the attraction of popular preachers and popular actors; without appeals to individual and congregational vanity; without all kinds of little, though perhaps innocent devices to get money; without merry stories and humorous anecdotes to excite the glee of laughter-loving audiences; without

toy-shops and excursions. Perhaps these are the religious matters by which we prove that we yet think as a child, speak as a child, and act as a child, but which we shall put away as childish things when we become men. The church, when it rises in its strength, and purity, and majesty, from the dust, and puts on its beautiful garments, will not need such stimulants, and will not make its activity depend upon the array of a public meeting, the eloquent speech of a stranger, or even the picturesque or touching anecdotes of a missionary. I do not mean to say that we can do without these things yet, but we must even now depend much less upon them than we do. Perhaps the time will come when the flow of our zeal will be as mighty, as regular, as silent, and withal as efficient as that of the Thames, which floats the commerce of an empire to enrich the world; and as pure as the crystal river proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. We must be guided by judgment, and moved by conscience. We must study the cause in the closet, and over an unfolded Bible. We must let it touch our hearts by its own power, and appeal to our understandings by its own great arguments. We must handle it as if we heard the groans of creation, the howlings of the damned, and the songs of the redeemed. What! is not the sight of the world covered with crime and curse; the Saviour's agony upon the cross for its redemption; the prophet's hand lifting up the veil of futurity, and disclosing the bright visions of millennial beauty; are these, I say, not enough to move us, unless we can have our religious holidays? I do not condemn these holidays if they are used only as recreations, and not as substitutes for severer work. Do, do let us make it a matter of private and religious

meditation, of solemn conference with ourselves, of communion with our own heart upon our bed, of solitary musings in our holiest hours. Let us settle what we ought to do for the cause, beneath the scrutinizing eye of Omniscience, and in prospect of the judgment day; and then use our public meetings not so much to stimulate us to duty, as to cheer and animate us in the performance of it.

8. Perhaps by growth in intelligence, and piety, and principle, the church will in time arrive at such maturity as to be able to take back the management of missionary affairs literally into its own hands, and each large body of christians will find itself strong enough, and willing enough to have its own missionary or missionaries in the field of heathenism, which it will support with its property, bless by its prayers, and comfort with its sympathy and counsel. In that day, if it shall ever dawn, large, central, and almost unwieldy societies will be unnecessary, and the plans of primitive churches will be revived, in all their simplicity and spirituality. But we are not ripe for this yet.

9. As the gospel is never likely to be spread through the world but by native agency raised up by its success in the countries wherein it is preached, it is the work of the church to be much in prayer to God, night and day, for labourers of this kind to be sent forth into the field. Missions must be self-propagating and self-supporting; and only on that principle can the world's conversion be expected. Who does or can pray but the church? This is her business and duty. Her prayers will convert the world by bringing down the Spirit.

10. The church must be brought to feel its entire dependence upon the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God

alone can convert the world. A missionary for each city, town, village, family, or individual, could we by any effort of the imagination conceive of so many, would not convert the heathen from their idols, without the Spirit of God. The Spirit will never come down but in answer to the church's prayers, and the church will never be mighty in prayer till it feels its weakness without him. Organization and money are the cry of the day; and that they are important, yea, indispensable, as means, I admit; but they will do nothing without God. Never till the church, by faith and prayer, lays hold of God's strength by a sense of her own nothingness, will God render her his salvation to the ends of the earth. We have idolatry to put away at home, before we shall abolish the idols abroad, and that is the worship of organization.

11. But then we should feel confident that God will give his Spirit upon a believing, prayerful, and self-denying liberality, and to a liberal church and not to a covetous one. The cause of the Redeemer is arrested in its progress; our societies instead of advancing must recede. The heathen are crying, "Come and help us;" the colonists are crying, "Come and help us;" the benighted towns and villages are crying, "Come and help us;" voices from every quarter cry, "Come and help us." To whom do these voices come? I answer, to the church, to the blood-bought, twice-born church. What answer is the church prepared to give? It may do well enough for the world to say, and the world will say, "Times are bad, the present is gloomy, gloomier the future, and I can spare nothing." Servants of God, followers of Christ, heirs of immortality, that answer will not do for you. The times may be bad, and prospects may be

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gloomy; and perhaps God is coming to scourge the world, and purify his church by national troubles, and to prove that he can enable you to do more for him in adversity than in prosperity. He is coming to see if you have Macedonian benevolence, and if in "a great trial of affliction the abundance of your joy and deep poverty will abound also to the riches of your liberality." He has hitherto called upon you to do, now perhaps he will call upon you to sacrifice. Perhaps he will more abundantly bless, it is probable he will, what you deny yourselves to give, than all you have hitherto done. Retrenchment must begin somewhere. Where shall it be? In your liberality, or in your indulgence? You must spend less upon yourselves, or upon Christ. Which shall it be? You must make sacrifices of your luxuries or comforts for religion, or sacrifices of religion for your luxuries or comforts. How will you decide? Members of christian churches, my appeal is to you, to your professions, to your judgments, to your hearts, to your consciences. Can you come down to simpler modes of living, to more economy, to self-denial, to sacrifice? Can you give up luxuries, comforts, for the world's conversion, and the glory of God? Can you say to the cause of Christ as you would to an adopted child, You shall share with me my last shilling? What then is now wanting, is a deep and solemn conviction, pervading the mind of the church of Christ, far deeper and more intense than is seen at most public meetings, that it is her present condition, function, and duty to fight the good fight, and battle with the hosts of darkness, for the conversion of the world to God; that for this work she ought to make herself ready by a more fervent and spiritual piety; a

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more humiliating sense of nothingness and dependence, combined with a spirit of faith and prayer; a more catholic charity; a more resolute self-denial, and a more abounding liberality; and that while she ascends her watch-tower to observe, with intense solicitude and christian hope, the convulsions of the times, it is her business to go forward with all simplicity of purpose, in the great enterprise of man's salvation. What we want is a light of holiness, a fervour of devotion, a glow of charity, equal to the splendour of zeal; and, at the same time, a spirit of sacrifice that will lead us to be content with a self-chosen poverty, rather than that the world's conversion shall stand still; then when the cause is consecrated by the tears of our private humiliations and prayers, as well as radiated by the smiles of our public enjoyments; when our property flows forth freely and abundantly at the bidding of our faith and our conscience, and not merely by the extortion of example and appeals, then, in short, when the church is in earnest, the world will be converted.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

THERE is no subject of a practical nature, to which I could direct your attention, of more importance, either to yourselves, or to the credit of your profession, and therefore to the well-being of others, than that which is contained in the present address; I mean, Christian Charity. I refer you to the apostle's beautiful description and eloquent eulogium of charity, in the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of

angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” The occasion of this chapter was as follows. The Corinthian church was pre-eminent in the possession of spiritual gifts. This distinction furnished occasion for the indulgence of pride and vanity in the exercise of those supernatural powers, which called for the interference, expostulation, and rebuke of apostolic authority. In the last verse of the preceding chapter, Paul admonishes the members of the church to “covet earnestly the best gifts;” those which were most for edification, such, for instance, as prophesying, that is, speaking of Divine truth under inspiration; and yet says he, “I shew unto you a more excellent way;” by which he meant that he would set before them something more excellent, and far more to be coveted, than the most extraordinary miraculous endowments. This pre-eminent excellence, to which he refers, is the charity which he describes in the chapter now alluded to. Nothing can give us a more impressive or instructive lesson, than this exaltation of charity over miracles. What a proof is it that the apostle was neither impostor nor enthusiast; that Christianity is indeed from heaven, since though it is accredited by supernatural powers and endowments, its Divine Author, and its inspired teachers, place these in an inferior rank to christian virtue. Had Paul been either impostor or enthusiast, would he not have dwelt with more emphasis and inflation, as all impostors do, upon the marvellous and miraculous, and with less earnestness on that which is plain and practical? What an idea does it give us of the value of this transcendent disposition, to see it thus placed above the wonder-working powers of the first christians: and what a notion does it convey to us of

our own privileges, when we find ourselves invited and enabled to possess ourselves of an acquirement more to be coveted and esteemed, than the ability to speak all languages without study, and to heal all diseases without the practice or the study of medicine. Such is charity.

In explanation of it, I would remark that charity signifies love. In modern usage this term has become almost limited to the act of alms deeds; and in bestowing money or other things upon the poor, we speak of our giving charity; but in Scripture usage this is not its meaning, there it signifies love. In many places it is so rendered by our translators; and it is to be regretted that in reference to this term, as well as to a few others, they have perplexed the English reader, by not observing a uniform translation of the same original word. In the following places it is rendered love: Rom. xii. 9; xiii. 10. Gal. v. 13, 22. Phil. ii. 1. 2 Tim. i. 7. Heb. x. 24; and in many others also: and in the following it is rendered charity: Rom. xiv. 15. 1 Cor. xvi. 14. Col. iii. 14. 2 Thess. i. 3; and in numerous other places.

But of what love does the apostle speak? Evidently not of love to God, as it is not exercised towards him; nor of love to our brethren in Christ exclusively, because the acts by which it is to be displayed are as incumbent upon us in reference to the wicked as to the righteous; it is love to all men, whether righteous or wicked; friends or foes. It is the same as love to our neighbour; it is, in short, that benevolent disposition or kindness which consists in goodwill to all creatures, and which leads us, as we have opportunity, to promote their happiness. God is love, and this is his likeness.

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God loves all the universe with a love of benevolence, but his people with a love of complacency. In analogy to this, his people are bound to love all, whether good or bad, so far as to be willing to promote their happiness; but they love the righteous with a special delight, on account of their relation and likeness to God; and thus add "to brotherly kindness, charity."

Such is love, not a mere natural amiability of temper, not a soft, relenting disposition, no; but a fruit of the Spirit. It is a benevolence which is the result of regeneration; cherished by a sense of God's love to us in Christ Jesus; guided in its exercises by the Holy Scriptures; and directed, as its end, to the glory of God. It is that state of mind into which man is brought by the great change wrought in us by converting grace. Man, in his fallen state, is under the dominion of supreme selfishness. He cares for no other or higher object than self. His wife, children, friends, neighbours, are no otherwise regarded than as part of himself, or for the sake of himself; but to love, in the scriptural sense of the word, that is, a love for God's sake, his heart is a stranger. To feel the cold and icy selfishness of the heart, warming and melting under the glowing ardour of Divine and infinite benevolence, and a sense of interest awakened in the soul, and an impulse of beneficence given to it, which sends it beyond the circle of its relatives, into the vast family of man; to be susceptible of emotions and affections which expand the heart till it embraces the wide range of sentient beings; to be conscious of a sympathy with all our fellow creatures as capable of happiness, and of an anxiety to secure it for them; to realize within us a chord that vibrates in the tone of sorrow to the grief of others, and in joy to

the notes of their gladness; to know something of a disposition, which if it courts power, and influence, and wealth, does so more as the instrument of benevolence and the means of communicating bliss, than as sources of our personal gratification, and elements of our personal greatness; to be ever ready to weep with those that weep, and to rejoice with those that rejoice; in short, to know that our happiness is derived in great part from the happiness of others, and is increased by promoting it, and to feel thus in imitation of the love of God to us; this is the love spoken of by the apostle in the chapter referred to, and the subject of the present address. The man who possesses this disposition in a high degree feels as if placed on some lofty height, where as the love of God in Christ streams upon him from above, and the whole human race lie below him, he feels the tide of his sympathy and his yearnings flow forth in sincere and ardent wishes to do them all good, and make them all happy, irrespective of relationship, of character, of party, or denomination.

Not however that this love overlooks the ties of social existence, and with infidel licentiousness merges the regard which is due to individual relations in the wild notion of a universal philanthropy: no, it begins with these ties, and is founded upon them, though it stops not in them, but goes out and on to all beyond their comparatively narrow circle.

The apostle has given us a description of the exercises of this noble and god-like principle, "Love suffereth long," is patient and forbearing under injuries and annoyances, and does not revile, revenge, or retaliate: "is kind," is not harsh or rude, but ever ready, willing, and pleased by looks, words, and actions,

to promote the comfort of others: “envieth not,” does not pine and grieve at the sight of another’s superior possessions, fame, happiness, or piety, and dislike him on that account: “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,” neither boasts its own gifts, achievements, and possessions, nor despises others, nor compares them to itself insultingly, but is humble and gentle: “doth not behave itself unseemly,” keeps its place modestly, and does nothing to offend by what is unbecoming its rank, station, or circumstances: “seeketh not her own,” does not selfishly want to have its own way, to promote its own interest, to the neglect of others: “is not easily provoked,” governs its temper, controls its passions, and is not soon or unreasonably irritable or petulant: “thinketh no evil,” is not censorious, or forward to impute a bad motive to a doubtful action, but is disposed to put the best construction on actions and words: “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth,” does not delight in the sins, but in the excellences of an opponent: “beareth (or covereth) all things,” does not divulge, proclaim, aggravate faults, but hides them as far as it can and it is right to do so: “believeth all things,” that are to the advantage of another: “hopeth all things,” where there is not sufficient evidence to authorize belief: “endureth all things,” bears hardships, sustains labour, makes sacrifices in order to accomplish its purpose of goodwill.

Such is love in exercise and act. This is benevolence: this is a regard to the happiness of others. Whoever acts thus must promote happiness. He must bless all around him. All things smile in his presence. Beautiful description! Heavenly temper! Godlike mind! This is religion, and this is to exist for ever.

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“Love never faileth;” miracles shall cease, indeed have ceased, but love remains: many things which belong to the church militant shall cease in the church triumphant, but love goes with us to heaven: faith shall be changed into sight; hope into fruition; prayer into praise; the helmet, and the shield, and the sword shall be laid aside when the fight of faith is over; but love is the victor’s trophy, yea temper, yea his whole character, that will be his honour and joy through eternity. Heaven is a region of love; love is its element, its bliss. Perfect love to God, and perfect love to our companions, in glory, will be the consummation of our celestial happiness. We cannot rise higher, we cannot go beyond it. Imagination can neither devise nor conceive of any thing richer than perfect love. God has nothing greater, as a disposition of the mind, to bestow. What can he do more for us, than to fill us with perfect love to himself, and to all the universe? What a centre, God and the universe, for the soul to be ever revolving around in a circle of love! Never to have a feeling contrary to, or below, perfect love! To soar in an atmosphere, to plunge in an ocean, to live and abide for ever in a world, of love! To have a perpetual efflux from the mind of thoughts and feelings of pure, generous, unchecked benevolence, and all returned by the objects of them, in reciprocal smiles, expressions of regard, and acts of pure and perfect charity!

Can we wonder that the apostle should give the palm of superiority to love? “Now remain these three, faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love.” Love is the end of faith, and the accomplishment of hope, and therefore greater; it is a social grace going out in its influence to others, while faith and hope are

personal graces terminating with ourselves; it is a resemblance to God, for God is love, but can have nothing analogous to faith or hope; it is to last for ever, when faith and hope shall cease; and on all these accounts is greater than the others.

Now, dear friends, look at charity, gaze upon its lovely form, its beautiful countenance, and its graceful actions; and observe its seraphic glow, its divine temper, till you are all enamoured of its charms. But look at it not only as something to be admired, but to be possessed and practised. Unless this be your temper you are no christians. I do not say you cannot be christians unless you have it in perfection, but you must have the principle, and must be living in its exercise; and you are christians no further than you live under its influence. Hear what the apostle says, "Now the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." No matter what knowledge you may have of the doctrines of the gospel; what seeming faith you may possess; what zeal you may manifest; what liberality you may exercise; what constancy, regularity, and punctuality in attendance upon the means of grace you may maintain; if love be wanting, all are but a body without a soul; all are but the galvanic motions of a corpse, without a principle of vitality to originate, direct, or sustain them. In the beginning of the chapter, the apostle tells us that eloquence of the sublimest kind employed in advocating the cause of the gospel, that the faith of miracles carried to the greatest extent, that a fortune spent in alms deeds, and all these closed and crowned with martyrdom, are all of no avail without love. Nothing

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can be a substitute for it. This, this is Christianity; not a slavish attendance on ceremonies; not receiving the sacraments; not zeal for orthodoxy; not a form of church government; not belonging to any particular church; not receiving the benefit of an episcopal or presbyterian ministry; not being a churchman, dissenter, or methodist; these, according as they are scriptural, are important as auxiliaries, but not as principals; as means, but not ends; as aids, but not substitutes. God's eternal thoughts and purposes, Christ's redeeming work upon the cross, the Spirit's omnipotent agency, were not merely to bring us under a particular ecclesiastical regimen, but to deliver us from the dominion of selfishness, and place us under the reign of love, and thus make us like God. Whatever there may be of churchmanship, or of dissent, or of methodism, if there be not love, there is no true religion, none at least that Christ will own to be such; and if there be love, there is a religion which he will own. Let it be inscribed on any place of religious worship, whether a cathedral, or a methodist or dissenting chapel, "Love is wanting here," and it is only saying in another form of expression, "Religion is wanting here." While, on the other hand, if it can be truly said, "Love is in this place;" some things may be wanting to a perfect exhibition of Christianity, and others may be there which are a blemish upon it, but the substance is there. The supposed apostolical succession, and episcopal ordination, and a finely composed liturgy, or the more simple system of dissenting worship, can be but a poor substitute for love. So also let it be proclaimed of any individual that he is destitute of love, and it is only saying that he has no

religion. He may be zealous for the forms of Christianity, but he is destitute of its living spirit.

Oh, it is time to call back the professed children of a God of love, and the professed followers of a Saviour who is love incarnate, to this glorious, simple, and sublime description of religion, and to show them, in this age of clamour and contention about creeds, articles, and forms, about priests, sacraments, and systems of government, that whatever may be the religion of denominations, the religion of the true, holy, universal church, is "faith working by love." This is the apostolic spirit, and the true apostolic succession. Strange that this should be so much forgotten; that men should have wrangled about the form, till they have lost the spirit of the gospel, and have trampled upon love in their contest for faith. Alas! alas! who, on looking at the present aspect of Christendom, resembling rather a battle-field than a peaceful city, a place of resort for savage animals that bite and devour one another, rather than a sheep-fold where the flock reposes in quietness and without envy, under one shepherd, that these were the professors of a religion, which as to its practical nature and design, is all expressed in that one word love? Who that is witness, (and who in these days is not a witness,) of the bitterness and the wrath, the malice, envy, and jealousy that now characterise so large a portion of the so-called christian world, could imagine that these fierce polemics, these angry opponents, these intolerant persecutors, would dare to call themselves by the name of that meek and lowly Saviour, who taught men they could not be his disciples unless

they loved their enemies: and who set them the example by praying and dying for his own!

Let it not be thought, from any thing I have said, that charity consists of that licentious latitudinarianism, that spurious candour, that fawning sycophancy, which annihilates the importance of right sentiments, smiles with equal complacency on all systems alike, purchases peace at the expense of truth, and would rather leave men to perish in their sins, than awaken them to solicitude by alarming their fears. No! love is as bold, resolute and firm to resist error, and as valiant for the truth, as it is gentle, tender, and pacific where the milder graces will best promote the happiness of its objects. Truth is its weapon, but it is truth in the hand of love; sin is its enemy, which it hates and seeks to destroy, while it pities the sinner: it is zealous, but its zeal is neither the lightning's flash, nor raging conflagration, nor a volcanic eruption; but the warm, silent, efficacious beams of the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.

And now, my dear friends, let me entreat you to examine yourselves touching this great essential of the christian character. Are you experimentally acquainted with this disposition? Is this your religion? Is your temper thus moulded? Through faith in Christ, and by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, are you brought to love God for his own sake, and man for God's sake? Is that one word, love, characteristic of your spirit? Have you a tie that binds you to the whole human race, and makes you anxious to promote universal happiness? Has God's love to you changed you into his own likeness? Do you know what it is to have pride, passion,

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envy, malice, selfishness, if not wholly eradicated, yet subdued, repressed, resisted, by a temper, meek, gentle, lowly, forgiving, forbearing, candid, generous, self-denying? Are the harshness, hardness, asperity of the fallen nature, displaced by the softness, sweetness, and amenity of true charity?

Cultivate this disposition. You have all too little of it. Remember, it is absolutely and indispensably essential. It is not a mere circumstantial, but a fundamental. You can no more be christians without love, than you can be without chastity, or justice, or truth. It is not a mere decoration of the christian character, but part of the substance of it. You can have no faith without love, for "faith worketh by love." You cannot be born of the Spirit without love, for "the fruit of the Spirit is love." You cannot be keeping the commandments of God without love, for "the whole law is fulfilled in one word, love." You have not the image of God without love, for "God is love." You have no meetness for heaven without love, for heaven is perfect love. You must have this grace, or you can never be saved.

Take great pains to obtain it. Without this you will never have it: you must watch, wrestle, and pray. It is not a beautiful wild flower, that, meeting with a congenial soil in your heart, will grow without culture or labour; on the contrary, it is an exotic, which finds in the soul of a man a barren soil, and in this world a chilling atmosphere, and which will never take root and flourish without great pains: it is a plant of paradise, which cannot live and grow on earth without incessant care, and without your placing it by faith and prayer under the warm beams of the Sun of righteousness, and

the dew of the Holy Spirit. Unless our hearts be set upon it, and we treat it as the gardener does some favourite flower, which he is anxious to rear up to strength and beauty, we shall never succeed. It is a grace which the man of the world neglects, and which many professing christians think far too little about; but it is of infinite value in the eyes of God. Let us not be disappointed if we do not make attainments in it as fast or as great as we could wish. Oh! let us mortify every feeling which is contrary to it, and resist to the uttermost the indulgence of the whole class of the irascible passions. Let us feel that love is our vocation, for which we are set apart by both redeeming and regenerating grace.

We should often meditate on the love of God and Christ to us. We cannot call love into exercise by a mere volition of our will: it will not rise and flame at our bidding; we must meditate on the great pattern, and study the divine exemplar. We must steadily contemplate the God of love bending in the attitude of a pitying benevolence over a world in rebellion against him; and we must visit the cross daily to see the bleeding, dying love of Christ. We must thus go to the fountain of love, and, as it were, drink in love, by the power of faith. The enmities of our nature wither, and all the charities revive and flourish, by the influence of meditation on the love of God.

How earnestly should we pray for that Spirit, whose first and richest fruit is love! It is his to bless our labours; his to render our efforts successful; his to water the precious plant and make it grow.

If it were necessary, by what motives could I enforce this disposition upon you. How will it promote your own happiness! How serene a temper will it produce

and sustain in your mind! Love is peace, and peace is bliss. It is the calm and sunshine of the breast. How will it bless others around you! Your looks will beam affection, your lips drop words of kindness, your actions will be beneficence, you will, in short, be as a tree of life, the fruit of which offers itself to every hand, and will refresh every palate. Others will love to approach you, and delight in you as one raised up by grace to bless your species. What honour and credit will you shed upon religion! You will roll away the reproach brought upon it by the anger, wrath, and uncharitableness of others; you will disabuse the minds of many of a prejudice against it, as if it were a waspish or canine temper, and convince them that instead of being a fury, it is a seraph, a ministering angel, sent forth from the Father of mercies, to reveal to men his nature, and to meeten them for his presence.

And now, in conclusion, I say, let us sigh, and pray, and strive, for the universal reign of love, through the influence of the truth and the power of faith. Let us invoke the God of love to bestow this blessed fruit of the Spirit upon this distracted and divided world, and upon every member of his church. It is the only cure for the gangrene of party strife, the most characteristic feature of Christ's image in the renewed man, the most precious fruit of grace; and yet the fruit which too many of his professed followers seem to think themselves hardly under any obligation to cultivate. Yes, this is the image, as well as the law of our Divine Lord, and not human systems and forms of government; and it is this that must form the bond of union between all the followers of Christ, the principle of a universal fellowship of saints, and the glory of the millennial church,

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even as it will be the sweet and everlasting cement of souls in heaven.

“Blessed likeness! Enchanting loveliness! Are the painted earth-made vizors [of human systems], which conceal ‘the human face divine,’ and substitute in its room their own deformed visages, worth the price they cost us? worth the conflicts, which have all the pains of military warfare, without its recompence; and all the hardships of chivalry, without its glory? worth the broken unity, the blighted peace, the tarnished beauty, the prostrate energy, the humbled honours of the church of God? Ah, no! Our hearts feel they are not. What then remains but to lay aside our petty contests. To strike our hands in a covenant of love, ‘a holy league,’ offensive and defensive, for the common Christianity; to present our consolidated front to the legions of error and death; and march on under the command and conduct of the Captain of our salvation, till the nations commingle their shouts in that thundering alleluia, The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

YOU know full well that true religion has its seat in the soul; and that it forms the character and guides the conduct by its power, as an inward principle of spiritual life; that it is, in short, being right-minded. The question arises as to what a right mind really is, and what kind of prevailing disposition the gospel requires in those who profess to believe it. This is answered by the apostle, where he says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” And he then goes on to tell what Christ’s mind was. The whole passage deserves your closest attention, both on account of its doctrinal truth and its practical bearing, for it shows in a very striking manner the intimate connexion between christian truth and christian practice, and how the former is employed by the sacred writers

to enforce the latter. The sublimest doctrines of our holy religion are all practical in their design and tendency: they are not mere theory or science, but are all of them "the truth which is according to godliness." If there be any mystery of religion which is great and high above the thoughts of men and angels, it is, without doubt, the incarnation of the Son of God; and if there be any place where this important truth is clearly and magnificently represented, it is this passage. The terms are at once so sublime and majestic, that it is impossible any thing more sublime or majestic can be said; the meaning is so noble and so well established, that nothing more powerful can be imagined.

The design of the passage is to enforce the injunctions of the preceding verses, that is, to repress all selfish considerations of our own rights, interests, and dignity, and in the exercise of a kind and condescending regard to the welfare of others, to forego for their advantage what we might claim for our own. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." The disposition which the apostle enjoins is that particular species of christian virtue which stands opposed to a stiff and tenacious maintenance of outward distinctions, personal rights, and social rank and precedence; and which consists of a meek humility, and benevolent condescension for the sake of promoting the comfort and interests of our fellow christians. And because this is the most difficult lesson for our proud and selfish hearts to learn in the school of Christ, he enforces it by the power of the most cogent and splendid example which the universe contains, I mean that of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Whatever therefore is the right view of the passage must

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of necessity contain an instance, on the part of Christ, of great and striking condescension and of profound humility, or it would not be relevant to the occasion. Whatever exposition of it leaves this out, or does not bring it prominently forward, cannot be the right one.

Whoever will attentively, and without the bias of preconceived notions or systems, consider this passage, will observe that the apostle points out three different states or conditions of our Lord Jesus Christ: the first is a state of antecedent dignity and glory, expressed in the words, "Who being in the form of God:" the second is a state of subsequent humiliation, described thus; "but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant," etc.: the third is a state of consequent exaltation, set forth in what follows; "wherefore God hath highly exalted him." Now the obvious design of the apostle's argument is to prove the benevolent and condescending humility of Christ, by descending from the first of these states to the second. Had there been no previous dignity and glory, there could have been no subsequent condescension, because condescension involves the idea of stooping or descending from some previous dignity or elevation, the resignation of the claim to some superior station, a foregoing of some advantage or pre-eminence. At the same time it is necessary to the reasoning that the humiliation was perfectly voluntary. So that if there were any condescension at all, our Lord must have had a previous and dignified existence from which he stooped in becoming man, and in doing this he must have acted with perfect freedom of choice, without being under any other obligation than the constraint of his own benevolence. If his previous state had not been one of glory; or sup-

posing it had, if he had been under any obligation, either of authority or justice, in doing what he did, there could have been no benevolent condescension.

It ought to be observed also, that his antecedent state of glory, and his ultimate state of exaltation, are two perfectly distinct and separate states. The opponents of our Lord's true and proper Divinity think it enough to say, in answer to all the arguments for this truth brought from the glory and power ascribed to him, that he received all this at his resurrection and ascension, and that this power and glory are not his natural perfections, but his acquired honours, and not of more ancient date than the work of redemption.

“But this is to confound the distinct states of glory which belong to him; the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and the glory which he received from the Father at the redemption of man; one the glory of nature, the other the glory of office; one the glory of the eternal Logos, or Word, the other the glory of the Son of Man; in short, one the glory of his eternal Divinity, and the other the glory of his mediatorial Person, as God-man.”

I will now give a brief exposition of the different parts of this wonderful passage.

“Who being in the form of God.” What is meant by the form of God? Not, as some assert, his power to work miracles. This power is nowhere else so called: if this were its meaning, the apostles were as truly in the form of God as Christ himself, for they also wrought miracles as well as he: whatever it means, it was possessed previous to his being in the likeness of men, and laid aside when he became in fashion as a man; but Christ was in the likeness of men thirty years before he wrought any miracle, and, in fact, never to the last laid aside this power: moreover, as the “form of a servant,” and “the likeness and fashion of a man,” signify true

humanity; the form of God, to which these expressions are put in contrast, must mean true and proper Divinity. It refers, then, to the visible manifestation of the Divine glory in heaven, similar, but transcendently superior, to the Shekinah, or symbol of the Divine presence, in the Holy of Holies, upon the mercy-seat, between the cherubim.

“Thought it not robbery to be equal with God;” deemed it no usurpation to receive the honours, and exercise the rights of Deity. This expression is rendered by some expositors thus, “He did not covet to appear as God.” If this be the true interpretation, it rather strengthens than weakens the argument for Christ’s Divinity. For if he were not God, what condescension was it in him, as man, not to covet to appear as God? Is it any condescension in the constable of a village not to covet to appear in the state and character of royalty?

“But made himself of no reputation;” or as the words literally rendered mean, “he emptied or divested himself” of this manifestation of his glory; he laid it aside, as a monarch might the robes and regalia of his state, as a sovereign. Of his divine nature Christ could not divest himself; of his divine state or manifestation, he could.

“And took upon him the form of a servant;” by serving not only God, but others.

“He was made in the likeness of men.” Instead of appearing as God, he came as man; for being made in the likeness of men, signifies that he was truly human.

“And being found in fashion as a man.” In what fashion should or could he be found, if he were only man? What was there wonderful or worthy of remark

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in this, if he might not and could not have appeared in some other fashion?

“He humbled himself.” How? By becoming obedient unto death.” This is the proof and display of his humility, his being obedient unto death, his being willing to die, and submitting to the stroke of mortality. His death was a voluntary act; he chose to die, and it was condescension in him so to do. But it may be well asked, If he were nothing but man, what choice had he in the matter, or what condescension did he display in submitting to it? If he were only man, mortality was his lot, his condition, and in no sense his choice, and could not, therefore, be any voluntary humility. How comes that to be humility in Christ which is necessity in every one else? Only on the ground, that while in one view of his Person he is truly and properly man, in another view he is more than man.

“Even the death of the cross.” Crucifixion was the most torturing and degrading method of execution; being accursed by the law of the Jews, and ignominious by that of the Gentiles; the punishment of the meanest slaves, and worst felons.

Now then look at the mind of Christ as set forth in this most wonderful transaction. He who was truly and properly God, who manifested himself in all the glory of the Deity in heaven, and received the adoration of the celestial hosts, instead of coming down upon earth for our redemption in the splendour of Divine majesty, took upon him a servile condition, and displayed his condescension by becoming man. But though man, yet being also Lord of all things, he was superior to the necessity of dying, and became subject to death only ‘because he chose to die. To die was, therefore, in him

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astonishing humility; but the climax of all his stupendous condescension, was his submission to the death of the cross. If we take into consideration, then, the Deity of Christ, the argument of the apostle is conclusive, and his example complete; but without it, you will hardly discover the force of his argument or the humility of Christ.*

“The Divinity of Jesus Christ,” says Dr. Mason, of America, “is, in the system of grace, the sun, to which all its parts are subordinate, and all their stations refer; which binds them in sacred concord, and imparts to them radiance, life, and vigour. Take from it this central luminary, and the glory is departed. Its holy harmonies are broken, the elements rush to chaos, the light of salvation is extinguished for ever.”

Before I come to the practical application of the passage on which I have dwelt in this address, I will give a summary of the scripture evidence of the fact of Christ’s true and proper Divinity. The argument is this, Inasmuch as every title, attribute, work, and honour belonging to Deity is, without limitation or reserve, ascribed to Christ in scripture, he, in addition to his being in one view truly and properly man, must, in another, be as truly and properly God. He is thus God and man in one mysterious Person.

TITLES OF DEITY.

Jehovah; Isaiah vi. compared with John xii. 41. Isaiah xlv. 22–25, compared with Romans xiv. 10–12. Jer. xxiii. 6. God; John i. 1–4. God with us; Isaiah vii. 14. Mighty God; Isaiah ix. 6. God over all; Rom. ix. 4. God manifest in the flesh; 1 Tim. iii. 16. The Great God; Titus ii. 13. The True God; 1 John v. 20.

* See some admirable sermons on this passage by Bishop Sherlock.

Attributes of Deity.

Eternity; Isaiah ix. 6. John viii. 58. Heb. i. 12; xiii. 8. Rev. i. 8. Omnipresence; Matt, xviii. 20. Omnipotence; Matt, xxviii. 18. Heb. i. 3. Rev. i. 8. Omniscience; Rev. ii. 23, compared with Jer. xvii. 10.

WORKS OF DEITY.

Creation; John i. 3-10. Col. i. 16. Heb. i. 2. The preservation of all things; Heb. i. 3. The government of the universe; Dan. ii. 9-14. Matt, xxviii. 18. 1 Cor. xv. 24-27. Ephes. i. 20-23. Philip, ii. 9-11. Regeneration; John v. 25, 26. Raising the dead; John v. 28; xi. 25. Being Judge at the judgment day; John v. 22. Acts xvii. 31. Rom. xiv. 9, 10. 2 Cor. v. 10.

HONOURS OF DEITY.

Being the chief end of the Creation; Col. i. 15. Worship, Prayer; Acts vii. 59. 2 Cor. xiii. 8. Rom. i. 7; and the benedictions and salutations at the commencement and conclusion of most of the epistles. Praise and Adoration; Rev. v.

This is but a selection from the passages of scripture which assert and prove the Divinity of our Lord. In fact, this great truth is so interwoven with the very texture of revelation, and occurs incidentally in so many places, that it appears to me impossible to separate it without destroying the whole. Let these passages be well studied, and accurately stored in the mind, both in their own words and meaning.

I now return to the passage which is the subject of this address, "Let the mind which was in Christ be also in you."

Jesus Christ is the only teacher who ever made a similarity of disposition to himself his test and badge of discipleship. He is not only the teacher, but the pattern, of his religion. His example is an essential part of his system. A man may be a philosopher of any school, if he only embraces the principles of his master, although in temper and spirit he is as opposite to his leader as the east is from the west: but this is not enough to constitute a man a christian; for he must not only receive the doctrines of our Lord, but must imbibe his spirit. He must not only believe all he taught, but he must live as he lived, think as he thought, and feel as he felt. Christ's mind must be in his mind, as far as he can contain it, and Christ's heart must be in his heart. I really know nothing more instructive, or more solemnly impressive than this. To be a christian, it is not only necessary that we should adopt Christ's doctrines, comply with his ordinances, observe his sacraments, associate with his church, espouse his cause, and conform outwardly to his conduct, but we must have his very mind in us: the prevailing spirit and disposition of his mind must be ours also; and unless men see the image of Christ upon our character, and the eye of God sees the mind of Christ in our soul, we are not acknowledged as true christians.

And what was the mind of Christ? Who shall describe it? Only the apostles who have written his life. How Holy was his mind! Not the shadow of sin, nor the least taint of moral evil ever passed over it, to becloud or pollute its immaculate purity. His mind was the seat of the most ineffable Benevolence. His heart was the very temple of love: nothing malevolent, vindictive, or cruel, ever found a place there. All his actions, words,

and feelings were the workings of unexampled love. His Humility was equal to his purity and benevolence: and it is more especially to the latter of these triune graces that the apostle refers when he says, "Let this mind also be in you." It is the Saviour's condescension which is especially commended to our attention and imitation. And none ought to be so distinguished for this virtue as the advocates for the divinity of Christ. It comes upon them with the weight of a peculiar obligation. It is their appropriate duty, and ought to be their distinction.

See, my dear friends, what true religion is: not, as I have had frequent occasion to remark, mere church—manship or dissent; not episcopacy, presbyterianism, independency, or methodism; not orthodoxy of creed, or gorgeousness of ceremony; not church government, or spiritual organization; no, no, but having the mind of Christ. Had it ever occur to you to examine how little is said by the sacred writers about observing the sabbath and the sacraments; about public worship and religious ceremonies; compared with what is said about holiness, benevolence, and humility? But, alas! alas! how much more eager are multitudes of professors about the one than the other, inverting Christ's order, and setting forms above spirit; just because it is so much more easy, and so much more congenial with all the feelings of our proud and corrupt nature, to hear a sermon, observe a sacrament, or repose for safety upon the trueness of our church, than to mortify the corruptions of our own mind, and to transplant into it the virtues and the graces of the mind of Christ.

For what purpose have four different pens been employed by the hand of inspiration in writing the Gospels, but to show us the mind of Christ for our imitation, as

well as his atoning work for our salvation, and by this quadruple delineation of his beautiful character, to impress us not only with its charms, but with the necessity of our resembling it.

See how the life of piety is to be promoted by reading the gospels, and that not only to learn how sin is to be pardoned, but what holiness is, and how it is to be promoted. Religion in us is no fancy sketch, no original picture, but a copy of which Christ is the original. We must sit down before this original, with the determination, and the hope, of producing, by the help of Divine grace, something resembling it in ourselves; and like artists keeping their eye constantly upon the original they are copying, not for the purpose of admiring it merely (though they do this, and their admiration helps them in copying it,) but for the purpose of producing as perfect a resemblance as possible; so must we, in reading the gospels, keep our minds intently fixed upon the conduct and spirit of Jesus, not merely to see and say, "How beautiful!" but to copy it.

If nothing short of this be religion, how comparatively little of it is there in our world! If the mind of Christ in us be necessary to make out our claim to the character of a christian, how many must forego the honour! It is enough to make us all tremble for ourselves and one another. Where and in whom is to be seen the union of holiness, benevolence, and condescension, which formed the character of the Saviour? Is his Holiness to be found in those professors who, though they are free from external vice and immorality, allow the corruptions of their heart to go unmortified, and indulge, instead of crucifying, the affections and lusts of the flesh? Is his Benevolence to be found in

those who are so fond of the world, so grasping, and so hoarding, that little or nothing can be extorted from their reluctant hands for the salvation of sinners, and the glory of God? And where is his Humility to be seen in his followers? Is it to be found in those who will never forego a single point of precedence, or one punctilio of etiquette; who will have their rights, and all their rights, at whatever cost of principle or peace; who are so tenacious of all that belongs to them, not only in the way of property, but of influence and respect, that they will not brook the least slight, but resent the smallest possible neglect of their claims, infringement of their prerogative, or opposition to their will, with all the manifestations of wounded pride, and mortified vanity? Many are so filled with high notions and excessive admiration of their own fancied greatness and excellence, that if they are not flattered and caressed, they feel as if they were robbed of their rights, and retire in disgust and indignation. Oh, is this the mind that was in Christ? It is matter of little astonishment that the people of the world should not evince the christian temper; but that the professed disciples of Christ should be so wanting in it is as surprising as it is painful. It might have been expected that in the school of such a master, self-denial and humility would have been accounted by his disciples cardinal virtues; that all would commence the cultivation of them the moment they took their place at his feet, and that the post of honour and ambition with them, would be the lowest instead of the highest place. Yet how widely different is the case! It would seem as if men had yet to learn either what the mind of Christ really is, or that this mind is binding upon them; and as if it were the design

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of Christianity to form the proud, intolerant, and selfish ecclesiastic, rather than the holy, meek, and humble christian. It would appear from the spirit and conduct of some, as if to be zealots for a creed or a church/were the true signs of discipleship, instead of the temper of Jesus; and yet an apostle has told us, that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Many had need study afresh the elemental principles of our holy religion, to learn in what it truly consists; and if they will allow Christ and his apostles to teach them, instead of fathers and doctors, councils and convocations, they will learn that the membership and the ceremonies of the true church, and the true apostolical succession in the ministry, are poor substitutes for the mind of Christ.

Wherefore, my dear friends, I entreat you cultivate the christian temper; seek for the spirit of Christ, and be content with nothing short of the mind that was in him. Let me entreat you to contemplate him, first upon his throne of glory adored by angels, and then upon the cross of Calvary despised, rejected, insulted, murdered by men; and when you are filled with astonishment at the grace that induced him thus to humble himself, examine yourselves as to what you know of the holy and humble benevolence which dictated this wondrous, yea, ineffably mysterious condescension. Confine your attention for a while to this one point of inquiry: let go every thing else for a season; drop creeds, sacraments, sabbaths, ordinances, alms-deeds, and press right home to your conscience the question, “What have I of the mind of Christ?” Does my heart answer, does my mind correspond, to the holy, meek, humble, forgiving, benevolent, patient, self-deny-

ing mind of Christ? Do men who know the beauty and glory of the original, as it is delineated on the page of the gospel, when they see me, say, "There is the image of Christ, and, oil, how like!" Or do they look sceptically on, and after standing in silence for some time, profess they can see little or no resemblance? Can you hold up your spirit and disposition to the world, and say, "Behold the mind of Christ?" Will Christ acknowledge your mind to be his mind? Oh, be satisfied with nothing short of a copy of Christ's heart into yours. You must go lower, lower, lower yet, in self-denying service for God and his saints.

I need scarcely point out to you again the intimate connection between the practical principles of religion, and the great doctrines of Christianity. Take away the incarnation of our Lord, his sacrifice upon the cross, and his atoning death, and the gospel loses its glorious peculiarities; and if you blot out his divinity, his atonement loses its efficacy, and his example its power.

"If we take away his dignity," says Mr Hall, "this great example dwindles into nothing: rob him of his divinity, and you divest him of his humility. It is this which renders his sacrifice of infinite value, his cross so inexpressibly awful and interesting, and to his people so ineffably precious. The cross of Jesus Christ is the appropriate, the appointed rendezvous of heaven and earth: the meeting place between God and the sinner. Deprive Jesus Christ of his dignity, and all these momentous truths dwindle into inexpressible futilities. Doctrines meant to warm and kindle our hearts fill us with perplexity. When we look for a glorious mystery, we find nothing but the obscurity which makes men rack their invention to find out the meaning of those passages, which it is plain the apostle poured forth in a stream of exquisite affection and delight."

And never, never forget, my beloved friends, that the divinity of Christ, however firmly it may be held, is never properly felt, never rightly improved, never truly

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enjoyed, till it is experienced to be a doctrine that fills the soul with a vivid resemblance to that holiness, benevolence, and humility, which were so conspicuously displayed by Him, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

SATANIC TEMPTATIONS.

I WOULD now invite your attention to a subject of deep importance, yet of great and awful mysteriousness; I mean, the agency of Satan in our temptations to sin. Of the real personality of this dreadful being, there can exist no well-founded doubt to any one who, with meekness and docility, submits his understanding to the teaching of God's word. To resolve what is there affirmed of his varied attributes and actions into mere orientalisms; and to conceive that nothing more is intended than a bold personification of the evil principle, goes far to turn the whole gospel history into fable, and requires but another and more adventurous step in the interpretation of Scripture, to convert even the Saviour himself into an ideal character, and to make him only the personification of virtue. Of the history of Satan we know but little, except that he is an apostate spirit, a fallen angel, pre-existent to man, cast out of heaven for his sin, and now in some unknown manner employing himself in seducing others

to sin. He is in all probability the leader and chief of all the "angels who sinned and kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, and are cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." He is by way of eminence called "the devil;" a word that signifies a slanderer and accuser, a term that perhaps has reference to his past history in heaven, and his present conduct upon earth. By way of emphasis he is called "the wicked one;" a fearful title, importing that his whole character is made up of unmingled evil and of every kind of wickedness; that he is wicked in himself, and the cause of all wickedness in others. In other places he is designated "the tempter." This appellation he has derived not only from his seducing our first parents from their innocence, but probably from his successful wiles in heaven, and certainly from his constant occupation among the children of men. It may be imagined that, filled and fired with impotent rage and revenge towards God, for his expulsion from heaven; with envy and malignity towards man, as selected in divine sovereignty to be the object of divine benevolence; and perhaps, above all, cherishing an envenomed personal enmity and hostility against the Lord Jesus Christ in his mediatorial character and redeeming work, he is ever seeking by his temptations to keep men under that yoke to which he has reduced them, and from which it is the design of the Saviour to emancipate them. It would seem to have been his object to be the tyrannical head of the human race, to have all mankind as his vassals, and to lead them to do his will by sinning against God. Perhaps his design was to be an object of worship and adoration,

“the god of this world;” hence his declaration to Christ, “All these kingdoms will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” His grand ambition and policy then are to be a kind of rival with God, to lead men off from Jehovah, and draw them under his own influence. This accounts for his personal enmity to Christ, who “was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.” To counteract the work of redeeming mercy, as far as in him lies, and thus oppose the purpose of God, the honour of Christ, and the happiness of man, he is ever tempting the children of Adam to sin, and following up, as far as permitted, his first success in the garden of Eden.

In what manner Satan tempts men to sin is a deep mystery. That in some way he has access to the human mind is clear, else how could he tempt at all, since he does not appear personally and solicit to iniquity? Peter in addressing Ananias said to him, “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?” Still the mode of his operation is concealed from us. We are very imperfectly acquainted with the nature of our own spirits; and how another spirit can act upon us, is a mystery not to be explained. The manner in which Satan and his influence are described in the word of God, and the earnestness with which we are admonished to guard against him, should excite deep anxiety and holy vigilance. It would seem that his power, though of course limited and restrained, is very great; that his craft is equal to his power; and that his malignity is not inferior to either. The very idea that we have to combat with such a foe, a foe that had the courage to attack the Son of God; a foe the more dangerous for the cloud of mystery that hangs about

him, and conceals his movements from observation; a foe that actually subdued our first parents, notwithstanding their perfect innocence and their being in paradise; a foe whom success has made bold, and experience sagacious, in ruining souls; a foe that may be near us at any moment, unseen, and therefore unnoticed, and may be preparing some new kind of attack, is indeed sufficient to alarm us, far more than it does, and to put us upon the best means of averting the danger. There seems about too many professing christians, a careless confidence, and an air of unwarranted security, which their situation of extreme peril does not justify, and which is quite opposed to the solemn warnings contained in the word of God.

How calculated is such language as the following to stir up a deep and watchful solicitude against Satan: "Simon, Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat." "We are not ignorant of Satan's devices." "I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Satan is transformed into an angel of light." "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist stedfast in the faith." What a description! Your adversary; one who for power is a "lion;" for cruelty and rage, a "roaring lion;" for activity, "walking about;" for diligence, "seeking" out his prey; for destruction and consuming purposes, "seeking whom he may devour." But still more impressive and appalling is the language of Paul, in another place, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour

of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked." This gives us a view of the subject of Satanic opposition which is almost terrific.

You cannot fail to observe that in this passage, as well as in others, the temptations of Satan are characterized by peculiar craft and cunning. The apostle speaks of "wiles," in another place of "devices," and in another of "subtilty." We are led therefore to suppose that he possesses most accurate knowledge of our constitution, situation, besetting sins, weaknesses, occupations, companions, conduct, unwatchfulness, and then adapts his temptations most skilfully to the case, taking advantage of whatever can by possibility give power to his seductions.

It is not presumptuous to inquire, to what kinds of sins his temptations are more, usually applied. Probably he has some concern in all solicitations to sin, but especially in those which render our character more like his own, to the vices which he himself is guilty of. To falsehood and error, for instance. He is called "a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies;" "a deceiver;" from this he takes his name "devil," or slanderer, and false accuser. It was in the case of a lie that he filled the heart of Ananias. The whole system of error, idolatry in all its forms, Mohammedanism, infidelity, and heresy in its numerous grades from the highest to the lowest, must be traced up to his subtle allurements. Pride is especially his sin: hence the

direction given by the apostle to Timothy concerning the appointment of bishops; "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil;" that is, the sin for which the devil was condemned. Ambition, with its attendant jealousy, cruel as the grave, is his vice and his temptation. All the irascible passions are especially diabolical sins, envy, malice, wrath, revenge. These form his very character, and to these he is ever exciting the susceptible children of men: hence the expression of the apostle, "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Neither give place to the devil;" that is, do not yield yourself up to him, and allow him to gain the ascendancy over you, by indulging in immoderate anger. Discontent, murmuring, and resistance of God's will, in his dispensations towards us, form a state of mind to which Satan is anxious to reduce us; hence the language of the apostle, in his epistle to the Ephesians: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience."

There is one passage, already quoted, which deserves especial attention, I mean the expression, "Whereby ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked." It is supposed the allusion here is to the poisoned arrows which were then, and still are, used, among rude tribes, the wound of which causes a sense of burning in the flesh; and that the apostle intends by this figure, to describe those horrid suggestions which sometimes arise in the minds of even good people, and which, as they proceed from no external apparent cause, are to be traced to the malignant operation of our great adver-

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sary. Such suggestions certainly do occasionally arise, to the sore distress of the subject of them; strange, unaccountable, horrid thoughts, savouring almost of blasphemy, or at any rate of infidelity and atheism in reference to God and his word; of gloomy despair and misery as regards our own state; and of mischief and injury towards our fellow-creatures. Perhaps all christians are aware of the reality of such painful imaginings, which are indeed like fiery darts shot into the mind by some cruel hand, and go sorrowing on account of them, as if they were the evidences of a wicked and unrenewed heart. Let them not, however, on this ground doubt their conversion, or conclude unfavourably against themselves. We are not criminal for the thoughts which come into the mind, but only for those which we keep and encourage there. If we invite them, do any thing that leads to them, or welcome and entertain them, there is in this case an act of the will in reference to them, and they enter into the sum of our accountability; but thoughts which come unbidden and unwelcome, the presence of which occasions alarm and distress, like a thief, the discovery of a serpent, or a fire in the house, and which like these are expelled or extinguished in all haste, may be matter of affliction with us, but certainly will not be matter of condemnation with Him who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth we are but dust." I question, however, if, in this expression, the apostle does allude to such suggestions exclusively, and am of opinion, that he intends the whole range of Satanic temptations.

I now go on to point out in what manner we are to carry on our conflict with Satan. And here I would remark that we are not to call in the aid of our imagi-

nation, and attempt in any way to embody before it any personification of the evil one; so neither are we to think of any direct and immediate personal conflict with Satan himself, as if we would come to engage in battle with him, and to resist him in any other way, than by opposing all our own evil thoughts, feelings, and propensities. Persons of an enthusiastic and visionary turn of mind, have so far lost sobriety of judgment as almost to imagine that in their spiritual conflicts, they have been in such immediate, conscious struggles with the tempter, as to persuade themselves they have seen him. But this was only the effect of a heated and misguided imagination. We can in no other way oppose Satan, than by opposing our own evil inclinations, or the enticements of persons and things around us, for there is no other way in which he attacks us, or in which we can be sensible of his attacks. We can in no manner distinguish his influence from the workings of our own corruptions, so as to be able to say this is Satan, and this is the operation of our own corruption. We can recognise his approach only in some movement of our mind or heart against the will of God, and it is by resisting that movement that we are to resist the devil.

The means of opposition are clearly pointed out in the scripture. "Whom resist stedfast in the faith," says one apostle: "above," or over "all, taking the shield of faith," says another, "whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." As one great part of our christian conflict is with him, so the principal means by which he is to be resisted is Faith. The figure employed by the apostle in comparing faith

to a shield is a very beautiful and instructive one; and his direction to put it on over all the other parts of the armour is equally striking. The shield was useful in covering every part of the body: if the foe aimed his arrow at the head, the warrior could raise the shield to protect this important part; if he aimed it at the heart, the defence could be in an instant lowered to cover this also; and thus whether Satan aim to tempt our mind with plausible error, or our hearts by seductive sins, faith is equally useful. Nor does this exhaust the beauty of the metaphor, for the shield covered not only all the parts of the body, but all the other parts of the armour. So faith extends its protecting influence to all the other graces. Who would care about the girdle of sincerity, if he did not believe there was a God to see and reward all that he doth? The breast-plate of righteousness would lie neglected if we did not believe that holiness is pleasing to God, and essential to our happiness. Hope would languish without faith; and the helmet remain suspended on the wall, instead of being placed on our head. The sword of the Spirit would repose in its scabbard, did not faith draw it out. The whole conflict with Satan is a fight of faith; and we thus account for the declaration of our Lord to Peter: "Simon, Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

By faith we realize the existence and presence of God, as the spectator and helper of our souls in the conflict, warning us by his holiness and justice against compliance with temptations, and encouraging us by his grace and truth to resist them. It helps us to realize a present God as well as a present devil; compels us to

say, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" and assists us to "endure as seeing Him who is invisible."

By faith, we repair to the cross, and bring to our aid all the power and might of the great atonement that was there made for sin. The cross of the Saviour is the shelter and defence to which the poor tempted soul betakes herself when sorely beset by the great adversary. There we see the evil of sin in opposition to all the glazing lies with which the enemy endeavours to deceive and entrap us. There we see how God is engaged to our side by the great sacrifice of his Son, and are encouraged to expect his gracious succour. There we see how completely we are rescued from the power of Satan, and are no longer his captives. There we learn that we are bought with a price and belong to Christ, and are bound to obey him as our liege Lord, and to give up all the unfruitful works of darkness. There we see the power of the Spirit provided for us, to assist us in all our spiritual conflicts. There it is that the believer, in holy indignation, and in magnanimous defiance, exclaims, "Get thee behind me, Satan; every drop of my Saviour's blood proclaims my blessed freedom from thy dominion, and my obligations to serve the Lord. Here I am more than conqueror through Him that has loved me."

By faith we partake of the fruit and effect of Christ's victory over Satan. He gained a two-fold conquest in the wilderness, to which he was led by the Spirit, and where he was victorious, by himself, but not for himself only. It was as our Redeemer he endured that conflict, that he might, as it were, beat the enemy first, and lead us to battle with a discomfited and humbled foe;

thus extending to us the fruit of his victory, as well as teaching us how to gain one for ourselves. Christ's second victory was upon Calvary, when, upon his cross, "he spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." It was then "he bruised the serpent's head," and "through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Then he broke the power and destroyed the dominion of Satan. Satan may now molest us, but cannot at will destroy us. It is a vanquished foe we fight with. Faith in this blessed truth gives courage, confidence, and spirit to the believer in resisting the wicked one.

By faith we are assured of the truth, excellence, and importance of God's word, and thus oppose the whole Bible to Satan's darts. Its doctrines and duties, invitations and promises, warnings and threatenings, are all useful by turns. Are we tempted by the difficulties and mysteries of some of the doctrines to disbelief and error? Faith fixes her powerful eye upon the evidence of the truth, and with a "Thus saith the Lord" to depend upon, receives the truth on the authority of Him that reveals it, and at the same time, conscious of its inability to comprehend even the most common matters in their full extent, bows the intellect to submission to the scriptures, and admits, without gainsaying, whatever divine wisdom has revealed. It is one of Satan's masterpieces to induce men to take one truth of scripture, and to magnify its importance beyond all due bounds, and to exalt it not only above all other truths but to the utter exclusion of them, thus founding error upon truth, and heresies upon the sacred records. Socinianism takes the humanity and example of Christ, but leaves out

his divinity and atonement. Mysticism, perverting the indwelling of the Spirit, insists on the inward light, to the neglect of the work of Christ and the outward revelation. Antinomianism triumphs in free grace and justification by faith, but is negligent of good works; while self-righteousness is proud of good works to the neglect of faith. Rigid predestinarianism asserts the sovereignty of God to the subversion of man's freedom; while pelagianism boasts of man's own sufficiency, to the denial of God's decrees and human dependence. But a simple faith takes the whole word, and thus repels the wiles of the tempter. In like manner, when the temptation is to sinful indulgence, and when the father of lies urges all kinds of arguments, and furnishes all kinds of excuses for sin, such, for instance, as that it was committed by some of the scripture worthies; that it is but a little offence, or a common one; that repentance can soon follow it; that there is no perfection here; that it is a part of the conflict for us to be occasionally defeated; that it need not be repeated; then faith meets the whole, by this one declaration, "It is sin. God has forbidden it. How can I do this wickedness, and sin against the Lord? "Thus, as Christ himself overcame the tempter by quoting scripture, so does the believer.

Faith conquers Satan by laying hold of the promises of help and reward contained in the word. Paul was buffeted with a messenger from Satan. In his distress he knocked thrice at the door of heaven, and cried for help. All the answer he could get was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It was enough. With this he went to the conflict, and came off more than conqueror. And what was said to him, is said equally to

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us. With God's grace to help us, we need not fear the wicked one. We may seem little in his hands, but he is far less in the hands of God. The lion from the bottomless pit is nothing before the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He may be mighty, but he is not almighty; formidable, but he is not invincible. We have a promise not only of help, but of victory. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Though he come rampant and roaring, he will, if resisted, depart in shame and confusion. And then there are also promises of a rich and eternal reward. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." We shall soon put our foot upon the neck of this foe, and with the victor's crown upon our brow, exclaim, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And then faith leads to all other appropriate and incumbent duties. We should be much in prayer for divine help. When we are weak, then we are strong. Prayer for God's Spirit is a confession of our weakness, and a reliance upon God's mightiness. It is thus we take hold upon God's strength. What is the monster spirit of hell, to the Spirit of God? Be much in prayer, then, and let this be one of your special petitions, to be delivered from the power of Satan. We never feel so strong, we never are so strong, as when we are bowing down before the throne of God. Satan has little hope of the man whom he cannot draw away from his closet. He regards him in that refuge, as in an impregnable fortress.

The apostle exhorts us also “to be sober and vigilant, because our adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Sobriety means not merely a restraint upon our fleshly appetite, so as not to be intoxicated with strong drink, but a restraint also upon the lusts of the mind, so as not to have the soul intoxicated with the love of the world. Many a man has a drunken soul who never had a drunken body in his life. Beware of spiritual inebriety. Let us “take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.” What can an intoxicated man do against a roaring lion? He can neither fight nor flee. And we must add vigilance to sobriety. Watchfulness is an essential duty of the christian life; none is more necessary; none more frequently or more solemnly enjoined. Who that is asleep can defend himself against a lion? How cautiously, how circumspectly should we walk, if we were in a country where wild beasts were common, and saw the foot prints, and actually heard the roar of a lion. Such is our situation. See to it then, that ye do walk circumspectly: looking all round, watching every object, lest it conceal the enemy; your trials, your comforts, your occupations, your tastes, your pleasures, your thoughts, your desires, your besetting sins, and especially watch your hearts with all diligence. An unwatchful christian is sure to be an unsuccessful one.

To sum up all that I would inculcate on this awful subject, I would remark, it is a mysterious one, and we should not allow a restless and prurient curiosity to pry further into it than God has seen fit to reveal. It is a solemn one, and should never be spoken of

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lightly or irreverently. It is a scriptural one, and should not be viewed with scepticism and distrust.

We should never allow ourselves to throw the blame of our sins upon Satan, nor in the smallest degree plead the strength and subtlety of his temptations, as an excuse for our guilt in complying with them; for though he may entice, he cannot compel.

THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

IT has been customary to represent Christianity as consisting of doctrines to be believed, and duties to be performed. The doctrines of Scripture are facts, which involve corresponding emotions and principles of action, and must, if believed, be operative upon the heart and the life; so that if they exert no influence, carry with them no practical weight, exert no moral power, they are not really believed. They are at once the source of consolation, and the means of sanctification. They come into the mind as knowledge; they produce peace and love in the heart; and thus spread the beauties of holiness over the character and conduct. They are light; and like the rays of the sun, which at once support life in the root of the rose tree, and impart colour form and fragrance to the flower; and which sustain life in the root of the vine, and produce fruit on its branches, this heavenly light of truth gives spiritual vitality to the soul, and holy conduct to the life.

These remarks apply with singular propriety to the doctrine of the atonement made by Christ for sin. This sublime truth is misinterpreted by its opponents, and too little understood by its friends. It is proper,

therefore, your attention should be drawn to it, and that the subject should be familiarly explained. The usual mode of setting it forth by those who reject it is this: that God is a cruel, vindictive and implacable being, inexorably offended by the sin of man, thirsting for vengeance, and bent upon the destruction of the offender, till appeased in his fury by the blood of His Son. Unhappily, the injudicious representations and illustrations of some of its advocates, give too much countenance to this distorted view of the matter. Something may be conceded, I allow, to the licence of poetry; but it is to be regretted, that some of the hymns (such for instance as the 108th of the second book,) of our great favourite Dr. Watts, have tended to circulate false conceptions of the doctrine in question, and to sustain the objections which have been brought against it. The atonement is a scheme of God's own infinite love, devised by His omniscient wisdom, for saving our guilty world, in a way that would accord with the principles of perfect moral government, and thus enable Him to be as gloriously just to Himself, as He is gloriously merciful to us.

In order to see the truth in its proper light, the following things must be remembered and considered. God is not only the Father, but the Governor of the universe. His government of rational creatures is a moral government; that is, He rules them not by mere physical power, as He does inanimate and irrational creatures, but by motives, addressed to the understanding, will, and heart. His rule of government is the moral law, the authority of which He must sustain. As a perfect moral Governor, He is essentially and inflexibly just; that is, He must mark the commission

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of sin with His displeasure, and provide, even in the exercise of pardon, for the manifestation of His hatred of sin. Man has broken His law and exposed himself to the visitations of justice. God, in benevolence, pities the sinner, but if He pardon him, upon his mere repentance, how can He carry out the principles of moral government, sustain the authority of His law, be just to himself, and act out His nature and appear to be what He really is, holy, and a hater of sin? On the other hand, if all sinners are destroyed, how can He show His mercy? To meet this exigency is the design of atonement; that is, it is a scheme to save the sinner, and yet to glorify God in every view of His moral character and government.

You see at once, then, that instead of eclipsing the glory, or even dimming the lustre of Divine benevolence, the atonement is its noon-tide brightness, its meridian splendour, the full radiance and warmth of Divine eternal love. It is mercy so intent upon its redeeming work, as to be baffled by no difficulties, to be stopped by no hindrances; but by the aid of wisdom, carrying out her plans, at a cost and with sacrifices that will fill immensity with glory and eternity with praise.

“The word atonement signifies an amends, or satisfaction, for the omission of some duty, or the neglect of some fault. In some cases, occurring among men, this satisfaction may be made by the offender himself. In others, such for instance as where the person owes as absolutely every duty which he could afterwards perform, as he owed that, the non-performance of which constituted his fault, it must be made, if made at all, by another. No man can possibly offer future duty, as an atonement for the neglect of past duty; for what is owed for the future cannot be accepted in payment for a past debt. Consequently the sinner against God, by no future obedience, even though it were absolutely perfect, could make an amends, or an atonement for the past. Nor can repentance, however sincere and

pungent, make such amends. We see this in human courts of justice. If, therefore, any atonement be made for him, it must be vicariously done; that is, by the intervention of some third person between him and his justly offended God. An atonement, if it be made at all, must be equivalent to the offence committed; that is, it must be of sufficient value, morally considered, to repair the mischief done. It must leave the Divine Governor as just, his government as firm honourable and efficacious, his law as much respected and likely to be binding, as if the sin had never been committed, or as if all sinners had been punished in their own persons.”*

Here then we see the true nature and value of the atonement of Christ; it consisted of his consenting to die as the substitute of guilty man, in order that upon the sinner’s repentance and faith, he may be pardoned and saved, purely for the sake of what Jesus Christ did and suffered on his behalf. In consequence of the dignity of his person, his death was an equivalent, or a satisfaction sufficient to repair the injury done to the Divine government by man’s transgression. God appears no less holy or just; his government appears no less firm or honourable; his law appears no less binding and strict, now that sinners are pardoned for the sake of what Christ did and suffered, than they would have done had man never sinned, or had all men been destroyed. It will appear to every considerate mind, that the following things are essential to, and included in, the atonement of Christ.

Its Divine appointment: for God being the party offended, must himself say whether he will forgive at all, and how. Hence the care taken by our Lord in his personal ministry, to represent himself as sent by the Father, John iv. 31; v. 23, 26; vi. 44; vii. 16. So also the declaration of the apostle, Heb. v. 4, 5.

Christ’s own voluntary consent to it: for it would he

* This is clearly set forth at large in Dwight’s Theology.

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manifestly unjust to compel any one to become the substitute for another against his own will: hence the willingness of Christ to undertake our cause is shewn, Psa. xl. 6–8. Matt. xxvi. 39. Luke xii. 50. John x. 17, 18.

The human nature of Christ: for how else could he suffer and die? The atonement must be made in the nature that sinned, Psalm xl. 6–8. Heb. ii. 14–17.

The absolute and perfect purity of his humanity: for if he had any sins of his own to expiate, how could he expiate the sins of others? Hence the anxiety of the sacred writers to set forth his perfect innocence, and hence also the wonderful provision made by his miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin by the Holy Ghost.

Nor was this all that was necessary, for if he had been only man, we ask how could the sufferings and death of one mere man, make atonement for the sins of all men? How could the sacrifice of Christ, even though he were without sin, be as clear a demonstration of justice, as if the whole world of sinners had suffered in their own persons? There must be a proportion between the atonement itself, and the thing atoned for, and the ends to be accomplished by satisfaction; and hence the necessity also of the Divinity of Christ, to impart a consideration and moral value to the sufferings of his humanity. Deity of course could not suffer, but it could impart an infinite value to the sufferings of humanity mysteriously united with it. We cannot fail to observe how the sacred writers connect these two, his Divinity and his sacrifice, Phil. ii. 5–9. Col. i. 14–17. Heb. i. 3.

The atonement of Christ is thus seen to be not an

abstract, isolated doctrine, apart by itself and separated from others, but a great truth, that includes or implies all the other grand peculiarities of the christian system. I now bring forward the proofs of this doctrine. The texts that support it are so numerous that they must be arranged in classes.

1. Those passages which speak of Christ as a Propitiation for sin. Rom. iii. 24-26; 1 John ii. 2; 1 John iv. 10. A propitiation means something through or by which, an offended person shall be willing to be favourable to the offender; a something that will constitute a valid reason, and a determining motive for pardoning the transgressor. Christ's death is such a propitiation with God, and therefore an atonement.

2. Those which represent Christ as a Ransom for mankind. Matt. xx. 28; 1 Tim. ii. 6. The word ransom signifies a price paid for the deliverance of a captive from slavery or death. Such a ransom is the blood of Christ.

3. Those in which we are said to be redeemed by the blood of Christ. Col. i. 14; 1 Pet. i. 18-19; Rev. v. 9. The Redemption here spoken of is by price, not by power, and the blood of Christ is the price.

4. Those in which Christ is declared to be our Substitute; Isa. liii.; Dan. ix. 24-26; Rom. v. 6-8. In this latter passage the fact of Christ's substitution is not only asserted, but' illustrated by a reference to the act of one man's dying for, or in place of another. Now if, in the latter, the death means not only obtaining some general benefit for its object, but an actual substitution in his place, so it must in the other, unless the apostle has employed language calculated to mislead.

5. Those which speak of Christ's bearing our sins.

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John i. 29; 1 Pet. ii. 24; 1 John iii. 5. "To bear sin," and "take away sin," are sacrificial terms, and must be explained by reference to the Old Testament, where they certainly convey the idea of expiation.

6. Those which set forth Christ as dying for our sins, and washing us from our sins in his blood. 1 Cor. xv. 3; Gal. i. 4; Heb. i. 3; Rev. i. 5.

7. Those which tell us of our sins being forgiven for the sake of Christ's death. Acts xiii. 38; 1 John ii. 12; Ephes. iv. 32.

8. Those which declare that our reconciliation with God is effected by the death of Christ. Rom. v. 10-11; Ephes. ii. 13-17; Col. i. 12-22.

9. How frequently does the apostle assert the relation of Christ's death to the ceremonial law, as the great antitype of all the ancient sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jewish dispensation. This is the design of the whole epistle to the Hebrews. Compare especially chapter ix. with Leviticus xvi, and doubt, if it be possible, the fact of the atonement. The law is said to be a shadow of which Christ is the substance that reflects it. Col. ii. 17; Heb. x. 1. Now if words have any meaning, the law contained the principle of substitution and atonement, Lev. xvi.; and if so, as there can be nothing in the dark outline of the shadow but what corresponds to the substance that reflects it, the doctrine of atonement must of necessity be in the death of Christ, or the shadow answers not to the substance.

Lay all these things together, add up the force of such terms as propitiation, ransom, substitution, reconciliation, redemption, bearing sin, washing away sin; and is it possible to evade the conclusion, by any fair argument, that they mean atonement? If this idea be

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not intended, can any language be more likely to convey it?

“A writer of eminence,” says Dr. J. Pye Smith, “in the polite world, who knew extremely little of theological systems, but who, emerging from a careless infidelity, read the Scriptures with attention and good sense, has described with regard to our present subject, the effect produced upon his mind by such an unbiassed study of the sacred books. ‘That Christ suffered and died as an atonement for the sins of mankind is a doctrine so constantly and so strongly enforced through every part of the New Testament, that whosoever will seriously peruse those writings and deny that it is there, may with as much reason and truth, after reading the works of Thucydide» and Livy, assert that in them there is no mention made of any facts relative to the histories of Greece and Rome.’” Soame Jenyns’s *Internal Evidence of the Truth of Christianity*.

We are not to distinguish, as some have done, between Christ’s active and passive obedience, assigning one part of his work to the former, and another to the latter. There is, in fact, no such distinction. In his sufferings he was active, in his doings he was in one sense passive. His whole life was, in one sense passion, in another action. His agony in the garden when he sweat as it were great drops of blood, his various and complicated sufferings in the hall of Pilate, all entered into the awful reckoning with justice, and formed a part of the great propitiation. But still it was his crucifixion that constituted the substance of his expiation. This was the death, the offering up of the victim. All else, and all before this, was but introductory to it. Then the full weight of our sins was laid upon him: then it pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief: then the great and holy God made the soul of his Son a painful sacrifice for sin. I say his soul, for the sufferings of his body constituted only a small part of what the Saviour endured. The sufferings of his soul were

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the soul of his sufferings. This is evident from his agony in the garden, and his piercing outcry upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Who shall interpret that exclamation? Who shall tell us what it meant? Who shall conceive what the Saviour was then enduring? Who shall imagine what that awful eclipse of the Sun of righteousness included? The sufferings of Christ could not have been, either in kind or duration, altogether of the same nature as are endured by condemned sinners in a state of punishment. He had no consciousness of personal sin, no sense of deserved punishment on his own account, no remorse of conscience, no hopeless despair, no raging sin in his own soul, no malice and fury against the holy and blessed God. No such feelings as these, even in the slightest degree, could exist in the soul of the holy Jesus. He suffered only as a perfectly holy being could suffer. Still the sufferings of his soul were intense beyond our conception, from the sight and sense he had of the malignity of devils, the enormity of sin, the displeasure of God against transgression. He was not punished, but he bore our punishment. God was not angry with him, for he never loved him more than when he bowed his head and died; but a sense of God's displeasure filled his soul.

A question has been raised about the Extent of the atonement, whether Christ died for the sins of the whole world, or only for the sins of the elect. If this question is to be decided by the simple testimony of Scripture, instead of the evidence and force of systematic theology; it is easily settled; since it is said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ever-

lasting life.” He tasted “death for every man.” “He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John ii. 2. The value of the atonement of Christ does not arise merely from the nature or intensity of his sufferings, but from the dignity of his person, in consequence of which they are infinitely meritorious, and from this consideration alone, must be sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, though they are efficient only for the salvation of those who are given him by the Father. If the atonement of Christ be limited, the offer of mercy must be limited to those to whom this provision of mercy is made; and one should suppose that the ministers of the gospel must have a revelation from God, to know who are the elect that are to be invited to the gospel feast. Yet by looking into the word of God, we find that the gospel published by Christ, is said to be glad tidings unto all people. If the atonement of Christ be in no sense universal, there is a portion of the world, whom God has not loved, for whom no salvation is provided, and who cannot with truth be invited to Christ. But is this consistent with the testimony of Scripture, where the offers of mercy are made to all men?

Let it here be distinctly understood that atonement is not pardon, but only a means of pardon. Christ did not die for sinners in such a sense, as that all should be saved whether they repented and believed or not; but that all who truly repent, might be saved in a way that shall harmonise with the principles of moral government. From every idea we can form of the subject, the same atonement would have been necessary had not a thousandth part of the redeemed been saved, and no other

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would have been necessary had a thousand times as many been saved.

We see, then, in this subject, the specific and sublime design of the death of Christ: it was not to render God merciful, for he was so already; but it was to open a way by which he might show mercy to the sinner, and yet maintain the rights and manifest the glory of public justice. I say public justice, by which I mean that regard to the authority of law, which every good government exercises to preserve the public good, and the public honour of the whole community. This is beautifully set forth in that striking passage, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Here, in the compass of only two verses, it is thrice declared that justice is that attribute of God, for whose claim provision is so carefully and adequately made by the death of Christ. Had mercy been the only attribute of God to be consulted, it does not appear there had been any necessity for such a system as the mediation of our Lord; but as God is just, as well as merciful, the whole scheme was intended to show forth the glory of mercy and justice in perfect harmony. Here is accomplished the beautiful language of the Psalmist, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven."

Hold fast, my dear friends, this blessed truth, not merely as an article of your faith, but as the foundation

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of your hope, and the source of your richest consolation. Enter deeply into the apostle's words, "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." By the Scripture method of salvation, God parts not with a single glory of his nature or government when he pardons your blackest sins. He is glorified in all. He eclipses none of his attributes, he foregoes none of his rights, he sullies not his honour, in pardoning you; in the very act of justifying you the glory of his whole moral character streams forth before the universe. In that one act, he appears "the just God and the Saviour." Oh rejoice, rejoice in your safety in Christ. You are washed in his blood, and covered with his righteousness. This, this is experimental religion, to rejoice by faith in Christ; to feel the truth shedding peace over the spirit by calming all the perturbations of a heart agitated and alarmed by a sense of guilt, and a fear of punishment. With this truth understood, believed, and applied to the heart, you may live in peace, and you may die in peace. Every apprehension may subside before the cross, for there God is reconciled to you. The atonement which is the joy of the church on earth is the song of the church in heaven. The slain Lamb is the object of adoring wonder gratitude and love to the celestial hosts; the delectable mountains are vocal, and the plains of heaven ring with the shout of the palm-bearing multitude, crying "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who has redeemed us to God by his blood."

And then what a strong internal evidence of the truth of the christian religion is this sublime doctrine! It is the glorious peculiarity of the gospel that it provides not only for man's salvation, but for the manifesta-

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tions of the Divine glory. The principle of substitution, or the suffering and enjoyment of one person as the result of the conduct of another, pervades the whole of God's arrangement in reference to our world. Vicarious interference and agency are to be found sustained by the whole analogy of human affairs: thus does the scheme of our Lord's vicarious and atoning death seem to harmonise with all other departments of the Divine administration. Had the gospel been of human device, the mere offspring of imposture, would it have entered into the depraved soul of duplicity and deceit to make provision for the manifestation of the Divine glory? Would it have occurred to a mind wholly under the influence of sin to make provision for the shining forth of infinite holiness and justice? "Would not the selfishness of the human heart have been content with merely providing deliverance for man from the punishment of sin? But now, when the gospel scheme opens a way of pardon that rests on the very pillars of justice and truth which support the eternal throne of God's moral government, how clearly in this do we recognize the interposition of God himself? To me, the atonement, intended as it is, and sublimely accomplishing its intention, to open a way for the sinner's return to God, not upon the ruins of his justice, but through its golden gates, and to bring out in radiant glory before an admiring universe his moral character in its glorious completeness, is one of the strongest internal evidences of the truth of Divine Revelation.

But the atonement, while it is a source of comfort as a basis of hope to the sinner, is no less practical in its tendency than it is instructive and consolatory. Its whole purpose is to support the authority of the law, to

manifest the holiness and justice of God, and to display the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Nothing represents sin as so inexpressibly dreadful in itself, or conveys such a warning against it, as the expiation of it by the blood of the Son of God. Neither the flaming sword of the cherub which guarded the access to the tree of life, nor the waters of the deluge, nor the fires that consumed the cities of the plain, nor the destruction of the Jewish nation, nor war, pestilence, and famine, nor the horrors of the infernal pit, are so vivid an exposition of the evil nature of sin, and therefore not such an impressive caution against it, as the cross of Christ, when viewed as an altar on which our substitute made his soul an offering for sin. With what an emphasis does the language of the apostle sound from the cross, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Remember, that as in the death of Christ, viewed as an atonement for sin, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other, so must these virtues meet and shine forth in the character of those who profess to have received this doctrine by faith. That man practically denies and dishonours the atonement of Christ, whatever may be his profession, who violates the rules of truth, justice, or mercy.

DECLENSION IN RELIGION.

I HAVE lately met with an American tract, entitled, "Marks of Religious Declension," so peculiarly searching, setting forth the subject of declension in so many

varieties of manifestation, and withal so plain and simple, that I have determined to adopt it as the ground of my present address, and to accompany it with such remarks as may seem, in my own judgment, to be appropriate.

I am very anxious that you should read this address with unusual attention, seriousness, and devoutness of mind; that you would select some season of leisure and solitude for its perusal; and that the perusal should be accompanied by earnest supplication to God for the help of his Spirit to render it a blessing to your soul. Do not proceed till your heart has ascended, by the prayer of faith, to open the treasury of divine grace. It is a subject of unusual solemnity that is now to be brought under review; a matter of fearful importance. Declension! In what? Not in health, not in property, not in friends, not in worldly consequence or enjoyment, though as to these it is distressing, but in religion; in the highest, and deepest, and most enduring of all man's interests, the interests of his soul. Recollect, I am not going to speak of final apostacy, or open backsliding, but of that which, though it is at present far short of it, yet is the way to it. Declension means a state of mind and heart, rather than of outward conduct; or, at any rate, of conduct which does not come under the head of immorality; of conduct which does not subject a man to the discipline of the church, or to the reproach of the world; of conduct which neither in his own estimation, nor that of others, blasts his reputation, or casts off his profession, but which yet shows his religion to be gradually diminishing in its source, power, and operation.

What renders it of more consequence that you should read this address with anxious attention is the deceitfulness of the heart, by the duplicity of which, aided by

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the machinations of Satan, you may be woefully declining without suspecting it. Many a tradesman is ignorant of the retrograde course of his affairs, till some circumstances lead him to examine his stock and his books, when he finds, to his dismay, he is on the verge of ruin. I conjure you then to read these pages with a devout and inquisitive mind. With a mind really desirous and solicitous to know your true condition. As you go from one mark to another, pause, look inward, compare, inquire.

Your religion, then, is declining,

“When you are averse to religious conversation, and the company of serious heavenly minded christians; and enjoy yourself best with men of the world.

“When from preference, rather than necessity, you are often absent from weekly religious services, confine yourself to Sabbath meetings, are easily detained from them, and are ready at an excuse or pretext for such neglects.

“When there are certain duties which you are afraid to consider closely and seriously, lest your conscience rebuke past neglect, and insist on your fidelity now.

“When it is more your object, in going through with a duty, to pacify conscience than to honour Christ, obtain spiritual profit and growth in grace, or to do good to others.

“When you have an over-critical spirit respecting preaching; are dissatisfied with the manner, as inelegant, or too plain, or not intellectual, or not according to some favourite model; or with the matter, as too doctrinal, or too preceptive: or when you complain of it as too close, or are suspicious of personality.

“When you are more afraid of being accounted strict than of sinning against Christ by negligence in practice, and infidelity to ‘your Lord and Master.’

“When you have little fear of temptation, and can trifle with spiritual danger.

“When you have strong thirsting for the complacency of men of the world, and anxiety to know what they think or say of you, rather than whether you honour the Saviour in their sight; in short, are more occupied with the question, ‘What will men think of me?’ than ‘What does God see me to be?’

“When scandals to religion are more the subject of your censorious conversation with men, than of your secret grieving and prayer before God concerning them, and of your faithful endeavours for their removal.

“When you are more afraid to encounter the eye and the scorn of an offending man, by rebuking his sin, than of offending God, by neglect to rebuke him.

“When you calculate more carefully for the security of your worldly prosperity, than for that of your precious soul; are more bent on being rich than holy.

“When you cannot receive, patiently and humbly, deserved and kind reproof for faults; are unwilling to confess your faults, and in the habit of always justifying yourself.

“When you are impatient and unforbearing towards the frailties, misjudgments, and faults of others.

“When your reading of the Bible is formal, hasty, lesson-wise, or merely intellectual; and unattended with self-application, quickening to conscience, and gracious affections, increase of prayerfulness, watchfulness, readiness for every good work; or when you read almost any other book with more interest than the book of God.

“When you have more religion abroad and in public, than at home and in secret; are apparently fervent and elevated when ‘seen of men,’ but languid, cold, careless, when seen only in the family, or by God alone.

“When you call spiritual sloth and withdrawal from christian activity by the names of prudence and peaceableness, while sinners are going to destruction, and the church suffering declension; unmindful that prudence can be united with apostolic fidelity, and peaceableness with most anxious and diligent seeking of the salvation of souls.

“When, because there is fanaticism and false zeal abroad in the world, you will neither trust yourself, nor countenance in others, even that ‘fervency of spirit serving the Lord’ which Paul taught and practised.

“When you are, secretly, more gratified at the missteps and falls of some professor of another denomination, or at variance with you, than grieved for the wounds he inflicts upon Christ, and the hazard in which he places his own soul.

“When under chastisement of Providence, you think more of your sufferings than your deserts; and look more for relief than purification from sin.

“When you confess, but do not forsake, easily besetting sin.

“When you acknowledge, but still neglect, duty.

“When, for slight pretexts, or under slight temptations, any indeed, you step across the strict, straight lines of the divine law: for example, doing improper things on the Sabbath; not being exactly just in business transactions; swerving from strict veracity; and do such things without much shrinking of conscience.

“When your cheerfulness has more of the levity of the unregenerate, than of the holy joy of the son of God.

“When you live so little like a christian, that you are embarrassed and ashamed in attempting religious duties to, or in the presence of, men of the world.

“When you say in yourself, of this or that sin, ‘Is it not a little one?’ or, ‘The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing:’ and think so lightly of some sins,’ called small, that you are learning not to be much disturbed respecting some great ones.

“When the habit of neglecting some known duty is pleaded as an excuse for the neglect, instead of an aggravation of it, and a reason for deeper penitence.

“When you have so many worldly plans, and please yourself so much with success, that you are unwilling or afraid to think of death, and even of ‘departure to be with Christ;’ and in your daily manner of living say, ‘I would live here always.’

“When you think more of being saved by Christ, than of serving Christ: more of security of heaven, and the comfort and quietness of , such security, than of deliverance from sin, saving dying men, and thus honouring God.

“When you shut your eyes from self-examination, for fear of what you shall find in yourself to alarm you and shake your hope.

“When you lean on the opinion of others that you are a christian, instead of faithfully searching your heart and life, and comparing them with the ‘sure word,’ so that you may find scriptural evidences of your hope.

“When- you speak more frequently of declension in the church t[ian in your own heart; or talk of both more than you mourn and pray before God, and labour for a better state of things.

“When the worldly spirit, savour and cares of the week follow you farther into the sabbath than the spirit and savour of the sabbath follow you into the week.

“When you are easily induced to make your duty as a christian bend to your worldly interest.

“When you can be in frequent association with men of the world,

without solicitude lest they do your soul hurt, or you do theirs no good, or both.

“When, in your thoughts, reading, or conversation on religious subjects, your clearness of head, ingenuity, and justness of conclusions, far outgo your spirituality, and heartiness, and love to Christ and his gospel.

“When your orthodoxy is the most, or all there is, which is right in you; and when you contend more about its positions, and against the erroneous theories and opinions of men, than you strive for holiness, and fight against sin in yourself and in the world around you.

“When your zeal, instead of being ‘according to knowledge,’ is according to your pride and prejudice; and more occupied in censuring the coldness of others, than in affectionate endeavours to persuade them to do their duty, and quietly and humbly to do your own.

“When your activity in religion depends upon the excitement of occasions, and the peculiarity of means and measures; instead of being the fruit of steady, spiritual-minded, disinterested principle; and when you take more delight in the bustle of outward and popular religious movements, than in secret communion with God, and in duties in which you are retired from the notice of men.

“When you think more of ‘the mote in your brother’s eye,’ than of the ‘beam in your own.’

“When you find it difficult to tell wherein you are essentially different, as to your state of heart and habits of life, from what you were before you professed to be a christian.”

What a list! What a test! How searching! Whose heart can abide the scrutiny? Yet which of these marks can be disputed? Is there one of them that implies any thing which we ought not to be, and to do?

I have called these indications “marks of declension,” but in fact some of them may be considered evidences of an unconverted state, and should lead the reader to ask in deep solicitude, the solemn question, “Am I indeed a christian, or only a professor? Am I truly regenerated, or only outwardly called? Is my nature changed, or only my name? “Dear brethren, do, do urge this inquiry, and take care to what conclusion you

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come. Oh, if you should be deceived! And self-deception is fearfully common. Many are going in church-fellowship to perdition.

I am desirous to impress your mind with the idea, already suggested, that there may be a state of declension without our being sufficiently aware of the fact. There may be in some cases incipient disease in the body, the health may be declining, without any alarm, there may be a declining affection for an earthly object, without the heart being duly impressed with its growing alienation: but it is far more likely that this should be the case in spiritual things than in temporal ones. This was strikingly exemplified in the case of some of the Asiatic churches; not only in that of Laodicea, which was blinded with the most infatuated self-delusion, but also in that of Ephesus. Turn to the impressive epistle addressed to that ancient community, and learn how possible it is, amidst many and great excellences in some views of the christian character, to be defective and declining in others. "I know thy works," said the faithful and true witness, "and thy labour and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." What a eulogium! It seems as if scarcely anything were wanting to perfection. Who of us could expect such a testimony as this, or could hope for such commendation? Yet even here did the searching eye of the omniscient and holy Saviour discern defects, and expose declension. Yes, even in this beautiful flower he saw a blemish, in this rich ripe fruit, a worm, and incipient decay. For mark

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what follows: “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Oh, how instructive and impressive! How alarming! What a call to rigid self-examination! Amidst what seeming eminence of piety, and distinguished christian excellence, amidst what beauties of holiness, may not the fading tint and withering speck be seen by that eye which judgeth not as man judges! And if this may be the case in the more distinguished examples of professors, alas, alas, for those who have made but small attainments, and are lagging far behind the rest. What a reason, I repeat, for close, frequent, prayerful examination! What a motive to anxious self-jealousy! What a condemnation of that careless indifference, unwatchfulness, and easy self-confidence, in which many indulge.

And then I may observe again that many of these marks may be called rather marks of defective, than of declining religion. You were, perhaps, never otherwise than in the state which these indications set forth. Even though you have been converted, yet how partially are you sanctified! You cannot be said to have gone back from these things, for you have never attained thereunto. Declension from any given point of course supposes we have reached it. But have you ever reached the points herein stated, or rather herein supposed? How defective are some men’s notions of religion! How inadequate their conceptions of christian obligation! How narrow their range of christian duty! It is a great thing to be a christian, a difficult

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thing, a rare one. How much more rare, to be an eminent one! We are almost ready to say, "If all this be required, who then can be saved?" Do not mistake. Something more is required than a regular attendance on an evangelical ministry, an approbation of orthodox truth, an enjoyment of elegant or exciting sermons, a relish for experimental preaching, a perception of the importance of sound doctrine, and a zeal for the spread of the gospel. Take up these marks then as pointing out what you ought to be, and must endeavour to be. Adopt them as a rule of conduct. Regard them as marks of sad destitution, if not of declension. Say within yourself, and to yourself, "I see that my views of personal religion have been sadly defective. I have taken upon me the christian name without considering what it implies; and have assumed a profession of religion without duly estimating its obligations. I have too limited a rule and too low an aim. I must raise my standard and enlarge my scope; and by the help of the Spirit of God will do so."

You know, my dear friends, how solicitous I am that you, the professed followers of the Lamb, should follow him fully. That you should have a self-evidencing religion; as evident to yourselves as it is to others; and to others, as it is to yourselves. You may spend life in a .profitless, trembling, comfortless state. If a christian in reality, yet scarcely knowing it or enjoying the comfort of knowing it, you may live and die under the cloud of doubt, gloom, and fear, in which you will tempt the world to draw inferences against your christian character, or the religion you profess, or both. If, which is seriously possible, you are not really a christian, you run the fearful hazard of living, as I have

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already supposed, in ruinous self-deception, dying in your sins, and plunging from the visible church, into the lowest hell!

Say not that by such addresses, I am unnecessarily exciting your fears, and depriving you of christian comfort, and of joy and peace in believing. I know of no legitimate consolation which can be enjoyed in a state of declension. We must repent and do our first works, before we can be comforted. It is said of the ancient believers, that "they walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost;" and these two can no more be separated now than they were then. The very wish to be comforted in a state of declension is of itself a sad indication of a declining state. Our peace comes from faith in our atoning and interceding Saviour, but it ever comes with righteousness. I am not now directing you to your own evidences of grace, as a source of consolation under a sense of sin: it is only the blood of Christ that can heal a wounded conscience, or calm a troubled heart, but as professors of religion, we have no right to rejoice, in the absence of evidence that we have believed.

It is not my design, and will not, I hope, be the effect of my statements in this address, to increase the perplexities of the timid and doubting believer; or to draw him away from the peace-giving consolation of the Lord his Righteousness, to that anxious hunting after imperfections, and that self-tormenting disposition to write bitter things against himself, in which some indulge. By no means. Many doubt most their piety who have least occasion to doubt; while many, on the other hand, doubt it least, who have occasion to doubt it most. It is not perfection only that is the evidence of a

renewed heart, but a longing desire after it, a practical pursuit of it, and the endurance of nothing that is contrary to it.

But perhaps you are by this time desirous to know how to recover from a declining state. Be duly, that is deeply, impressed with the sinfulness, misery, and danger of such a condition. Do not excuse it, or consider it as a mere misfortune. Sincerely desire to recover the ground you have lost. Examine into the cause of your declension, and put it away. If it was a neglect of the word of God, resume the devout, spiritual, and constant perusal of the Scriptures. If it was a neglect of prayer, begin afresh this holy exercise. If it was the indulgence of heart-sin, mortify it. Be alarmed lest declension lead to open backsliding, and backsliding to final apostasy. One tends to the other. Confirmed apostasy begins at the heart. After all, I may remark, that the best way to recover from declension, as well as to keep from it, is to look more to a crucified Saviour. The cross is the sinner's hope, the believer's comfort, and the backslider's recovery. The first step of declension in religion, follows the first turn of the eye from Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. A life of holiness can only spring from a life of faith. The joy of the Lord, and in the Lord, is our strength. The more clear, and comprehensive, and delightful our view of the person, and offices, and work of Christ is, the more vigorously will the work of sanctification go forward.

Yes, my dear friends, I want you to be happy christians, as well as holy ones; and happy ones in order that you may be holy ones; as well as holy ones in order that you may be happy ones, for these things in-

fluence each other. It is my desire that all the consolation in Christ, and all the consolations of the Spirit may be yours. And oh! what springs of comfort are ever pouring forth their crystal streams to refresh you, from the attributes, relations, and providence of God; from the offices of Christ as your Prophet, Priest, and King; from the operations of the Holy Spirit; from the promises of the everlasting covenant; from the hope of glory, and the prospects of eternity. But you cannot enjoy even these consolations in a state of declension. Let the contemplation and belief of these stupendous realities raise you by the power of the Spirit from a low state of religion, and then let the rich enjoyment of them prevent you from again sinking into this deplorable and dangerous condition. "Wherefore be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die." "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And there is no other way to grow in grace, than by growing in the knowledge of Christ, or at least, all other ways without this will be essentially defective. The mere schooling of the law will not make a good disciple of Christ; there must also be the sweet, persuasive, and melting teaching of the gospel. For the athletic exercise of a vigorous and manly piety the soul must be nourished by a generous diet of spiritual consolation: and the reason why so many professors are lean and feeble, and their strength is in a declining state, is because if they have not been overworked, they have certainly been underfed. They have been sparingly, far too sparingly, supplied with the bread which cometh down from heaven, and the flesh of Christ which is meat indeed. Go afresh, dear brethren, to the cross of your Lord; there is no constraint like

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the love of Christ. May you rise from a low estate, and then continue in a high one, by the power of his resurrection.

Equally necessary is it to be much in prayer for the influence of the Holy Spirit. We are, it is true to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; but, at the same time, we are to be dependent upon Him that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. It is the power of the Spirit that can alone keep us from, or help us out of, a state of declension. It is his teaching that must show us the evil and the danger of such a condition, and affect our hearts with a sense of our painful situation. All our reflections, meditations, and resolutions, will be cold, heartless and uninfluential, till he gives them warmth, energy and power. It is his voice alone that will awaken our slumbering conscience, and his impulse alone that will move the heart. It is the hand of faith taking hold of God's strength, that can raise us out of our low condition. This, however, so far from excusing the past, shows the sinfulness of your conduct in neglecting the Divine assistance; and so far from warranting neglect for the future, is the greatest encouragement to exertion. Consider, therefore, how you have fallen. Be zealous and repent. Recover lost ground, and make up that which is wanting. Be this your prayer, "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

My dear friends, I now propose to lay before you the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's work in the regeneration

and sanctification of the human soul. Man by his fall brought a twofold evil of a most awful nature upon himself, guilt upon his conscience, and depravity into his heart; what therefore he needs for his salvation is pardon and sanctification. To obtain for him the former is the end of the mediation of Christ, while to produce the latter is the design of the work of the Spirit: and it is of great consequence accurately to distinguish between the work of Christ for us, and the work of the Spirit in us. Of what avail would it be to us that the Father loved us, and contrived a scheme for our redemption, or that the Son loved us, and executed that scheme, if no provision were made to apply the whole, as a system of restoration, to our depraved hearts. Man is blind in his judgment, and neither understands his need of salvation, nor the nature of the scheme by which he is to obtain it; he is obstinately set against all that is spiritual and holy, and full of enmity against God and his ways; hence the need of something more than a plan of reconciliation, I mean a power to fix his attention, to enlighten his mind, to subdue his aversion, to make him willing to accept the offer of mercy, and amidst all the temptations by which he is surrounded to hold him to the way of truth. This agency is provided in the office and work of the Holy Spirit.

The atonement of Christ having been accepted of God, and a way of intercourse, honourable to the Divine character and government, having been thus opened, the Spirit is poured out upon man, as one of the most blessed fruits of the mediation of the Saviour. This rich donative of celestial mercy is granted to our world entirely for the sake of our Lord's glorious sacrifice, and is therefore so much honour done to Christ.

The whole work of the Spirit, under the christian dispensation, comprehends his extraordinary and miraculous gifts granted and confined to the first age of Christianity for the confirmation of the truth, and his ordinary renewing and sanctifying influence continued through all ages, for the application of the truth in the regeneration and sanctification of believers; and in reading the New Testament, we must always bear this distinctly in remembrance, and inquire whether the sacred writer is treating of miraculous gifts or ordinary endowments.

In explaining the ordinary and continued work of the Spirit, I will briefly point out, first, what the Spirit's work does not imply. It does not then suppose, nor is it intended to supply, any deficiency in the atonement of Christ, since it is altogether for a different purpose: nor does it suppose, nor is it intended to supply, any deficiency in the word of God, for the word is as complete and sufficient as an instrument can be: nor does it suppose any weakness, inappropriateness, or want of adaptation in the ministry of the word, for the preaching of the cross is the power of God to salvation to them that believe: but it does imply, that the mind of man is so blind, his heart so worldly and wicked, that notwithstanding the boundless love of God, the perfection of Christ's atonement, the clearness of the word of truth, and the power of the christian ministry, he will not repent, believe, and obey, without the power of the Spirit operating upon his mind.

Consider next, in what the Spirit's work really consists. Not in imparting new natural faculties, but in rightly directing the exercises of those we already possess: not in, effecting any mechanical change in the

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physical essence of the soul, but in producing a moral change in its disposition: not in bestowing upon us natural power, but that which is moral. Metaphysicians and divines have distinguished between natural and moral inability, and the distinction is real, and exists in the very nature of things. Natural inability respects what a man has no power to do if he would; for instance, it exists in a blind man with respect to vision, he cannot see if he would: moral inability respects what a man would not do if he could, or what he has no inclination or disposition to do; and exists, for instance, in a man who hates a person he ought to love; he will not love him. Every body perceives that there is a difference between these two kinds of inability. Now the Spirit's work is not to give natural, but moral power; or, in other words, will, inclination, disposition. If men had no natural ability, they could not be guilty and responsible; but, having natural, though not moral, power, they are both guilty and responsible, for not repenting of sin, believing in Christ, and loving God. A cripple has no natural power to go and hear a sermon, and is not blameworthy for not going, for he has no natural power; but if any one come and preach to him in his house, he is guilty, and will be condemned, if he do not repent and believe; yet it is certain he will not repent and believe, unless the Spirit, which opened the heart of Lydia, shall dispose and enable him to do so. Nothing, however, prevents him from believing, but the depravity of his heart; nothing but what makes him guilty; nothing but that for which he is accountable to God, but still which the Spirit alone can remove. You have now as clear a view as I can present to you, in this short compass, of the work of the Spirit; it is a divine

power operating upon the mind, giving it clear and impressive views of the truth, taking away from the heart its natural aversion to the truth, and substituting love to the truth in its place, and inclining the will to embrace it.

The instrument employed by the Spirit in this great change, is the holy scripture, James i. 18; 1 Peter i. 22, 23. There is much that is mysterious in this subject, as our Lord intimated to Nicodemus; but amidst all this mystery we see much that is plain and intelligible. The truth reveals to the mind the objects to be loved and obeyed; the Spirit disposes the heart to embrace them. It is neither the Spirit without the truth, nor the truth without the Spirit; but the Spirit by the instrumentality of the truth, and the truth in the hands of the Spirit. It is not the Spirit in the word merely, but the Spirit with the word. Without the word there would be nothing to love; without the Spirit there would be no love. The word is the light which reveals the objects of spiritual affection; the Spirit gives the affection towards them. The Spirit's operating upon the heart, apart from the word, would only give an inclination, a disposition, without an object as its end and purpose. This view of the subject clears it of all difficulty and objection on the ground of irrationality and enthusiasm, as if it meant the setting up of another rule, standard, and light within, and spontaneous blind impulses, without any appropriate object to produce them, or any fixed rule to guide them. It treats us as rational creatures, and yet as sinful and wilfully blind ones: it does not extinguish our reason, but sanctifies and guides it: it calls us to exercise our faculties on their appropriate spiritual objects presented by revelation, and

gives us divine aid in so doing: it teaches us to unite diligence and dependence: it keeps us from the pride of self-sufficiency on the one hand, and from the despondency of unaided helplessness on the other: it preserves us from wild enthusiasm, and equally so from dead formalism; in short, it directs to the rule we are to go by, and furnishes the strength we need to follow it.

After all I must allow that much remains beyond our power to comprehend or explain. Can this be matter of surprise? How imperfectly do we understand what a finite spirit is, and how much less do we understand the Infinite Spirit? How then shall we be able entirely to comprehend the influence of the Divine upon the human mind? The fact is evident, however mysterious is the mode. If a man be a creature fallen, and totally corrupt, how can he renew himself? Can darkness originate light, corruption purity, evil good? If holiness come into our nature, it must come from without. To suppose that a heart totally depraved will reform itself, is not only to suppose an effect without a cause, but contrary to a cause. No: all evil is from ourselves, and all good is from God.

Search the scriptures, and see how every part and exercise of true religion is there ascribed to the Spirit of God. Illumination, Ephes. i. 17, 18; Regeneration, John i. 12; iii. 3-8; Sanctification, 1 Pet. i. 2; Consolation, Acts ix. 31; Help in all the weaknesses of the christian life, Rom. viii. 26; Direction in prayer, Rom. viii. 26; Habitual guidance, Rom. viii. 14; The witness to our adoption, Rom. viii. 16; Our sealing to the day of redemption, Ephes. v. 30; Production of all christian dispositions, Gal. v. 22; Ministerial success, 1 Cor. iii. 5-7. Is there a grace which is not

produced in us by the Spirit? Is there a duty we perform without being directed to his aid for assistance to discharge it? Are we not said to live in the Spirit, to have no spiritual existence, no actual being, apart from his gracious influence? He dwells in us and we in him, so that all the energies we exert, all the vital acts we perform, all the spiritual powers we put forth, are the result of his working in us.

Such then is the work of the Spirit, and it is, moreover, of great consequence to remember that his work is carried on by a direct process on individual minds. It is not a power coming down upon a collective mass, which relates only to the mass, but not to its individual and component parts. We can form no idea of the Spirit's work but as a direct work upon individual minds. The church is regenerated, sanctified, comforted, and preserved only by the calling, sanctification, and consolation of its individual members. And this influence of the Spirit comes upon the mind of man, through the channel of the truth, however that truth may be presented to the mind. It is the great object of the Romish policy to destroy as much as possible the christian's individuality, and make him a mere appendage to, instead of a part of, that mysterious and undefinable abstraction, the church. That presumptuous and dreadful system, (with Puseyism, its offspring,) has raised up and thrust something between man and God. It will not allow the fruits of the Saviour's mediation, or the influence of the Spirit to come to the soul, except through the additional medium of the church. It claims for its priests the power of bestowing the Spirit in baptism, in the eucharist, and in its other sacraments. How monstrous are its pretensions! How

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awfully presumptuous and arrogant its claims! God declares that it is by the truth the work of sanctification is carried on. Wherever the truth is understood and believed, there is the work of his Spirit; no matter whether the truth be read or heard; meditated upon in the closet, or listened to in the sanctuary; presented in sermons, or in sacraments; by laymen or by ministers; God's Spirit accompanies his own truth, goes with it into barns or into cathedrals; into the pulpits of learned doctors, or of unlettered missionaries. But this is denied practically by many: they want to confine the communication of the Spirit to the ministration of a certain class of men, and even to a certain part of their ministrations; they would hold back the atonement, and put forward the sacraments; extinguish, or at any rate bedim, the truth, and light up candles; veil the cross, and uncover the crucifix. They would have nothing drawn from the fountain of grace but by their official hands. They would make the whole work of regeneration and sanctification a matter of sacerdotal order and clerical administration. They would shut up the Spirit within their pale, and claim to be the sole dispensers of Divine grace. The plain and simple truth that God will pour out his Spirit upon every one who devoutly prays for it, and seeks it in reading the word, and hearing sermons, and striving against sin, and, longing to be holy, is mystified, obscured, and lost amidst their ambitious talk about sacramental grace and apostolical succession, and other like matters.

Be not deceived, dear brethren; God's Spirit is not thus confined or communicated. It comes down on every renewed and believing soul direct from God. It is not a gift of the church, or at the church's disposal,

nor conveyed through the church. It is true that many means are to be enjoyed in the fellowship of Christ's true churches upon which the blessing of Divine influence may descend, but the work of the Spirit neither begins in the church, nor by the church, nor is confined to it; nor does its communication depend upon the offices of the church's ministers: it is a Divine gift to the soul direct from God, the fountain of life; it is a separate bestowment upon each individual; and every holy soul, in its own individuality, is taken separately under the patronage, and guidance, and fostering care of the Divine Comforter. The oversight of a christian pastor, the ministrations of the sanctuary, and the vivifying power of sacraments and ordinances, may be blessed, and are much blessed, by the Holy Spirit, for carrying on the work of grace in the soul; but these are not the only means that are blessed by the Spirit, for there is reading, and prayer, and watching, and striving at home in the house; on all of which the Divine Agent pours his gracious energy, for he has established with every soul that is united by faith to Christ a direct channel of communication, which is independent of sacerdotal order and ministerial mediation. The work of grace in the soul is God's own work, and not man's; though to a certain extent he employs human instrumentality of various kinds.

A striking writer of the seventeenth century has thus set forth, in a passage of great beauty, the work of the Spirit in regeneration and sanctification.

"This which it is our duty to seek is our dignity to possess. It is the glory of a man in Christ that he hath a higher spirit than his own, no less than the Holy Spirit of God, in him. The Holy Spirit accommodates grace to every faculty, as the dew is white in the lily, and red in the rose, so the Holy Spirit in its graces, is light to the

mind, liberty in the will, order in the affections. Also it accommodates suitable influences to every grace, it gives such sweet touches upon their holy love, fear, meekness, patience, as makes them go forth into act in a free spontaneous manner; it acts so powerfully, as if there were no room left for human liberty, and yet so naturally, as if there were no power at all in it. Further, it accommodates itself to them at every turn; it is a Spirit of grace in their penitential meltings; a Spirit of supplication in their ardent devotion; a Spirit of revelation in their evangelical studies; a Spirit of love in their charities; a Spirit of power in their infirmities; a Spirit of fear in their holy walkings; a Spirit of meekness in their carriage towards others; a Spirit of comfort in their afflictions; a Spirit of glory in their reproaches; a Spirit of holiness in all their converses: it lives, breathes, moves, and aptly operates in them. Hence in all their good actions they are lifted up above themselves; and carried beyond the line of a mere human spirit; they walk in a divine circle from God as the first cause, to God as the last end; they centre on nothing less than God himself, and take no aim lower than his glory. This is an excellent privilege indeed, they are actuated by the Holy Spirit, and walk as Christ walked; they, as mystical parts of him, tread in his divine steps: no flesh on earth but that which is spiritually joined to him doth so: all others are off from the great centre; their best works putrefy; one inferior end or other, like a worm at the root, makes them moulder into nothing; not being terminated in God, they are not accepted as done to him." Polhill on Union with Christ, p. 222.

I shall now lay down some cautions touching this momentous doctrine, which it will be of importance for you to observe.

Be not staggered by your inability to comprehend how the Spirit acts upon your mind. Modes of operation are often inscrutable, where facts are obvious and indisputable. Our Lord admits the mysteriousness of this truth in his conversation with Nicodemus.

Do not attempt to discriminate at the time between the influence that comes from above and the operation of your own faculties, or of the word of God. There is nothing violent, nothing palpable, nothing ascertainable, either by the evidence of the senses or of consciousness,

at least, necessarily so, in this power, except as to its effects. The illapses of Divine influence are so gentle, so harmonious with all the working of our own mental faculties, as to insinuate themselves unperceived, at any rate in any other way than by their fruits, by the mind that is the subject of them. We may have just reason to believe we are wrought upon, without being able to discriminate between grace and our own mental acts.

Do not test the reality of the Spirit's work so much by the strength of emotion, as by the sanctity of affection and principle. The Spirit's work is not usually characterised by raptures or terrors. It is not in the storm or earthquake, but in the still small voice.

While admitting the sovereignty of this Divine gift, do not confound sovereignty with what is capricious and arbitrary. God giveth the Spirit to whom He will, but He wills to give it to all who seek it. It is an influence distinct from means, but not separate from them.

This leads me to say, do not expect the Spirit but in connection with means. In the first bestowment of the Spirit God is often found of them that seek Him not, but every subsequent communication must be obtained by believing prayer, watchfulness, diligence, and waiting.

Beware of slighting and grieving the Holy Spirit by neglecting His gracious motions, and by the indulgence of sinful affections.

Do not be satisfied with small and ordinary measures of Divine influence. God gives more grace. Any measure is attainable, if we have faith to seek and to receive it. "Open thy mouth wide," says God, "and I will fill it." "We are not straitened in him, but in ourselves."

We are not to wait, in matters of duty, till we feel

ourselves sensibly under the influence of the Spirit, but to enter upon obedience, expecting His gracious aid, we are not so much to wait for as to wait upon the Spirit.

Beware of making the experience of others, rather than the word of God, a criterion to judge of the work of the Spirit in yourselves.

In judging of the Spirit's incitement to duty trust not to the impulses of your own mind, however strong, without trying them by the word; the most phrenzied enthusiasm, and the most mischievous fanaticism, have resulted from a neglect of this caution. All the Spirit's work in the heart is in accordance with His own rules in the word. He cannot contradict Himself.

And now I shall close with a few directions.

Believe, feel, and practically acknowledge, your need of Divine influence. Let there be an abiding, humbling, influential sense of utter moral inability, of infantine weakness, and dependence.

Let there be habitual, earnest, believing, wrestling prayer for the Spirit, Matt. vii. 7-11. Pray sincerely, really desiring the Spirit, to whatever sacrifices, self-denial, mortification His coming shall lead.

Depend upon the Spirit. Do every thing in simple, childlike reliance upon His aid. Never venture out of His sight, nor take a step without laying hold of his hand by faith. Bead, hear, pray, watch, struggle in the Spirit. Yield yourselves up into the care, protection, and guidance of this Divine Agent.

Expect the Spirit in faith. He is promised. You live under a dispensation of abounding communicated grace. Look for the heavenly shower in its season.

Seek often sanctifying grace for all those precious fruits which form the christian temper adorn our

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character, and bless our species, and which the apostle thus enumerates: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Obtain and preserve the Spirit's witness to your adoption. Labour after this heart-cheering testimony to your Divine filiation, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Happy assurance! Blessed confidence!

Dwell my dear friends, on this glorious and delightful doctrine of the Spirit's work in believers, yield yourselves up into His hands to become His finished and exquisite workmanship. Implore Him to add another and another stroke and touch in producing the image of God in your souls. Beseech Him who formed Christ in the womb of the virgin by a supernatural overshadowing, to form Him in your heart, that you may be a miniature picture of Him who is the brightness of His Father's glory. Seek His blessed power to inspire obedience into you, that holiness may become in this sense natural to you, and all your duties be brought forth in the easy, healthful, and graceful walk of the new creature; that you may feel no confinement or constraint in the service of God, but walk, run, yea fly onward towards eternal happiness in the amplitude and liberty of your divine life.

Since it is by the instrumentality of the word of truth the Spirit carries on His work of grace in the soul, be diligent in the devout perusal of the Scriptures. It is when the mind is fixing the eye of contemplation on the objects of revelation, that the Comforter comes down into the heart. The word of God is the sword of

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the Spirit, by which He slays our corruptions, and the fire by which He purifies our souls. It is when we commune with God in His own book that illumination is diffused through our minds, sanctification through our heart, and comfort spreads over our whole soul. The Divine Author loves His production, and delights to bless those who study it. The Spirit-like Dove is ever hovering over these precious leaves, to reveal Himself to the humble and docile student of their contents. No wonder we have little of the Spirit when we seek Him not in the word.

Diligently follow up and improve all the gentle drawings and sweet persuasives of this Divine Sanctifier. When your mind is under his gracious impulse, “stretch every sail, launch forth into the deep of the Divine perfections and promises, and possess yourselves as much as possible of the fulness of God.” Be quick to discern his seasons of visitation, and skilful to turn to account all his various operations. Be deeply humbled that with such a Teacher you have learned so little, with such a Sanctifier you are no holier, and with such a Comforter no happier. Seek a livelier faith, a closer union with Christ, that you may have more of that influence which is ever flowing from the Head into all the members. Look to Him, that by his efficacious and rich anointings you may be enlightened when dark, quickened when dead, drawn when reluctant, strengthened when weak, sustained when falling, enlarged when in straits, comforted when sad. May this Divine Spirit be in you as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. If Israel could so joyfully sing to an earthly fountain, “Spring up, O well,” how should Christians joy in the fountain of grace, and say, “Flow out, O

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infinite well, let thy streams make us glad for ever and ever!”

“O Holy Ghost, the Comforter, come and dwell in our souls: make our bodies thy temple. Fill our minds with thy light, and our hearts with thy love, that over our whole character thy power may be seen in the beauties of holiness. May we all live as something sacred to thee, as well as perfected by thee. Come in all thy seven-fold energy, and replenish us with thy illuminating, comforting, sanctifying influence. Baptize us with celestial fire, and give us, in thy abundant grace, the earnest of glory everlasting. Amen.”

THE BENEDICTION.

I KNOW not any subject more appropriate, with which to close this series of pastoral addresses, than the apostolical benediction: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

Before I come to unfold, in few words, the import and the value of the blessings here invoked, I will dwell a little upon that great fundamental doctrine of revealed religion which is here expressed, I mean the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. We do not indeed meet with the word Trinity in Scripture, however frequently we meet with the doctrine which it designates. Some have scrupled the propriety of employing any terms in theology which are not used in the word of God. The objection however is in my opinion groundless, as the propriety of such expressions rests upon the same foundation as the use of general terms in all scientific investigations, namely, they are abbreviations of language to prevent circumlocution, and they serve as convenient instruments of thought. The doctrine of

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the Trinity means, the existence and union of three subsistences, or persons, in the unity of the Divine essence. It does not signify three Gods. There is, there can be, but one God. The unity of the Divine essence is the first article in religion, every where asserted in revelation, every where proved in nature. The threefold distinctions in the Divine essence we call, for want of a better term, persons, or subsistences. Here however it must be remembered, that since the term person, in ordinary use, denotes a distinct, whole, and separate being, so that three persons would mean three separate and complete individual men or women, we are to be cautious, when speaking of the three persons of the Godhead, not to conceive of such a plurality as implies three Gods. The term, as applied to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is used to signify that these appellations do not express a distinction that is only modal and official, or as exhibiting the same Divine Being under three different aspects, but that there are three subsistencies or real personal distinctions which have subsisted from eternity, and are essential to the nature of Deity. You observe, then, that the Trinity means that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not, on the one hand, three separate beings, natures, or essences; nor, on the other, only three modes of development of one and the same person. Not three Gods, but one: not one person, but three. Still, of the precise import of the term person, or, in other words, of the precise nature of the distinction which it expresses, I shall not presume to attempt to convey any clear conception. The Scriptures simply assure us of the fact, but of the mode of the fact they offer no explanation. And where the Bible is silent it becomes us to be silent also. All

attempts at illustration by analogy or comparison, are more than useless; and it is deeply to be regretted that any have been made. The moment we venture off the firm ground of Scripture, and push the inquiry to ascertain their modes of existence, we lose our way amidst thick darkness, plunge into the swamps of our own folly, and expose ourselves to the assaults of ridicule from our opponents.

The doctrine of the Trinity is confessedly incomprehensible by human reason, though the terms of the proposition which enunciates it may be intelligible; and where should mystery, using the term in a popular sense, be expected more than on the subject of the Divine nature? God himself, viewed in his simple unity, is an infinite mystery. There can be nothing more incomprehensible than God, in any view of his nature. Can it astonish us that we who cannot comprehend our own essence, or the essence of any thing else, should be unable to comprehend the essence and mode of existence of the infinite, eternal, necessarily self-existent, omnipresent Being?

“But for any thing we know or have a right to assume,” says Dr. J. P. Smith, “the combination of unity and plurality may be one of the unique properties of the Divine essence; a necessary part of that sole perfection which must include every real, every possible excellence, a circumstance peculiar to the Deity, and distinguishing the mode of his existence from that of the existence of all dependent beings.”

But it is not the mystery, but the supposed contradiction which is alleged against it. There is no contradiction. If we asserted that three are one, and one is three, in the same sense and respect, or that there are three Gods, and yet but one God, it must be admitted there would be a contradiction; but we assert no such

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thing. God is one in one sense, and three in another: one as to essence, three as to personality. God is one Being, and yet as one of the peculiarities of his transcendent greatness and excellence, he possesses a threefold manner of existence.

Dr. Dwight, in a sermon of vast research, and by an astonishing collection of testimonies, has shown, not only that this doctrine pervades the writings of the early Christian Fathers of the first centuries, but that traces of it are to be found through the works of the Jewish paraphrasts, commentators, and authors; and in the Hindoo, Persic, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Chinese, and Mexican triads, which he infers are imitations and corruptions of the Trinity of the Bible.

This great question however must be decided by the testimony of the Scriptures alone, as explained by the acknowledged methods of fair, honest, and rational interpretation.

If the doctrine is not explicitly revealed in the Old Testament, yet there are even there distinct, though dim intimations of it. How striking is the language of the venerable legislator of the Jews. In the Hebrew it is thus: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Gods is one Jehovah." Unity and plurality are here both asserted. Jehovah is represented as saying, in reference to the creation of man, "Let us make man in our image." And again, "Behold, the man is become as one of us!" To what other plurality can there be here a reference, but to that which exists in the Divine nature? Who can be associated with Deity in this plural pronoun?

Still, however, it is in the New Testament that this sublime truth is fully revealed. What else can we make of the formulary of baptism? "Baptizing them, in [or

into] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Can it be supposed that the true God would be associated, in this solemn initiatory rite of the christian dispensation, with a man, and an energy, attribute, or influence? So again, in the apostolic benediction, which is at the head of this address, and which to all intents and purposes is a prayer, did the apostle, in the same formulary, pray to God, to a man, and to an energy, attribute, or influence?

To the forgoing proofs of the doctrine of the Trinity in general, I might add others that sustain the Divine personality of the Son and of the Spirit. For the former I refer you to the address on "The mind of Christ;" and for the latter to the following passages of holy scripture. In support of the personality of the Spirit turn to those texts in which the acts and operations of personality are distinctly ascribed to him, John xiv. 16, 26; xvi. 7-14. Acts xiii. 2, 4; xv. 28; xvi. 6, 7; xx. 23; xxi. 11. I Cor. xii. 11. I Tim. iv. 1. Heb. iii. 7; ix. 8. Rev. ii. 7. These are only some of the passages in which the acts and operations of personality, such as willing, hearing, speaking, commanding, forbidding, approving, witnessing, etc., etc., are ascribed to the Spirit. These are all obviously personal acts, acts of an intelligent agent. Now turn to the following which are proofs of divinity. Matt. xii. 31, 32. Acts v. 3, 4, 9. Ephes. iv. 30. If then the Son and the Spirit be Divine Persons, as well as the Father, there is a Trinity, such as that which I have described. I again acknowledge its profound and inscrutable mysteriousness. Well may we exclaim, "Oh, the depth! Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It

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is high as heaven; what canst thou know? deeper[^]than hell; what canst thou do? “If there were no other use to be made of this truth, how humbling is it to human pride! “Vain man would be wise, though man be bora like a wild ass’s colt.” Here is a limit to the researches of his understanding, a depth he cannot sound, a height he cannot scale: and he is thus admonished to be humble, modest, and content”; and is taught, that as in many things he is required to submit his senses to the dominion of his reason, so in this, to submit his reason to the government of his faith. This is a truth which faith is to receive in silent, humble, adoring wonder, upon the testimony of revelation alone, and ingenuously to confess its inability to unfold the mystery.

And now, my dear friends, I return to the benediction itself, to show you something of the rich and incalculable blessings which it contains.

May the love of God, that is, the Father, be yours. Yours not only in that general sense in which he loves the world, but in the special “favour which he beareth to his people:” in all its rich, immense, infinite, and eternal benefits. Admire, as you well may, this love of God; that he should not satisfy himself with bestowing upon them little things, and temporal kindness, but should confer upon them all spiritual and eternal blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus: that he should love them not only for a while, but for ever and ever: that he should put forth for them the uttermost of his love. Oh, this is wonderful! Yes, he has gone to the uttermost in nothing but his love: he has never showed so much of his wisdom and power but he could show more; he could go on creating and multi-

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plying worlds to eternity, but his love cannot do more or greater things than he has done in giving us Christ, heaven, and himself. He has left his love no greater work to do, no richer developement to make. His love is inconceivable by all but himself. It has heights not to be scaled, depths not to be fathomed, breadths not to be measured, and lengths not to be traced: it passes knowledge. Oh, the greatness of God's love! Admire it, I say, and may you possess it, in itself, and in all its operations and provisions, in time, and through eternity. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be yours: that grace of which the apostle so beautifully writes, where he says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." That grace of which he speaks in another place by itself, as if it were of itself the sum of all spiritual blessings, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Who can imagine what this grace is in its spring and fountain in the heart of Jesus, and in all its streams in the work of redemption; how unsearchable, how free, how abundant, even to exceeding riches? Who can imagine what that grace must be, of which the stable and manger of Bethlehem, the life of humiliation and sorrow, the endurance of ceaseless contradiction and persecution, the agony and bloody sweat in the garden, the degradation and insults in the hall of Pilate, and the tormenting and accursed death of the cross, were but the fruits, expressions, and operations? What must be the grace itself, when these are only its outward workings! May this grace be yours. May you live in the heart of Jesus. May his favour compass you about as a shield. May all the blessed, and untold, and in-

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conceivable results of his mediation be your portion. And then you will be rich amidst the deepest poverty, safe amidst the most pressing danger, happy in the heaviest sorrow, great and honourable amidst the lowest obscurity.

May the communion of the Holy Spirit be yours. By this you are to understand, the participation and fruition of his all-enlightening, renewing, sanctifying, preserving influences. May you live in the Spirit by regeneration, and walk in the Spirit by sanctification: may you be habitually led by him: may he be your Counsellor and Comforter: may he dwell in you, as in his temple, and actuate you as the pervading soul of his body the church: may he help your infirmities, prompt your prayers, and make intercession for you, according to the will of God: may he fill your minds with light, your consciences with peace, your hearts with love, your lives with holiness: may he so shine upon his work in your souls, and so enable you to compare it with the description of his work in the word, as to witness to you in this manner clearly and assuredly that you are the children of God: may he, by his heavenly light, and love, and purity, and peace which he shall impart, be to you, and in you, as the earnest of heavenly bliss, and at the same mould and shape you as vessels which he is beforehand preparing for glory.

Thus is the whole Trinity concerned in the great work of your salvation. All originating in the love of the Father, executed by the grace of the Son, and applied by the power of the Spirit. Each Person performing his own part according to the arrangements in the eternal covenant of redemption, yet all concurring in the work of each.

What an important work, and how vast, is the salvation of lost sinners! All the Persons of the Godhead are concerned in it: the love of God the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Spirit. How vast a blessing must be the salvation which is thus accomplished, and is the fruit of such an astonishing and mysterious scheme! Who can conceive of it adequately, and tell all that is included in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory! If we are to estimate the greatness of the product by the means employed to work it out, what must be the glory, honour, and felicity which are to be the result of that scheme, which was devised by Omniscience from eternity, executed by the Son of God upon the cross, and which the Holy Spirit is poured out from on high to carry into effect in the heart of fallen, yet immortal man!

With what confidence may we wait for and expect the progress and consummation of our salvation. There are the eternal love of God, the all-sufficient grace of Christ, and the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit, to carry it forward to its completion. What cannot Eternal love, Infinite merit, and Almighty power do? We have mighty and restless enemies to oppose us, great and formidable obstacles to surmount; and if the consummation of the work of grace depended upon ourselves, or upon any human or angelic aid, we might well despair, and conclude our salvation to be impossible: but we have the Father, Son, and Spirit, on our side; we have infinite and inexhaustible resources of Divine wisdom, power, love, and truth, to rely upon. In view of this blessed subject, we may utter the apostle's bold, beautiful, and triumphant language, "Who shall separate us

from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” No: where there is no condemnation, there will be no separation. We may be separated from our friends, our property, our health, our home, our country, our life, but never, no never, from Christ. One thing, and that infinitely the most valuable and momentous thing, is sure to us in this world of vicissitudes, losses, and wrecks; the salvation of them that believe is as sure and safe as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can make it.

But recollect that we are called upon at the same time to exercise all those virtues and graces which, as renewed creatures, are obviously our duty. Our souls are, in the first instance, to believe and trust, then to rejoice, then to hope; but then also to watch and pray, to resist and struggle, to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. What blessed encouragement we have to do this, in the promises and engagements of a Triune God to carry on the good work of grace where it is begun, even until the day of Christ Jesus! You are fully warranted to expect this love of the Father, grace of the Son, and power of the Spirit. They are promised to them that believe, and ask, and seek. As God will not be mocked by you by false professions, so he will not mock you with false promises.

Call to recollection your baptismal covenant: you were baptised in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and thus bound to yield and consecrate yourselves to the worship, service, and cause of the ever-blessed Trinity; to seek the satisfying love of

the Father, the pardoning grace of the Son, and the renewing power of the Spirit. In that solemn hour, you were claimed for God, and set apart for him, and are thus solemnly bound to consider yourselves as belonging to him, and to seek by all means which he has put within your power the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. The whole Trinity claims you: each Person has an interest in you, and to each you are to surrender yourselves by an entire and appropriate consecration.

And I admonish you to give all the glory of your salvation to God! Love, grace, and free undeserved communication have done, and will do all. You stand now, and will stand to the end, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made you accepted in the beloved." Ye are saved by grace through faith. Grace chose, grace called, grace justified, grace sanctifies, and it is grace that must keep, you. Let no note be sounded more loudly, more frequently, more gratefully, or more joyfully, than that which at once lifts you high, and at the same time lays you low, grace, grace. It is by the grace of God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, we are what we are. Yet a little while and grace will be swallowed up in glory. Soon we shall emerge from the shades amidst which we are now walking into the regions of unclouded splendour, and fully possess the inheritance of the saints in light. There, as we bend around the throne of God, the fount of truth and life, we shall better understand than I can teach or you can now receive, the mystery of the divine nature, and see more clearly, though we shall never fully comprehend, the doctrine of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. Oh, blessed state! Oh, glorious abode! where the din

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of controversy shall be no more heard than the din of war, where ignorance and suspense will no longer exist, where all mistakes will be rectified, all doubts be removed; and that which is perfect being come, that which is in part shall be done away, and we shall know, even as we are known.

This is the last address of the series. There is something affecting and impressive in the last of the continuous efforts of any scheme of a minister's solicitude for the welfare of his flock. And the last effort, of the last scheme, must soon be made. It is well both for you and for me to bear in constant recollection this solemn fact. Time is ever rolling on, and carrying us upon its rapid and resistless torrent towards eternity; and the tribunal of Christ is being erected for us both. To that scene I often turn with anxiety, not altogether unmixed with hope of a gracious acceptance from the grace and condescension of my Divine and merciful Lord. I feel it to be a fearful thing to watch for souls; but oh, to give account of them! Brethren, pray for me, that what of life remains, whether it may be much or little, may be so spent, that when I meet my Master, it may be to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

At that same tribunal you too must stand, to account for every effort of my tongue, and every labour of my pen, for your spiritual and eternal welfare, and this among the rest. If I am ever to be of any service to you, it must be now, and not "in that day." Let me not see you then detected, despised and rejected as false and unworthy professors; let me not see you at the left hand of the Judge; let me not then be separated for ever from the friends in whose society I have lived, in

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whose houses I have prayed, to whom I have preached, and for whose benefit I have written. Let me not then aggravate, by my testimony, the condemnation I was so anxious to prevent, and aggravate it even by that very anxiety to avert it. You will then learn, if you never learn it before, that the ministry of the word is a talent of immense value and proportionate responsibility. What means of grace and opportunities of improvement does it involve in every case of pastoral fidelity! Oh! did you keep your eye upon the "great white throne," and upon Him that sits upon it, with the balances of the sanctuary in His hand, and the book of His account with each individual hearer of the gospel lying open before His eyes, would you hear sermons, and read the Bible and religious treatises with so much inattention and neglect? I tremble in anticipation of our interview at the bar of God. How shall I appear? How will you appear? Where shall we find ourselves? Oh, let us meet each other at the right hand of the Judge: let us spend our eternity together, in the same happy world, in the presence of the same glorious Saviour, and in the communion of the same ineffable felicity: let us go away in company from the judgment seat, with the song of cherubim and seraphim, into the mansions of glory! With what rapturous gratitude shall we there dwell upon our union in this world, as pastor and people! How sacred and sublime will be our intercourse! How transportingly shall we review the way in which the Lord our God has led us, and how wonderingly shall we recall the various schemes, and their benefits, then fully realized, of ministerial labour! How pure, will be our friendship, how perfect our love, how sublime our intercourse! To that scene I refer

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your faith and hope, your anxieties and your prayers, your contemplations and anticipations; and, in prospect of it myself, I pour forth again, as the object of all my pastoral labours, supplications, and solitudes, the prayer, which I breathe from the bottom of my soul, and which I shall never cease to breathe as long as I live, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen."

**PASTORAL INQUIRIES: A NEW YEAR'S
ADDRESS FOR 1847.**

MY Beloved Flock, As one appointed by God and yourselves to take the oversight of your spiritual interests, I desire to watch for your souls, as one that must give account. In the exercise of this solicitude, I have frequently employed the press as well as the pulpit to accomplish the great objects of my ministry, and to perfect that which is lacking in your faith. A printed new year's address from your pastor is no novelty. I now repeat that labour of love, assured that this effusion of a heart devoted to your welfare, will be no less welcome than those which you have already received. The lapse of time does not in the smallest degree impair the strength of my regard for you, or diminish the trembling anxiety I feel and cherish for your eternal salvation. The forty-second year of my pastorate finds me not only as zealous for your immortal interests as the first did, but far, far, more so. As time bears me onward to the great account, and as the bar before which

we must all appear is nearer, and becomes more distinctly visible, I am conscious of a continually deepening impression of the tremendous responsibility which attaches to the hearing of the gospel, and the still more tremendous responsibility of preaching it. We are now nearer by another year to the awful scrutiny of the last day, and are perhaps entering upon that annual portion of time in which we must be placed at the dread tribunal. A solemn reflection: may God impress it on our minds!

You are then commencing another of these divisions of your existence, setting out afresh on the journey to the grave, to eternity, to heaven or hell. What objects, what scenes, what destinies are before us! What are we going to witness, to be, to suffer, or to enjoy this year? How can we be otherwise than serious, reflective, inquisitive? With a pulse, on every beat of which hang all the means of grace, the opportunities of salvation, the prospects of eternity, and of which any beat may be the last, how can we be thoughtless and frivolous, or allow the festivities of the season to drown reflection in diversion?

I wish it were possible for me to enter the habitation of every one of you this new year's day: for then, after offering you my congratulations on the past and the present, and my best wishes for the future, I would put to every one of you the question addressed by Elisha to the Shunamitish female who came to him for the recovery of her dead child, "Is it well with thee?" 2 Kings iv. It is no improper accommodation to the purpose of this epistle which I now make of this fragment of one of the most beautiful of scripture narratives. In default of the living voice and speaking eye, this address, their

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best, their only substitute, says to each of you, "Is it well, is it well, with thee, is it?"

I make this inquiry not in reference to your bodies: I leave them to your physicians, though with best wishes for your health: not in reference to your temporal ' affairs; I refer them, though with desires for your sanctified prosperity, to yourselves, and to your lawyers. The question from my pen relates to your souls: those souls for which I labour, and watch, and pray; which you have entrusted to my care, and for the care of which I must give account. Is it then well with your souls? Are you entering upon another year in a good and healthy state as to them?

I. I shall present the question in a general form in reference to your religious profession as a whole.

In what state and condition as regards your religion are you setting forward afresh on the journey of life? Pause, ponder, and inquire. Religion is too momentous a concern to be left to itself without care, and without examination.

Is it well with you as regards your attachment to the doctrines of the evangelical system of revealed truth? You know what truths you have been taught, and are supposed to have received. You are professedly believers in the doctrines of the Trinity; the incarnation, sufferings, and death of Christ as an atonement for sin; the justification of the sinner in the sight of God by faith alone; the necessity of Divine influence for the regeneration and sanctification of the soul; and the Divine sovereignty in the salvation of man. I trust you are holding fast the form of sound words which you have been taught, and are not carried about by every wind of false doctrine, nor exchanging the funda-

mental verities of the truth as it is in Jesus, for the novelties of a vain and deceitful philosophy. I hope those great doctrines are still the substantial bread on which with hungry and healthy appetite you delight to feed. Any loss of relish for them, any hankering after novelties, any satisfaction in their absence, provided their place was supplied with the graces of composition, the fascinations of eloquence, and the music of oratory, would be a distressing symptom, and would liken you to the Israelites, who in the wilderness grew tired of the heavenly manna, and said, "our souls loathe this light bread." Much importance is attached in scripture to sound doctrine: one apostle commanded the primitive christians not to receive into their house those who went about propagating false doctrine, 2 John ii, 10: and another pronounced a fearful malediction on those who preached another gospel, Gal. i, 8. Disregard the charge of bigotry, set light by the scorn of philosophy, be content to bear the imputation of irrationalism. Cleave to the truths which converted you, which set up Christianity in the world, which effected the reformation from popery, which are now doing battle with the idolatry of all nations, and which are the professed religion of nearly all Christendom. Is there any declension of your interest in, or zeal for, these truths? I trust not. Be ever open to conviction, but do not suppose that nothing is settled as to doctrinal Christianity; or allow yourselves to believe that to doubt of the soundness of received opinions is the evidence of honest inquiry after truth.

2. Is it well with you as regards your pious and devotional feeling? Piety towards God is the first and most essential element of all true religion: there are, I know,

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other elements which this draws after it, with which it is always in combination, and which will be presently enumerated and considered; but this is the primary one, a devout mind. True religion is the exercise of right dispositions of mind towards God; the going forth of the soul to God; the communion of the spirit of man with the Spirit of God. Have you then an habitual, supreme, fervent, practical love to God; a love that leads you to meditate upon him, even as you meditate upon an absent object of your earthly regard; that makes you delight to approach him, to walk with him, to talk to him, as you do to a beloved friend; that makes you trust in him, obey him, glorify him? What say you, my dear friends, does the spirit of adoption beat high in your bosom, impelling you as by an irresistible impulse into his presence, with the cry of Abba, Father? And then as to Christ, do you consider it to be the cant of enthusiasm, or the expression of an intelligent, evangelical, experimental religion, to adopt the declaration of the apostle, "To them that believe he is precious?" Does the glory of the Saviour shine upon your soul with a growing brightness, or does that great moral luminary, though seen, appear to you as the sun in a mist, shorn of his beams? Do you ridicule, or court, spirituality of mind; denounce religious affections as enthusiasm, or consider them essential to all genuine piety? What is the state of your mind towards heaven? Is there any attractive power drawing you upward, keeping the world in check, producing in you the feeling of pilgrimage and absence from home? Are your affections set on things above? Are you looking for the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, unto eternal life? Are you waiting for his Son from heaven? Are you living and walking by

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faith? Does the hope of glory gladden you under the trials, and preserve you amidst the temptations, of life? Do you feel as if you had more in heaven than in earth, and belonged more to it? Is heaven the grand reality with you, and preparation for it your great business? Dear brethren, is it well with you in reference to these matters?

Permit me to ask, do you consider that your great business on earth is to prepare for heaven, and that time is given you to meeten for eternity? That your whole stay, and work, and concern here, are all of a probationary character? I am afraid this is forgotten by multitudes, perhaps by some of you. All the men in this world are upon trial for another state, in various situations, and amidst diversified advantages; but still every one is upon his trial. The trial is always and every where going on. Something eternal will grow out of every thing temporal; and something in heaven or hell will be realised from all that is done upon earth. Nothing is ultimate, final, or terminating here. God gives us this commission when he sends us upon earth, "Go and prepare for an eternity of bliss." What a commission! Now let me ask, Is this what you are living for?

Just see, my beloved friends, how this one consideration, if it were properly weighed, would bear upon the questions which sometimes come up about the lawfulness of many things, especially matters of diversion. We live in an age when much is said about recreation, and when all kinds of schemes are put forth for supplying it. Some of these are at best of a doubtful character for professing christians. There may be nothing positively immoral in them; nothing even bordering

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upon vice; nothing that would subject the person indulging in them to any imputation upon moral character; nothing but what the most chaste, just, amiable, and lovely individual may engage in, without the least injury to their social feelings: such for instance are many of the public musical entertainments which are so common in this day, and especially in this town; the conversaciones, the semi-dramatic performances, the promenades, the routs and dancing parties, and other matters of tasteful and elegant amusement. But there is another light in which these things should be viewed by us, and in which they are viewed by a truly pious, or at any rate, an eminently pious mind; and that is, how they bear upon our affections towards God, our spirituality, our heavenly-mindedness, our devotional feelings and character? How do they help or hinder us in the great trial, the moral probation, the momentous ordeal for eternity? Do they feed, strengthen, guard and defend the religious principle, or enfeeble and impoverish it? What bearing have they, (they must have some,) upon our immortal state? Does the spiritual life find any aliment or any poison in them? "But are christians," you reply, "to be debarred from all pleasures?" Certainly not: but only from such as are injurious to their present piety and their eternal felicity. And have they no pleasures? The scriptures speak of joy and peace in believing; "a peace that passeth understanding," "a joy unspeakable and full of glory." You profess to know something of this, and to have experienced "wisdom's ways to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be peace." And is it then for you to ask if the christian is to be debarred from all pleasure? Does not this running after worldly pleasures seem to say that you really know so

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little about your own appropriate and specific enjoyments as to be coveting those that belong to the world? Do you not often sing,

“I send the joys of earth away,
Away, ye tempters of the mind,
False as the smooth deceitful sea,
And empty as the whistling wind;”

and yet perhaps you are fond of them. It is hardly the way to convince the people of the world that you are made so entirely happy by your religion that you have no need to come in and partake of their delights, for them to see that your own are not enough to live upon. Besides, does not this craving after worldly pleasure look like a mistake about our condition in this world, and of God's design concerning us in sending us here? Spiritual improvement seems to be our great business on earth, with, I admit, as much of enjoyment, even of a general nature, as is compatible with it. God denies no man upon earth as much felicity as he can secure and enjoy, in subordination to the enjoyment of spiritual pleasures and an ever growing meetness to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; but still as there is an eternity of happiness in reserve for the righteous, an eternity of most pure and perfect felicity, which will certainly be enjoyed by those who are morally fit for it, and as certainly can never be possessed by those who have not that moral fitness, we should be very little anxious about worldly pleasures here, especially about such pleasures as have a doubtful influence upon our happiness beyond the grave. A christian is by profession, and ought to be in reality, in his views, feelings, tastes, pleasures and pursuits, training himself for the

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eternal state: one who says, I am living, hoping, preparing for immortality.

Connected with that element of religion, which I am now placing before you, I mean piety towards God, are the means which he himself has ordained for promoting it. These are private, domestic, and social: we cannot maintain piety without them, for in fact they are the expressions of it, as well as the means for promoting it. Is it well with you then as to your closet devotions? Do you make conscience of private prayer? Have you your regular seasons for individual secret devotion, and do you regularly keep them? If you are habitually neglecting this duty, or performing it merely in a formal, hurried, undevout manner, you cannot be in a healthful state of soul. Private prayer is the life and soul of piety. If you have closed the past year in a lukewarm state in reference to this duty, I must at once announce to you, that you are a backslider in heart from God, and have need to take alarm lest your secret declension should end in open sin. It is an awful description of character and conduct where it is said "He hath restrained prayer." And then, Is it well with you as to the public means of grace? Are your sabbaths kept holy, or is any part of them devoted to travelling or to business? What! a professor of religion seen at the railway station on a sabbath day, setting out on this world's business, with the men that know not God? Or if not thus desecrated, are your sabbaths improved as days of urgent business for the soul, or are they days of indolent repose, carnal feasting, and idle, frivolous conversation? Is your attendance at public worship regular, punctual and serious? Do I

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not miss some of you on sabbath evenings? You expect me to be in my pulpit both parts of the day, and I also may expect you to be both parts of the day in your pew. In a town like this, novelties and varieties of all kinds are continually presenting themselves to draw you away from your own place of worship, and the multiplication of churches, and other places of worship, in the outskirts of the town, adds another attraction by their contiguity to your dwellings, if you choose to yield to it, to keep you from your own minister. But it is a poor compliment to him to yield to these inducements. Let it be your aim and his comfort to have a steady congregation: a rambling one can be neither a credit to yourselves, nor a satisfaction to him. The first symptoms of decline in a congregation are to be seen in the falling off of the evening attendance; and when I see this it will be an intimation to me that I had better retire. At present I have comparatively little to complain of on this account. The week-day services are also of consequence. I am sorry that I have to complain of a want of proportion between the congregation at them and on the Lord's-days. They are not, that I am aware, less than they were, but with a continually augmenting church they ought to be greater. There are many who never attend either the week-day lecture, the prayer meeting, or the church meeting. Can it be well with such persons, unless they are kept away by great distance, or bad health? I do not believe any person's soul is in a good state who continually neglects these important meetings for want of inclination to attend them.

3. Another part of religion is Conscientiousness, a sincere desire a constant aim and an assiduous endea-

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your to do right. "An exercising ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and man." Religion has a great deal to do with the conscience; it gives not only truth to the judgment, and piety to the affections, but tenderness to the conscience. Whatever else is possessed, whatever knowledge of doctrine, whatever warmth of affection, if there be not an enlightened and sensitive conscience, a holy dread of doing wrong, and an earnest desire to do right, with deep penitential sorrow, and self condemnation for every thing done amiss, there cannot be true religion. Is it well with you in this respect? Do you feel a growing obtuseness, or a growing tenderness, of conscience? If you commit without reluctance even little sins at which you once trembled, it is ill with you; but if on the other hand, you are become more scrupulous than you were, and see that to be sin which did not formerly appear to be such, it is well. If your religion is in a prosperous condition, you will not only be rigidly moral in the great things of justice, truth, chastity, and mercy, but in the lesser ones. You will be known as persons who in their ways "abstain from the appearance of evil." You will be "zealous of good works/" and, by a blameless and harmless life, let your light shine before men. How is it with you, dear brethren? Are you commending religion by an uniform consistency, exhibiting its loveliness and beauty, its usefulness and happiness, or are you prejudicing others against it by your inconsistency? I do not ask you if you are immoral, for if you were you would not be in our communion; but are you conscientiously endeavouring not to injure the cause of religion by little sins, by shuffling, by artifice, by equivocation, by circum-

venting, by meanness, by ingratitude, by bad temper. In the body there may be eruptions on the skin which mar the beauty, though they do not destroy the features, and diseases in the blood which impair the health without extinguishing life; so it is with the soul. The little breaches of moral principle, and the minor exhibitions of unsanctified temper, of which so many are guilty, and think nothing about it, are exceedingly injurious to the credit of religion.

4. A last element in religion is Love to man; the Charity spoken of in the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. Is it well with you in reference to this? Malice, envy, wrath, revenge, are as truly forbidden as injustice and adultery. A man can no more be a christian who is wholly under the dominion of the former, than he can be a christian if he practises the latter. It is as truly our duty to love our neighbour as ourselves, as it is to love God. To make others happy around us is a part of our religion, and a great part of it too. Selfishness is sin. Bad temper is sin. He who by a petulant, waspish, sullen, passionate, revengeful disposition, is ever making his family, his acquaintance, or those who deal with him, miserable, is a most imperfect christian, if indeed he can be a christian at all. Is it well with you as to your temper?

Among the exercises and manifestations of love Mercy to the miserable sustains a high place. An unmerciful christian is as great a contradiction as an unchaste one. Our whole religion is a religion of mercy: in the way of fact and doctrine it is a display of God's mercy to man, and in the way of duty of man's mercy to his fellows. "If God so loved us," says the apostle when speaking of the gift of His Son to be

our propitiation, "we ought also to love one another." While another apostle denies the christian character of him who dispenses not his property for the welfare of his fellow creatures: "If any man have this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Oh ye that are daily crying for mercy unto God, and feel that if God shew you no mercy, yea if He do not continually show mercy to you, you are utterly and eternally lost, how can ye expect, how ever ask for this exercise of the Divine nature to you, if you do not adopt it as a pattern, and exhibit it as the attribute of your own nature? "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." He shall have judgment without mercy who showeth no mercy. Mercy is the glory of the Divine Being, the brightest jewel in His crown of majesty, and it must be one of the most distinguished excellences of the christian character. Think, beloved friends, of the numbers in your own town, who need the exercise of your charity, especially at this season of the year. Think of the starving Irish. How can ye indulge in all the luxuries of this festive season, and forget the multitudes to whom the parings of your potatoes would be a comfort, and the broken victuals of your feasts an exquisite luxury. Just before I penned these lines, I received the following note from one of my hearers: "Dear Sir, As I feel assured that you must know in your pastoral office a number of very poor persons to whom a shilling or two would prove acceptable, I take the liberty of troubling you with two pounds, and shall esteem it a favour by your dispensing it to any person that you may know in need of pecuniary assistance." This is mercy,

a mercy that thinks of the wants and woes of others, feels for them, and waits not to be asked for pity and beneficence, but is beforehand with its relief. This is what is wanted, the exercise of individual, spontaneous, and cheerful giving, without being satisfied to wait for public collections, and then to give as little as possible to them. Is it well with you as to this duty? Is your covetousness, or your liberality, on the increase? You live in an age of religious and humane exertion. The calls upon your liberality are frequent, urgent, and increasing. Do you feel this a calamity and a hardship, or a privilege and a pleasure? While enlarging your personal expenses, are you contracting your beneficence? Are your luxuries paid for out of the savings of your charity? "To do good, then, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." You say you want pleasure; seek it like your Master in going about doing good. Imitate in this respect the Society of Friends, who are never found in places of worldly amusement, but always in scenes of want and woe. How many meals to starving families the expense of one public amusement will furnish. You are christians zealous for the salvation of the world, and the glory of Christ: then grudge no money spent for such objects in reason. Is it well with you then as regards your liberality?

5. A last element of religion is Love to the brethren as such; there must be brother-love, as well as neighbour love: a love to all who love Christ and are loved by Him, because they love Christ, and are loved by Him. How much is said about this brother-love in the New Testament. It is the law of Christ, the identifying mark of discipleship, the evidence of regeneration, the

inseparable concomitant of faith. Are you cherishing this disposition? Do your hearts go forth to the disciples of Christ, to all the disciples of Christ?

Do you drink deeply into the spirit of the apostle when he says, “grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity? If it be enough to engage your affections for an individual, that he is a genuine believer, a child of God, without wanting to know of what denomination he is a member; and if it be no check to your love to know that he is of a different denomination to your own, you have brother-love; and if you love those most who have most of the image of God and the mind of Christ, though they differ from you in minor matters, you have much love. Is then bigotry or charity rising into the ascendant in your heart? Is it your church, or the church you love best?

Is it then well with you in all these respects? Here are topics of examination, matter for self inquisition, subjects for inward scrutiny, take them up, apply them to your own heart and conduct. Set apart the afternoon of the first sabbath in the year to the work of solemn examination by this test.

II. But I now go on to give this enquiry a special bearing on your various relations and circumstances.

Is it well with you, as Heads of Families, in the religious state of your households? God has placed you over a little community of immortal souls, of which you are, in a modified sense, prophets, priests, and kings. These souls you are to teach both by precept and example, and to commend to God by sincere and earnest prayer. For those souls you are accountable to God, and God will require them at your hand. How are you discharging your duties, as the christian parent and master?

Is family prayer kept up with constancy, punctuality, seriousness, and fervency, or has it degenerated into a mere form, perfunctorily observed, without devotion, unction, or reverence? Are you really and in earnest training up your children for God? It is a solemn thing to be a parent, and to have souls committed to your care. It is the frequently expressed wish of professedly christian parents that their children may become truly pious; they pray at their family devotions, and at our meetings for social prayer, that this may be the case; and they lament when it is otherwise. But in many cases there is a most deplorable and obvious contrariety between their prayers and their practice: there is nothing in their whole system of domestic polity that looks like a wish or a design that their children should become true christians. Their children see just enough of religion to inspire a disgust with it, and no more. One of my members, speaking to a child of a professor about religion, received this answer, "How can I love religion, and look at my father." What a fearful idea! A professor exciting in his own child an inveterate prejudice against religion by his misconduct, and yet that parent, perhaps, prayed for, and with, his children! It is not difficult to conceive with what insufferable disgust some children must listen to their father's prayers, and some servants to those of their masters. The wonder with me is, how some parents and masters can carry on family prayer at all; that they are not ashamed to call their families together to witness their hypocrisy. Think of a parent praying in the morning at family devotion for the conversion of his children to God, and then in the evening taking them to some gay scene of worldly amusement. What do the children of some professors

see of religion in the way of consistent, holy example, hear of religion in the way of judicious and earnest instruction, persuasion, and warning, feel of religion in the way of holy and affectionate influence? A radical and fatal error has gone abroad in these days of evangelical preaching, and spread over the whole church of Christ, that the pulpit is almost the only means of conversion. That it is the great means for this none can deny. But in respect to whom? In respect to the children not of the godly, but of the ungodly. Preaching was never designed to subvert or supplant family instruction, nor the sermon to substitute the lessons of parental instruction. Preaching is God's ordinance for the conversion of those without, domestic instruction is equally his ordinance for the conversion of the children of those within. Parents cannot devolve their duty upon pastors, and must not send their children to the sermon or the sanctuary, or to the Bible class in the vestry, to have that done for their children which they ought to do themselves at home. We should look for the church of God to be built up in great part from the families of its members, and it would be so built up if those members did their duty. Nothing must set aside the domestic constitution. Why is the good old way of domestic catechetical instruction left off? This is one thing in which modern professors of religion fall short of former ones. Baxter tells us that in passing through the streets of Kidderminster, when the scene of his labours, between the public services of the Sabbath, the ears of the pious listener would be greeted on each side, and at every step, with the voice of family prayer, praise or instruction. And had that visitor lifted up the latch of the door, and obtruded upon those

hallowed scenes of domestic piety and bliss, he would have beheld the saintly father in the centre of the circle, with patriarchal grace, and his Bible open before him, leading the devotion, or promoting the knowledge of that happy group; and with his beloved and loving wife, first smiling upon their children with holy love, and then looking up with faith and hope to that heaven to which they were conducting them. Blessed scenes of former days, whither and why have ye fled! Return again to our families, and let us see one of the first and most certain indications of the revival of the spirit of intense and consistent religion.

To Mothers, in an especial manner, the formation of the religious character of the children is, under God, entrusted. A pious, judicious mother, whose heart is set on the religious character of her children; who studies to prepare herself for this momentous duty by reading and meditation; who begins early, and carries on her work steadily and conscientiously, will usually see the blessed fruit of her labours in a pious circle of sons and daughters. In the hope of stimulating this class to their duty, and aiding them in it, I have, as you know, commenced a series of meetings with them, which I intend to continue.

Is it well with you as Christian Tradesmen? Are you conducting your business on the moral principles of the New Testament, and diligently practising whatsoever things are just, and honest, and true, and pure, and lovely, and of good report: letting your religion shine forth in all your transactions with your fellow-men: and thus establishing your reputation as an upright, honourable, and generous tradesman? Religion is an element that is to be incorporated with every thing; it

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must be seen in the shop and the warehouse, writing "holiness to the Lord," on the very merchandise. If your light is to shine before men, and they are to see your good works, you must take especial care that your religion is eminently conspicuous in those parts of your conduct that fall under their observation. Now they cannot see you in your closet or at your family altar, but they can see you in your shop, and in your counting house, and they can tell whether you are true, and just, and honourable, and generous, in your business; and they know that the same religion which commands you to love and worship God, commands you also to love your neighbour, and to behave towards him with all justice, truth, honour and kindness. Trade is the test of your profession, and alas, how many modern professors fail in the application of this touch-stone.

Is it well with you in all the Social Relations? Does your religion make you better husbands and wives; parents and children; brothers and sisters; masters and servants? If your piety does not strengthen and sanctify, and soften at the same time, all the social ties, it is not of the right kind, or not in the right degree.

Is it well with you as Church Members? You are in the fellowship of a christian society; are you answering the ends of fellowship, giving out and receiving a beneficial influence? No man who joins a community of any kind, civil or sacred, ought to be indifferent to its welfare. By his junction with it he comes under a tacit obligation to promote its interests. How are you conducting yourself towards the church of which you are a member? Is your heart given to the church, and do you feel at home with it? Do you pray for its peace, and seek after its harmony, watching in your own spirit

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and in others against every thing which would break its concord? Are you a brother among brothers; with a brother's heart, and a brother's tongue and head? Are you constant at the Lord's Supper, and the Church meetings; a useful member of the community; in every sense a man of love and peace; active, without being obtrusive; and busy, without being officious?

Is it well with you as regards the temper of your mind in reference to the Providential Circumstances in which you are placed? God has prospered you in business, are you thankful, spiritual, humble, liberal? Are you anxious to make your prosperity contribute to God's glory, your own growth in grace, and the good of others; or are you only elated with the thought of greater wealth and grandeur? Sanctified prosperity is a high attainment in piety: so is sanctified adversity. Perhaps you have been called to suffer affliction. Can you say, "It is well: all well: quite well?" Do you bear your troubles with the meekness of true submission, glorifying God in the fires, and become more and more holy and heavenly, even as the gold is purified from its dross, and shines brighter in the furnace?

Is it well with you, my valued friends the Deacons? Are you men full of wisdom and the Holy Ghost; patterns of all good things to the church; denying yourselves, and sacrificing your own tastes for the sake of example, and acting upon the principle of the apostle, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient;" separating yourselves from the spirit of the world; devoting yourselves by spirituality, heavenly-mindedness, zeal, humility, and tender compassion, to the good of the church; remembering that it is a solemn and most responsible thing to bear office in the church

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of Christ, and ever seeking so to conduct yourselves that when you meet the Master you may hear Him say to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?"

Most readily do I grant you permission to return the question, and ask the Pastor, "Is it well with you: are you watching for souls as one that must give account; making full proof of your ministry; labouring in word and doctrine; preaching the word, being instant in season and out of season; reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all long suffering and doctrine; a pattern to believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity? Is it well with you in the closet, in the study, in the pulpit, in all the departments of pastoral action?" Would God I could answer unhesitatingly, and sincerely, and thankfully, "It is well." Deeply, most deeply sensible am I of far more defects than you see, and most humbly do I confess them to God and my church, gratefully acknowledging the kindness and forbearance which I receive from both. Of one thing I am as certain as I am of my existence, that I never desired more ardently than I do now, to be found faithful.

Having thus gone through the various classes of the church, and placed the question to each, I may apply this test in another way, and ask. Is it as well with you as it has been in times that are past? Compare your present selves with your former selves. Look back and see whether there have not been periods in your history when it was better with you than it is now; when your soul was in greater prosperity, and in stronger health. If so, to you the Lord Jesus is saying as He did to the church of Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember there-

fore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." Do not, I conjure you, be content to remain in a state of declension and backsliding of heart from God. Do not be satisfied with acknowledging you are going back, or even lamenting it. Ineffectual complaints and indolent confessions are alas! too common. With the new year, let there be a new course of life; a fresh dedication of yourselves to God; and with penitence for the past, let there be a renewed vigour for the future.

Is it as well with you as you wish it to be? It is a fearful thing in religion to be satisfied with present attainments, to be careless about improvement. Even the holiest have ample room left for improvement. The blessed apostle Paul reached forward after more grace. Self-satisfaction is a dark sign, a fearful indication. He who is content with what grace he has gives evidence he has none.

Is it as well with you as it is with others that you know? Are there not many who have no other, no better advantages than you, who are outstripping you in the heavenly race: exhibiting far more of the christian spirit, temper, and consistency? How much more in earnest they are than you, how much more constant and diligent in their attendance upon ordinances, liberal with their property, humble in their minds, or submissive in their afflictions! Do not envy, but emulate their zeal, imitate their conduct. Be thankful for their example, and copy it into your own character.

These particulars are numerous, but they are all of them important, and all of them appropriate. How

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wide is the circle of christian duty! How great, and arduous, and difficult a thing is it to live as a christian, but at the same time how blessed an one! What watchfulness and prayer, what dependence upon the aid of the Holy Spirit, and what solicitous and believing supplication for this help to our infirmities, are indispensable. You need the exceeding greatness of God's power, working mightily in you to carry you forward, and you may have it. The christian life is life in earnest: and it is a living and walking in the Spirit.

I am jealous of the word profession, and am afraid that with many it means a certain point gained in religion which releases from all further obligation. You have joined the church: and this is your profession. You have been received, and thus accredited, as a christian; and perhaps in too many instances are indolently reposing upon your profession, which is considered to be your goal, and not your starting point. Your religion is viewed by you rather as a state, than a series of acts. Your profession has acted rather as a sedative than a stimulant: it has cradled you into a state of repose, rather than brought you into a state of exertion. And since the time you entered the fellowship of the faithful you have some of you been more like persons under the power of an opiate, than like those who are wide awake in the attitude of service, having their loins girded about, and their lamps burning. I want to see you like men upon the stretch for salvation, laying aside every weight, and the sin which most easily besets you, and running with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. I am anxious to see you bringing all your faculties into the mighty service of your soul's welfare, and acting like

those who are pressed by a constant and great urgency, in a way beset with many obstacles, through which there is no hope of making progress, but by the forth-putting of all their strength, and employing all their expedients. In short, I want you to be delivered from the danger which lurks under that word, profession, and would rather you would consider yourselves practitioners than professors. As christians you have always something to do, something the doing of which stands connected with your eternal salvation. Begin this year, and each day of the year, with the question, What shall I do? and end it with the enquiry, What have I done, and what have I left undone?

And now, my dear friends, let me urge you to consecrate yourselves afresh to God at the commencement of another year. Begin the year with a clear knowledge, a frank admission, a penitential sense, and a deep impression, of your past deficiencies; you cannot supply them, if you do not know them, and will not improve if you do not know in what amendment is desirable. Dare to know yourselves, and even the worst of yourselves. Guard against self-deception, and the deception of others. Place yourselves under the searching eye of God's omniscience, and the scrutiny of an enlightened and faithful conscience. Enquire what we have to do this year, collectively as a church, which we have not done before, for God and our fellow-creatures, for the church and the world. Ask what more, what better, we can do for the cause of truth, holiness and happiness. We are a large body, though not a rich one. We have energy enough, property enough, and influence enough, for doing much; do we employ all as we should, to do much in the way of zeal,

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liberality and humanity? Our mercies are numerous and great. We owe God a very large debt of gratitude for our peace and prosperity. May we never forget that to whom much is given from them much will be required. But we must not merge our individuality in our social organization. Let each say, What more, or better, does God call me to this year, what neglected duty to perform, or what sinful practice to put away? To what am I summoned by the voice of Providence and conscience? "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth: what wilt thou have me to do? Show me the path of duty, and I will go in the strength of the Lord." In this frame let us set out afresh on the journey of life.

In this frame we shall be prepared for the close of life: and to many of you the close will be sure to come this year. Between twenty and thirty of our number have finished their course during the past year. Many of you will never receive another New Year's Address: the decree is gone forth concerning you, "This year thou shalt die." The great and awful change is to be for you among the events of the year. How solemn and impressive the idea! Let each say, "Lord, is it I?" Be ye ready. Live so as to die happy, and then you will die so as to live happy for ever. Consider your end; there is no wisdom in endeavouring to forget what is inevitable: the wisdom lies in remembering it, and preparing for it. Dwell upon your mortality: dwell still more upon your immortality. The grave apart from immortality is a dark and gloomy object, but viewed in the light of that it is radiant with glory. Live near to God and walk with him, and then the love of life will diminish, and the fear of death will depart. A consistent christian is always and every where in a

state to die: He needs no ministerial functions, no ceremonial observances, no devotional process; in the midst of his business, if the summons come to him there, as well as in the sanctuary, or in the closet of devotion, he may say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Be holy then and fear nothing. Put your trust in God, and in this state of mind venture forward, as you well may, into the dark and unknown future. What is concealed in the cloud before you none can tell, nor ought you to be anxious to know. It is enough that it is all known to God. Come from that cloud what will, poverty, sickness, the loss of friends, or death itself, you, if trusting in God, and glorifying Christ, may in the confidence of faith calmly say "It is well."

As it is probable this Address may fall into the hands of some who have made no profession, and are therefore not members, I would most solemnly put the question to all such, "Is it well with you?" How can it possibly be well, while you are unconnected with the church of Christ, and thus living in the open neglect of our Lord's positive command, and closing the year, in this particular at least, in open and manifest rebellion against him? Do ask why this is. Do inquire whether it is not the indication of a heart still alienated from God, a mind indifferent to religion, a soul not yet in the way to life. Your husbands or wives, your parents or children, your brothers or sisters, are going to heaven, and perhaps you are not going with them, and are thus drawing nearer and nearer, every year, to the point of eternal separation. Awful idea! Is it so? Are you beginning another year, an enemy to God, and entering upon another year's journey, to perdition? How can

you bear the idea of living only to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? If all my previous invitations, expostulations, and warnings have been in vain, may this New Year's Address be blessed by God's Spirit to lead you, on this day, to devote yourselves to his service: then may you take the comfort of these blessed words, "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with them."

**NEW YEAR'S PASTORAL ADDRESS
FOR 1849.**

MY beloved Flock, I have sufficient confidence in your affection and respect to believe that another New Year's Address from your pastor will be received with the deference and welcome which you have ever given to his counsels and admonitions.

The strange and changeful aspect of the world around us, and the internal condition of the church of Christ at large equally demand attention, and furnish subjects for meditation and inquiry to all thoughtful and serious minds. In times when God seems to be coming out of his place to perform some of the greatest wonders of his providential government, it does not become us to turn away our eyes from his doings, nor to be indifferent spectators of his wondrous ways. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." And it is mentioned as one of the marks of the irreligious, that "they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands." There is a medium to be observed between an inquisitive curiosity to pry into things not revealed, and a sullen, atheistical

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indifference to such as are. I am anxious you should avoid both extremes, and that with an attentive and devout notice of what is passing around you, there should be combined in your state of mind, a holy and conscientious solicitude to know what is the duty of professing christians in such eventful times as those in which we live; and how best to combine the christian and the politician.

What a year has just closed upon us! Did the most sagacious observer of the political horizon, the most accurate calculator of the tendencies of events, the most profound interpreter of the signs of the times, anticipate a year ago the convulsions and the revolutions which, like a political earthquake, have shaken the continent of Europe? It is said, and said truly, that coming events cast their shadows before them. If this were true in reference to the events of the past year, men were so occupied that the shadows were unnoticed. A check has been thus imposed upon the disposition to speculate on the history of the future events; and the most prescient and far-seeing are taught to be humble, and at the same time to be cautious in delivering their predictions. Yet notwithstanding this, every one is saying, "What will the end be of these things?" and thus the very events which stimulate the inquiry, seem to show how fruitless it is.

Of all men the christian has the greatest reason, and in some respects the greatest proneness, to endeavour to penetrate into the dark unknown of futurity, to unravel the present mysteries of Providence, and to anticipate the things that are to be. Hope is the element in which he breathes, expectation is the habit of his life; and besides, inasmuch as an earnest longing for the highest

welfare of all men every where is his passion, no great movement among the nations can take place which does not mightily stimulate the long cherished and often disappointed belief that a bright day is close at hand for the world. "Now at least," he says, at every great turn in the world's history, "shall that new order of things take its commencement, under which whatever is heavenly shall prevail over whatever is earthly." Yes, besides the question asked by his patriotism, "How shall it fare with my own country?" there is another of deeper solicitude and wider comprehension, "How shall it fare with that better kingdom which shall never be removed?" He then of all men can be least disposed to look with indifference on passing events.

I do not know that I could more profitably occupy your time and attention for a little while, before I come to that part of this address which will bear more directly upon the matters of your own church, and of your own individual religion, than to point out in what manner, and with what views and feelings a christian should survey the political changes which are taking place in this extraordinary age. I need scarcely say that he ought in all these things to recognize the hand of God. If not a sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father, how much less can we imagine that without the same interposition of divine wisdom and directive agency a monarch can be deposed, a throne subverted, and a kingdom revolutionized. This is set beyond conjecture, for it is the united testimony of all parts of revelation, that, "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and that his kingdom ruleth over all." So that while contemplating the scenes over which the whirlwind has swept, we hear, or might hear, the distinct articu-

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lations of a divine voice saying to us, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth." Cherish then a most devout and intelligent conviction that all is of God. Even those who ordinarily are not prone to recognize the hand of God in human affairs, are constrained to admit that these events are so extraordinary as to be accounted for only on the supposition of providential interference. God is in all history, as well as in all nature, and it becomes you to follow his footsteps, and see his workings with reverential awe, in the one department of his operation, as well as in the other. In the contemplation of these events, rise from the region of politics into the element of religion, from the passions of men to the work of God, from the operation of principles which are the proximate cause to the plans of the Governor of the universe, and to the influence of the great First Cause. Ascend from link to link till you reach that last link which connects the whole chain with the throne of the Eternal. Be devout politicians. Look at all that is taking place through the medium of Scripture. In following the track of revolution, feel as if you saw the pillar of cloud and of fire before you, and heard the voice coming from the pavilion of darkness, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Intelligently observe the kingdoms, their history and moral condition, in which these great revolutions have taken place. And which are they? France, Austria, Italy, Naples, Sicily; countries which are the very "seat of the Beast," spoken of in the book of the Apocalypse, where infidelity and popery have shared the dominion and governed the people. How truly wonderful that Rome, the secular and spiritual centre of popery; Rome,

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containing the throne of the Pope as a secular prince, and the head of the Roman Catholic religion; Rome, where it might have been supposed the last spark of religious liberty, and every desire after it, had long since been trodden out by the heel of ecclesiastical tyranny, that this city, the very mausoleum of civil and religious freedom, should be the seat of a revolution which will in all probability end in the deposition of the Pope as a temporal sovereign. While I write this he is a fugitive from Rome, and what may be his future destiny, and the system of which he is the head, is all unknown. In Prance the great mass of the people seem not only to be without spiritual religion, but almost without a susceptibility for it. Where in any of the countries which have been visited with the revolutionary spirit, except Prussia, is there the practice of the word of God, or even its possession by the people; where is there aught that looks like a recognition of the gospel of Christ, except as it is seen in the forms of a blind and effete superstition? And what a low state of morals do we find all over the continent? Is it any wonder that God should say, "Shall I not be avenged upon such a nation as this?" Do we not see the retribution of his justice upon the rulers of such countries in casting them down from thrones which they have occupied to so little advantage to the nations they have misgoverned? And though no doubt in the end these events will be conducive to the welfare of the people, yet in the mean time what misery is endured, what blood has been shed, what financial difficulty incurred, what destruction of property occasioned, what myriads have been ruined, what embarrassments have been brought on trade, what establishments have been broken up! Why is all this, and what is it, but the

manifestation of God's righteous displeasure against iniquity?

Still it becomes us to mark in all this the operation of principles, which however destructive in the outbreak of their power, will no doubt be over-ruled in the end for the good of the nations. The records of inspiration do not sanction tyranny and oppression in rulers, any more than anarchy and rebellion in subjects. The Bible is at once the basis and the guardian of all rights, and the enemy of all wrongs; it inspires the love of liberty, and prescribes the best method of obtaining and preserving it; and therefore it is a legitimate exercise of christian principle to rejoice in the downfall of whatever, by destroying the liberties, abridges the happiness of mankind. No doubt the revolutions of the continent of Europe are the rising of nations long oppressed by tyranny; the efforts of vast masses to throw off the yokes that have long enslaved them. In countries where the liberty of the press is unknown, where the people are not represented in the government, and where all the means of rousing, forming, embodying, and expressing public opinion are wanting, reform can come only in the way of revolution; liberty is heralded in by the trumpet of civil war; and the sun of tyranny usually sets in blood. In looking upon the scenes which are, and have been going on across the channel, we may not be, and are not, able yet to determine whether for the present all may not end in military despotism; yet we may be very sure that ultimately constitutional liberty, whatever defeats and disappointments it may have for awhile to sustain, must be victorious. It came forward at first in too frantic, boisterous, and savage a form, to be the

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mild and beneficent spirit which shall rule over the destinies of nations. It requires, perhaps, a discipline, a probation, a humiliation, before it can do all that it may be expected to accomplish. It may be yet kept in the furnace of trial, but it will assuredly come out at length purified from its dross. There is no doubt that much alloy of infidelity is mixed up with it at present. It is impossible to know the state of parties in France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, and Prussia, without seeing this. It is, in many cases, liberty associated with downright atheism; but it will find out presently that it can be safe only in the guardianship of Christianity, and it will then part company with infidelity, as from a ruffian, who though he has slain its oppressor, may next turn his arms against itself. It is a wonderful thing that already in several parts of the continent, the press is free, and there is liberty of speech. But here we must be upon our guard not to expect too much from this; we must not imagine that if the nations of Europe had all the liberty of our own happy island, their conversion to God would be the immediate result. Much would be gained which in time would be turned to the best account; but in the new order of things, many objects for a while would so engross the public mind, and absorb the national feeling, as to operate with a far greater force than religion. "Religious liberty is indeed an incalculable boon when granted to a people among whom religious feeling pent up has intensely yearned for it; but is this the case any where between the shores of the Atlantic and the deserts of Siberia? In France, Austria, Italy and Spain, it would be something like the unloosing a corpse, the knocking off iron chains from a marble statue." Let

us then moderate our expectations as to the amount of liberty that will be granted, and the degree of beneficial result that will follow the emancipation of the conscience. Popery will and must in the end fall before it, and irreligion be subverted: but this may not be so near as many people expect. The new constitution of France discovers little advance in the way of intelligence upon the old regime: and the theory of the republic is but a small improvement upon that of the monarchy.

Perhaps in connection with this state of things abroad, we find it impossible not to look at the state of our own country, which presents in almost every point a delightful contrast to the nations of the continent. True, we have felt the tremors of the earthquake, and have not been without some apprehension from its vibrations: and Ireland presents an object of appalling anxiety, but now, through God's goodness, rather on account of its physical and social, than its political condition: so that we can be far from entire repose on this account. Still let us rejoice and give God thanks for our safety. There at anchor, having outlived the storm, floats our noble vessel, while those of other countries are still buffeted with the wind, or struggling among the breakers. Yet the question sometimes arises, "How will it be with us? Shall we still continue in security?" For my own part, I expect no catastrophe here: no breaking up of existing institutions by violence. We have much infidelity, but the great mass of the educated population are attached, by profession at least, to the principles and institutes of religion: we have some portion of socialism, but less than we once had, and to this not only the higher and middle classes, but the better educated portion of our operatives are opposed: we have

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some republicanism, but the nation at heart is monarchical. Changes, though not organic ones, will, and should take place. Reform knows, and ought to know, no finality: but this will be effected by the silent progress of opinion: light will come over the land, revealing not only evils to be removed, but the best mode of removing them. It is, of course, impossible for us to say what revolutions God may suffer to come over us, but so far as we can argue from our condition, our habits, and our present tendencies, there is no great reason to apprehend any convulsion similar to those which have happened in other countries. Nations which have liberty to reform, have no need of revolution; and revolutions when they do take place any where are rather the result of necessity than of choice. A well governed people can have no motive, and therefore no wish for revolution.

It is of great importance, my dear friends, both for the honour of your religion, and the knowledge of your duty, that you as professing christians should ever bear in recollection the weight and influence which the Bible must have in all these changes which are ever going on in the structure of the social fabric. I do not mean that we are to look to the Bible for theories of government, but for the principles which are to direct those that govern, and those that are governed. If all the people of a country were under the influence of that blessed book, the outward form of the government would be a matter of little consequence, for they would be peaceful and happy under any system in which constitutional liberty was enjoyed, whether monarchical, aristocratic, or republican. What we want is the spirit and the principles of the Bible permeating the mass of society,

and this will render it plastic to the hand of civil government only for good. All the principles of good government and national prosperity are in the Bible.

“What then is needed is not that revelation should be brought in to supersede the functions of civil society; far from it. Legislative wisdom, and statesman-like ability, and practical good sense, would continue to devise, to digest, and to elaborate the measures best to be adopted; and then these measures having been assented to and approved, Bible force would come in to carry them through, sweeping away irresistibly all opposition of class selfishness and prejudice. When once Bible power has by any such social crisis been brought to bear in an open manner upon national interests: when once this sign of the Son of Man has thus been seen in the political heavens, then shall this same power be seen to be taking effect in a thousand instances that were not at first thought of.”

The same writer, in his valuable paper, shews that in addition to the several developments of Christianity that have been made, at the time of the Reformation, the revival of religion by Whitfield and Wesley, and the missionary enterprise, there must now be a fourth which he denominates the dispensation of justice, the economy of right. Christianity has displayed itself beautifully as a system of mercy, wiping away the tears, and healing the wounds of a weeping and bleeding world; but it is as a religion not simply of mercy, but of justice also, that it can rectify the evils, consolidate the strength, establish the order, and promote the comfort of society. It is surprising to see how conspicuous a place the administration of justice, the concession of right, bears on the page of Scripture. Now this will be the crowning triumph, the finished glory of Messiah's kingdom, when through the prevalence of his religion, the throne of justice, and the law of righteousness, shall every where be established. It is the last, most difficult, and most glorious dispensation of grace:

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for men will in many cases sooner pity the sorrows, relieve the wants, and remove the wretchedness, of society, than concede their rights.

What is it that has occasioned the bloodshed and convulsions of the late revolutions, what is it that has shaken all the thrones of Europe, and involved so many countries in the terrors of civil strife, but this want of justice, and this denial of rights? Let our country then learn wisdom, and be foremost in bringing on peaceably, but certainly, the reign of social and political right. Let there be a deeply fixed hatred of wrong. Let us be forward in promoting whatever is right between man and man, between the governor and the governed. Before this principle slavery all over the world would retire abashed, confounded, and destroyed, the relation and the compact between master and servant would be equitably adjusted and peacefully maintained, without oppression on the one part, or injurious combination on the other, political enfranchisement would move onward with equal pace to the growing intelligence and virtue of the community, the inequalities and chasms which yet remain in the theory and administration of law would be removed and filled up, the stream of commerce and of secular business in general would flow onward with equable and gentle movement in its deep channel, confidence would take the place of suspicion; the upper would no longer look down with contempt upon the lower classes of society, nor the lower orders look up to those above them with hatred and dread; in short, society would settle with firmness and steadiness upon its basis, and would fear no political earthquake, no revolutionary convulsions. Let it be our desire, our prayer, and our endeavour, each in his sphere, that this

reign of righteousness may commence; and then in this case as in every other, "the work of righteousness will be peace, and the fruit of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

I know that many of you will be ready to think how little it is that you can do to bring on this blessed era, when the Bible and the church of Christ shall have their due influence on worldly society, and when the throne of universal rectitude shall be established, and its sceptre be stretched over all people. But is not the church the salt of the earth? Is it not this holy community that is to regenerate the world, not so much by political agitation as by individual example? And are not you a member of that church? Do not think meanly of the power of the church; it is God's instrument, yea, it is the dwelling place of Omnipotence. God is in this church as a Spirit of power. The Lord her God in the midst of her is mighty: and let her only know her privilege, and do her duty, and hers would be the honour of reforming society. If every member of every different branch of the church did his duty, we should soon see the proof of the moral power of the church. Let us only take up the idea that the power of the church lies not in forms of government or in ceremonial observances, but in the principles of truth and holiness, and righteousness and mercy, of which she is the embodiment and promulgator; and in addition, let us all individually cultivate these principles to the uttermost, and we should be astonished to find what a fountain of moral influence the church would prove to the world. Let the church of God only possess and carry out to a full extent all the principles which are comprehended in its profession, and it shall realise in its

beneficent influence upon the world the language of the prophet in reference to the Jews: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men."

I now go on, my dear flock, to another part of the design of this address, which is to speak of the need of a revival of religion; for if the church of Christ is to exert a powerful moral influence on society, it must itself be in a high state of spiritual vitality and energy. The church of God never wanted religion more, or wanted more religion, for the great work God has given it to do, and the opportunities it has of doing it, than at the present time, and yet never in modern times was in danger of having less. The church has to mould society at home, and to convert the world abroad; it has to give the moral character to the times, and thus direct in no inconsiderable measure the current of national affairs, and at the same time to change the religion of the globe; and for such work, so noble, so momentous, and so difficult, what ought to be her condition; how mighty in faith, in prayer, in holiness! But is she ready for such service? Alas, alas, how easy and how true the answer! The work of conversion among sinners and of sanctification among saints, every where goes on slowly. The ministers of every denomination are unitedly uttering one sorrowful complaint, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" and yours, my friends, among the rest. Yes, we too partake of the general lethargy: we too have to lament, not so much a want of numbers in attendance upon the ministry, as a want of its success.

The spirit of the world has eaten into the core of our piety; the fruits of righteousness are shrivelled, and the green leaf of our profession is withered. Nor ought it to satisfy us that we are no worse than our neighbours. Shall we continue in this state, and rest contented with our present condition? Or shall we seek a revival? Another year is opening upon us, and shall we not make the inquiry, "What shall be done?"

Permit me to call your attention to one matter which lies at the root of all that is important in the church or in the world, which is essential to all right action, which must lead to all improvement, and which must precede every revival; and that is, the obligation of individual effort. Individuality is forgotten, and combined action is almost exclusively thought of. In every organization the individual is likely to merge himself in the multitude, and to forget his duty in that of the many. This is especially the danger of christians in this day. We live in an age not only of great cities, but of great societies. It is the era of combinations, the reign of the associative principle. Our very religion is in danger of losing its individual character; the pulpit, the platform, and the meetings for public business, are calling us away too much from our closet, and our heart, and we are too little alone with ourselves, or with our God. We need warning, and caution, and direction, on this head. We require to be called more out of the social circle into the solitary retreat. Personal godliness cannot flourish and grow if it be always kept in public. It requires the seclusion of the closet, the stillness of meditation, the scrutiny of introspection. It is not like a blade of grass, or an ear of corn, which may do very well by the general attention which is paid by the

farmer to the whole field, but which requires no individual attention; but it is like a delicate hot-house plant, which requires the gardener's especial care to inspect its state, to cleanse it of insects, to give it water, and to keep up the warmth of the air.

This then, dear friends, is my admonition to you, "Look to yourselves:" each one to himself. You are each a unit, not a cipher; a whole, not a part. You stand in no relation to God but as individuals, and in no other way than as individuals will God deal with you. In going up to the bar of God, you will drop every tie that binds you to your fellows, and surrounded by millions will be judged apart. This is worthy your most serious attention. Instead therefore of asking how it is with others, ask how it is with yourselves: instead of saying, What should they do? say, What shall I do? Instead of your inquiry about the collective means of bringing about a revival, ask for the means of bringing it about yourself. Wait not for others, depend not upon others, begin with yourself, by yourself, and for yourself. If the church is to be revived, it will be by the revival of individuals, and you are one of them. If it begins at all to be revived, it must begin somewhere, and why not with you? You can do this. Nothing need hinder you. To will it is to do it. If there is no burning coal to be had from the hearth of others, you can kindle a fire yourself, by one from off the altar above, and thus be the means of kindling it in others. You, every one of you, whether man or woman, who shall read this, you are the persons on whom the obligation lies of a revived church, by the obligation that lies upon you of being a revived individual. The whole weight of the moral law, and of the gospel of the

grace of God, lies upon the conscience of each one of you. It cannot be shared with any one by you.

Now there are three or four subjects I will bring before you touching the nature of religion generally, which I shall leave each individual member to apply personally.

1. The true religion is a Bible religion, which lives and grows upon Bible truth. Yes, truth, the truth as it is in Jesus, is its aliment: this is the milk for babes, and the strong meat for such as are of a full age; or to change the metaphor, the manna for every taste. Christ himself declared that "his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed;" by which we are to understand that the spiritual life and health are maintained by the doctrine of his atonement. To this great central truth, and all the others which it implies or involves, the pulpit is to be chiefly devoted: and work enough will it find to do, in proclaiming the grand positive doctrines of Christianity:

"To push these aside, and to look to other topics either as substitutes or important auxiliaries, is virtually to give up Christianity as an antiquated dispensation, and to place the Bible beneath the records of science and the philosophy of history. The stem of Christianity is, we fear, much diseased in the church, or the individual whose preaching displays a profusion of such parasitical ornaments."

Now what is your taste? Is it for the truths of the gospel, or is it for them only among other things, for a pretty large infusion for instance of science, literature, politics, or philosophy? Are you content with the provision which God has made for the life of your souls, and are you saying, "Evermore give us this bread?" Or are you grown tired of the heavenly manna, loathing it as light bread, and hungering after novelties? Are you roaming about from place to place to hear some

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new thing? It is not a sign of good health when the appetite grows weary of the substantial and nutritive food of ordinary life, and can relish only the spiced or sweetened devices of the confectioner's art. When I speak of the love of the truth as it is in Jesus, as a sign of sound and vigorous health, I do not mean that truth represented in the hard and unbending dogmatic shape of some of the rigidly systematic divines, which makes every sermon a kind of exposition of an ecclesiastical creed, than which nothing can be more repulsive to educated and thoughtful men, and especially to the young; but the truth presented in all its spontaneity and freshness; the untrammelled freedom and the noble majesty with which the scripture abounds. Dear brethren, may you never want, never ask, never relish, any other food for your souls than this bread of life. Suffer your pastor to pour out his apprehensions on this subject, and express a fear lest by any means you should be corrupted from "the simplicity that is in Christ:" lest you should turn aside, or be drawn aside, to something else than the gospel of Christ, for the support of your religion. This gospel by itself in its purity and simplicity, by the blessing of God, conquered the philosophy and mythology of ancient Greece and Rome, and planted Christianity on the ruins of both; this gospel effected the Reformation of the sixteenth century; this gospel has raised the noble army of martyrs; this gospel in the lips of Wesley and Whitfield, and under the power of the Spirit, roused the slumbering piety of the nation; this gospel is now subjugating the world to Christ; this gospel fired the genius of Milton; formed the creed, though alas! not the practice, of Bacon; sustained the piety of Pascal; was embraced by Newton;

and has fed the fire of pure devotion wherever it has burned upon the altar of God. And to come down from the greater to the less, which however will be more intelligible and more interesting to some of you, it is this gospel which has been the power of God unto your salvation; which has given occasion for the erection of the place in which you worship, and filled it with a church of nearly nine hundred members. And can you need, and do you ask, for any thing else as the support of your religion? If you do, you must receive it at other hands, for your pastor has nothing else to give. You are aware we have lately celebrated the centenary of the formation of our church; and it becomes us to recollect that it was an enlightened and holy zeal for the fundamental doctrines of evangelical truth, the Trinity, the atonement, justification by faith, regeneration by the Spirit, and the sovereignty of divine grace in the salvation of sinners, which led our forefathers to separate from the body with whom they had been accustomed to meet and worship. Let us hold fast the form of sound words which they professed, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints as they did. With like zeal to theirs, let us continue to be pillars and supports of the truth. At the same time let our spirit be as tolerant as our convictions are firm: bigotry is an unsightly excrescence upon the body of truth, not only impairing its beauty, but weakening its strength. Sound doctrine is both sustained and promoted by a spirit of charity.

It is only by keeping up this great truth in its glory and power in the pulpit that the spirit of evangelical piety can be maintained in the church; when this is either kept back by the preacher, or disliked by the

hearer, the lamps will grow dim in the sanctuary, and the fire will languish upon the altar. The congregation may be large and overflowing, and the people may be pleased, but the fervour of true devotion, the unction of piety, will not be there.

Have you, dear brethren, in any instance lost your relish for scriptural truth? Have the discoveries of science and the inventions of art which have come so fast upon us in this wonderful age, and have so surprised and captivated us, thrown into the shade the doctrines of revelation; and have the lectures to which on all subjects you are so often listening rendered the discourses of the sabbath and the sanctuary a repetition of effete and barren common places? If so, you are in a state of declension from the power of Christianity; and the revival of the church's piety, so far as you are concerned, must commence by your being brought back into a living communication with the Bible, to receive a new impulse from its momentous and ever quickening truths.

2. True religion must of necessity be earnest. This may be learnt not only from innumerable passages and figures of speech in scripture, where religion is compared to "a race," "a fight," "a labour," but from the very nature of the thing. Is it not a constant striving against our corrupt nature, an ensnaring world, and a tempting devil, and a striving against such foes, for glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life? Is it not an escape from the quenchless fire of the bottomless pit to the felicities of the celestial city? Is it not a struggle to avoid a dungeon, and to gain a crown? Is it not a labour after the salvation of an immortal soul? And can there be all this without earnestness? Impos-

sible. You cannot be saved without being in earnest, but must be lost, eternally lost. Yet how few comparatively give proof of such a state of mind. Do the majority of christians look like men engaged in a straggle for life? A revival of religion means a revival of earnestness on the part of its professors.

Just look at the manner in which some attend the means of grace which God has appointed for keeping up the necessary regard to eternal realities. How irregular are they at the house of God, sometimes away whole sabbaths, without any sufficient excuse; hearing only one sermon a week, and that one with as much indifference as they would hear a tale that is told. They fill up their own place in the morning perhaps with tolerable regularity, but where are they in the evening? Rambling all over the town in quest of some new man or new thing, attracted by whatever can gratify their curiosity or love of novelty. Sermons with such persons are every thing, and prayer nothing. And then even the sermons are of no value, but as they are smart, clever, or eloquent, no matter how evangelical in doctrine, weighty for good sense, full of instruction, or adapted to promote edification. They must hear an argumentative, or a rhetorical preacher; no matter how little of sound exposition of the word of God his discourses may contain, for their aim is to be entertained, not to be sanctified. Every thing is as light, as frivolous, as undevout, with them, as it is with the listeners to a lecture upon some fashionable topic of the day. All is matter of taste, not of conscience; of entertainment, not of devotion. Yet this is the religion of many professors of the present day, both in the metropolis and in our large provincial towns, a mere

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lecture-loving thing, a matter of the ear and of the imagination, rather than the heart, a sabbath-day amusement. Is this how the affairs of the soul are to be conducted, the concerns of eternity to be settled, the business of salvation conducted, and the church of Christ to attain to its moral power and influence over the nation and the age?

My beloved flock, this is one of the snares of our times, one of the perils to which you, in common with others, are exposed. The devout seriousness, the staid habits, the holy regularities of true piety, are broken in upon by the ever recurring novelties of this exciting and extraordinary age. We have in all our churches too many professors who resemble the butterfly rather than the bee; for though they are ever fluttering about from flower to flower in the garden of the Lord, they seem to belong to no hive, and certainly make no honey. If they have a minister whose services can edify by the instruction he imparts, and the weighty counsels he delivers; who watches for their souls, and is able to build them up on their holy faith; who knows how to touch the heart, to awaken the conscience, and to guide their life, let them give him their whole sabbath, the evening as well as the morning; but if he cannot do this, let them seek one who can, and let them cease to treat religion with such levity as if it were a thing of mere entertainment.

When a revival of religion takes place, it will be one of its evidences and effects that the great bulk of professors will be seen merging their fickleness, their levity, and their restless curiosity, in an earnestness which will give a steadiness to their aim, and a fixedness to their habits.

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3. True religion is a prayerful thing. The spirit of prayer is its animating soul. It is impossible to read the word of God, whether of the Old Testament or the New, without knowing this: "Continuing instant in prayer," and "pray without ceasing," are injunctions so plain as not to be mistaken: but though so plain, are they not forgotten or neglected in this busy age? Does the church look like a community instinct with the spirit of prayer? Does it seem as if she were characterized by devoutness, by intercourse with heaven, by communion with God? If not, and if it be really so that we cannot find time for prayer, what is this but saying, we cannot find time for serving God? Is it then come to this, that we have made up our minds that we can find time for every thing else but prayer? And what is more alarming still, that professors of religion can coolly and calmly, and without any blush or sense of shame, acknowledge they have very little time to pray? It is false, palpably false: the want is not of time, but of heart. A man who had really the spirit of prayer in him, would, even if he could not go into his closet, find any where, even in walking along the street, or in his daily occupations, an outlet for his desires which are Godward.

What do your families, my dear friends, say concerning your domestic prayers? What do your closets say of your private prayers? What do the prayer-meetings say of your social prayers? A revival of religion must begin with a revival of the spirit of prayer. This is the freshening of the breeze which is the forerunner of the coming cloud and falling shower of divine grace.

How are you, in this respect, beginning this new year? The religion that will have power to influence a

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nation, and convert the world, must be a religion that clothes itself with omnipotence, and lays hold by believing prayer of God's strength. It will be when the church shall be filled with the Spirit that she will appear to be the tabernacle of God with man, and as having the glory of God. When shall your pastor's heart rejoice, and his hopes be raised, by seeing your meetings for social prayer attended as they ought to be? When by this sign shall he be encouraged to believe that the time of revival is come? Is it surprising that he should have to complain, as others do, that the word preached is comparatively powerless, when so many of you neglect the meetings for social prayer? Some of you are prevented and cannot attend, but many of you could if you would. I stay not to solve the mystery of God's suspending the communications of his grace upon the prayers of his church; but since he has done so, what an incentive ought this to be felt by the church to present its supplications! How can we expect the showers of celestial influence if we do not pray for them? If you think our usual prayer-meetings are formal, lukewarm, and uninteresting, why not come and by your presence endeavour to quicken them? There is a power in numbers, the power of sympathy. Or why not meet in smaller associations, a few earnest praying friends together?

4. True religion is a uniform and all pervading thing: it tinges, leavens, yea, permeates and moulds the whole character. It not only includes the love of God, but the love of man; prescribes not only faith, but goodness; not only dictates piety in all its heavenly communings, but morality in all its earthly relations; it is the germ of every social excellence, as well as of every

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devotional taste; it is, in short, God's image stamped on the character of man as a God of love, of truth, of holiness, and justice. A real and consistent christian is a christian every where, and carries his Christianity with him into every thing. He does every thing religiously, and therefore makes every thing a part of religion. No other religion will be respected in the world but this. It must go among men as a form at once awful and amiable, with the odour of sanctity mingling with the perfume of a high-toned morality. Men must confide in it as a guarantee for all that is just, and good, and noble; and not fear it as a cloak for all that is mean, and false, and dishonest. The church will not mould the world till the New Testament has moulded the church.

My beloved flock, fulfil ye my joy by exhibiting in your character and conduct, not the inconsistencies of too many professors, but the reflected glories of the law of God, of the christian code, and of the example of Jesus. Be my witnesses for the morality as well as the religion I have taught you. Be my helpers by attracting others to the ministry which has by God's blessing invested you with such moral beauty. As patriots, citizens, and neighbours, as husbands or wives, as masters or servants, parents or children, be the best of your kind. You ought to be, religion demands it of you. If any of you will not follow the whatsoever things are just, honest, pure, true, lovely, and of good report, you must leave us; you are our grief, our hindrance, our reproach, our curse, as long as you are with us.

Such is a sketch of the religion that is wanted to influence the world, and which if it were possessed and

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exhibited by all who call themselves christians, would silently and slowly, but effectually work such changes in the nations of the earth, as would render revolutions and convulsions unnecessary to subvert the systems of evil which are continually arising to oppress, and to enslave, and to torment the children of men.

We want more of this religion in the churches of our day, and in our own among the rest. It is not with us as it has been, as it should be, and as it might be. We might ask with greater reason than they did, the question which was put forth by the children of Israel at Meribah, "Is the Lord among us or not?" We would not say he is not, we cannot say he is, at least in any very striking displays of his power and presence. We have some signs of prosperity, but others are wanting: our congregation is large, our peace unbroken, and the administration of ordinances regular; but conversions of the ungodly are fewer than they have been, and the piety of those who make a profession of religion is, in many cases, languid and lukewarm. The various circumstances of the times, so strange, and so striking, combined with a love of ease, a taste for amusement, and the wondrous advance of knowledge, are, in too many instances, throwing religion into the shade, and diverting your attention from its infinitely sublime objects and its eternally momentous pursuits. Your pastor has endeavoured by his publications to draw attention to the necessity of an Earnest Ministry and an Earnest Church. Lamentable indeed would it be if both were wanting among ourselves.

Let us examine, each for himself, his own deficiency. We must have a revival, we may have it: but let us begin with ourselves. Let each revive one person, and then all

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will be revived. I want to awaken a solicitude about a new quickening. I want to prevent you from settling down upon your lees, and sinking into the passivity and the indolence of the good-enough system. I want you to see and feel that the world is making greater aggressions upon the church, than the church is making upon the world: that religion instead of giving a character and a direction to every thing else, is receiving a character and an influence from surrounding objects; and that this applies to your religion and church as well as others. May God revive us!

A new year is opening upon us; may we inquire into the demands, the duties, and the responsibility, which it brings with it. Who can tell, or even conjecture, what it will bring forth to our nation, to the world, to our own church, to our families, or to ourselves, as individuals. May we set forth to meet all that is to happen in a spirit of resignation, dependence, confidence, and prayer. May we never be so anxious or curious about the future as to be diverted from present duty. God hides from us the former that we may be more intent upon the latter. And while earnestness is the characteristic of the age, may it be equally the characteristic of the church, and of all the sections into which the church is divided; and of all the congregations which compose the section to which you belong, may yours be a pattern to all others of deep seriousness and devout earnestness.

In concluding this address, permit me to assure you of my undiminished, yea my ever increasing desire and solicitude for your welfare as a christian community; for the maintenance of your numbers, your faith, your holiness, your love, your union, your compactness. This feeling of anxiety keeps pace with the advance of my

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age. Few pastors have ever had to watch with less apprehension their lengthening shadows than yours. Yet with all his confidence in the strength and constancy of your attachment to his person and ministry, he knows human nature, even in its renewed state, too well, not to imagine that there may be some among his flock who want something more vigorous and vivacious than the sermons of a man of sixty-four; something different from the preaching of one whose determination it is “to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;” and something more novel than the voice which has been heard for four-and-forty years on the same spot, promulgating the same doctrines. Even if there be any such, though I do not know that there are, I am pretty much at ease in the persuasion, that the candour and forbearance of the great bulk of my attached people could and would stand much severer tests than they have been put to yet by any perceptible infirmities of advancing life. To those who are craving after novelties, if any such there be, as well as to those who have really to complain of a want of pastoral attention, I repeat the information I have already given, that I am looking and waiting for help; and sincerely and earnestly do I beg your prayers, that in an affair which so deeply involves my usefulness and comfort, as well as your profit and peace, I may be directed by Him who ordereth all things for his church in wisdom and in love.

**PASTORAL ADDRESS, FOR THE YEAR
1853,**

PREFIXED TO AN ACCOUNT OF THE INSTITUTIONS SUPPORTED BY
THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION.

My Dear Friends, instead of a pastoral letter of the usual form, it has been deemed advisable by the deacons and myself, this year, to lay before you an account of the various Institutions which have been originated and sustained among you by the "Wisdom that is from above; which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits." The object in presenting this statement to you, is not ostentatiously to parade our good works, but to encourage and increase them. It has been supposed, and perhaps not without reason, that there are many among us, who, though a public appeal is made from the pulpit occasionally for most of our religious and benevolent societies, are not well acquainted with them; and who, upon such information as is here given, would greatly augment their liberality, and in every way take a deeper interest in its objects.

When the magnitude of our congregation is considered, it will not appear that the following Report, whatever cause it may furnish for thanksgiving, will lay any foundation for a spirit of vain glory, or give any occasion for boasting. We should be humbled, deeply humbled, that we have done so little, rather than be elated that we have done so much. He who hath "redeemed us, not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot," has

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laid us under infinite obligations to promote His glory, and the good of our fellow-creatures. It is one of the obligations of our holy religion to bless in proportion as we are blessed. And if this, or anything approaching to it, be indeed the measure of our duty, the most munificent donor among us is yet far below the standard of his beneficence.

Every individual christian, and especially every christian church, is to act as “the light of the world,” and “the salt of the earth,” and thus become a source of illumination and sanctification to a benighted and corrupted world. It is a serious question to ask, and a solemn subject to propose for consideration, how much of spiritual light and holy influence should be diffused over this town by a christian community of nearly nine hundred members, and how much would be diffused, if they were all as “zealous of good works” as they should be. Every christian church should be characterised first of all by eminent holiness; and no zeal, however fervent, can be a substitute for this. Its members should bear the image of their Heavenly Father, and should be filled with “the mind of Christ.” And this cannot be the case unless there be much christian activity for the glory of God, and the happiness of man. “God is light;” “God is love;” that is, He is holy and benevolent. And of Jesus Christ it is said, “He went about doing good.” We no longer answer either to our proper character, or to our high vocation, than while we are walking “in all holy conversation and godliness,” and are “full of mercy and good fruits.”

It may be permitted me to make a few discriminating remarks upon the various Institutions, an account

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of which is now submitted to you. Two of them are for foreign objects: one of these has for its design the conversion of the heathen world to Christianity. The magnitude and importance of this, surpass all comprehension; and it is hoped that whatever other objects may, as the circle of benevolent activity continually widens, rise up to claim our liberality, this will never be suffered to receive less support than it now does. Our contributions to the London Missionary Society, were, at one time, larger than they are at this time. The other foreign object presented to you is, the British Colonies, now in such rapid and wonderful development and augmentation. The recent extraordinary gold discoveries have invested the Colonial Missionary Society with an importance which no representation can exaggerate.

Among the Home Societies to be found in the following statement, attention might be directed to several of pre-eminent interest, which prefer strong claims upon your liberality. You are supporting a larger educational establishment, taking the Sunday and Day Schools, the Carrs Lane and those at the out-stations, into account, than, perhaps, any congregation in the kingdom. In the present state of the question of popular education, this should not fail to impress your mind as a proof, how far, if called out, the voluntary energies of the people could go to meet the wants of the nation.

There is another of the objects in the Home field of your benevolence to which special attention must be directed, both on account of its great value, and the absolute and pressing necessity of an immediate enlargement of the funds required for its support, I

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mean your Congregational Town Mission. Of the vast importance of this institution, your church meetings, into which the fruits of its operations are so abundantly and so constantly brought, bear strong testimony. There are now nearly one hundred of your church members, who have been brought into christian fellowship, having first, we hope, been brought to Christ, by God's grace upon the labours of your town missionaries, at the two stations of Palmer Street and Bordesley Street. This is a fact, which will serve instead of many arguments, to prove that it is almost impossible to rate too highly this society. It was originally determined to support this cause exclusively by the contributions of the church members, who, it was supposed, would feel great delight and honour in sustaining the labours of your two missionaries, of whose success they had such convincing proofs. I regret to have to state, that in this hope I am somewhat disappointed; for it is certain that a very large number of our members do not subscribe to it at all. I am willing to believe that this arises more from the want of an effective organization and general canvass, than from a want of disposition to assist. A fresh appeal will soon be made, not only to the church members, but to the congregation, when it is expected an adequate contribution will be raised to keep up the comfort of your valuable agents.

On looking over the list of Societies, you will carefully observe how much of female agency is employed in them. To that sex, of which it has been said they were the last to leave the cross and the first to visit the sepulchre of our Lord, great praise is due for their exertions in the cause of religion and humanity. It is our happiness to

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have among us “devout and honourable women, not a few.”

The Brotherly Society entails no expense, but confers many benefits on the congregation; and the Village Itinerancy sustains, with singular self-denial and disinterestedness, its own operations.

And now, my dear friends, while I sincerely rejoice and give God thanks for the grace bestowed upon you, in these operations of your benevolence, and desire that you may abound more and more, I am deeply solicitous that your spiritual state, as a church, might be still more flourishing than it now is. Religious activity should be the result of true religious feeling and pure religious motives. Without this, however beneficial it may be to others, it will be of no benefit to ourselves. I want to see a more solemn, serious, earnest, and spiritual piety prevailing among us. My prayer for you is, that you may be “filled with the Spirit;” yea, “with all the fulness of God.” Do we not need this? Are we experiencing it? If not, why not? If we have it not, is it not because we do not ask; or because we ask amiss? Have we faith enough to seek and pray for a revival of pure and undefiled religion, and to expect what we ask and what we seek? Does not our church, and do not other churches, need spiritual power, as well as general activity, the power of eminent holiness? The power to impress the world with its own sanctity, and thus give forth a living testimony against immorality, infidelity, heresy, and popery? It is not merely books the world wants, it has plenty of these; it is examples. It is the spirit of holiness, love, union, the “living epistle known and read of all men.” The great controversy against sin, Satan, and all that opposes itself

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against God, must be carried on, not merely by the writings of the church's ministers, but by the holy lives of the whole body of the church's members. The church of Christ makes but little aggression upon the world; sin abounds more than holiness, and destruction more than salvation. The conversion of sinners goes on slowly, and is it not because the sanctification of believers is so imperfect? Ought not this deeply to impress and affect us? Shall we see ourselves surrounded with ignorance, error, and sin; with moral ruin, spiritual death, and abounding perdition, and not feel our obligations, and be roused to exertion, to lessen the torrent of iniquity, and set limits to the work of destruction? Are you spiritually alive? Are you full of love to Christ, and compassion for souls? Are you filled with concern, like the prophets and apostles of old, and the reformers of more modern times, for the dishonour sin is doing to God, and the ruin it is inflicting on your fellow-creatures? Rouse yourselves to greater zeal and earnestness, I entreat you. It is probable that during the ensuing spring I may institute, in common with others, some measures for the revival of religion, in which I shall hope to receive your cordial and prayerful support.

Commending you to God and the word of his grace, and praying "that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God,"

I remain, your affectionate Pastor.

PASTORAL ADDRESS FOR THE YEAR 1854.

MY dear Friends, I believe the time is not yet come when a New Year's Address from your pastor will be unwelcome, or unseasonable. I again shall endeavour to stir up your pure minds, both in the way of remembrance and exhortation.

By God's abounding mercy we have been now carried through another year of our eventful history as a christian church. We may indeed say with the poet of our sanctuary, "His goodness runs an endless round, Salvation to the Lord." We still live in undisturbed harmony, unimpaired confidence, and undiminished affection. Few churches have greater internal tranquillity or external prosperity than ours, and therefore few have greater obligations to praise the Lord for his wonderful kindness. In looking back upon the past year, if we find, as we certainly may find, much to humble us on account of our shortcomings in the christian life, we see much to call forth our gratitude and love. Our losses by death, and what is a still more painful separation whenever it occurs, by the discipline which offences call for, have been below the average. As a balance against this, it may be also affirmed that our additions in the way of membership have also been below those of some other years. This is to be considered the more surprising, because the congregations were never larger at any former period of my ministry than at the present time, and should lead to great searchings of heart before the Lord after the cause of this suspension of divine influence. May it not be feared that there is not among our members that deep, intense, and prayerful interest in the success of the ministry, either in the way of the

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edification of believers, or of the conversion of the impenitent generally, which there should be. True, their personal advancement in the divine life is of course the first object which they should keep before their minds in attending upon the ordinances of the sanctuary; but it is not the only one. There should be a solicitude pervading the whole church, expressing itself in believing prayer and appropriate activity for a successful ministry. The past year has been in one respect a most important and eventful one in the history of the church. I refer, as you will anticipate, to the selection and appointment of Mr. Dale as assistant minister. I would fain hope, and by all present appearances feel warranted to hope, that this is one of God's gracious interpositions for the present and permanent welfare of the church. The entire and cordial unanimity of the members in confirming this appointment, and the great acceptableness of Mr. Dale's public and private services, together with his own pleasure in rendering them, combine to make us thankful for the auspicious manner in which this connexion has commenced. To myself this event is matter of ineffable gratitude and pleasure. In proportion to the gratification it now yields should be the fervent and universal prayer to God for its happy continuance. Remembering that God is the giver lover and conservator of peace and concord, instead of trusting to our own good dispositions for the permanence of this union, let us pray incessantly to Him for the healthful Spirit of his grace. With the most entire confidence in the good feelings of both the aged and younger minister towards each other, you should never forget that they are but men, and that Satan, envious of our harmony and jealous of our associated efforts, will endeavour to

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do in our case, what he has done in so many others, to sow the seeds of discord and produce alienation and division. Be earnest then in your supplications that our joy may not be turned into mourning by the springing up of any root of bitterness among us, ever remembering that it is in rich soils, perhaps, more than in poor ones, that such roots are most apt to grow. This is a new era in the history of our church and one pregnant with great good or great evil. I write this not to excite alarm, or awaken suspicion, but to produce dependence upon God and to stimulate prayer. Recollecting that both youth and age have their appropriate advantages, you will be thankful to avail yourselves of each, and be too wise to make unseemly comparisons to the detriment of either. Instead of imitating the conduct of the Corinthian church, where one said, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, you will rather enter into the spirit of the apostle's language to this divided community, where he says, "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are your's: and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Your minds are sufficiently intelligent to appreciate the excellences of each, if peradventure, they have any; and your hearts are large enough to find ample room for both. I am quite sure, and am easy in the thought that in asking what would be given without asking, for your love, respect, and confidence for the younger minister, I am not asking you to give up any of those dispositions towards the older one. I do not wish you by subtraction to take your affection from me to give it to him, for I value your regard too highly to part from the least portion of it, but I do ask you by

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addition to take him with me as the object of your esteem and love.

You must, I believe, be aware that it was not from any great decay of bodily or mental vigour; any pressure of physical infirmity, much less from any unworthy love of ease that I proposed this union. I say I proposed it, for, as you know, the proposal did come from me; I waited not till approaching imbecility, more obvious to my people than to myself, compelled them to suggest to me the propriety of such a step. How anxious I have ever been for the welfare, and harmony, and peace of the church, you know; and being aware how hazardous to this unity, the unassisted choice of a pastor is in all cases, I did feel a solicitude that if it were the will of the Divine Head of the church, I might be permitted to assist you in making this selection, and thus have the evening of my days cheered by the co-operation of one, to whom you as well as myself, could give your unhesitating confidence.

The retrospect of the past year supplies matter of devout thankfulness to the Fountain of all grace for the continued activity and liberality of the church and congregation, in supporting our various organizations of pious zeal, and for the grace bestowed and the honour conferred upon us by God, in our being permitted, enabled, and disposed to lay our offerings on the altar of his cause. I trust we are got somewhat beyond the point of giving our substance merely as matter of duty and obligation; and that we know something of the great evangelical principle of action, and can say with the apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us." It is indeed a blessed privilege to do any thing for Him who did so much for us; and so it will be thought and felt when we shall "see

Him as he is," and behold in the final consummation of his redeeming work, the glorious results of our humble instrumentality.

In looking forward to the future year, it becomes us to examine ourselves and see what there is in us that is wrong which ought to be rectified, and what there is deficient that ought to be supplied. With the opening of the year should ever be connected a fresh dedication of ourselves to the service of Him to whom we rightfully belong. At such a period, the words of the apostle should sound with emphatic solemnity in our ears, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price: glorify God with your body and your spirit which are his." "I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." I need not, I believe, exhort you to continued liberality in the cause of Christ, I know your ready mind, and "have confidence in you in all things," that you will not "become weary in well doing." There is no prospect, and ought to be no hope that the calls upon your beneficence will be less frequent, less extensive, or less urgent than they have been. On the contrary, it must be expected and ought to be desired, that as the millennial period of the world comes on, christians must and will be prepared, to give any thing, almost every thing for Christ. He will employ His people in possessing Himself of the kingdom He died to redeem. The work befits their relationship to Him; it is the very work which the hope of heaven has

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qualified them to do; the work most friendly to their sanctification; the work which brings them into a fellowship with Himself; a work for which the Saviour will love to reward them; and that He will not do without them. The Lord Jesus must have a church that will obey Him, and He will have, as the latter day of glory draws nigh, a church prepared to live for Him, and labour for Him, and, if necessity be, to die for Him. And if any now in his visible kingdom cannot wake their hearts to this tone of christian enterprise, they had better die and commit these high interests to others to occupy for the Lord till He come. There must be a still more abounding liberality, a more earnest zeal, and a more prevailing spirit of believing prayer on the part of Christ's professing people, or the kingdom will never be given to Christ according to the promise by the means specified. You know me too well, and have been too long and too intimately acquainted with my methods of appeal to suppose that I shall allow your benevolent activity to sleep. I cannot, I dare not, I will not suffer the world's conversion to stand still for want of the little influence I may possess with the people of my charge. And I will never ask you to do that which I am not prepared to do myself. By God's grace I will lead, if you will only follow. And as in the advance of our Redeemer's cause we shall see greater things yet, so must we ever stand ready to do greater things. I am deeply solicitous therefore to keep up healthful activity. I mean an activity that springs from a healthy state of soul, and reacts upon its source, and strengthens and invigorates the health of which it is the manifestation and the exercise.

Still, dear brethren, there is another thing about

which I am more anxious, and more fearful, than I am in reference to a spirit of liberality, and that is the spirit of earnest and believing prayer for a higher degree of religious life. For prayer is the out-growth and expression of this divine vitality. It is impossible to possess the least acquaintance with either the Old or New Testament, without a deep conviction of the indispensable necessity and vast importance of prayer. Prayer is indeed the christian's vital breath; he lives only while he prays. The spirit of prayer is the soul's thermometer indicating by its elevation and depression its actual degree of holy warmth. Now is there not reason to fear that with all the activity and liberality of our church, we, in common with all around us, are low in this grace? You and I are not troubled with any metaphysical difficulties or sceptical doubts about the exercise of prayer. We admit its obligation, and we have felt its sustaining, comforting, and sanctifying influence. Yet are we not far too negligent and lukewarm in its exercise?

But I now refer to the subject of prayer in connexion with the ministry of the word, and the spiritual interests of the church. Our very prosperity may and will become a snare if we are lulled by it into a state of self-reliance and self-confidence. You have now two ministers instead of one; the ardour of youth combined with the experience of age. Your congregation was never larger, if ever so large. Your harmony was never more perfect. Your organizations of piety, zeal, and humanity were never more flourishing. These things endanger, while they delight and honour, you. They may lead to a spirit of self-admiration and exaltation, and to some degree of carelessness. Then does

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our perilous condition commence, when we are led to say, "My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved." I therefore most earnestly call you to cultivate a spirit of prayer. You never needed it more, and I am sometimes afraid you never had it less. With all these signs of external prosperity, the ministry of the word in the conversion of sinners is certainly not powerful among us. In common with others, your ministers have too often to say: "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? How few are awakened by their sermons from the deep slumbers of worldly-mindedness, and quickened from a death of sin to a life of righteousness! And how many professors of religion remain in a state of drowsy lukewarmness!

Permit me, then, deliberately, seriously, and earnestly to propose as a suitable, an important, and a necessary subject for consideration and adoption this coming year, an increased spirit of earnest, believing, continued, and prevailing prayer for the Spirit of God to come down on the ministry of the word among you. Let us determine that this year shall be characterised by a general and intense earnestness of supplication for that blessed influence, without which Paul would preach and Apollos labour in vain. "Who is Paul and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as God gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." I am deeply solicitous that the early sowings of the young minister should, for his encouragement, be successful; and that the late sowings of the aged one, should, for his comfort, be no less so. If the chief of the apostles craved the prayers of the churches, and reiterated the request, "Brethren pray for

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us:" if he said even to the meanest members of the Corinthian church, some of whom were slaves, "You also helping together by prayer for us: "if he said, "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you," how much more may we? How much encouragement is given in the Scriptures to this prayer for ministers. It was the prayers of the church that delivered Peter out of prison. It was the prayers of the church that brought on the wonders and glories of the day of Pentecost. It was by the prayers of the church Paul was delivered from the unbelievers in Judea. Facts innumerable in modern times prove how intimately connected ministerial success is with the prayers of the people. It may seem a mysterious thing that God should make the outpouring of His Spirit depend upon the supplications of the church; and He does not always, for no doubt sovereign visitations of mercy are sometimes granted; ordinarily however He does so, and surely nothing can be conceived to impose a weightier obligation upon christians to pray for the Spirit than this does. Every member of our churches ought to say, Is it, indeed, a fact that the success of my minister in the salvation of souls depends, in any way and measure, upon my prayers? Then can I be so wanting in concern for the glory of God, pity for lost souls, and desire for the success of my pastor, as not to pray for him? Do I not know that there are multitudes who attend his ministry to whom it is only "a savour of death unto death," so that the very sermons which are lifting me, by God's grace, to heaven, are through their wilful unbelief the occasion of sinking them deeper in hell? What! is the work of destruction of men's souls as the result of their impenitence and unbelief

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going on in the very place which I attend, and in the very pew which I occupy, and shall I not pray for the Spirit of God to arrest it? Shall I see and hear my faithful minister wearing out his life in labour for these souls, and I not help him by my prayers? Shall I refuse him this assistance even when he asks imploringly for it, and it is the best, yea the only way in which I can assist him? Where is my zeal for God, my compassion for souls, my love for my minister, my interest in his labours, my sympathy with him in his object, desires, and anxieties? Oh! that all our members would thus reflect, and act accordingly!

Now this, while it is the duty of the church in its collective capacity, is the duty of each of the members individually. Each should feel the obligation without waiting for the rest to do so. There is sometimes a very just lamentation that the prayer meetings are neglected, and many are mourning it in secret and saying, "o that we could have our prayer meetings revived. What a blessing might be expected upon the ministry if this were the *case*." This is all very well, and you should endeavour to obtain this revival. But how is it to be brought about? Why by each determining to go, without waiting for any one else, or making his going dependent upon theirs. It is not however of social prayer I now speak. Alas! some seem to think that prayer for the ministry is only a prayer meeting concern. On the contrary, it is a concern for the family, and not only for the family but the closet. Many cannot if they would attend these exercises of social prayer; but all can pray in their closets; and who can tell what a blessing one praying soul might bring down upon the ministry of the word? A godly minister was once much

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discouraged by his long continued want of apparent success. To his surprise and delight at length one individual after another came to him under deep solicitude about salvation. He said to himself, "How is this." He had not been more than usually earnest. He said, therefore, to his little church one day, "Have any of you been more than ordinarily importunate in prayer for a blessing upon my ministry?" It came out that a poor servant girl had been long and earnestly praying for this very thing. I say then, let each without waiting for others give himself to prayer. I know cases, in which two persons whose minds were much set upon a revived state of the church agreed with each other to meet and pray for this object, and it was granted in an eminent degree.

My dear brethren, think highly of prayer. Have confidence in prayer. Be much in prayer. Let no false humility lead you to say, "Can I expect that my prayers will prevail?" Why not? It is sincerity faith fervour not intellect wealth rank station, that make prayers acceptable. There may be as much of all that makes prayer prevail with God in the petitions of a servant girl as in those of a queen. God is a respecter of dispositions, not of persons. But remember the apostle's direction to pray in faith. Many pray as if they did not expect their prayers to be answered; such prayers are as much a mockery as you would deem it for a person to come and earnestly ask you for something, and then turn away without stopping or looking for a reply. Surely, surely, if any prayers may be presented in faith, they are such as are offered for the success of the ministry.

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Recollect it is not only the good of others that is promoted by the ministry but your own edification also. A person once went to her minister to request her dismissal to another church in the same town. He enquired her reason for it. She frankly told him that she received little benefit from his sermons. "Well," he replied, "I am willing to comply with your request, but first of all let me ask you when you last prayed for your minister." The question startled and perplexed her; and she confessed she had been lamentably negligent of this duty. "Go then," said he, "and ascertain whether the deficiency of your profiting is to be attributed to my preaching or your own want of prayer for me: and then come again, and if you still wish to be transferred you shall." She took the advice and returned, but not to ask for her dismissal, but to confess that the fault was all her own. To how many of our complaining hearers might we say, "Go thou and do likewise." Cowper's words would then be often fulfilled,

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your joyful song would oftener be
Hear what the Lord hath done for me."

Let me then, dear brethren, press upon your attention this subject as the important matter for your devout consideration during the coming year. You are a working church, and a giving one, as your institutions and contributions testify; fulfil ye my joy and your own duty and be a praying one, and in order to this, an eminently holy one.

Do we not need, dear brethren, and ought we not to have some special seasons of public devotion; some un-

usually solemn and impressive services of the sanctuary and the closet; some extraordinary means of rousing our attention to our own personal religion? Was there ever a time in the history of the church of Christ when it more became its members to encourage their pastors to call them to a more than ordinary attention to their soul's concerns? The tide of worldliness, in a variety of ways, is setting in so strongly upon the church that we need raise up a breakwater against it. Are routine and formality enough at any time, and especially in such times as these? Is it not true that complaints come to us from every quarter of a declining spirit of prayer and a growing conformity to the world? Is there not, in regard to spiritual religion, creeping over the church a growing spirit of Laodicean lukewarmness, which seeks and finds its apology in the prevailing activities of the age; a disposition to make a compromise, to be for so much money given to public institutions, released from the obligations of a delicate morality, and a high toned spirituality and heavenly mindedness? A hint was given in the last address of some special means being about to be adopted for the revival of our spiritual life. The year has passed on without it. Oh that you felt the need of it, and asked for it, and said, "Come and let us call upon God to favour us with showers of blessings in their season! Do we not need it, and shall we not ask it?"

You live, dear brethren, in wonderful times; and ordinary piety is not sufficient for an extraordinary age. God is coming out of his pavilion to do great things in the earth, and like the prophet you should ascend to your watch tower in deep thoughtfulness, and strong

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faith, and earnest prayer, with minds instructed by God's word, that you may observe the ways of Providence and be prepared for the operations to which you are called by the voice of events. Ordinary piety and ordinary prayers, I say again, should not be thought sufficient for extraordinary times. The whole world seems calling upon us for our prayers. Shall it call in vain?

There are two or three other subjects on which I should have wished to enlarge, as of great importance to the carrying out of the one on which I have now dwelt, if it were not that the discussion of them would make this letter too long. I have urged upon you the duty of prayer: but it becomes you to recollect what the Psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." And there are some sins, though not peculiar to this age, yet extensively prevailing in it, which must of necessity damp if they do not altogether extinguish the spirit of devotion. How excessive is the attention which many are devoting to the cares of business and the pursuit of wealth! I know very well there is extreme difficulty in this age of raging competition to restrict the occupations and engagements of trade within even ordinary limits; and to draw the line of demarcation between lawful and undue attention to secular concerns. But surely that devotedness to business must be unlawful, which comes within the comprehension of the apostle's language, "They that will be rich fall into divers temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many

sorrows.” What is it but the spirit described in these words that leads so many even of those that make a profession of religion to violate in their course of business the laws of christian integrity? I am sick of hearing the reports of the mean, dishonourable, not to say roguish conduct in matters of business of the members of christian churches. I do not now refer to those who are under my care: without affirming or supposing that there are none of them to whom the remark applies, I am happy in the hope that such cases are rare among us. May you adopt as the christian rule of trade the apostle’s direction, and follow whatsoever things are true and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. Maintain an undeviating regard to commercial integrity, and endeavour to be known as just and honourable tradesmen; and so conduct yourselves as that a profession of religion shall be the guarantee of all that is honest and honourable, instead of being considered, as it is now by many, an hypocritical cloak for whatever is mean, tricking, and shuffling.

Let it also, by your whole conduct, be seen that you consider religion to be, not an abstract thing of peculiar times places and occasions, but a thing of all times places and occasions, producing an universal conscientiousness to do what is right, because it is right, in every engagement, situation, and relation of life, “Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify God your Father in heaven.”

How momentous a duty also is family religion in the case of those whom God has placed at the head of households! How are family prayer and family instruction

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going on within your domestic circle? Are all the purposes, the plans, the arrangements of the family adopted and pursued with intentional, and wise, and constant reference to the religious character and eternal well-being of your children and servants? If you have been remiss in these things, begin afresh this year. And now what is the source and spring of prayer and all those other necessary and momentous duties? Is it not, as I have already suggested, the inner, the spiritual, the divine life? A dead profession, orthodox indeed in doctrine, and perhaps decorous in external conduct, is a common but a sad thing. How many are there who, like the members of the church of Sardis, have “a name to live and yet are dead.” Is there life with you, and in you, dear brethren? Does your profession answer to that ever emphatic, instructive word, life?

I now, in conclusion, commend the welfare of the church to your deep, anxious, and prayerful interest for another year. With a most catholic spirit of christian charity towards all other congregations and denominations, a spirit that regards, and hates, and avoids, religious bigotry and congregational selfishness as a sin, unite still a primary love to your own church as your religious home: and it is, you know, the duty of every man who has a home, to love that above all, though not to the neglect, much less to the opposition of all other interests and places. You have all come into a professed fellowship with this church, and fellowship implies a real, watchful, and active regard for the community of which you are members. I refer you to the remarks I lately made on the deplorable want of interest in our church affairs which is manifested on the part of those

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who never attend our church meetings; and I now express a hope that this deficiency will be supplied by them in future.

There is one class of persons for whose welfare, as greatly important to the interests of the church, I am solicitous you should be deeply concerned, and most importunately pray to God, I mean our Young Men. As a class, I think the young men of this age are certainly improved in intelligence, and perhaps in morals. I wish I could think that they were equally so in spiritual religion. How comparatively rare an occurrence is it in any of our congregations, or evangelical denominations, for a young man of wealthy connexions in life to come forward and take up a spiritual, earnest, and decided profession of religion! And yet how important is it that this class should be made partakers of true godliness! The church of Christ ought to take a deeper interest in them than it has yet done. The ministers and deacons should be foremost in this. To those who are now young men will soon be committed the interests both of the world and of the church. They are the coming generation to which will belong the conservation of our liberties, the making of our laws, the support of our government, and the management of all our secular affairs. And to whom also are we to look for the maintenance of God's cause in our world? Who are to be the future pastors, deacons, and members of our churches? Who the secretaries, treasurers, and committees of our societies? Those who are now our young men. Look round upon the office-bearers of your own church, whether pastor or deacons, and see how many of them are standing with their grey heads

on the border-land of the eternal world, and of whom it must soon be said, "Your fathers, where are they, and the prophets do they live for ever?" Where are the young men rising up to fill up the vacancies which their removal must soon occasion? Be much in prayer to God, then, to pour out his spirit on this class. We may hope much from the influence of Mr Dale in reference to them. He has already manifested considerable interest in them, and is gaining their confidence and conciliating their affection. But he must not be left in his labours unsupported by your prayers. Let this subject, I beg, be in an especial manner taken up by you. Pray for our young men, they are the hope of their families, of the churches, and of our country.

And now, dear brethren, may I ask on behalf of this letter, a devout, a serious, and prayerful consideration. Let it not be read with that carelessness and indifference with which such ephemeral productions are but too generally received, and which of course, where this is the case, produce no impressions upon the mind, awaken no sensibility in the conscience, and leave no trace on the memory. It comes not only from my pen, but from my heart, a heart which amidst the advancing winter of my life feels no chill of affectionate solicitude for your welfare, and no weariness of effort to promote it. It has been written amidst much prayer and by prayer will be followed. Take it into your closet, and let some portion of the first Sabbath of the year be spent by those who shall have purchased it, in reading and praying over it. Go from the table of the Lord, where you will have renewed your dedication to his service and brought yourself under the obligation of another vow, to be for

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ever, and more than ever his, to your private place of communion with him, and while the recollection of those solemn transactions is fresh on your mind, peruse these pages, with earnest supplication, practical purpose, and firm resolve.

Commending you to God and the word of his grace,

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend and Pastor,

J. A. JAMES.

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