

THE THEOLOGY
OF
CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE,

DESIGNED AS

AN EXPOSITION OF THE "COMMON FAITH"

OF THE

CHURCH OF GOD.

BY

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P R E F A C E .



THERE is a "COMMON FAITH"¹ of the Church of God on earth ; and this, extending to a far greater number of particulars than one would think from examining the various systems of theology which find favor with Christian men.

In the following treatise the author has attempted to give a systematic presentation of this common faith. The treatise bears the title of "THE THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE," because—1. This "common faith" is a faith to which the Christian comes from the study of God's Word in the light of Christian experience ; and because—2. It is this "common faith" alone, which will fully explain and illustrate Christian experience, as it presents itself in the life of the child of God in the world.

In offering such a work to the Christian public, the author is fully aware of the apparent presumption which there is in one man's thus undertaking to speak for the whole Church of God ; and in order to break the force—in so far as he rightfully may—of any unfavorable prejudice hence arising, he would say, the work has not been hastily undertaken, nor has it been hastily executed. The subject is one which has occupied his thoughts, to a greater or less extent, during a ministerial life of twenty years.

Nor has he shut his eyes to the real difficulties of the

¹ Titus, i. 4.

work. That he has so perfectly succeeded in his undertaking, that his own views in systematic theology have in no instance given their tinge to the language used in setting forth the truth, or even a peculiar aspect to the truth itself, is more than was to be expected. And yet, he would fain hope that the experienced Christian—it matters not in what part of the visible Church he has his place—will find nothing stated as God's truth, in the following treatise, which he cannot receive as such.

An exhibition of our "common faith," if fairly and faithfully given, may prove of service to the Church—

1. In meeting the cavil of the Infidel and the Romanist, grounded on the lack of outward, formal, unity in Evangelical Christendom.

2. In showing to the thoughtful man of the world just what our "common faith" is, and the relation in which it stands to the Christian life; in giving to the inquirer an answer to the question—what is this "experimental religion" of which Christians speak?

3. In serving as a guide to the young Christian in his study of God's truth; and in giving distinctness and consistency to the views of older disciples. It is often true—and not in the case of our religious faith alone—that truth really believed, is yet indistinctly apprehended; and in such circumstances, the most valuable service which can be rendered, is to give distinctness and consistency to that faith—to show the believer just what he believes, and why he believes it.

With the prayer that, in so far as this is a fair exhibition of God's truth, he may bless it, the work is given to the public.

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INTRODUCTION.



“AND he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in THE UNITY OF THE FAITH, AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”—
EPHESIANS, iv. 11-15.

THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

INTRODUCTION.

CHRISTIAN UNITY.

§ 1. *Christian Unity a Result of Christian Experience.*

IT TAKES A GREAT DEAL OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE TO MAKE A GOOD THEOLOGIAN—was the remark of an aged Christian, made to the author some twenty years ago.

The idea expressed in these words is a scriptural one, and meets us in various forms in the Word of God.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”—Prov. i. 7. “We are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us in scripture, unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence for God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to him.”—HENRY.

“I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.”—Ps. cxix. 100. “The love of the truth prepares for the light of it.”—HENRY.

“Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—2 Pet. iii. 18. A real growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and a growth in grace, go hand in hand. The Christian can make no true progress in the one without making a correspondent progress in the other.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”—2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. “Truth is in order to goodness.” All scripture truth is practical, and like other practical truth, can be fully understood only when studied in its practical application.

Christian experience is the result of the practical application of the truth of Scripture to the purposes of the Christian life; as that truth guides “the man of God” in his darkness, relieves him in his difficulties, comforts him in his sorrows, sustains him under his trials—as it “makes him free,”¹ as it “sanctifies”² him, as it “saves”³ him.

It should therefore cause us no surprise, that

¹ John, viii. 32.

² John, xvii. 17.

³ 2 Thess. ii. 13.

Christians, under the teaching of experience, illustrated and enforced as the lessons of experience are by the Spirit of God, should come to entertain the same views of divine truth in all its more important particulars—that Christians, old in the Christian life and mature in grace, should use so nearly the same language, when they “speak one to another” of the things of God, or address themselves to God in prayer, that it is impossible to tell in what school of theology they have been reared—that in their life, there should be a hearty recognition of brotherhood in all that bear the image of Christ, it matters not in what particular part of the visible church they may have their register—that thus, the church on earth should present something of that “unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,” which shall characterize her, when Christ “shall present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.”¹ The effect of practical study here, is but the same with its effect in other departments of human knowledge.

Would we, in our study of this subject, press our investigations beyond such general results as those stated above, we must look more narrowly into—
1. The nature of the divisions which exist in the church of God, and—2. The nature of the theology

¹ Eph. v. 27.

of Christian experience in which the "common faith" of the church is embodied.

§ 2. *Extent of the Divisions in the visible Church.*

With respect to the existing divisions in the church of God, let the reader remark :

1. On all the great doctrines of Christian revelation the different evangelical churches agree, even as those doctrines are formally expressed in their several creeds. It is on minor points alone, points confessedly such in so far as the salvation of the soul is concerned, they differ. In some instances, churches have been rent asunder, and the division has become permanent, by differences respecting mere matters of expediency, differences which do not concern the faith in Christ.

2. Not a little of the controversy which marks the history of the church has arisen out of a misunderstanding respecting the use of theological terms. Systematic theology, like every other science, must have, to some extent, a language of its own. Especially is this true in the department of polemic theology. Here, the Christian theologian encounters the infidel and errorist of every shade; and his business is to expose their sophistry, to refute their arguments, and to give "a reason for the hope that

is in him." As the most plausible objections to Christianity, and the errors that have been attempted to be substituted for gospel truths, have generally been philosophical in their character, "oppositions of science, falsely so called,"¹ the Christian polemic has been under the necessity of following the errorist out on to his own ground. In this way, much of the peculiar phraseology of theological science has come into use.

It is needful, not so much to express positive truth, as to guard against the introduction of specious error. It belongs to the "munitions of war," rather than to the "provisions" of the camp. It cannot be dispensed with in dealing with the enemy, but it may be all safely laid aside, and in fact, is laid aside, in the intercourse of friends. In the communings of the pious soul with God it has never been introduced.

Calvin, when treating of the terms "substance" and "person," as used in stating the doctrine of the Trinity, after remarking that such terms seem necessary, "that no subterfuge may remain to ungodly men, to whom ambiguity of expression is a kind of hiding-place," adds—"I wish, indeed, that such terms were buried, provided that all would concur in the belief that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 20.

God, and yet, that the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that each has his peculiar subsistence.”—*Cal. Ins.* book i. ch. 13.

3. Different minds are so differently constituted, that what seems to one man a necessary consequence of a certain doctrine, and what may be, in fact, a truly logical consequence, so that his reception of the one would necessarily imply his reception of the other, does not so present itself to another man. It is no more true in the department of theology than in any other department of human knowledge, that all men are alike accurate thinkers and logical reasoners. Hence it comes that the logical importance of a doctrine, its importance as a part of a system of theology, is often very different from its practical importance, its importance when viewed as a part of the faith which is to control the Christian life. The real faith of many a man is better than his creed.

§ 3. *The nature of the Theology of Christian Experience.*

The peculiarities of the theology of Christian experience, viewed as a system, arise principally from these facts :

1. It takes the doctrine of “Christ, and him cruci-

fied" as its central truth, and all other truths are studied in their relation to this.

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul declares, respecting his ministry—"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."¹ He does not here mean to affirm that he had never preached at Corinth upon any other topics than Christ's person and work. It is evident from this very epistle that he had preached to them on other topics—but, 1. That this topic was the grand topic of his preaching; and, 2. That all other topics were treated of in their relation to this, as they illustrated it, and were illustrated by it.

In almost every department of human knowledge, we may give to truth the form of science, *i. e.* we may give it systematic arrangement, by taking any one of several truths as the central truth of the system; and the form in which many a truth will have to be expressed, and the phase in which it will present itself will be affected by the selection of a central truth which we have made. Astronomers tell us that our sun is but one of many in the heavens, and they tell us, also, that many of these suns differ in the color of their light from ours. Should our sun be replaced by some other of a different color,—one sending forth green or red light, instead of white

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

as ours does—the whole appearance of our world would be changed, and yet that world would remain in substance the same that it had ever been. An effect analogous to this is produced upon every science—theology, in the number—by changing the central truth of the system.

2. It deals with truth in the concrete rather than in the abstract; as it applies, and is illustrated in the Christian life, and not as it adapts itself to the necessities of metaphysical speculation.

When a Christian reads the record—“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: *whose heart the Lord opened*, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of by Paul,”¹ or David’s prayer—“*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,*”² he finds no difficulty in the hearty reception of the doctrine of God’s agency in conversion as here set forth. There is no Christian that has not repeated the prayer of David on his own behalf; none, that has not prayed on behalf of unconverted friends, that the Lord would open their hearts, as he did the heart of Lydia. And yet, this very doctrine, when the attempt has been made to state it in such a way as to meet the demands of metaphysical speculation,

¹ Acts, xvi. 14.

² Psalms, li. 10.

has been, and is a fruitful source of controversy in the church.

As illustrating the effect of thus taking "Christ and him crucified" as the central truth, and dealing with truth in the concrete, we would ask the reader's attention to the following extract from the "Life of Simeon."

"A young minister, about three or four years after he was ordained, had an opportunity of conversing familiarly with the great and venerable leader of the Arminians in this kingdom;¹ and wishing to improve the occasion to the uttermost, he addressed him nearly in the following words:

"'Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore, I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I begin the combat, with your permission, I will ask you a few questions, not from impertinent curiosity, but for real instruction.' Permission being readily and kindly granted, the young minister proceeded to ask:

"'Pray, sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning unto God, if God had not first put it into your heart?' 'Yes,' says the veteran, 'I do, indeed.'

¹ John Wesley.

“And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything that you can do; and do you look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ? ‘Yes, solely through Christ.’

“But, sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works? ‘No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last.’

“Allowing that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power? ‘No.’

“What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother’s arms? ‘Yes; altogether.’

“And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom? ‘Yes; I have no hope but in him.’

“Then, sir, with your leave, I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is, in substance, all that I hold, and as I hold it: and, therefore, if you please, instead of searching out phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things in which we agree.’

“The Arminian leader was so pleased with the

conversation, that he made particular mention of it in his journals; and notwithstanding there never afterwards was any connection between the parties, he retained an unfeigned regard for his young inquirer to the hour of his death."—CARUS' *Life of Simeon*, pp. 106-7.

The theology of Christian experience is not properly "a harmony" of the discordant systems of theology current among Christian men. Much less is it an "eclectic" system, a selection of truths made upon the principle of striking out all upon which these systems differ. The "negative theology" which would be obtained by this latter process, is farther from "the common faith" than the most objectionable positive system which has ever found favor in the church. The theology of Christian experience is an independent system, characterized by its arrangement of all revealed truth around "Christ and him crucified," as its central truth, and its presentation of truth as it illustrates and is illustrated by Christian experience.

§ 4. *The Scriptural Idea of Christian Unity.*

This "unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of God," seen in the earlier stages of the Christian life, and which becomes more and more perfect as

Christian character is developed and they approach unto "the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus"—and not such an external unity as Romanists contend for, a unity in church order, and discipline, and government—is the unity, if we mistake not, which the scriptures represent as characteristic of the true church of God in the world.

That the different portions of the visible church will ever be united under one organization here on earth, is nowhere distinctly promised in Scripture. Nor does God's providence toward that church give us any good reason to expect it.

The hope of such a consummation, entertained by many, seems to be based, in part at least, upon a radical misconception of the nature of the church—in making some form of organization, on some particular rite, an essential element in the church's being, instead of regarding the church as the school and kingdom of Christ, characterized by its possession of the truth, in which his people are gathered for the purpose of godly living, and the efficient discharge of the commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This last-mentioned idea of the visible church is that to which the experienced Christian, sooner or later, comes—is the doctrine of the church as it enters into the theology of Christian experience. Hence it is that

aged Christians, Christians old in the Christian life, in spite of early prejudices, and in spite of false theories of the church, show in a thousand ways their hearty recognition of brotherhood in all that bear the image of Christ, and are laboring for the spread of the gospel among men.

It is a lamentable fact that the divisions of the church into separate denominations have often been made in a very unchristian spirit; and in some instances, with results most disastrous to the cause of Christ in the world. But then, on the other hand, the attempts which have been made, from time to time, to secure and maintain a formal unity, have often proved equally, or more disastrous. Sometimes resulting in the persecution of the weaker by the stronger party; at other times, in a laxity of faith, utterly at variance with that love for God's truth, even in its least important particular, which lies at the foundation of all real "growth in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Denominational organization in the church of God is, in its nature, an evil; and yet, would it seem to be a necessary evil in this present world; and therefore, an evil which God has and will overrule for good.

If we regard the experience of the individual Christian here as foreshadowing that which shall be the experience of the church—and in many par-

particulars such is undoubtedly the case—the unity to which the church will attain in its most perfect form on earth, will be a unity in faith and knowledge, and not a unity in rites and external order; a unity which will appear in all God's people acknowledging in their hearts and in their lives their Christian brotherhood; and not in their being gathered under one church organization, either through the instrumentality of a latitudinarian act of comprehension, or by the gradual and successive absorption of all the different denominations by one of the number.

§ 5. *Plan of the present Treatise.*

A Christian is one who “believes in the Lord Jesus Christ,”¹ as revealed in Scripture. The theology of Christian experience, therefore, starts with the reception of the Scriptures as the Word of God.

Hence, in a treatise such as this, it seems proper to begin with “CHRISTIAN APOLOGY,” as it is termed by the Fathers; *i. e.* an exhibition of the evidence upon which we receive the Scriptures as the Word of God.

Much of this evidence is of the kind pointed out in our Lord's words, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or

¹ Acts, xvi. 31.

whether I speak of myself,"¹ and hence the course proposed will necessarily involve something of repetition in the work. But then, on the other hand, if the reader starts in his examination of Christian theology proper, with clear and distinct notions of the nature of the evidence upon which the scriptures are received as from God, every separate truth of that theology in which is exhibited the glory of God, or an adaptation in Christianity to the necessities of man, becomes a new argument for the divine origin of Christianity; and the advantages hence resulting will, we think, more than counterbalance any disadvantages arising from unavoidable repetition.

Augustine, in common with most of the Christian Fathers, derives the word *religion* from *re-ligare*, to bind anew. According to this etymology, a religion implies the renewal of a broken bond; and as the word is never used with reference to mere earthly relations, the renewal of a broken bond between man and God. In this sense of the word, Christianity is a *religion*, as contradistinguished from a system of mere theology, *i. e.* an exhibition of God's nature and attributes, on the one hand, and a system of ethical philosophy, on the other.

Inspired Paul styles the Christian revelation the "*Word of reconciliation.*"² Reconciliation implies a

¹ John, vii. 17.

² 2 Cor. v. 18.

previously existing estrangement; that the parties to be reconciled are at enmity one with the other. And Christian revelation is styled the "Word of reconciliation," because it is a revelation of God's method of reconciling to himself a world that is at enmity with him, of knitting anew the bonds which sin has broken.

Atonement and *regeneration* are the two great doctrines of the Christian religion, both as that religion is set forth on the page of revelation, and as it presents itself in "the common faith" of the church. Blot these out from the page of revelation, and you destroy revelation itself. Take them away from the faith of the church, and you leave her nothing worth contending for.

Atonement and regeneration, both alike, contemplate man as a sinner. The one, as a sinner condemned, under the sentence of a righteous law, and awaiting the execution of that sentence; the other, as a sinner, "dead in sin," and needing to be "born again" ere he can "see the kingdom of God"—either that kingdom set up in his own soul in this present life, or that kingdom in its glorious perfection, as it shall be revealed in the world to come.

In attempting to systematize the truth taught us in the Christian Scriptures—and Christian theology is nothing but Scripture truth systematized—the sim-

plest and most natural method is to examine into—

1. The nature and history of sin, and the ruin which it has brought upon man, and—

2. The nature and history of the redemption which God has provided for man the sinner, as embraced in the great doctrines of atonement and regeneration, and as illustrated in the life of the man of God in this present world.

This method has the further recommendation, that it is in this order truth presents itself in actual Christian experience; that it is in this order they learn the truth who are taught of the spirit “to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.”¹ As Moses preceded and prepared the way for Christ in the history of the church, so does the law, in its work of convincing of sin, precede and prepare the way for the gospel in its saving power. “The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith.”²

In the following treatise :

BOOK I., entitled CHRISTIAN APOLOGY, is occupied with an exhibition of the evidence upon which we receive the Scriptures as the Word of God.

BOOK II., entitled SIN, contains, 1. An account of sin and the ruin it has wrought, as actually existing

¹ John, xvii. 3.

² Gal. iii. 24.

in the soul of man and manifesting themselves in his life; and, 2. The Scripture account of the way in which sin entered the world and "death by sin."

BOOK III., entitled REDEMPTION, treats of, 1. Atonement, *i. e.* God's method of saving the sinner from the condemnation due to his sins, and restoring him again to favor; and, 2. Regeneration, *i. e.* God's method of saving the sinner from his present death in sin, and commencing in him a new life which shall ripen into life eternal. And—

BOOK IV., entitled THE NEW CREATURE, in which the application of the doctrines of atonement and regeneration to the life of the man of God in this present world are more particularly traced out.

BOOK I.

CHRISTIAN APOLOGY.



“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”—1 Pet. iii. 15.

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—2 Pet. i. 16.



PART I.

MAN'S RELIGIOUS NATURE.



CHAPTER I.

SOURCES OF MAN'S RELIGIOUS IDEAS.

“For the invisible things of him (*i. e.* God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”—Rom. i. 20.

“SUPPOSE that the sun, rising and setting as at present, had been perpetually hid from the eye by an intervening cloud or shade which concealed his body without obstructing his beams, there might still have been a universal impression that a great luminary existed as the cause of the light which daily illuminated our globe. Different persons might have fixed on different objects as reflecting the light of heaven most impressively; some on fleecy or gilded clouds; others on the lively verdure of the grass and forests, or on the cerulean ocean, or on the rich grain of autumn glistening in the yellow beams; but all would

have rejoiced to conclude that there was a sun behind the veil.”—M^cCOSE.

In a way similar to this does Paul affirm that God, in his eternal power and Godhead, is made known to man. Thus does he account for the fact that a belief in the existence of God is universal among men. The fact itself will not admit of question. In the few instances in which travellers have reported the existence of tribes of men destitute of all ideas of God, subsequent and more careful examination has shown the report to be erroneous.

Under the operation of sin, indulged through many generations, man may, and does, become deeply degraded; and the belief in a being invisible and far above him, in whose power he is and to whom he is accountable, may become so indistinct as to seem to have disappeared from his mind. Yet, upon closer examination, the idea has always been found there; and as he has risen again in the scale of being—has been restored again to his humanity—this idea has become more and more distinct and comprehensive.

Along with the idea of the existence of God as the governor of the world, and one to whom man is accountable, and inseparably connected with it, comes the idea of worship. Where men have become “vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart

has been darkened,"¹ this worship often becomes bloody, obscene, and even ridiculous; yet in some form is God worshipped by all men. And this universal prevalence of worship is, at once, a consequence and a proof of the universal belief in the existence of God.

In this sense, as believing in the existence of God and in accountability to him, and as rendering to God worship of some kind, and not as loving God or leading a holy life on earth, it is affirmed of man that he is a religious being.

If we push our inquiries a little further, and ask—How does man come thus universally to believe in the existence of God? The answer is, in general terms, "the invisible things of God are understood by the things that are made," *i. e.* by God's works, including his works of providence, as well as his works of creation, for such is the proper compass of the Greek here translated "things that are made."

1. The evidences of design are so many and so striking in the world around us, and in the world within us, our bodies and our spirits, that from the evident design, the mind naturally passes on and up to the designer. Heathen philosophers, *e. g.* Socrates and Aristotle, have written largely and eloquently upon this theme. And when the pious Psalmist ex-

¹ Rom. i. 21.

claims, "I will praise THEE; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are THY works; and that my soul knoweth right well,"¹ the heart of man promptly responds to the exclamation.

2. The existence of God is rendered evident, also, by his providence; both by the care which he takes of man, and by the judgments with which from time to time he visits the world. God hath "not left himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."² "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."³

3. "The conscience, 'the law written in their hearts,' is a ready and powerful means of suggesting the idea of God to the mind. We believe that it is by it, rather than by any careful observation of nature, material or spiritual, that mankind have their thoughts directed to God. It is not so much by what he sees around him, as by what he feels within him, that man is led to believe in a ruler of the world. A conscience, speaking as one having authority, and in behalf of God, is the monitor by which he is reminded most frequently and emphatically of his governor and judge."—M'COSE. "For the Gentiles

¹ Psalms, cxxxix. 14.

² Acts, xiv. 17.

³ Isaiah, xxvi. 9.

which have not the law (*i. e.* the written law), are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another.”¹

¹ Rom. ii. 14, 15.

CHAPTER II.

HEATHEN RELIGIONS.

“Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness.”—ROM. i. 21, 24.

As one looks at the dark picture of heathenism which Paul gives us in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans—dark, but not so dark as that drawn by the most distinguished Greek and Latin authors of their own countrymen; not more dark than truth would require us to draw of heathenism as it exists at the present day—the question comes up—Can heathenism be called a religion?—Can these services in temples, which are but gorgeous brothels, and sacrifices, which are but “a horrid mixture of superstition and cruelty,” be called worship?

The only rational account of the origin of this state

of things is that which Paul gives us. That sin should develop itself, should grow not only in the heart of the individual sinner, but among a people from generation to generation, is what human experience teaches us to expect. "A foolish heart darkened,"—and the scriptures do not make the broad distinction between the intellect and the moral faculties, which we are accustomed to make, and the term "heart" is often used to mean the whole of man's spiritual being, including the intellect, conscience, will, and affections—becomes the source of terrible evil.

Man must have some object of worship; and when he will not retain the knowledge of the true God, he substitutes false gods in his place. When "given up" of God, whom he will not worship, there is no loathsome, cruel absurdity to which he has not turned. And all the vile and bloody rites with which the heathen seek to propitiate their false gods, when properly considered, do but show the more clearly the strength of man's natural propensity to worship.

A people always become assimilated in their character to the gods they worship. Odin and Thor, the gods of the northern tribes who overthrew the Roman empire, were "hero-kings," blood-thirsty and cruel: and their worshippers "seemed like

blood-hounds, to be possessed of a horrid delight when they were revelling in scenes of blood and slaughter." Venus, worshipped by all the elder nations of antiquity, was a personification of lust; and we are not surprised to be told, as we are by Strabo, that "at Corinth, there was a temple of Venus, where more than a thousand courtesans regularly prostituted themselves in honor of the goddess;" nor to read the charges which Paul brings against them, in immediate connection with the passage quoted at the head of this chapter.

Among the gods worshipped by the polished Greeks and Romans—taking the most favorable representations of their characters and history, that given by the poets—there is not one, were he now a man among men, who would be tolerated in decent, Christian society. And so great was the danger to sound morality hence arising, that Plato advised that their histories should not be rehearsed in public lest they should influence their youth to the commission of crime.

That man should become assimilated to the gods he worshipped, seems necessarily to result from his constitution as a religious being. This principle of assimilation, a principle of wondrous potency for good where the god worshipped is the true God, just, and holy, and pure, and good; is a source of terrible

evil where man worships false gods or devils. Like the pillar of cloud between the camp of Israel and the Egyptians, while it gives light to these, it is a cloud and darkness to the other.

Thus is it that the abounding wickedness of heathendom is clearly to be traced back to man's "not liking to retain God in his knowledge;" and this abounding wickedness is but another proof of the fact that man is, by nature, a religious being.

CHAPTER III.

NATURE AND REALITY OF CONSCIENCE.

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law,” *i. e.* the written law—“are a law unto themselves. Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”
Rom. ii. 14, 15.

“THE expression, ‘by nature,’ is common in all languages, and is used, as in this case by the Apostle, to refer to a source of action independent of external causes and influences. When it is said that an animal is cruel ‘by nature,’ it is meant that its cruelty is to be accounted for by its natural constitution, and not by imitation or example. When the Gentiles are said to ‘do by nature the things of the law,’ it is meant that they have not been taught by others. It is neither by instruction nor example, but by their own innate sense of right and wrong, that they are directed. Having this natural sense of

right and wrong, though destitute of a law externally revealed, they are a law unto themselves.”—
HODGE.

With the statement of Paul, quoted above, compare that of Cicero: “Right reason is itself a law, congenial to the feelings of nature, diffused among all men, uniform, eternal, calling us imperiously to our duty, and peremptorily prohibiting every violation of it. Nor does it speak one language at Rome and another at Athens, varying from place to place, or from time to time; but it addresses itself to all ages, deriving its authority from the common sovereign of the universe, and carrying home its sanctions to every breast, by the inevitable punishment which it inflicts on transgressors.”

Thus the Christian, Paul, and the heathen, Cicero, both testify to—1. The existence of conscience as an original element in man’s spiritual nature; and 2. To the rightful and sovereign authority of conscience in the human soul.

Would we understand this remarkable coincidence in testimony between the Apostle and the philosopher, we have but to turn our eye inward, upon our own souls, and notice what from time to time takes place there.

On certain propositions being brought under review, there arises the conviction respecting them—

this is *true*—that is *false*. The attribute or faculty with which these convictions originate is called the *understanding* or *reason*. And all that we know respecting the manner in which these convictions originate, is that they spring up naturally, when the propositions themselves are fairly apprehended.

On the actions of an intelligent, moral agent being brought under review, there arises, in just the same way, a conviction respecting them which we express in the words—this is *right*—that is *wrong*. The attribute or faculty with which these convictions originate is called the *conscience*.

The conviction expressed in the words “this is right—that is wrong,” is as different from that expressed in the words, “this is true—that this false,” as an impression of sight is from one of sound. The clearest convictions of truth or falsehood may exist,—the conviction of the truth of a mathematical proposition, for example—without the idea of right or wrong being involved in it, or in any way associated with it. And when a cruel action is considered, we pronounce it to be wrong, without any idea of truth or falsehood entering into our decision. Hence we conclude, that the conscience is an attribute or faculty of the soul, different and distinct from the understanding. Both alike, enter into the original constitution of the human soul.

When Paul writes, as he does to the Corinthians—"For our rejoicings is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward"¹—we have no difficulty in understanding him. We know what he speaks of, from what we have learned of an approving conscience; of man's "thoughts *excusing* one another," in our own experience.

And when we read—"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief-priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."² We feel that the gospel narrative is true to nature. Every man, in his own experience, has learned so much of the power of a condemning conscience, of man's "thoughts *accusing* one another," that he is in no way surprised at Judas casting down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple, and going out and hanging himself.

¹ 2 Cor. i. 12.

² Matt. xxvii. 3, 5.

In such facts as these, we have, at once, a proof and an illustration of the truth, that conscience sits in the human soul, a judge, deriving its authority from God himself, and applying to man's conduct a law, the obligations of which he can neither deny nor ignore. "To preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right—had it power as it has manifest authority—it would absolutely govern the world."—Br. BUTLER.

The idea of law involves that of sanctions, by which obedience is to be enforced. Directions given without sanctions are mere advice, and rise not to the dignity of law. Conscience, sitting as judge, to administer justice under "the law written on man's heart," besides the solemn sanctions connected with the world to come—sanctions neither unknown, nor unfeared even among the heathen—has an attendant retinue of feelings, emotions, passions, by which it enforces obedience through rewards and punishments belonging to this present life. The "rejoicing" of which Paul speaks, was a present reward for his "simplicity and godly sincerity," received under the decision of conscience. The terrible remorse which Judas suffered for his treachery, came at the bidding of conscience; and was but one from the train of its attendant retinue of passions, which,

by God's appointment, often follow up the commission of crime "with more fearful lashings than the serpent-covered furies were ever supposed to have inflicted."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DECISIONS OF CONSCIENCE.

“I verily thought with myself, that I OUGHT to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth ; which things I also did in Jerusalem ; And many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief-priests ; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I persecuted them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme ; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”—Acts xxvi. 9-11.

“OUGHT” and “ought not,” is the peculiar language in which conscience utters its decisions. And when Paul writes, “I verily thought that I OUGHT to do many things against the name of Jesus,” we must understand him as affirming that he had acted the part of a bloody persecutor at the bidding of conscience.

How are we to reconcile such a statement as this, with that from his epistle to the Corinthians, quoted in the preceding chapter? How are we to understand the fact, that Paul, at one time, conscientiously

persecuted the disciples of Jesus, and at another, just as conscientiously “preached the faith which once he destroyed?” And more especially—how are such facts to be reconciled with the idea of uniformity in the decisions of conscience, the idea of conscience as “a law,” and a righteous judge in the soul?

In order to a correct answer of these questions, we must take account of the fact, that conscience pronounces its decisions, not directly upon man’s acts, in the ordinary sense of the word action; but upon the feelings or motives out of which the action springs.

In the case before us, the reigning motive in the heart of Paul *the persecutor*, is “zeal for God”—a zeal without knowledge, it is true, but not on that account less properly a “zeal for God.” The reigning motive in the heart of Paul *the apostle*, as “he preached the faith which once he destroyed,” is “zeal for God”—a zeal according to knowledge now. And it is of this “zeal for God,” in both instances alike, the conscience directly approves. There is no discrepancy, then, between these two decisions of conscience. “Zeal for God” is a righteous motive, and this is just what the conscience declares in the one case as well as the other.

Through the influence of ‘prejudice, and the false representations of others, Paul *the persecutor*, verily

believed that Jesus of Nazareth was an impostor, aiming at the destruction of God's religion from among men. And believing this, through "zeal for God," he shuts up in prison the followers of Jesus, and when they were put to death he gave his voice against them.

Afterwards, Paul *the apostle*, recognizes in this same Jesus of Nazareth his nation's long-promised Messiah, Immanuel, God with men; and he sees in his work and doctrine the fulfillment, the completion, the perfection of the law and the prophets. And thus the whole case is changed. "Zeal for God" now makes him as fearless and faithful a preacher of the religion of Jesus, as he was once its deadliest persecutor.

The actions are as different as actions well can be. The motives from which they spring are one and the same.

From ignorance or willful disregard of the nature of the decisions of conscience, some have inferred, from facts such as those we have just examined in the history of Paul, that conscience was not an original element in the soul, but the mere creature of education; and therefore, in no proper sense of the expression, to be considered "a law." And others, that the decisions of conscience are variable, and not to be relied upon in distinguishing between right and

wrong. The facts, when understood, give no countenance to such conclusions as these.

In describing the great apostasy, Paul speaks of those "having their CONSCIENCE SEARED with a hot iron,"¹ by which most commentators understand a conscience rendered insensible by a long continued and willful perseverance in sin, just as any part of the body is rendered callous by burning it with a hot iron. That such an effect should be thus produced upon the conscience is in perfect analogy with what we know of man's nature.

The intellect, fitted and intended of God to distinguish between truth and error, under the influence of long continued neglect or habitual sophistry, at length ceases to recognize truth, be it never so clearly presented. So with the conscience. Let its decisions be often disregarded, and, in many case, it will cease to make its voice heard in the soul. Upon this principle we account for the fact that wicked men often suffer but little disturbance from conscience for a long time together. In such cases, however, conscience is not destroyed, nor is it dethroned, as is evident from its sometimes suddenly resuming its office and authority, and, even in this present life, enforcing its decisions with terrible power.

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 2.

PART II.

THE FAITH OF "MEN OF THE WORLD."



CHAPTER V.

INFIDELS AND INFIDELITY.

"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"—ISAIAH, xliv. 20.

THE Bible claims to be the Word of God, and this in a peculiar sense, a sense in which no other book has ever claimed to be from him. This claim of the Bible has been and is generally admitted wherever it has gone, and the Christian Scriptures are now received as the Word of God among the most enlightened nations of the earth.

Nevertheless, among every people some are to be found who do not allow this claim. Infidels form a part of almost every Christian community. That a revelation coming as the Bible does with reproof for man's vices, condemnation of his sins, and crossing in

a thousand ways the desires of the natural heart, should be rejected by many, is nothing more than is to be expected—more especially, if the evidence by which it is authenticated be such as to convince the ingenuous, but not to compel the faith of the unwilling; and such authentication is all that is claimed for the Bible. Authentication, such as would compel all men to believe, would be at variance, not only with the course which God ordinarily pursues with man, but also with the relation which man sustains to God, as a free agent, living under established law.

When we come to inquire more particularly into the nature and history of this infidelity, as it exists in the individual soul, we cannot but notice certain facts strongly corroborating the representation of Scripture—“A deceived heart hath turned him aside,” all pointing to the heart, and not the intellect, as the true seat and source of infidelity.

1. The logic of infidelity, if logic it may be called, is made up of little besides mere shreds and patches of argument: of doubts, of cavils, and of objections; and these, directed immediately against the doctrines of the Bible, which are most at variance with the desires of the natural heart.

2. The creed of the infidel, in so far as he has a creed, is made up of articles incongruous, and often

utterly inconsistent with one another. The following summary of the infidel faith of the last century, given by one of the elder British essayists, can hardly be considered a caricature :

“THE UNBELIEVER’S CREED.

“I believe that there is no God, but that matter is God; and that it is no matter whether there is any God or no.

“I believe that the world was not made; that the world made itself; and that it had no beginning, and will last forever, world without end.

“I believe that man is a beast; that the soul is the body, and the body the soul; and that after death there is neither body nor soul.

“I believe that there is no religion; that natural religion is the only religion, and that all religion is unnatural.

“I believe not in Moses; I believe in the ‘First Philosophy;’ I believe not in the evangelists; I believe in Chubb, Collins, Toland, Tindal, Morgan, Mandeville, Hobbes, Shaftesbury; I believe in Lord Bolingbroke, I believe not in St. Paul.

“I believe not in revelation, I believe in tradition; I believe in the Talmud, I believe in the Koran, I

believe not in the Bible; I believe in Socrates, I believe in Confucius, I believe in Sanchoniathon, I believe in Mahomet, I believe not in Christ.

“Lastly, I believe in all unbelief.”—*Connoisseur*, No. 9.

In our day, popular infidelity has become more speculative and ethereal than it was in the days of Addison and Steele; but it is not one whit more consistent with itself now than then.

3. Infidelity is generally accompanied by gross ignorance of the Bible, if not a proper outgrowth of such ignorance; and will seldom stand before an ingenuous and thorough examination of the Scriptures themselves.

“It is stated by Rev. T. T. Biddolph, that Lord Lyttleton and his friend Gilbert West, Esq., both men of acknowledged talents, had imbibed the principles of infidelity from a superficial view of the Scriptures. Fully persuaded that the Bible was an imposture, they determined to expose the cheat. Lord Lyttleton chose the Conversion of Paul, and Mr. West the Resurrection of Christ, for the subject of hostile criticism. Both sat down to their respective tasks full of prejudice. The result of their separate attempts was, that they were both converted by their efforts to overthrow the truth of Christianity. And when they came together, it was not, as they had ex-

pected, to exult over an imposture exposed to ridicule; but to lament over their own folly, and to felicitate each other on their joint conviction that the Bible was the Word of God. Their able inquiries have furnished two of the most valuable treatises in favor of revelation, the one entitled "Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul," and the other, "Observations on the Resurrection of Christ."

4. Men who have gloried in their infidelity in their days of prosperity, safety, and health, have renounced it all when misfortune, danger, or death has been at hand.

Of Voltaire it is related, upon good authority, that "Immediately after his return from the theatre, he felt that the stroke of death had arrested him. Immediately, his friends crowded around him, and his brethren of the Illuminati exhorted him to die like a hero. In spite of these admonitions, he sent for the curé of St. Genevais; and after confession, signed, in the presence of the Abbé Mignot (his nephew), and the Marquis de Villeville (one of the Illuminati), his recantation of his former principles. After this visit, the curé was no more allowed to see him. His former friends having obtained possession of his house, interdicted all access to him. D'Alembert, Diderot, and about twenty others, who beset his apartment, never approached him without receiving

some bitter execration. Often he would curse them, and exclaim, 'Retire! it is you who have brought me to my present state. And what a wretched glory have you procured me!'

"These reproaches were succeeded by the dreadful recollection of his own part in the conspiracy against religion. He was heard in anguish, and in dread, alternately supplicating or blaspheming that God against whom he had conspired. He would cry out, in plaintive accents, 'Oh, Christ! Oh, Jesus Christ!' and then complain that he was deserted of God and man."

5. The conversion of many an infidel, considering that conversion simply as an intellectual phenomenon, furnishes a striking illustration of the truth.

The infidel, to-day, is firmly established in his infidelity. Preach the gospel to him in all its winning grace, it has no charm for him; preach the law with all its awful sanctions, and he receives it with a sneer. Christian revelation, as a whole, he regards with contempt; and for its every separate doctrine he has his separate cavil.

This man is brought under the influence of "conviction"—it matters not, for our present purpose, just how this conviction is produced. And without any new argument from what is called the "external evidences of Christianity" having even presented it-

self to his mind, his infidelity vanishes. His unanswerable refutations, his insuperable objections, his difficulties, his cavils, his sneers, all disappear, like the airy ghosts with which superstition peoples the darkness of the night are wont to disappear at the dawning. A conviction that the Bible is the Word of God takes possession of him, and holds him as with "a giant's grasp." His physical frame sometimes trembles under its influence. Distressed, alarmed, he cannot rest, and he finds no peace until he finds it in believing in Jesus—the very Jesus whom he once scorned.

And this faith, thus springing up in his soul, is not a passing impression, but an abiding conviction, remodelling his whole character, controlling his whole life. He who, but a little while ago, was in the view of the Christian, as "one possessed of a devil, exceeding fierce, so that no man could bind him," now sits at the feet of Jesus, "clothed and in his right mind."

This change in the man has been wrought, not by the presentation of any new argument "*ab extra*," not by the evident fulfillment of any prophecy, not by any new evidence that the miracles ascribed to Christ were really wrought by him. The case is evidently one of those in which unbelief has its seat in the heart, and not in the understanding—in which

a man does not believe because he wishes not to believe; and where, when the heart is set right, "the mind passes rapidly, though rationally, from a state of skepticism to one of faith, without any change in the mere external evidence presented to it."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BIBLE DEMAND.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”—MARK, xvi. 15, 16.

IN this passage—and many others of similar import might be quoted—“the Bible demands immediate and implicit faith from all to whom it comes. It may lie neglected in the study of the philosopher, or in the chest of the outcast sailor; or it may be given by a missionary, yet ignorant of the language, to the heathen to whom he ministers. The moment, however, it is opened, in these or any other circumstances, it utters the same calm voice, ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.’”¹ If this demand was confined to the educated, we might suppose it to rest on evidence which the educated only are able

¹ John, iii. 36.

to appreciate; or if it was made of those only to whom the Scriptures are presented by regularly commissioned ministers, we might suppose it rested on their authority; but it is not thus confined. It is inseparable from the word itself. It is as imperative when the Bible is read by a child to a company of Pagans, as when it is proclaimed in a cathedral.”
—HODGE.

The demand of faith cannot reasonably be more extensive than the exhibition of evidence. If God gives to man a revelation demanding faith on his part, that revelation ought to come so attested as to furnish proper grounds for such faith. The Bible, if it be from God, ought to contain and carry with it its own evidence, for nothing short of this will furnish a proper foundation for the demand which it makes to be received as from God.

We do not say that the revelation must come authenticated by such evidence as will compel all men to believe. As before remarked, such is not the course which God ordinarily pursues with man; and would be at variance with the relation in which man stands to God, as a free-agent living under established law. What we do say is, that such a revelation ought to come so authenticated that the ingenuous inquirer, he who honestly wishes to know whether it be “from Heaven or of men,” shall

have within his reach the means of fairly determining the question.

That the Bible does contain and carry with it this reasonable and sufficient evidence, is rendered plain by its general reception as the Word of God, wherever it has gone.

1. The great body of Christian men, in every country and every age, have given little or no attention to the "external evidences of Christianity," *i. e.* the evidences of the divine origin of the Bible, which lie outside of the Bible itself, and the religious experience which it awakens in the soul. They have never traced out the fulfillment of any of its recorded prophecies, as presented in the subsequent history of the world. They have never carefully analyzed the evidence afforded by miracles; have never examined the proof that the miracles recorded in Scripture were wrought at the time and by the persons they claim to have been wrought by; have never had a thought, it may be, upon this whole subject, excepting such as were suggested by the narrative of the miracle itself, and presupposed the truth of that narrative. They have never attempted to subject the claim of the Bible to be received as genuine and authentic to any process of literary or historic criticism—nor are they competent so to do, if they "had a mind to the work." Yet these men

have a firm, unwavering faith in the Bible as the Word of God; a faith which, saving occasional hours of darkness such as the Bible itself teaches man to expect, all the reasoning of men and devils cannot shake; a faith manifested to the world in their daily life and conversation.

It will not do to consider this faith as but irrational credulity. The men of whom we speak, though little versed in criticism and philosophy, and the last men upon earth to be charged with credulity; and in all our dealings with them, in the ordinary course of life, we act upon this as a well-known truth in their case. They are not philosophers, in the commonly received acceptance of that much abused term; but they are shrewd, honest men; not subtile disputants, but men of excellent common sense. And therefore, we say, the last men upon earth to be imposed upon in such a case as this.

2. The great majority of those, in every Christian community, who are not Christians in the distinctive sense of that term, do nevertheless receive the Bible as the Word of God. They do not receive it with the unwavering conviction of its truth which the Christian feels; the cannot say with him, "I *know* in whom I have believed;"¹ but they, nevertheless, believe that the Bible is from God, and could by no

¹ 2 Tim. i. 12.

means be persuaded to class themselves among infidels. Their faith does not control their life as does that of the Christian; but it disturbs them in their worldliness; and nothing is further from their thoughts than passing away from earth such as they now are. Under the faithful preaching of the gospel—not a presentation of the proof that the Bible is from God, but such a preaching of the gospel as presupposes this to be proved—they are often ready to say with Agrippa, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;”¹ or with trembling Felix, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”²

This faith of the men of the world in the Bible as the Word of God, is in part an effect of education, not a mere prejudice, as it is sometimes represented to be, but a legitimate effect of education. “Having been taught from infancy to regard it as a divine revelation, and knowing no sufficient reason for rejecting it, they yield a general assent to its claim.” Yet when this is said, we have by no means given a complete account of the matter. In the Bible itself, as they have read it or heard it read; in the conduct of Christians as it has fallen under their observation, especially, if they have been blessed with pious parents; and in their own religious experience—for

¹ Acts. xxvi. 26.

² Acts, xxiv. 25.

they have a certain religious experience, though they have not become Christians—they have had such evidence that the Bible is from God that they cannot discredit its claim.

This evidence upon which the faith of the men of the world rests, we shall attempt to set forth in some of its particulars in the remaining chapters of this "Second Part" of Book I., leaving the peculiar proof which the Christian has, upon the ground of which he can say "I know" that the Bible is from God, to be examined in "Part Third."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRUTHFULNESS OF SCRIPTURE.

“Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?”—JOHN, iv. 29.

IN many of the representations which the Scriptures give us of man, and the workings of the human heart under the operation of Bible doctrine, there is a marvellous truthfulness apparent, which at once suggests the thought that these representations must be from God.

Christ, in his recorded discourses, often spake of man in his relations to God and his religion in a half-prophetic way, and we can now test the correctness of his representations as well as we could had we lived in his day, and received them from his lips. Some of his parables are a sort of pen-pictures for all coming time—*e. g.* the parable of “the sower”—and we cannot compare the picture with the original before our eyes without being struck with its truthfulness.

In the parable of "the sower," we have a picture of a Christian congregation, an exhibition of the way in which the preached gospel is received among men. This parable was uttered in Judea more than eighteen hundred years ago. But just the same classes of hearers make up our Christian congregations now which Christ has therein delineated, and just the effects therein ascribed to the preached gospel, are the effects which it produces under our eyes.

1. "Seed falling by the wayside." Explained in Christ's words, "Those by the wayside, are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."—Luke, viii. 12. This is by far the most numerous class among the unprofited hearers of gospel truth in all ordinary circumstances; and hence, all know less or more of what Christ means by "seed falling by the wayside," from their own conscious experience.

2. "Seed falling upon stony places," *i. e.* places where the soil is thin in consequence of the underlying rock coming very near to the surface. "They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for awhile believe, and in time of temptation (trial) fall away."—Luke, viii. 13. The thin soil which

covers an underlying rock warms through, in the early spring time, all the quicker because it is thin; and when the deeper soil hardly shows any signs of vegetation, the rock is gay with verdure. But all this growth is short-lived. When the warm summer's sun shines upon it—the sun which brings into vigorous life the growth on deeper soil—it withers away, and for a time lies dead upon the ground, and long before the autumn comes, it has disappeared altogether.

How apt a representation this of many an instance of “religious awakening,” especially in seasons of revival. The attention of the gospel hearer is arrested and his feelings aroused; he is seemingly all in earnest, frequenting the house of God, uttering the voice of prayer, it may be even rejoicing in hope. He is foremost among the throng which seem to be pressing their way into the kingdom of heaven. But look for him a few months, or even weeks afterwards, when the trials of the Christian's faith begin to be felt, and all this fair promise has disappeared. You may find him in the Lord's house on a Sabbath morning, but it is only to remind you of the parched and shrivelled vegetation of the spring time, which dead upon the rock, and wasting away, will soon have disappeared altogether.

3. “Seed among thorns.” “And that which fell

among thorns, are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”—Luke, viii. 14.

The religious impressions made upon this class of hearers are more deep and permanent than in the case of those already mentioned; but they are not saving impressions. And because their impressions are more permanent, this class of persons find their way into the church. And there they live, and die, discrediting that church with the world; just as the yellow, stunted, fruitless stock of corn, choked by thorns, discredits the field in which it grows with the passer by.

They are not guilty of open vice—they are not liars, nor thieves, nor adulterers; but you may find them, by the fireside, “troubled about many things,” the querulous victims of carking care; as if God had not said, “take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or where withal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”¹ Or, in the festive hall or ball-room, laughing, dancing, singing, the gayest among the pleasure-loving throng, as if the service of God and his love was not to be compared to “the laughter of fools.” Or, amid the

¹ Matt. vi. 31, 33.

bustle of the busy mart, making their thousands, and hoarding those thousands when made, as if the Saviour's exhortation, "make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness"¹—"lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,"² were the babbling of a fool. The church has many names of such upon her rolls; names which are not entered in "the Lamb's book of life."

The cavilling unbeliever sometimes brings up the case of the stony and thorny ground hearers, in objections to the claims of the Bible; as if he had made a great discovery, had found a weak point in Christianity which had never been found before. Whatever such cases may or may not prove, one thing is plain, their existence is no discovery of the present day. If this be a weak point in Christianity, no one has ever exposed it to the world as boldly and as clearly as Christ himself has done.

4. "The seed in good ground." "But that on the good ground, are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."—Luke, viii. 15.

These alone hear the gospel to the salvation of their souls. They constitute the class—and our Lord's words would seem to imply that this class is often a small one—in every Christian community,

¹ Luke xvi. 9.

² Matt. vi. 21.

who are known as Christians indeed. Though the men of the world may speak slightly of them in public, as "righteous over-much," and even show them but little favor in private, yet, in their inmost souls, they respect them for their consistent piety; and many a time their secret thought is—Would that "my soul stood in their soul's stead."

Such is the pen-picture of a Christian congregation which Christ gives us in the Scriptures. No man can add anything to it, or take anything away without marring the picture. There is a marvelous truthfulness in all its representation, which suggests to the mind the divinity of its author.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

“Truly this man was the Son of God.”—MARK, xv. 39.

THE character of Christ Jesus, as it is presented in the Gospels, is perfectly original. Attempts have been made to exhibit character like his, in part; but in no instance to combine all its elements into one and the same whole. Redeemers have appeared among men, and their lives have been written. The character of the Perfect Man has been sketched by the pen of the historian. Even gods incarnate are not unknown to classic antiquity. In the character of Christ Jesus alone, have we all these elements combined in the same person.

And what greatly enhances the difficulty of the task is, that this character is delineated, not in general terms, and with the aid of a fanciful rhetoric, but in a simple narrative of the occurrences of his everyday life.

Christ Jesus does not maintain the character assigned him by assuming regal state, and thus raising himself so far above the multitude, that through reverence they shall not see, or through fear shall not scrutinize his life; nor by withdrawing himself to the anchorite's cell, and so hiding himself from the gaze of men. He is a God-man Redeemer in the midst of the world. He lived all his life long among the people, mingling with them in the everyday transactions of the world. At the wedding, at the funeral; in the desert, in the thronged city; as they journey by the way, as they rest when the toils of the day are over; on the lone mountain, in the crowd "pressing upon him, so that his disciples have not time to eat bread;" teaching in the Temple at Jerusalem, asleep on his pillow in a storm-tossed bark upon the sea of Galilee; now comforting the penitent "that was a sinner," now rebuking the haughty members of the sanhedrim; mingling with friends and foes alike; receiving the hospitalities of the sisters of Bethany, feeding five, and seven thousand in the exercise of his miraculous power; now speaking words of consolation to his disciples sorrowing in prospect of his separation from them, and shortly after tearing the mask from the hypocritical rulers of the Jews assembled in council. His life was eminently an active one, and he was brought in con-

tact with all classes of the people; the king upon his throne, the beggar that lay at Bethesda with none to care for him, the learned scribe, the rude, unlettered fisherman. And he was tried, *i. e.* tempted, by all classes: By officious friends, who "would take him by force to make him a king;" by lawyers, who stood up "to catch him in his words;" by the fickle multitude, who one day cried "hosanna," and the next "crucify him, crucify him."

And this his life is laid open to inspection; all his conduct from the cradle to the grave is spread out before us, in one of the simplest narratives that was ever penned.

"I find no fault in this man,"¹ said Pilate to the chief-priests and people, and their only response was, "crucify him, crucify him." "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"² was Jesus' challenge to the Pharisees, and none would undertake the task. They could persecute him unto death, but none could convict him of sin. And the same declaration has been oft repeated, and the same challenge given at every bar at which "the Christ of History" has been arraigned, and always with a like result. Well might Rousseau exclaim: "The inventor of such a narrative would be a more astonishing character than the hero. It is more inconceivable, that a number of persons

¹ Luke, xxiii. 4.

² John, viii. 46.

should agree to write such a history than that one only should furnish the subject of it."

Thus far we have contemplated the character of Christ Jesus, in the general; let us now look at it more minutely in one or two particulars.

1. The character of Christ as given us in the Gospels, is that of a perfectly sinless being, in this meeting one of the most difficult requirements in the character of a God-man. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate "from sinners."¹ He did no sin, neither was guile found "in his mouth."²

In this particular, his character is in contrast, not only with that of the heroes of classic, but also of sacred history. He alone, in the whole history of our race, appears without fault. Abraham, the father of the faithful, dissembles; "Moses speaks unadvisedly with his lips;" David sins grievously in the matter of Uriah's wife. Evangelists and Apostles tell us of their own sins, their ambition, their unbelief, their childish jealousy of one another, their base desertion of their Master in his hour of trial.

And the recorded prayers and confessions of good men all betray a consciousness of sin. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes seeth thee: wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,"³ is Job's confession.

¹ Heb. vii. 26.

² 1 Pet. ii. 22.

³ Job, xlii. 5, 6.

“Woe is 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,” are the words of Isaiah. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief,”¹ is the confession of Paul. All the worship which has ever been offered by God’s saints on earth, beginning with the “bloody sacrifice,” of Abel, tells us, in some form, of a consciousness of sin in the heart of the worshipper.

Jesus alone, in his whole life “did no sin,” and centuries of unfriendly criticism have failed to detect a blemish in his spotless character. Jesus alone betrays no consciousness of sin. His declaration: “The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things which please him,”² is confirmed by a voice from heaven—“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”³

2. Christ’s character is that of a God-man, and yet a Redeemer, a Saviour of sinners. Before his birth, an angel from heaven addresses Joseph with the words, “thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins;”⁴ and to the cavilling Pharisees, he himself declares, “They that be whole

¹ Isaiah, vi. 5.

² 1 Tim. i. 15.

³ John, viii. 29.

⁴ Matt. xvii. 5.

⁵ Matt. i. 21.

need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”¹

To set forth fully the exhibition which Christ gives of this his character, would require us to transcribe, in large part, the gospel narrative. We must therefore take an instance or two as a specimen of the whole.

An adulterous woman, taken in the very act, is brought to him that he may condemn her to death; and the Scribes and Pharisees stand around, loudly accusing her. “Jesus lifted up himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, with the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.”—John, viii. 3–11.

Christ is upon the cross, hanging in ignominy between two malefactors. One of them “railed on

¹ Mat. i. 21.

him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."—Luke, xxiii. 39-43.

"And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors; one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others, let him save himself, if he be the Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself."—Luke, xxiii. 33-37.

Do the records of classic antiquity, or the literature of heathenism in any age, contain such a decision as that given by Jesus in the case of the adulterous woman, a sentence in which justice and mercy are mingled in such divine harmony? Did ever a

god-incarnate before—and the character of the god-incarnate appears in the literature of almost every people—pass away from earth to heaven, taking a crucified thief as his companion, and a trophy of his grace? Did ever any other redeemer pray for his murderers, as they mocked, and reviled, and taunted him, as did Jesus the Christ? Well might Rousseau write, “The life and death of Jesus were those of a God.”

Thus have we briefly directed the reader’s attention to a few particulars only in the life of Jesus. If we mistake not, Dr. J. W. Alexander has written what the experience of many a one will confirm: “Other arguments may admit of being presented with more didactic exactness in mood and figure; but it is my sincere persuasion, that no argument goes so profoundly to the heart, or so irrefragably reasons down the prejudices of skepticism, as the person of Jesus, as it shines out from the evangelical page.” In all probability, could we trace minutely the history of the faith which the more thoughtful men of the world have in the Bible as the word of God, we would find it traceable, in a larger measure, to their knowledge of the character of Christ Jesus as set forth in the Gospels, than to any other source, excepting only Christian education.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

§ 1. *Faith an effect, "not a mere prejudice of education."*

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."—PROVERBS, xxii. 6.

THE lesson taught in these words is presented in various forms in the word of God. God commends Abraham in the words—"For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."¹ When he gave his law to Israel, by Moses, he gave direction—"And ye shall teach them, *i. e.* all the words of this law—your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and

¹ Gen. xviii. 19.

when thou risest up, and thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thy house, and upon thy gates; that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon earth,"¹ And in general terms, he says, by Solomon—"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."²

This doctrine of Scripture is in contrast with the teachings of that so-called "liberal philosophy," which would forbid the parent to influence the religious faith of the child, and which would treat with contempt all faith which is traceable to parental influence and instruction as "the prejudice of education;" but it is in perfect harmony with the lessons of common sense, and common experience, and all the better feelings of the human heart.

The pretence upon which the parent is urged to use no influence over the faith of his child, "that in the maturity of his intellect, that child having become a man, may judge for himself in these matters," ignores a fundamental law of our nature. It is only by exercise that the intellect can attain to maturity. It is only by a proper exercise, an exer-

¹ Deut. xi. 19-21.

² Prov. viii. 9.

cise in which it shall be taught to distinguish between truth and error, that it can attain to a healthy maturity. A maturity of intellect attained without exercise is an impossibility. There is, there can be no such thing. And besides this, the human mind is, in its very nature, active, and "man that is born of woman" is born into a busy world. The alternative is not between religious influence and perfect independence, "between sound principles and none; but between wholesome truth, and those crude or poisonous errors, which a subtle enemy is ever ready to inject, and the natural heart ever ready to receive."—BRIDGER.

The wise parent labors to impart his wisdom to his child; the prudent parent seeks to teach his child prudence; the industrious parent trains his child to industry; the patriotic parent teaches his child to love his country's name, and love his country's honor; and all men praise them for so doing. Shall religion, involving as it does the most important of all our interests, alone, be excepted from this general influence of education. Has a man's wisdom, prudence, industry, patriotism, come to him, in a certain sense, as an inheritance from a wise, prudent, industrious, patriotic parent, he glories in this his character, not only on account of its intrinsic excellence, but because it is an inheritance; because his father was

wise, prudent, industrious, patriotic before him. Shall we treat with contempt religious faith alone, because it has been inherited from pious parents?

“The unfeigned faith” of Timothy, of which Paul tells him “it dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice,”¹ can with no propriety be spoken of as “a mere prejudice of education;” it is an inheritance which came to him under the operation of the same law by which the richest blessings of earth descend from parent to child.

Is it objected that heathenism, and all the various forms of false religion are propagated from parent to child in the same way. We reply—True. The law of education, like every other great law of our nature, is capable of alternative operation; is as ready a means of transmitting destructive error, as saving truth. The mere fact that we have been taught our faith by our parents does not prove that faith a sound one. What we insist upon, in opposition to this “liberal philosophy” is, that this fact is no ground of objection to our faith; does not constitute it “a mere prejudice” in the sense in which that term is commonly used. But, on the contrary, such faith is a proper and legitimate effect of education; and, if, like wisdom, prudence, industry and patriotism, it be good in itself, the fact that it

2 Tim. i. 5.

has come to us from our parents, instead of detracting from its worth, should render it the more precious in our eyes.

In speaking of Christian education as a source of the faith which the men of the world have in the truth of Christianity, we must understand the term education in its comprehensive sense, as including the influence of their association with God's people, and of their own personal religious experience.

§ 2. *Christian Example.*

"Need we, as some others, letters of commendation from you? ye are our epistle,—known and read of all men."—2 CORINTH. iii. 1, 2.

We have an old proverb, "actions speak louder than words;" and we may add, in accordance with common observation—speak more honestly too. The idea of a power to reform and control the life, enters as an essential element into the idea of a religion, as that idea exists in the popular mind. A religion which renders its possessor none the better is, in fact, no religion at all. It may be a system of philosophy, or a superstition; but it does not come up to the popular idea of a religion. Hence the power of a consistent Christian life as an argument for Christianity. Hence the church of God in the world is, in its very nature, a witness-bearing church.

The impressions thus made, are made, in part, by the general life and conduct of God's people. Their sincere honesty, their unaffected benevolence, their conscientious regard to duty, and above all, their evident piety, are felt to be "from above."

And this impression is all the more powerful, and finds its way more directly to the heart, because it is made in an inobtrusive way. Argument, though it may be sound and unanswerable, often awakens opposition; admonition, though never so wisely administered, frequently offends; and many a one will not place himself within the sound of a preached gospel. But even a small band of consistent followers of Jesus, by their conduct, speak to the community around in a way, and with a power which few can altogether resist. This influence so mighty in the community in which church of God exists, is yet more mighty within the narrower limits of the family circle. The consistent life of a godly parent is with many a child an unanswerable argument for Christianity; and it is at once, the simplest and the soundest of all arguments too, if we except a personal experience of the power of religion in the individual soul.

Besides the general influence of a consistent Christian life, there are particular incidents, occurring from time to time, which make an irresistible impression upon the observer.

A young man, relating his religious experience to the author, said, "One of the most distinct impressions of the truth of Christianity which I can recall, was made in this wise: When about sixteen years of age, I was residing in a family which numbered among its members an excellent Christian lady, one respected by all for her consistent walk and conversation. The community was one in which the Sabbath was respected, and Sabbath order carefully preserved. On a certain Sabbath day, I was lying listlessly on a sofa, not knowing what to do with myself, and wishing that "the leaden hours" would speed their flight, when my eye rested upon this lady, as she sat in another part of the room, reading her Bible. There was an expression of contentment, interest, unfeigned pleasure, upon her countenance, which could not be mistaken; and as I looked upon her, I could not but acknowledge that she possessed a happiness to which I was a stranger; and *I felt* that her happiness must be from God.

§ 3. *Personal Experience.*

“ When Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing : sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful ; for he was very rich.”
—LUKE, xviii. 22, 23.

Many a religious awakening does not result in genuine conversion to God. Many a one has stood “ not far from the kingdom of God,”¹ who has never entered it.

Such was the case of the young ruler, who came to Christ with the question, “ Good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? ” And who, when Christ reminded him of the commandments, replied, “ All these have I kept from my youth up ; ” the termination of whose religious awakening is recorded in the words quoted at the head of this section.

Such was the case of Herod, of whom Mark tells us, “ Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him : and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”² Such was the case of Felix, who, as Paul “ reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time ; when I have convenient season I

¹ Mark, xii. 34.

² Mark, vi. 20.

will call for thee?"¹ And of Agrippa, who in answer to Paul's pointed and solemn appeal, said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."²

Very few are to be found in a Christian community, and more especially among the children of pious parents, who have attained to years of maturity, without having been less or more frequently the subjects of religious awakening. Some providence of God, the reading of the Scriptures, or other religious book, or some faithful exhibition of God's truth from the pulpit, arouses them to thought and self-examination. For a season the subject of religion engages their attention. They look back over their past lives, they look down into their own hearts; they look forward into the future, stretching far away beyond the narrow limits of this present life: and with conscience awake, and the Word of God in their hands and the Spirit of God pouring light upon the sacred page, they get some true ideas respecting their position, and character, and prospects. They see enough of their lives and of their hearts to be constrained to acknowledge that the Scripture testimony respecting them is true. They get such glimpses of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him, as they are set forth on the sacred page, and in the experience of God's people, as to

¹ Acts, xiv., 25.

² Acts, xvi. 28.

see in this Saviour and way of salvation something of a divine adaptation to their need.

They do not come to Christ in the only way in which a sinner can come to him and be saved; they are not willing to receive salvation upon the terms on which alone it is offered in the gospel; and hence, though at such times they "are not far from the kingdom of God," they do not enter it; their awakening does not result in their conversion to God.

After such periods of awakening have passed, the sinner is generally more careless, more worldly-minded, more hardened in sin than he was before: But it may be doubted whether the impression of the truth of Christianity made at such times and in such a way is ever entirely lost. As the traveller pursuing at midnight some dangerous way, unconscious of his danger because the darkness hides it from his view, if a flash of lightning for an instant illumines the scene, and reveals to him snares and pitfalls in his path, and dens of wild beasts by the way-side, cannot afterward obliterate the impression made by this scene for an instant disclosed to his view; so is it with the sinner, and the impressions made during his temporary awakening.

For this reason, doubtless, among others, it is that the class of persons of whom we speak seldom be-

come thoroughly infidel. They may become so absorbed in the business of the world, or so fascinated by its pleasures as to forget religion; or so enslaved by vice long indulged, as to live in utter disregard of all its obligations; or so entangled in the meshes of some specious error as to have many doubts respecting it, and even loudly to declaim against Christianity. But yet, they never do entirely abandon the hope of yet finding "a convenient season" for turning to God, and they die unconverted, because death takes them "at unawares;" or their death-scene, like that of Julian the Apostate, who with his last breath cried, "O Galilean, thou hast conquered," shows the impression yet remaining, which had been made long years before.

In these several ways—by what they have seen of divinity in the Bible itself, and especially as it shines forth in the character of the God-man Redeemer, and by education, understanding that term as including, not the instruction received from God's Word and the ordinances of his house alone, but also the lessons given by the consistent Christian life of God's people, and their own personal religious experience, and not by any study of what are commonly called "the external evidences of Christianity"—the great majority of persons in Christian

lands have been taught to believe that the Bible is the word of God.

If the question be asked, why is not this faith such as to exclude all doubt, and to lead them to govern their life and control their conduct by the precepts of the Bible, a sufficient answer is given—though not the complete answer, as we shall see when we come to study “the ruin which sin has wrought”—in the fact, that they have never ingenuously followed up the trains of argument thus presented them. As this subject will be fully illustrated in the remaining Part of this Book, we dismiss it for the present, simply remarking—Let no man treat this faith as a mere phantom, or shadowy prejudice of education, because there are agencies at work that overmaster it in the busy world and in the hours of health, lest like Voltaire or Julian, he find it a terrible reality when compelled to grapple with it amid the agonies of a dying hour.

PART III.
THE FAITH OF THE CHRISTIAN.



CHAPTER X.

PRACTICAL PROOF.

“I *know* whom I have believed.”—2 TIMOTHY, i. 12.

IN almost every department of human knowledge we have two classes or kinds of proof to which appeal is made in substantiating truth. The one, termed philosophical or speculative; the other, experimental or practical proof.

Either kind of proof, when full and clear, furnishes a proper foundation for rational faith; though in most instances in which a man's belief is such that he can say “I know”—if we except the department of the pure mathematics alone—his faith will be found to rest upon practical proof.

There is this further advantage which practical possesses over speculative proof. Whilst the latter, as a general thing, can be fully apprehended and

fairly appreciated by the man of cultivated mind and scientific acquirements alone, the former can be understood equally well by all. Hence it comes that the rational belief of the great body of men, in truth belonging to every department in human knowledge, has ever, and must ever, rest upon experimental or practical proof.

A religion, to be worthy of the name of a religion, must be practical in its character. Out of mere speculation man may construct a mythology, a philosophy, a system of metaphysics; but never a religion.

The religion of the Bible is eminently practical. It claims to have been given for the purpose of securing the reconciliation of man the sinner to God. It claims to be "a power" in the world, and its avowed aim is to make us better men in this present life, and to fit us for a higher and holier life in the world to come. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also,"¹ is the emphatic declaration of an inspired apostle.

The Bible represents man's condition as a diseased one, and it proposes a remedy. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to

¹ James, ii. 26.

repentance," is the exposition which Christ Jesus gives of the purpose of his mission to earth.

Of the reality and power of this disease we become deeply conscious so soon as we attempt to "work the works of God." If the claim of the Bible be well founded, and the diseased man applies to the Physician to whom that Bible directs him, and under his care a healing operation be even begun, he must feel in himself the power of the healing balm applied, and he must soon know whether the knowledge and skill of the physician are adequate to his case. It is in just this way—as will be set forth more fully in the next chapter—that Christ proposed that the claims of his religion should be tested. It is in just this way the Christian has tested them; and in just this way he has obtained an experimental or practical proof that Christianity is from God.

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

“Jesus answered them, If any man will do his (God’s) will, he shall *know* of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”—JOHN, vii. 17.

“THE most competent judges of the truth and divine authority of Christ’s doctrine are those that with a sincere and upright heart desire and endeavor to do the will of God.”—HENRY. And what Christ asserts respecting such—in the words of his quoted above—is, that such shall have a practical proof that his doctrine is of God.

If any man, with the Bible in his hands, and under the guidance of his own reason and conscience, will honestly and earnestly set about “working the works of God,” meeting the demands of his own religious nature, he shall find that in his conscious experience which will enable him to *know* that the Bible is from God. He shall be so satisfied that the Christian religion is all that it claims to be, that with the full

consent of his understanding, and with no anxious thought, he will risk his soul's life upon the issue.

This practical proof is that upon which the faith of the great body of God's people has ever rested. What Christ here proposes, is just what they have done, and thus they have come "to know" that his doctrine is from God.

Even in the case of the profound Christian scholar, it is upon this practical and internal, rather than upon any external evidence, that his faith rests. "The external evidences of Christianity," such as the fulfillment of prophecy, and the performance of miracles, have their use—and a most important use it is; yet is it true that we "know the doctrine to be of God," by "doing his will."

Let us examine the nature of this proof more particularly in the case of one of the peculiar doctrines of the Bible—the doctrine of regeneration, or the new birth. And we speak of this as a peculiar doctrine of the Bible, because no other religion but Christianity embraces a proper regeneration in its creed.

A man, hitherto an irreligious man we will suppose, honestly asks the question, "What must I do that I may work the works of God?"¹

The Bible answers him, "Thou shalt love the Lord

¹ John, vi. 28.

thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”¹

No sooner is this statement fairly apprehended, than the soul admits its truth; and the conscience declares, This is the law which you ought to obey, and ought to have obeyed from the beginning. It may be that this law has never presented itself distinctly to his mind before. But this will not affect its claim to be received as from God now. “We seldom apprehend intuitive truths of any kind, till they are suggested to the mind from without. A large class of such truths in morals and religion are first duly and adequately presented to the mind in the Bible. But when so presented, the mind intuitively perceives their truth, if its faculties be in a sound condition.”—HODGE.

One of the simplest and most natural outworkings of love to God on the part of man, is the rendering to him of worship. We cannot conceive of man’s apprehending anything of the true character of God, and the relation in which he stands to him, without feeling the obligation to worship him.

On this point, when the Bible declares further,

¹ Matt. xxii. 37-39.

“God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth,”¹ the instant response is, This is truth. Such worship as this I ought to render to God, and I ought to have rendered to him from the beginning.

With this law, understood as it embodies itself in duty, and recognized as God’s law by its own heavenly radiance, the inquirer is led to compare his past life and present character; and thus comes “conviction of sin;” a conviction which becomes deeper and deeper, the more carefully he examines into his case, the more carefully the comparison of his life with that law is carried out. Before this, a shadowy perception of guilt had sometimes troubled him, and made him shrink back from death as “the great enemy.” This shadow now gives place to “the strong man armed.”

Our selected course of examination leads us, from this point, to follow the progress of the inquirer in a different direction. We therefore drop this subject of “conviction of sin,” understanding that phrase in its popular sense of conviction of sins actually committed.

I have sinned, but I will do so no more, is the determination of the awakened soul. The past is

¹ John, iv. 24.

forever beyond my reach. But now will I reform my life; and from this day forward will I worship God in spirit and in truth.

This determination he attempts to carry into effect. He withdraws to his closet, and on bended knee attempts to pray. He has very imperfect ideas of what prayer, offered by a guilty creature to a holy and spiritual God, ought to be. But this much he understands: that such prayer ought to be offered in unfeigned humility, with singleness of purpose, with heart-felt earnestness, and with honest faith. These, at the least, must all meet in and characterize any prayer which can possibly be acceptable to God.

Can he offer such a prayer? He tries. He might as well attempt with his "earthly body" to scale the heavens, or, with "stammering tongue," to speak the speech which angels use. And this he soon finds out, to his dismay. Reason and conscience will not relax their righteous demands "one jot or one tittle." Instead of being able to meet these demands, with every attempt he makes his heart seems to be growing only the harder—not that his heart is really becoming any harder, but because, now for the first time, he is learning experimentally its hardness.

Troubled, alarmed, he turns from prayer to some other religious duty. But all with no better success. He reads the declaration of Christ—"Verily, verily,

I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”¹

No sooner does this declaration meet his eye than his response is—Truth, Lord, every word of it. And this, though he may before have denied or even scoffed at the Bible doctrine of regeneration. Unless, in some way, a radical change can be wrought in me—a change which may fitly be spoken of a being “born again,” I can never hope to see “the kingdom of God” set up in my soul here, or the more glorious kingdom of God which shall be revealed hereafter.

Again his Bible is opened, and he reads—“Except a man be born of water and the Spirit (*i. e.*, of the purifying Spirit) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit”—and that alone—“is spirit.”² Or, “Then will I (God) sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I (God) give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.”³

This is the scheme of salvation for me—the only

¹ John, iii. 3.

² John, iii. 5, 6.

³ Ezek. xxxv. 26, 27.

scheme which can reach a case so desperate as mine—is his language, as he reads these declarations. If born again, it must be of the sanctifying Spirit I must be born. If this heart of stone within me is ever replaced by a heart of flesh, it must be by God's power the deed is done.

But how can I hope—guilty sinner that I am—to engage the Spirit of God on this behalf? Could I come before him with some good deed, or right feeling, or purpose which I dared to trust, there might then be a hope for me. But, alas! I cannot. I am altogether vile. My very “righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”¹ And I am most vile, most a sinner in this, that I feel no contrition for my sins.

He reads, again: “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but *sinner*s to repentance.”² “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinner*s.” To “*call sinner*s”—to “*save sinner*s”³—then may there be some hope for me. If no other name befits me the name of sinner surely does. Any other gospel than a gospel for sinners would be a mockery to one like me. It may be that a Saviour of sinners will save even me.

¹ Isaiah, lxiv. 6.

² Matt. ix. 12, 13.

³ 1 Tim. i. 15.

“O that I knew where I might find him.”¹ Were he yet in bodily presence upon earth, I would force my way to his feet, and guilty as I am, He who saved a Mary Magdalen might save me. But he is in heaven. In his spiritual presence alone is he known among men. I might come to him in prayer—but alas! I cannot pray.

Just here, he reads the Scripture—“And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.”² Can it be that the gospel provision is so gracious, so full, that such a prayer as this of the publican may be heard and answered of God. Though I can say nothing else sincerely, I can say to God as this poor publican did—I am a sinner—a sinner most in this, that whilst I know and admit God’s righteous claims upon me, my “heart of stone” does not feel, much less meet and discharge those obligations. If I can ask for nothing else, I can ask for *mercy*, *i. e.* favor to the undeserving. ’Tis mercy—God’s mercy to the sinner—that alone can reach my case.

In Mark’s gospel we read: “And a certain woman which had an issue of blood twelve years, and

¹ Job, xxiii. 3.

² Luke, xviii. 13, 14.

had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind him, and touched his garments. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole!"¹ In very much this same spirit, in his extremity, the awakened sinner cries: "God, be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord, save me,"—"take away this stony heart out my flesh, and give me a heart of flesh."

It may be that this prayer is not answered at once. But it is offered again and again. And in his own good time, Jesus does hear, and answer it; and the petitioner begins "to feel in himself that he is healed." Not that the healing process is perfected,—such is not the course of the great Physician, as revealed to us in the Bible. But the healing process is begun. He is conscious of a love to God which has been made to spring up in his heart—a love which exhibits itself with especial distinctness in a felt love to God's people, his word, his sanctuary, his cause among men—a love which enables him, a sinner, to come to the mercy-seat with "Abba, Father"² upon his lips.

In some cases this change is more evident and sensible than in others, and the recovering sick

¹ Mark, v. 25-28.

² Rom. viii. 15.

man, as he feels the fresh life-blood coursing through his veins, shouts forth the praises of his Physician. In other cases, the work seems to the subject of it to go on more slowly, almost imperceptibly it may be, and it is only by comparing his present condition with what it was some time before, that he begins to hope that a healing operation has been begun. This man cannot shout as did the other. But he loves his kind Physician none the less truly, and believes in him none the less firmly.

Such, in substance, is the conscious experience of every child of God. We say "in substance," because, in order fairly to set forth the nature of this proof, we have given to this experience, a strictly logical order, and distinction from all other experience, which it seldom possesses in point of fact; and we have connected with each step a particular passage of Scripture, when, in fact, the step may be taken under the guidance of the same truth suggested in a different way. This however is, in substance, the experience of every child of God. He is conscious in himself of a radical change; and the remembrance of the despair in which he turned from all earthly help and hope to God, will not suffer him to doubt that this change is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Thus does he obtain a practical, experimental proof of the truth of the Bible, in so far as its peculiar doctrine of regeneration is concerned. And in the same way, he obtains the same sort of proof of each of the great doctrines of the Bible, as we shall have occasion to show more at large in the subsequent portions of this work. A faith which rests upon proof of this kind, more especially where it is proof of a system, not as a whole, but of each of its several parts, taken by itself is rationally and necessarily the firmest faith to be met with among men.

· And the fact, for fact it is, that the great majority of Christian men would not be able, if called upon, to state this argument with anything of logical exactness; and, indeed, may never have carefully examined the argument as an argument, in no way discredits the argument itself, nor their faith which rests upon it. Human experience, as it lies in the minds of most men, is a tangled mass; and it often requires a practised hand to so follow up its several threads as to show just how conclusions are connected with their proper premises.

This which is true of human experience in general, is true of man's religious experience. And if we would deal fairly with the truth of Christianity, deal with it as we would deal with any other truth, all that we have a right to demand is, that when this

experience is clearly set forth with logical exactness and in logical order, and a proper connection between conclusions and their premises is clearly shown, the Christian shall recognize it as his experience in each of its several particulars, and the conclusions shall be found to be the conclusions to which he has come. And this, the reader will find the most unlearned child of God able to do when this experimental proof of his faith is set before him.

CHAPTER XII.

HUME'S CAVIL EXAMINED.

“Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”—
MAT. xxii. 29.

NEAR the close of his celebrated “Essay on Miracles,” Hume remarks: “Our most holy religion, is a religion founded on *faith* and not on *reason*, and it is the surest method to expose it, to put it to such a trial as it is by no means fitted to endure.”

This remark is true, or is not true, according to the sense in which we understand the terms *faith* and *reason*.

If by *faith*, we understand a full and hearty belief—such a belief as will govern the life and mould the character of the believer—the subject-matter of that faith being truth properly attested; and by *reason*, we understand such speculation on religious subjects as writers of the class to which Hume belongs are accustomed to dignify with the

name of reason—speculation, which starting with certain shreds and patches of truth, gathered in part in the wide field of nature, but stolen, without acknowledgment, in much larger part from revelation, and this truth mingled with much of palpable and positive error, ends in certain conclusions which have never made men either happier or better for their belief—speculation which Paul well and truly describes as “science, falsely so called”¹—if in this sense we understand the terms, faith and reason, Hume’s remark is true. “Our holy religion,” whether regarded as a system of doctrine, or a practical law of life, has its deep foundations laid in faith and not in reason. And one of its chiefest glories is that such is the fact.

But if we understand *faith* in the sense of credulity, and *reason* in the sense of the proper and diligent use of the understanding, upon subjects fairly presented, and falling legitimately within its province—and in this sense Hume, evidently, intended the terms to be understood, for thus only will they convey the sneer which their infidel author meant they should—the remark is not true. Never has there been a system of religion presented to man,—and we include the so-called “natural religion” of Hume in the remark—nor a system of truth claiming cred-

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

ence for any purpose, which called for less of *faith* and more of *reason* than "our most holy religion," the religion of the Bible does.

The remark of Hume owes all its plausibility to ignorance or willful disregard of the nature of the proof upon which the faith of the Christian rests. This proof, as we have seen, is experimental or practical: whilst Hume takes it for granted that the Bible can reasonably claim credence upon the ground of "external evidence" alone, *i. e.* the fulfillment of prophecy, miracles, and the literary and historic proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the several books which make up the sacred volume.

As already remarked, the great body of Christians know little or nothing of these "external evidences." Nor would it be possible for them, in the circumstances in which God in his providence has placed them, to carry out such investigations as those upon which Hume would make a reasonable faith to depend. The man who must labor from day to day for the maintenance of himself and family; the man who from youth to hoary age, literally "eats his bread in the sweat of his brow"—and the great majority of men, in every country, ever have and ever must belong to this class—has no time to pore over dusty tomes, or to master the subtleties of metaphysical philosophy, or the complicated details

of literary criticism. And hence, we remark, if the Bible did claim to be received as the word of God upon such evidence, this of itself would be a strong presumptive proof that its claim was not a well founded one. The Bible would not be adapted to the needs and necessities of those for whom any religious revelation, from the common God of all men, must and ought to be intended.

The difference between the proof afforded in "the external evidences of Christianity," and the practical proof which the Christian has in his own religious experience when he attempts "to work the works of God," may be fairly illustrated in some such way as this.

Amid the ruins of some ancient city, suppose two fragments of what many think to be the same curiously carved capital, or elaborately engraved vase, are found: and the question is raised—are these indeed parts of one and the same work of art?

The man of science takes the two fragments, and carefully measures them in height and thickness, and measures also the principal projections and depressions exhibited along their "line of fracture:" he notes the color, hardness, and specific gravity of each: he accurately analyzes portions of them; and finding an exact agreement in all the particulars to which his attention is turned, he reasonably con-

cludes that they are parts of one and the same vase or capital.

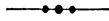
Another man, ignorant of science—a plain day-laborer, suppose—knows nothing of these investigations, and could not understand, much less appreciate, them if he did. But wishing to determine the same question, he takes the fragments, one in one hand and the other in the other, and having adjusted their irregularities of surface, presses them together, when he finds that they fit so exactly in every part, that when closely pressed, the very line of fracture disappears. He also concludes that they are parts of one and the same vase or capital.

The argument of the man of science is capable of being exhibited with greater didactic exactness, and presents itself to the world with a far greater show of learning, than the other; and in silencing the objections of the caviller can be used with far greater effect. And yet, the faith based upon the experimental test to which the plain man has subjected the question, is the more reasonable faith of the two. And this, among other reasons, because his method affords a severer test of truth than the other does. Even the man of science, after being satisfied with his own investigations, will feel from the plain man's proof a confirmation of his faith.

The faith which arises from an application of the Christian religion to man's fallen nature—fallen, and broken in the fall—is the most reasonable faith known among men.

BOOK II.

SIN.



“ Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.”—**JEREMIAH**, ii. 19.



PART I.

SIN AND THE RUIN IT HAS WROUGHT.



CHAPTER I.

THE CHARGE OF SIN MADE IN SCRIPTURE.

“We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.”—ROMANS, iii. 9–12, 19.

HOWEVER men may differ among themselves in individual character or outward circumstances, religious or social, when tried by God’s perfect law, all are proved to be “under sin,” under the power of sin, and exposed to its condemnation.

In teaching this doctrine, the Scriptures do not teach, either that all men are as bad as man can be, or that all men are equally sinful.

In the case of the worst man that has ever lived,

there was room, we believe, for an increase in wickedness; and between different men, even where Christian influences are altogether unfelt and unknown, there is great difference in moral character. Who will venture to say that even the execrable Nero had gone the full length in wickedness of which humanity is capable. And to say that there is no difference in moral character, between that beastly, blood-stained tyrant, and his countryman Cicero, is to confound all the acknowledged distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil.

Nor does this doctrine imply that there is no such thing as natural virtue and social morality upon earth. So far from this, the Scriptures especially teach, that in many things even, "the Gentiles which have not the law, *i. e.* the written law, do by nature the things contained in the law."¹ And so much of social morality had characterized the life of one who came to Jesus on a certain occasion, that an evangelist makes the record, "and Jesus, beholding him, loved him."²

What the Scriptures do teach is, that "all are under sin," inexcusably so, before God; so that in the judgment of the great day, when all shall stand at his bar, "every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before him."

¹ Rom. ii. 14.

² Mark, x. 21.

“There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.”¹ “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”²

Such is the charge which the Scriptures bring against man.

That very many are sinners, all are ready to admit. The profane swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, the liar, the thief, the adulterer, the murderer, are sinners in the account of all men. Even the loosest system of morality which has ever obtained among thoughtful men condemns them. But an admission of their sinfulness by no means covers the ground covered by the charge which the Scriptures bring against man. There are many to be found who have never sworn profanely, or uttered a falsehood, much less have they been guilty of the greater crimes mentioned above; and yet they are all included in the general charge brought in Scripture, “there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.”

If the Scripture charge is to be substantiated, there must be sins of a subtler character than those specified; sins which escape the attention of the world, either by being overlooked altogether, or by having their true nature hidden from the world’s view.

¹ Ecc. vii. 20.

² 1 John, i. 8.

This is just what the Scriptures assert to be a fact; and it is upon such sins as these, sins of which all are guilty, the virtuous in the world's account, as well as the vicious, that the Scripture charge is based.

To an examination of several of the specifications of Scripture, from this class of sins, the reader's attention will be turned throughout the remaining chapters of this First Part of Book II.

CHAPTER II.

G O D L E S S N E S S .

“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God : God is not in all his thoughts.”—PSALMS, x. 4. .

SUCH is the charge which David, speaking “as moved of the Holy Ghost,” brings against the “men of the world;” a charge of godlessness. And a charge of godlessness against an intelligent creature of God, living in God’s world, if it be true, is a very serious charge.

But is it true?

Would you know—go with me to the places where the men of the world assemble, and mark their words and conduct; that thus you may judge of their thoughts, of what is passing within.

Here, on the mart, BUSY MEN are hurrying to and fro. The old and the young alike are here; and in the earnest pursuit of some chosen end they are taxing their minds and bodies to the utmost. There are plans formed here, there are purposes pursued, there

are calculations made of every kind and respecting every subject. No, not every subject. There are no plans formed here for God's glory. There are no purposes pursued here which have immediate reference to the soul. There is no calculation made here which reaches beyond the limits of this mortal life. Houses, and lands, and cattle, and merchandise—they are thought of, they are talked about, they are bargained for; but "God is not in all their thoughts."

One may say—these are *busy men*, so taken up with the cares of life, that it is no more than was to be expected that their thoughts should be engaged about this world alone. It is folly to look for man, thoughtful of God and of the soul, amid the whirl and noise and excitement of the thronged mart.

Come with me then, to the corners of the streets; or some other of the haunts of IDLE MEN; for in our cities now, as in Paul's day, we will have no difficulty in finding idle men. Mark, now, what falls from the lips of these men. They talk about politics; they tell the news of the day; they speculate about the weather; the floating scandal of their circle; the last merry-making; the thoughtless and often obscene jest; the best method of "killing time," are all discussed, and each one has something to say. But there is nothing of God in their

conversation. His name is not mentioned, save it be to point an oath. These men "spend their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some *new* thing," and religion is old as the ruin it is intended to remedy.

There is less of God and godliness at the corners of the streets than in the busiest haunts of busy men. You may, perhaps, once in a great while, hear some word spoken respecting the life to come, upon the thronged mart. At the corners of the streets, never; man in his idleness is more thoroughly, hopelessly godless than he is in his busiest mood. The Apostles, with God's blessing, planted a Christian church in persecuting Philippi, in idolatrous Ephesus, in busy Smyrna; but none that we read of in idle Athens.

Does one say: It is neither on the thronged mart, nor at the corners of the streets we ought to expect to meet with thoughtfulness of God. These are both places in which we see man in his worldly mood.

Let us look, then, at the man of the world in his RELIGIOUS MOOD, if he have such a mood. Come with me to the sanctuary, and let it be on the Lord's day we enter the courts of the Lord's house. What see you here? The externals of devotion. "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people." So far, so well. But

“Son of man, hast thou seen what they do in the dark, every man in the chamber of his imagery?”¹

When the Lord Jesus was upon earth, we read—
“He went up to Jerusalem, and found in the Temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep, and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves—Take these things hence: make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.”²

We live under a different dispensation from that of Moses, and the worship which God has appointed for his house in our day is a less ceremonial, a more spiritual worship. Hence, you will not find in the Lord’s temple the gross profanation of holy place and of holy time which Jesus rebuked so sharply at Jerusalem. But look beneath the surface; and take note of the thoughts, and plans, and purposes of these men who sit here in God’s house before God’s prophet, on God’s holy day. How many a money-changer will you find sitting behind his table, with the clink of the dollar sounding in his ear, throughout the whole Sabbath service. Could we bring together all the merchandise and cattle, that in plan,

¹ Ezek. viii. 12.

² John, ii. 13-16.

in purpose, have been bought and sold in God's house, and that in the best ordered Christian congregation in our land, would we not have a fouler temple than that which our Lord cleansed at Jerusalem?

Man, in his *religious mood*, if this be his religious mood, seems as thoroughly godless, and more wickedly so than at the corners of the streets, or in the thronged mart.

“In this deep revolt of the inclinations from God, in this lethargy of all sense and all principle toward him, in this profound slumber which is upon all eyes, so that the being who gives us every breath, and upholds us in all the functions and faculties of our existence, is wholly unregarded; in this there is nothing to move the moral indignancy of our own spirits, for the same death-like insensibility which prevents their being alive to the sense of God prevents their being alive to the guilt of their ungodliness. But in the jurisprudence of the upper sanctuary, this guilt is enormous, and there brands us with the character, even as it has placed us in the condition of accursed outcasts from heaven's family. And the pure intelligences of heaven, when eyeing this territory of practical atheism, cannot but regard it as a monstrous anomaly in creation; a nuisance which, if not transformed, must at length be swept away.”—CHALMERS.

CHAPTER III.

LIVING IN PLEASURE.

“She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth.”—1 TIM.
v. 6.

EASTERN fable tells us of a philosopher and an angel, once travelling in company, who by the way-side found the corpse of one of God's martyred saints. They stopped to look upon it. And as they stood there, the philosopher wept, but the angel smiled. Afterwards, on entering a village through which they must needs pass, they met a maiden garlanded with flowers, the song upon her lips, and mirth beaming in her laughing eye. Here again they stopped for a moment, and as they looked, the smile and the tear again appeared. But now, it was the philosopher that smiled—the angel wept.

The philosopher, with all his vaunted wisdom, saw “as man seeth;” man, “who looketh upon the outward appearance.” A corpse, though it be the

body of one of God's martyred saints, is but a dead body to him; and death in itself, and in all its attendant circumstances, is a sad and terrible thing. Man's cry everywhere and at all times has been, "give me a place that I may bury my dead out of my sight." But the maiden, garlanded with flowers, and moving in the merry dance—she is to him a living creature, and life is beautiful in all its forms.

Not so with the angel. He saw "as the Lord seeth." The mortal body is but "our earthly house of this tabernacle," in which the spirit tarries for a little season. And that body dead—it is but "our earthly house" deserted, and its crumbling walls whisper in his ear the story of a pilgrim spirit, that staff in hand, has passed on and up to take possession of "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."¹ The grave of the saint, it is but the "tiring-house" in which this corruptible puts on incorruption, this mortal an immortality. And hence, the corpse of a saint, or his grave, may call forth from him a smile, but never a tear.

But the gay and thoughtless devotee of pleasure, to the angel's eye, as to that of heaven, instructed

¹ 2 Cor. v. i.

Paul "she is dead while she liveth." Dead, in so far as her better, her eternal life is concerned. The body is alive, but the spirit is dead—dead to God, his love, his service, his worship. And no garlanding with flowers, no "needlework of Tyre" can make this dancing corpse to pass with him for a living thing.

God has given her a heart full of strong and tender affections, that she may love him therewith. And in her early youth, he met her with the call, "Daughter, give me thy heart."¹ But she would not: and now that heart's affections gush forth in their fullness for all but God.

God has given her a body "wonderfully made," and for many a year his watchful care and good providence have kept that body in life and vigor; and this, that she may "visit the fatherless and the widow in their afflictions."² But instead thereof, she dances heedlessly by the widow's door, and the new-made grave.

God has given her a voice rich in melody, that she may praise him therewith. And she sings, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways."³ Aye, she has even learned the devil's song, "What have I to do with

¹ Prov. xxiii. 26.

² James, i. 27.

³ Job, xxi. 14.

thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment me before the time?"¹

“She is dead”—dead, in so far as the great ends and purposes of life are concerned. She liveth only to become the fitter subject of eternal death.

¹ Matt. viii. 29.

CHAPTER IV.

COVETOUSNESS.

“Covetousness is idolatry.”—COLOSSIANS, iii. 5.

WHAT is idolatry? Is it the mere act of bowing down before stocks and stones? No, that is but one of the grosser manifestations of idolatry. What God accounts idolatry is a thing of the heart.

The mere act of taking away the life of a fellow-man does not constitute murder. The officer, who carries into execution the sentence of the law, is no murderer, though he does take away life. And there is murder, murder in God's account, in which no life is lost. (See Matt. v. 21, 22.)

The mere uttering of a form of words is not prayer—though the words uttered be those which Moses or Samuel were wont to use, or those which Israel spake, when he wrestled with the angel Jehovah and prevailed, or those which Jesus taught

his disciples in answer to the request, "Lord, teach us to pray." It is only amidst the gross darkness of heathenism, or in the maudlin theology of Babylon, "drunk with the blood of the saints,"¹ that such utterances have ever been seriously accounted prayers. Prayer is, in its very nature, a thing of the heart; and there is prayer in which no sound comes from the lips; prevailing prayer, like that of Hannah, in which the petitioner "speaks with the heart only, and the voice is not heard."²

So with idolatry. Idolatry in God's account is a thing of the heart. It is the giving to any other that love and service which are due to God alone. And idolatry in its subtler forms is by no means unknown in this Christian land. Even in the common language of the world the justice of this view is acknowledged: as when we say of the too fond mother, "her child is her idol"—or of the statesman, grasping after power, and willing to obtain it at any sacrifice, "ambition is his idol." It may be, that did we see "as God seeth," we should find the exhortation of Paul to the Corinthians, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry,"³ as needful an exhortation, in this our Christian land, as it was in Athens, when it was said of that city, "it contained as many gods as it did men."

¹ 1 Rev. xvii. 6.² 2 Sam. i. 18.³ 1 Cor. x. 14.

“Covetousness is idolatry,” says Paul, or as the world expresses the same truth, “the covetous man makes gold his idol.” Let us subject this declaration to a practical test, by comparing covetousness with heathen idolatry as they exhibit themselves in the life of the votary.

Behold this covetous man whom God hath prospered. As his riches have increased, his heart has been set more and more upon them. He who once prized money for money’s worth, has learned to prize it for its own sake. The great purpose of his life is to fill his coffers. To this end he rises early, and labors long and hard, and “eats the bread of carefulness.” He “will be rich”—not that he may use his gold—but that calling it his own, he may make fools stare; and on the credit of it, secure for himself a labor more wearing than that of the galley-slave by day, and “a watchman’s beat” by night. Heathen idolatry is foolish; but surely, not more foolish than this.

Having indulged his covetousness, having made gold his God, it is everything to him now. He is a father; God has given to him a daughter, and he has trained her to think of gold as he thinks. And now, he will wed that daughter to the fool, or man of heartless craft—to become his slave, his life-long slave—and all for the sake of gold. Heathen pa-

rents, in their besotted idolatry, have caused "their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Moloch,"¹ a most cruel rite. But not one whit more cruel than that with which this covetous father worships mammon in our Christian land. And as if to make more marked the similarity in these cruel rites, in both alike, the victim goes to the altar garlanded with flowers.

That he may add to his fortune—fortune the world calls it, and he calls it so too—this covetous man "keepeth back the hire of the laborers who have reaped down his fields," and "he robbeth"—always under form of law, as did the Pharisees of old—"the widow and the fatherless." In this way his wealth increases, and "men praise him, because he doeth well for himself."² "His grounds bring forth plentifully, and he thinks within himself, 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits.' And he saith, 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater.' And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.' But God saith unto him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.'"³

Death strips this covetous man of all his possessions. His gold is no longer his. He heard the sigh of the oppressed, "the widow and the father-

¹ Deut. xviii. 10.

² Psalms, xlix. 18.

³ Luke, xii. 17-20.

less," as he wrenched that gold from them. He saw their tears fall upon it, and he knew that it was wet with those tears when he laid it away in his coffers. But, besotted, he knew not that those tears had cankered all his gold ere he died; and that as he counted it o'er from time to time, his hands and his heart had become deep-stained with the rust of it—a stain which even the damps of the grave cannot destroy. And this canker-stain is now "a swift witness against him"—like the blood upon the hands of the murderer—as he stands trembling before the God of the widow, his God as well as hers. 'Tis a terrible sentence which falls upon his ear, "The rust of thy gold shall eat thy flesh, as it were fire." Heathen idolatry was deadly in its consequences, but surely, not more deadly than this.

CHAPTER V.

UNBELIEF.

“He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and that life is in his Son.”—1 JOHN, v. 10, 11.

“CHRIST crucified,” is the great object held up to view in the gospel of God’s grace.

As a fact, it is *the* fact to which prophets and apostles testify. As a doctrine, it is *the* doctrine which they all preach. The bleeding lamb of Abel’s sacrifice, a type of Christ crucified, is one of the first objects which breaks upon our vision as, in the light of revelation, we attempt to trace the history of our race back to the beginning. And “the Lamb slain,” upon the throne, in the midst of the New Jerusalem, is seen, when “the mystery of God is finished,” and the mighty angel, “lifting up his hand to heaven, has sworn by him that liveth forever and ever, that time shall be no longer.”

“Christ crucified” is God’s most solemn and emphatic declaration, at once of his love to man, and of man’s ruin. No more affecting exhibition could God have given us of the truth, confirmed by his oath, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;”¹ and at the same time, of his own infinite and unchangeable justice, that “though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished,”² than that which he has given us in his Son “lifted up” upon Calvary.

“Christ crucified” is the very sum and substance of the revelation which God has given to man.

In conformity with this view, we read in Scripture—“He that hath received his testimony”—*i. e.* his testimony that “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”—“hath set to his seal that *God is true.*”³

When under a deep sense of his guilt, and his depravity, the believer turns from every other hope, and casting himself at Jesus’ feet, cries—“Lord, save me,” he “receiveth God’s testimony, he sets to his seal that God is true,” in all the declarations he has made respecting his love to man,

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

² Prov. xii, 21.

³ John, iii. 33, 35.

and man's ruin. And every humble confession of sin, and every prayer offered in the name of Jesus, and every groan of the burdened spirit, and every tear "sets to his seal" anew, "that God is true."

The history of his Christian life, as it is written by the recording angel, contains a note of many a short-coming in duty, of many a positive transgression. He was, at best, but a poor, stumbling follower of Jesus—sinning and repenting—sinning and repenting. But there is mingled all along with the record of his sins, the record of his deep contrition, of his oft-repeated cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," of his many tears shed before the mercy-seat. And the angel has marked, reflected in the tear-drop as it fell, the witness graven so deeply on his heart, "God is true;" and marking it, has written it as a "running title" to the record. And now, looking forward to "that day," faith sees the Man of Calvary lay his bleeding hand upon the open page; and ere the eye of the judge has fallen upon it, all is blotted out, save this running title, "*God is true.*"

There is no intrinsic worth in this faith of the believer. Nor, need there be. It is God's plan that the redeemed of earth be saved by *grace*. But if "all are to be judged out of the things written in the books," it is not strange that one whose only

record is, "God is true," receives, for Jesus' sake, the welcome "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

In solemn contrast with all this is the Scripture declaration—"He that believeth not God, *hath made him a liar*, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

It is to the language of man's actions this Scripture refers. "He believeth not the record that God gave of his Son," and his whole life is a practical declaration of this his unbelief. God hath given to man's life a tongue, and its utterance in the case of him that believeth not is, "*God is a liar.*"

That this may be so, there is no need that a man be a drunkard, a rake, or an abandoned profligate; a thief, a Sabbath-breaker, or a profane swearer. Let him simply be an unbeliever, and show by his life that he is an unbeliever in "Christ crucified"—God's touching exhibition of his love to man, and of man's ruin, and the distinct language of his life is, "*God is a liar.*"

Inordinate worldliness and thoughtless mirth, in all ordinary circumstances, differ greatly in demerit from ribald mockery of God and godliness. But the man who had danced and sung, or bought and sold, on "the hill Calvary," while the Son of God hung there upon the cross, would have been, in the

judgment of all men, but little better than those "that passed by, reviling him, wagging their heads, and saying, 'Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.'" It is the unbeliever's knowledge of the gospel, it is God's exhibition of "Christ crucified" to man for whom he was crucified, that gives to man's unbelief its damning guilt. "This is *the* condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."¹

The record of the life of him that believeth not—believeth not in a Christian land, and with the Bible in his possession—is a fearful record out of which to be judged. It may contain, in so far as the world can now see, a note of naught else but thoughtless mirth, or gay excitement, or absorbing business: of God forgotten—the soul neglected—Christ's love unsought—life's great work put off to a convenient season. But in the ear of him who hath kept the record, though man heeded it not, above the sound of thoughtless gaiety, the music of the ball-room, the plaudits of the multitude gathered in the forum or the senate chamber, above the din of business even in the thronged thoroughfares of earth, there has rung out the impious cry, "*God is*

¹ John. iii. 19.

a liar.” And from the home fire-side too, where the unbelieving parent—the labors of the day being over—has gathered his little ones around him—no word of God read to them—no acknowledgment made of God’s forbearance—no thanksgiving rendered for his favors—no mercy sought—no prayer offered for their souls or his—this same impious cry, “*God is a liar,*” has ascended to heaven. And it is written, as a faithful summing up the unbeliever’s worldliness at the bottom of every page of his history.

The unbeliever’s record, “*God is a liar*”—there it is before the Judge’s eye, written with terrible distinctness; and on his behalf there is none to interfere. “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?” was oft uttered by his lips while he was yet upon earth; and now there comes echoed back from every side, “What hast thou to do with Jesus, the Son of God?” as he stands despairing, before the “great white throne.”

Does it seem strange that he hears the sentence pronounced—“Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Can any say—That sentence is not a righteous one?

CHAPTER VI.

THE HEART DESPERATELY WICKED.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ?”—*JER. xvii. 9.*

IN Mark's gospel we read—“And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all ? And Jesus answered him, The first commandment is, Hear, O Israel ; the Lord our God is one Lord : And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength : this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself : there is no other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, master, thou hast said the truth ; for there is one God ; and there is none other than he : And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the

soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.”—Mark, xii. 28–33.

The answer made by this scribe, is just the answer which every ingenuous inquirer finds himself compelled to make, when once he has fairly apprehended the nature of God, and the relation in which man stands to him.

“God is a spirit,”¹ and no service but a service of the spirit can be acceptable to him. “O Lord,” writes David, “thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.”² As he is an everywhere present, all-seeing spirit, our thoughts and feelings must be as direct objects of perception to God, as are our words and actions to our fellow-men. “Our thoughts are heard in heaven,” is the language of poetry; but it is poetry of the noblest kind, the poetry of truth. No service of the tongue or of the hands, in which the heart is not, can be acceptable to him.

Through the lips man most frequently learns the feelings of the heart. Should a son labor never so industriously at some work which his father had set

¹ John, iv. 24.

² Ps. cxxxix. 1–3.

him, but all the while keep crying out—Father, I do this because it will serve my own private ends ; or, I do it from no love to thee, but that I may escape the lash with which I know that thou standest ready to scourge me if I do it not—would the father be pleased with such service? Would any son, having the feelings of a son, think of offering such service to his earthly father? And, if not—shall our Father in Heaven accept such service at our hands? Could any son, by such service, discharge his filial obligations? And can we with a heartless service discharge our obligations to God?

“Thou shalt LOVE the Lord thy God” is the substance of the law.

God is, in his own nature, worthy the supreme love of all his intelligent creatures. As he stands disclosed to us in Scripture, enlightened reason pronounces him infinitely perfect : and his attributes of justice, truth, and holiness, are among the chiefest glories of his God-head. If he were one whit less just, less true, less holy than he is, the perfection of his character would be marred ; his glory would be dimmed. These very attributes, when they exhibit themselves, though it be with many an imperfection, in the life and character of a fellow-man, receive the willing homage of the heart. And this, not because of these imperfections, but in spite of them. And

all men regard him as deeply depraved whose heart does not yield this homage.

If God, in his own nature, is worthy of our love, much more will he so appear when we behold him as he reveals himself in his providence towards us.

He claims for himself the title of "our Father in Heaven," and well does his conduct vindicate this claim. Never has loving earthly father provided for the happiness of a son, or borne with him in his waywardness, his disregard of obligation, his ingratitude, his abuse of privilege, his desperate folly—never has tender mother watched over a child, in health and in sickness, by night and by day, guiding in danger, guarding from harm, seeking to win back the wanderer, to reclaim the prodigal, with such long-suffering forbearance, such tender mercy, as have marked the dealings of our Heavenly Father with us. Had any earthly parent shown a goodness and grace at all approaching in character the goodness and grace of God, would not the world pronounce the child dead to all that was "pure, and lovely, and of good report," that did not render in return the heart's warmest affections?

But under this, our gospel dispensation, it is with God in the person of the Son we have more especially to do.

Of his work on our behalf, he saith—"I looked

and there was none to help ; and I wondered that there was none to uphold : therefore mine own arm brought salvation.”¹ “None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee ; to have compassion upon thee ; but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.”² And, in the same strain, an Apostle writes—“Scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”³

The curse of a just and holy God is resting upon the sinner—behold, the Son of God appears bearing that curse on that sinner’s behalf. Nothing but blood can atone for sin—behold, the Son of God pours out his blood like water. The violated law of God demands the sinner’s life—behold, the Son of God dies in that sinner’s stead ; dies, despised, rejected, reviled, in ignominy, in agony, upon the cross. Justice has drawn its flaming sword to smite him dead—dead with the second death—behold, the Son of God sheathes the avenging blade in his own bosom. And now, this Son of God, with all

¹ Isaiah, lxvii. 5.

² Ezekiel, xvi. 5, 6.

³ Romans, v. 7, 8.

the marks of his wondrous love upon him, asks the love of that sinner's heart in return. Were this a case between a man and a fellow man; had any mortal done and suffered for us a thousandth part of what this Son of God has done and suffered, would not the world say—That man, who felt no love in return, must have a heart “desperately wicked?”

How is it with thee? man of the world—caviller, it may be, at the Bible doctrine of the “desperate wickedness” of the human heart:—How has it been with thee for many a long year? Passing by the obligation to love God for what he is in himself—taking no account of his gracious dealings with thee as thy Father in Heaven,—and fixing attention upon thine obligations to God in the person of the Son—look down into that heart of thine, and answer—Is there one trembling emotion of love to him there? Hast thou ever loved him?”

Dost thou answer—I have never thought of these things? The answer comes—The testimony of God to all that Christ hath done and suffered on thy behalf has been in thy hands; and in many ways, by his providences, through thine own conscience, by his ministers, by the sacrament of “the body and blood” of him who died, has thine attention been demanded to this testimony. To say that thou hast not thought of these things, is but to add to the evidence of thy guilt.

But come—think of these things now. And see if love to the Son of God will spring up in that heart of thine, responsive to this most reasonable demand.

Behold the Son of God as “he empties himself” of his glory, and “takes upon him the form of a servant,” and “comes unto his own, and his own receive him not.” In this world, “made by him,” he leads a life of such poverty that “though the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head;” and he closes that life by an ignominious death. Betrayed by a disciple, seized by a band of rude soldiers, condemned upon the testimony of hireling witnesses; he is buffeted, he is spit upon, he is crowned with thorns, he is crucified. His disciples forsake him, the haughty priests mock him as he hangs upon the cross. He has prayed in agony, and yet he is forsaken of the Father, and there breaks from the lips of that patient sufferer the bitter cry—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Well may he exclaim, “Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.”¹

And all this, sinner, he suffered for thee. It was

¹ Lam. i. 12.

thy curse which afflicted him. It was the burden of thine iniquity which crushed his spirit. It was thy sin which like an iron entered his soul. It was to redeem thee from death that he died.

All he asks of thee in return is thy *love*. Canst thou say, as did his disciple of old, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?"¹

If truth compels thee to answer, No; we ask yet further—Dost thou feel any shame on account of thine insensibility? Dost thou feel any sorrow for thy strange indifference? Dost thou feel any contrition for thy wondrous ingratitude?

If truth compels thee again to answer, No; then admit the charge which the Word of God brings against thee. For very shame, cease to cavil at the Scripture representation of that heart of thine as a heart "desperately wicked."

Thou mayst be an honest man of business, a public spirited member of society, a good neighbor, a fast friend, an obedient son, a kind husband, a prudent father—thou mayst be all this, and a thousand times more; but upon the strength of this single count, the truth of which thou canst not deny, that thou lovest not the Lord Jesus Christ, it must be held proven beyond all reasonable doubt, that thou hast a heart "desperately wicked."

¹ John, xxi. 17.

PART II.

THE HISTORY OF MAN'S RUIN.

CHAPTER VII.

A FULL STATEMENT OF THE CASE.

§ 1. *Man's Condition, one of Disease.*

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."—ISAIAH, i. 5, 6.

IN our examination of man's character, and condition, we have seen abundant reason to accept the Scripture representation, that "all are under sin," under the power of sin, and exposed to condemnation.

But as yet, we have not made a complete examination of our humanity. There are lights as well as shadows in human character and human history. There are in the soul sensibilities, passions, and affections, the natural outworking of which is in virtuous

action; and these operate with a good degree of certainty and freedom, at least in so far as man's relations to his fellow man, considered as a mortal inhabitant of this world, are concerned. If man be a sinning, he is not yet a heaven-forsaken creature.

Such, for example, is the emotion of pity, causing the heart of one to sympathize in another's sorrow, and opening the hand to alleviate that sorrow.

Such are the social affections, the bond by which parent and child, husband and wife, brother and sister, are bound together. Who can tell the strength, in the natural heart, of a mother's love? The acts of unselfish devotion to which it has given rise are among the brightest records upon the pages of human history. Who can fail to understand the strength of the asseveration conveyed in Isaiah's words, when speaking in God's name, he exclaims: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."¹ Often, when the whole heart has been desolated by the fires of some unholy passion—by lust or avarice, for example—we yet see this affection remaining, as the tall, naked, blackened trunk of the old oak remains, where a fire in the forest has swept away

¹ Isaiah, xlix. 15.

before it every other trace of the glory which once clothed that forest land.

But far above all else in its potency for good, there exists in man a moral sense or conscience, which even in the case of the most abandoned, is never utterly destroyed. Bishop Butler utters a doctrine of Scripture as well as of sound philosophy, when he says of conscience, that "to preside and govern from the very economy and constitution of man belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world."

It is mainly from the resistance which our sinful affections and passions oppose to this supremacy of conscience, that the turmoil in the human soul springs; that turmoil, of which every one knows less or more from his own experience.

The powers and faculties of man, both bodily and spiritual, are all evidently capable of a holy use. This reason teaches us. Such a use as this the law of God demands. As God's creatures, living, moving, and having our being in him, we are called upon "to glorify him in our bodies and our spirits, which are his."¹ And yet, it cannot be denied that everywhere man is a sinner. Among his earliest experiences is that of a turmoil within. An accus-

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

ing conscience—he has never known the time when conscience, left free to speak, did not accuse him.

Is it strange that when such is human experience, Rousseau should have declared of our humanity, “that it was deeply tainted with some sore and irrecoverable disease;” or, that Byron should have written :

“ Our life is a false nature—’tis not in
The harmony of things—this hard decree,
This uneradicable taint of sin,
This boundless upas, this all-blasting tree,
Whose root is earth, whose leaves and branches be
The skies, which rain their plagues on man like dew,
Disease, death, bondage, all the woes we see,
And even the woes we see not, which throb through
The immedicable soul, with heart-aches ever new.”

And thus, the infidel philosopher, and the infidel poet, should be at one with inspired Isaiah, when he writes, referring immediately to Israel as a nation, but not the less truly to the individual Israelites making up that nation: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”

Most of the language we use in speaking of spiritual things, originally belonged to material things;

our guide in the new application of the term being some discovered analogy between the two. We apply the terms *dis-ease* and *dis-order* to certain conditions of the body in which its vital action tends to its present discomfort and its ultimate destruction; in the first of terms having an eye to the effect of this condition; in the other, an eye to the condition itself. Can any terms better describe the state of things in the human soul, as we learn its nature from our own conscious experience, than these terms *dis-ease, dis-order* ?

§ 2. *This Disease Hereditary.*

“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born.”—PSALMS, lviii. 3.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”—PSALMS, li. 5.

This condition of *dis-ease, dis-order*, described in the preceding section, is not a condition into which man comes late in life. It mingles itself with our earliest recollections. None of us can recall a time when we did “love the Lord our God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the mind.” None of us can recall a time since the commencement of our intelligent moral agency, when an enlightened conscience would acquit us of sin.

No authentic history pretends to tell of a land where men are not sinners; nor of a period when the earth was not "full of violence." It is true, the poets speak of a "golden age," when universal harmony prevailed between God and man. But poetry is not authentic history; and the thought suggests itself—either this golden age may be but a poet's vision,—a vision of what ought to be, and not of what has ever been on earth. Or, as it is among the earlier poets this golden age is most frequently spoken of, and even then, is referred to "the long past," it may be that we have here preserved for us some indistinct tradition of early times—some memory of an old and blessed home-
stead yet lingering among the scattered descendants of a once holy and happy family.

It is further worthy of remark, that we cannot attribute this state of things to education, or to any of the accidents of social life. Amidst the eternal frosts of the extremest north as well as the burning heat of the tropics, among every branch of the great family of man, under every form of civil government, from absolute despotism to the wild unbridled license which has sometimes obtained; under every system of education, from the severe discipline to which the youth of Sparta were subjected, to that in which the child is suffered to grow up without re-

straint, "doing that which was right in his own eyes," it has everywhere and in all times proved true, that so soon as man was capable of showing his moral character, he has shown himself a sinner. Not that all men are equally bad—not that civil government, and especially education, have had no influence in restraining man's propensity to evil; but under all circumstances man has shown himself "estranged from God," in heart, and "going astray" in his life.

If then, man's moral condition be regarded as one of disease, we must regard that disease as a hereditary one; a terrible legacy which has been inherited by the diseased child from a diseased parent. No other words will as well set forth the facts in our case, as we learn those facts in our own experience, as the words of David, "The wicked"—and all are wicked—"are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born." And no other words will as well set forth the common and natural inference from these facts, as those other words of David, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

CHAPTER VIII.

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF "THE FALL."

"By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin."—
"By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condem-
nation."—"By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners."—
ROMANS, v. 12, 18, 19.

It is impossible that the state of things in the human soul should be made a subject of thought, without the questions arising: Has man always been such as he now is? and, if not, how did he become what he is?

These questions the Scriptures answer, not frequently, not very much at large, but yet most distinctly, in such passages as those quoted above.

Before turning to the particular study of the Scriptural answer, let us glance briefly at one or two of the answers which man, ignorant of the Scriptures, or discarding their authority, has given.

I. Some have said, man's present condition is the result of accident: that chance has determined the

moral character of each one of our race as he has come into being in this world of ours.

On this hypothesis, it is sufficient to remark, that the unvarying uniformity with which men are found to be sinners, in every land, in every age, in all circumstances, is utterly at variance with the doctrine of chance, in the only sense in which a sound philosophy will admit of any such thing as chance in the world. Wherever we discover a uniform result—especially if this uniform result is produced in a great number of instances and in a great variety of circumstances, we at once infer the existence of a law, and of a cause operating in accordance with that law. Any other course than this is not only at variance with our conceptions of cause and effect, but will unsettle the foundations of all human reasoning.

II. Others have said, God the creator made the first parents of our race just such as we now are, and that we, the children, have derived from them our inheritance of sin and sinfulness in the natural order of things.

This hypothesis is at variance with the conception which men everywhere have formed of man's condition. The infidel philosopher and infidel poet, as well as the inspired prophet, represent that condition as one of *disease*, of *ruin*: and in so representing it, they have embodied the common conception, as it

lies in the popular mind. Disease implies a previously existing state of health. Ruin implies a previously existing order and perfection of structure.

In the classic lands of antiquity, many an almost shapeless mass of stone is to be met with, in which a closer examination discloses what all regard as traces of the architect's skill, and the sculptor's art. We see what we take to be "the lines of the foundation;" we discover the remains of crumbling walls, the fallen column, the broken capital, the shattered cornice; and unhesitatingly we pronounce this mass a ruin—the ruin, it may be, of some stately temple which, in the days of its perfection, was the admiration of many a beholder. All trace of this building, in the history of the times, may be lost. No probable conjecture can be formed as to when, and by whom it was erected, or when and how it was thrown down, and became the shapeless mass it now is. Yet nothing of this kind will change our belief that it is a ruin.

It may be difficult to express in language the argument by which this belief is established to our satisfaction. An ingenious skeptic may suggest: It was created what it now is—or, The architect and the sculptor made it for just what it now is—it was never a temple, but always a ruin. Yet no suggestion of this kind will affect our faith. To us, it

remains a ruin; and with the idea of its present decay, there is indissolubly united the idea of its former perfection and beauty.

Just such as this, would seem to be the impression made upon the popular mind by an examination of man's spiritual condition. The two impressions seem to have been made in very much the same way: and we doubt whether any suggestion of the skeptic can shake man's faith in "the ruin," in the one case any more than in the other.

III. The account which the Scriptures give of man's ruin is what is commonly known as the doctrine of "the fall," and is briefly set forth in Paul's words: "By one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

Stated more at large, it embraces the following particulars, viz.: 1. "God created man in his own image,"¹—"made man upright,"² with ability to love and obey him, but with liberty to fall. 2. The first man, Adam, thus made upright, God constituted the head of our race, in such a sense that his obedience would secure life not only to himself, but to his posterity, and his disobedience would bring death not only upon himself, but also upon his posterity—the life including spiritual along with natural life, and the death also including spiritual along with

¹ Gen. i. 27.

² Ecc. vii. 20.

natural death. 3. The test of obedience was a very simple one, set forth in the words—"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."¹ 4. Thus placed upon trial, under temptation, Adam fell; he ate the forbidden fruit, and immediately the sentence began to be executed upon him, in the spiritual death of which he became the subject. And having been driven forth from the garden in which he had been placed, "he begat a son"—not in the likeness of God in which he had been created, but "in his own likeness,"²—and thus, the disease having entered our blood, has descended, a terrible inheritance from father to son.

Such is the history given in Scripture of man's ruin. To Adam it is, and to this portion of his history, that Paul refers when he writes—"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation. By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners."

This account accords perfectly with all that we know of the facts in the case. It presents us man's nature, just as the concurrent judgment of mankind

¹ Gen. ii. 16, 17,

² Gen. v. 3.

has ever held it to be—a nature in ruins. It tells us of a time when that nature came forth perfect from the hand of God, reflecting his own beautiful image, the crowning work of his earthly labor; and it tells us, too, when, how, and by what its ruin has been wrought.

Yet it is not upon such evidence as this we receive the account as true. The most that could be fairly claimed upon such ground as this, is that the Bible account is probable; or, that there is nothing in the known facts of man's case which forbids our reception of it.

The Bible we receive as the Word of God; and it is upon the authority of the Bible, thus received, we believe that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

This is the only kind of reliable proof possible in the case. Human experience and human observation can testify to man's condition, as it now is. Human history can carry us back for many a century; yet, in its earliest authentic records we find "the earth full of violence," and "all under sin," just as now. If we are to know anything of man's condition prior to the era of authentic human history, God must give us that knowledge. In the light of revelation alone can we make our way back to the beginning.

CHAPTER IX.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF "THE FALL" EXAMINED.

§ 1. *Objection to the Doctrine of "the Fall" as a statement of Fact.*

"Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"—JOHN, viii. 48.

THE Scripture doctrine of "the fall" requires us to take a very dark view of man's condition and character, and one very humbling to the pride of the natural heart. Hence some reject it; and, as in the case of the Jews, whose reply to our Lord, when he taught the doctrine, in so far as it is a statement of fact, is quoted above, instead of admitting the Bible to prove the doctrine, make the doctrine an occasion for rejecting the Bible.

Let the reader notice here—That the matter in question between the Christian and this class of objections is a matter of fact, fairly coming within the

range of human experience and observation: and therefore, one which may be determined in the same way in which any other matter of fact may. The Bible does not make the heart of man "desperately wicked;" it simply declares that his heart is "desperately wicked" already. Blot the Bible from existence, or prove it the vilest imposture which was ever palmed upon the faith of credulous man, and the fact that "all are under sin," if it be a fact, will remain just as true then as it is now.

To the proof of the Scripture statements, that the heart "is desperately wicked," that "all are under sin," that "the wicked are estranged from the womb," afforded by the conscious experience of the individual, the reader's attention has been already turned. We have not attempted to set forth this truth in all its details as it is set forth in the Scriptures; but rather to give such illustrations of it as would enable the ingenuous reader to follow out the proof for himself. Let us now, very briefly, glance at the proof of these same statements afforded by history; for human history testifies most emphatically to their truth.

History is, to a very large extent, but a record of human crime. The history of a highly civilized people, such as the ancient Greeks—a people among whom the arts, and science, and philosophy flour-

ished—is unlike that of a tribe of rude barbarians. The history of a Christian people—Christian in the sense in which Great Britain and the United States are Christian in the present day—is unlike that of a heathen nation. Yet is the history of one, as well as of the other, when truly written, to a very large extent, a record of human crime and human bloodshed. National and individual wrongs, rapacity, lust, murder, are among the facts with which the historian has continually to deal. The chiefest heroes of history are warriors, remarkable for successful craft or savage ferocity. Its great events are those of the camp and the battle-field. Even where we have a record of civil or political reform, it usually presents itself baptized in blood. A fitting motto for the title page of the history of the most civilized nation upon earth, is furnished in the words of inspiration—“The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence.”¹

But the most remarkable testimony which history gives on the point under examination, is that furnished in its records of the attempts made, in different countries and at different times, to reform our race, upon the supposition that man’s moral nature was not “a ruin;” attempts to make a *philosophy* do the work of a *religion* in the world.

¹ Gen. vi. 11.

The ancient philosophers had not the Bible, and in the pride of their hearts, they overlooked or denied the truth that man was a ruined creature, that there was in the soul a fatal proclivity to evil. And just in this denial lay the grand error of their systems. There is much, very much, to admire in the ethical writings of Plato, and Aristotle, and Cicero. And yet there is no fact which stands out more clearly upon the page of history than that the lessons of these great masters, though inculcated with commendable industry, and enforced with great eloquence, were powerless in so far as the renovation of their countrymen was concerned.

The same systems, in substance have been revived in modern days; and variously modified, and supplemented, and adorned, and under new names and different auspices, have been sent forth again into the world, for the purpose of raising our fallen humanity. All that industry and eloquence could do to speed their mission has been done: for we should do great injustice to such men as Rousseau, and Voltaire, and Volney, did we deny them the praise which their industry and eloquence have merited. And yet the failure has been, if possible, more complete than in ancient days. Never in the history of civilized man—no, not under the influence of the darkest and deadliest superstition—has human nature exhibited

itself under a more revolting form than in France, when matured under the nurture of these very systems of philosophy. The "reign of reason," as it was called in anticipation—the "reign of terror," as it has been called ever since, forms one of the darkest, bloodiest pages in modern history.

On the ground of this evidence of history, as well as of that afforded by the conscious experience of the individual, we receive the Bible statement as true, that the heart is "desperately wicked," that "all are under sin"—as true, beyond all reasonable question. He who rejects it, rejects not simply a doctrine of Scripture, but a truth capable of as complete and thorough a verification as any truth within the whole range of human knowledge.

Instead of the Bible's recognition of this truth being a good reason for rejecting its claim to be received as the Word of God, it does, in fact, furnish a confirmation of that claim. Had the Bible come ignoring or denying it, this, of itself, would have been fatal to its claim. The doctrine of "the fall," in so far as it is a statement of fact, must enter into any religion intended for man.

§ 2. *Objection to Doctrine, as Inconsistent with Proper Ideas of Divine Justice.*

"The way of the Lord is not equal."—EZEKIEL, xxxiii. 17.

It is sometimes objected to the Scripture doctrine of "the fall" that it is irreconcilable with worthy conceptions of God's character: that the establishment of such a headship of our race as that which the Bible represents as vesting in Adam by God's ordination, is at variance with proper ideas of divine justice.

Perfect and impartial justice requires, says the objector, that no man should suffer for another man's sins—that every man should stand by and for himself—should be rewarded for his own virtues, and suffer for his own sins alone. And under no other order of things than one which secures to man this complete independence, it is claimed, can man properly be held responsible for his actions.

In the world around us, we have what all but the Atheist admit to be the actual government of God spread out for examination. Let us see how these principles of justice, advanced with so much confidence by the objector, will apply here.

I. Man was made for society. Civil government is "the ordinance of God."¹ From the very consti-

¹ Rom. xiii. 2.

tution of society, the ruler must represent and act for the subject, in many particulars; *i. e.* a headship of the people vests in the ruler. And it has been true in every age, and in every part of the world, that "when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn."¹ How many a man has died upon the battle-field, fighting and compelled to fight, in a war the sole cause of which is to be found in the incompetency or ambition of his ruler! How many a hearthstone has thus been rendered desolate!

The family is of divine institution: and it is the very corner-stone upon which all human society rests. The parent, the world over, stands as the representative of his children. If the parent lead a virtuous life, the child along with the parent reaps the blessed fruits of that virtue. But turn to the hovel of the drunkard, and behold these suffering children, as, hungry and cold, and sick, it may be, they try in vain to protect themselves from the winter's storm. Is not their suffering the direct consequence of their drunken father's sin?

II. The principle of interdependence is a principle running through the whole constitution of human society.

As man is born into this world, he is born one of

¹ Prov. xxix. 2.

the feeblest of God's creatures. For years, he is thrown upon his parent's care; and his character and destiny are subject to the moulding influence of that parent's hand. So in the history of nations. National greatness, and national degradation alike, as they exhibit themselves in the present, have their sources in the far distant past. There is not a civilized people upon earth of whom it may not be said, "Other men labored, and ye have entered into their labors;"¹ there is not a degraded people who are not suffering the consequences of the sin of their fathers.

III. The dependence in which one is thus placed upon another, though in some instances it may be under the control of his voluntary choice, as when under a republican government a people elect their ruler, yet, in the great majority of instances, such is not the case. No people have ever, or ever can have the election of their ancestry; and yet, they must be blessed by the virtues, or suffer for the vices of that ancestry. No child chooses its own parent; and yet, the moulding of the character and destiny of that child is, to a large extent, in that parent's power.

IV. This interdependence, according to the common judgment of mankind, as that judgment is to

¹ John, iv. 38.

be gathered from enacted laws, from the treatment of children by their parents, and from our own conscious sense of merit and demerit, does not destroy either man's proper individuality or his righteous responsibility for his actions. And this would seem to be so, from the very necessity of the case; and, therefore, plainly by the ordinance of God.

Society, in the form of the nation, the tribe, the family, cannot begin to exist without an acknowledgment of man's interdependence; and, along with this, an acknowledgment of his individual responsibility. So thoroughly interwoven is it with the constitution of human society, that it is one of the first things to claim attention in any examination of man's actual condition in the world; and we cannot proceed a step in the endeavor to provide for his necessities without taking it into our account.

Of all the unreal visions which "the foolish heart, darkened," has conjured up, none is more unreal than the vision of man standing by and for himself. Of all the foolish imaginations which man has dignified with the name of philosophy, none is more foolish than that such an independence is necessary to a righteous responsibility.

It is just this principle of interdependence which lies at the foundation of the Scripture doctrine that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death

by sin." . The headship of our race which, according to Scripture, vested in Adam, may not have been exactly the same in kind, or extent, with any headship now existing in the world. But the principle of equity involved is the same in all; for perfect justice will no more wrong the creature in the least particular than in the greatest.

The objection we are considering, if it be a valid objection to the Scripture doctrine of "the fall," is an objection equally valid against God's present government of the world. If it proves that doctrine to be untrue, it proves just as clearly that there is no God; or, what for us amounts to the same thing, that God exercises no government over our world, takes no cognizance of what is passing among men. If, then, on the ground of this objection, we give up Christianity, either as a whole or in any of its essential doctrines—and the doctrine of "the fall," as we shall see, is an essential doctrine of Christianity—we do it, not to take in its place some more rational form of Theism, but cold, cheerless, irrational, incredible Atheism.

§ 3. *Objection to the Doctrine as Inconsistent with proper Ideas of Divine Benevolence.*

“Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good.”—ROMANS, vii. 13.

The Scripture doctrine of “the fall,” it is sometimes objected, is irreconcilable with proper conceptions of God’s goodness, benevolence, and love; and to establish this objection, we are told of the long train of evils which has come upon our race through their headship in Adam.

The mere fact that a curse has come through a certain constitution, as Paul teaches in the passage quoted above in the case of the law, is no proof that that constitution is not “good.” The curse which we see may be but the legitimate consequence of sin “working death by that which is good.”

The Lord Jesus tells us of some for whom “it had been better they had not been born.”¹ Yet no one will hence infer that God’s making man a living soul is at variance with a proper conception of the divine goodness; or, that life is not given as a blessing. It is sin which has converted it into a curse.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 24.

The "gospel of the grace of God," though it be preached with all the faithfulness and wisdom of an Apostle, becomes "a savor of death unto death in them that perish;"¹ yet no one will hence conclude that the giving of that gospel is at variance with a proper conception of the divine benevolence. The death which we see, is the work of sin—"sin, working death by that which is good."

The Scriptures declare, and none will call in question the declaration—that "God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; that God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."² Yet, on the part of the unbelieving world, does sin convert this gift of the Son of God into a damning curse: "For this is *the* condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light."³

The plague is a disease, which introduced into the bodily system, not only proves fatal, but the more full of life, and health, and vigor the body is, the more rapid is its action, the more deadly is its effect, and the more putrid the corpse which remains when its work is done. Like this is the action of sin in the soul. It is the "plague spot" on man's heri-

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

² John, iii. 16, 17.

³ John, iii. 19.

tage. Its "exceeding sinfulness" appears most in this, that it "works death in us by that which is good."

In turning to examine the long train of evil consequences which have come to us from Adam, the terrible legacy which we have inherited from him, we must remember that Adam sinned.

The headship of our race, which by divine constitution vested in him, was a headship embracing alternative consequences. The law of God set life as well as death before him, for himself and his posterity. Had he yielded obedience to the reasonable requirements of God, blessings numerous and great as are the evils we inherit, would have descended to us from him. In the channel of his headship, instead of the lava stream, which is flowing onward through time, scathing and scorching, and consuming all of life and loveliness that is in its course, and leaving man's heritage "a waste howling wilderness," there had been "a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal," a river which "in its gentle flow" had made all earth an Eden, a fit habitation for man, "the friend of God," and "made in his likeness."

How great the blessings which this constitution might have secured us, we have illustrated in the blessings of redemption; for, it is through a headship

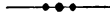
which vests in Christ, the "last Adam,"¹ analogous to that which rested in our first father, that all the blessings of redemption become ours.

The divine constitution is "good," and in no proper sense of that expression "has that which is good been made death unto us." The death which we see is a death wrought by sin, working in accordance with its own deadly nature—"working death by that which is good."

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 45.

BOOK III.

REDEMPTION.



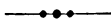
“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”—GALATIANS, iii. 13.

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.”—EPHESIANS, i. 7.

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”—TITUS, ii. 14.



PART I.
ATONEMENT.



CHAPTER I.

THE PROMISE.

“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”—
GEN. xxii. 18.

“He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to
thy seed, which is Christ.”—GAL. iii. 18.

ABOUT the time at which Jesus was born, there was a very wide-spread expectation of a Redeemer among the nations. One evidence of this we have in the fact recorded by Matthew—“There came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying. Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”¹

The idea of some way of reconciliation to God, is one to which man has clung, even in his deepest de-

¹ Matt. ii. 1, 2.

gradation. Under the influence of a "foolish heart darkened,"¹ this idea, like all other of man's religious ideas, has become so distorted as to be with difficulty recognized; and yet the idea remains, and enters in some form into all the religions which have prevailed among men.

This, no doubt, is to be attributed, in part, to some faint traces of the earlier promises of God, preserved among the religious traditions of the nations; and the general expectation of the appearance of a Redeemer about the time at which Jesus was born, is owing, in large measure, to the knowledge of the prophecies spread abroad through the agency of the dispersed Jews. But in part also, we believe, the idea and the expectation have been suggested to the more thoughtful by what they have known of man's character and condition.

In a previous part of this work, we have seen abundant reason to accept the scriptural representation that "all are under sin," that the heart of man is "desperately wicked." And further, that in so far as man himself is concerned, there is no reasonable hope of a change for the better; either by the general and thorough reformation of the generation now living, or by a generation being born who shall be of different character. Such is the ruin which sin

¹ Rom. i. 21. •

has wrought in our humanity, that "man goeth astray as soon as he is born," and his children are all "begotten in his likeness," are all "conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity." This on the one hand.

On the other hand—we have seen that all good has not disappeared, either from the heart, or from the life of man. There are unmistakable traces of a better nature yet discoverable. The fundamental distinction between truth and error, right and wrong, has not been obliterated. Justice, truth, honesty, purity, are yet of good report among men. And thus the idea is suggested that man, though a ruined, is not a heaven-forsaken creature.

Man has sinned, and sin has brought the ruin which we see upon him. Yet is man, the sinner, permitted to continue, for a season, his inhabitation of the earth, "living, moving, and having his being in God."¹ And God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."² Even among the degraded heathen "God hath not left himself without witness, in that he hath given them rain from heaven, filling their hearts with food and gladness."³

That punishment should follow immediately upon transgression is what perfect justice demands. No less than this can perfect justice accept under an ad-

¹ Acts, xvii. 28.

² Matt. v. 45.

³ Acts, xiv. 17.

ministration of law alone. This is just what the law, as announced to Adam, contemplates, "*In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*"¹ In the case of the only other race of sinning creatures of which we know anything—the sinning angels, justice had its course. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment."²

Why has not justice had its course in the case of sinning man? is a question which naturally rises in view of such facts as these. And just as naturally the thought comes up—it may be that in the same way in which it is possible for God to spare and bless sinning man on earth for "three score years and ten," it is possible for God to spare and bless him throughout eternity. As a reprieve will suggest to the condemned prisoner the possibility of a full pardon, so does man's mortal life suggest the possibility of a complete redemption.

This suggestion, arising alike from a view of man's character and condition in this world, Christianity realizes. It tells us of one, who, "when he passed by and saw man polluted in his own blood, said unto him, live;"³ "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death;"⁴ but a mighty and gracious one has staid,

¹ Gen. ii. 17.

² 2 Pet. ii. 4.

³ Ezek. xvi. 6

⁴ James. i. 15.

for a season, its fearful ravages; it is yet coursing through man's veins, but it is not yet finished. It tells us of "a Daysman" who has interposed between a just God and the sinner, and said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit"—the pit of the grave, and not the pit of hell, as is evident from the context—"for I have found a ransom."¹ It tells us of a "grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"² dimly disclosed in the sentence pronounced upon the tempter, "it, the seed of the woman, shall bruise thy head;"³ more distinctly revealed in the promise to Abraham, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;"⁴ shining forth in yet greater splendor in the prophecies, especially in the prophecies of Isaiah: "He was wounded for our transgression, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed;"⁵ and standing fully disclosed in the life and death of Jesus the Christ, a life and death in which "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other,"⁶ mercy to man, the sinner has met with truth in him who had said, "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"—God's righteousness and peace to man have kissed each other.

¹ Job, xxxiii. 24.³ Gen. iii. 15.⁵ Isaiah xliii. 5.² 2 Tim. i. 9.⁴ Gen. xxii. 18.⁶ Ps. lxxxv. 10.

The Bible discloses to us a way in which, consistently with strict justice, God may for a season spare and even bless our sinning race—may cause his “sun to shine upon the unjust,” and his “rain to descend upon the evil”—may, in this sense, become “the Saviour of all men,” as well as bestow eternal life upon a part of the race, and in this “especial” sense become “the Saviour of them that believe.” But for this grace, this interposition of a Daysman, the same quick justice must have o’ertaken sinning man, which “spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell;” and through this “grace,” the intervention of this “Daysman,” shall the “redeemed of the Lord” ere long stand in heaven.

CHAPTER II.

THE GOD-MAN.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”—ISAIAH, ix. 6.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God; All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made, that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”—JOHN, i. 1-3, 14.

“FOR I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” writes Paul to the Corinthians. “Paul’s only design in going to Corinth was to preach Christ; and Christ not as a teacher, or as an example, or as a perfect man, or as a new starting-point in the development of the race—all this would be mere philosophy; but *Christ crucified, i. e.* as dying for our sins. Christ

as a propitiation was the burden of Paul's preaching. It has been well remarked that '*Jesus Christ*' refers to the person of Christ, and '*him crucified*,' to his work; which constitute the sum of the gospel."—HODGE.

Respecting the person of Christ, the great truth taught us, that upon which the Scriptures lay greatest stress, and, we may add, that which under the gospel dispensation has always entered as a cardinal doctrine into "the common faith" of the Church of God, is that he is at once both God and man, uniting in himself a true divinity with a complete humanity.

At the head of this chapter we have quoted two passages, out of many which might be quoted, one from the Old and one from the New Testament, in which this doctrine is clearly set forth. He is "the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father"—or Father of Eternity. Surely he is God. At the same time, he is "a child born to us, a son given to us." Surely he is man. "The Word was God, all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." In what terms can divinity be more expressly set forth? Yet "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." Can this be said of any other than one who is truly and properly man?

The history of Christ, as given us in the gospels,

corresponds in every particular with the nature thus assigned him by prophet and apostle.

His divinity appears in such facts as these: he was announced by a heavenly messenger as Emmanuel, God with us; he wrought the most stupendous miracles, healing diseases, stilling the tempest, raising the dead, casting out devils; and all this, not as prophets and apostles have done, in the name and by the authority of another, but in his own name and by his own power; he taught in the temple of God as one having authority, spake as never man spake; he expressly claimed to be divine, and the Jews so understood him, and therefore sought to kill him, yet a voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him;" he forgave sin, and who can forgive sin but God only; he received divine honors and worship, such as an angel shrunk from receiving when about to be offered by John (see Rev. xix. 10); he rose from the grave as the first fruits of them that sleep,¹ and declaring to his disciples "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,"² "he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."³

In all this he appears truly and properly God. In all this he is exalted far above the honored prophets and apostles. Yea, above the angels in heaven.

That Christ Jesus possessed a true and proper

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

² Matt. xxviii. 18.

³ Mark, xvi. 19.

humanity appears in such facts as these: he was born of the Virgin Mary—was born a feeble infant, and by regular process of growth attained to the stature of man; he experienced all the sinless trials and wants of humanity; he was wearied by labor, and refreshed by sleep; he hungered, and his hunger was satisfied by food; he was grieved in spirit, and his grief relieved itself in tears; he was in an agony in Gethsemane, and he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground; he was tempted of the devil; he prayed to God; he was strengthened by an angel; he cried out in bitter agony, when for a season God forsook him; he was betrayed by a disciple; he was condemned by wicked rulers; he was mocked; he was scourged; he was spit upon; he was crowned with thorns; he fainted; he was crucified; he gave up the ghost; he was buried.

These are all the marks of a true and proper humanity. They mark a broad distinction between "the Word made flesh" in the person of Jesus the Christ, and all those manifestations of God to man, which occurred at an earlier date, and are recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. In all these, as when Jacob "saw God face to face,"¹ there was, at most, but a temporary union of some mortal body or material form with the divine Spirit.

¹ Gen. xxxii. 30.

In the person of Christ Jesus there must have been a rational human soul, as well as a body, and these sustaining to each other the same marvelous relation which they do in the person of man everywhere in the world; else, how could he have been weary, and refreshed himself by sleep? how could he have wept in his grief, or sweat in his agony, or fainted under his cross, or have given up the ghost? Well does his life establish his claim to that title, by which, more frequently than by any or all others, he chooses to designate himself—viz.: “the Son of man,” *i. e.* one truly and properly man.

Neither the supposition that Christ Jesus was God only, having taken into union with himself a human body; nor that he was man only, exalted by the power of God, far above all prophets and apostles, will meet the case as it is presented to us in the gospel narrative. He must have been God-man. It must have been true, that the “Word which was God, and by whom all things were made,” was truly “made flesh and dwelt among us.”

CHAPTER III.

FURTHER PROOF OF CHRIST'S DIVINITY.

§ 1. *Christ's Divinity taught incidentally.*

"The glorious gospel of Christ."—2 Cor. iv. 4.

"THE glorious gospel of Christ," is the title which Paul gives the gospel which he preached. If this gospel corresponds to the title given it, the work and person of Christ must be its grand subject, and it is fairly to be expected that so important a truth as the divinity of Christ will appear, not in those passages alone in which the object of the author is to teach it, as in those quoted at the head of the preceding chapter, but also that it will appear incidentally in many others.

When we turn to the Scriptures, we find that this our expectation is not disappointed. All through the Bible, and especially the New Testament, passages teaching Christ's divinity incidentally, are to be met with.

As specimens of the whole, we will quote a single passage from each of the epistles of the New Testament. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself unto God."—Rom. xiv. 10, 12. "Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Cor. i. 3. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."—Gal. vi. 16, 18. "God who created all things by Jesus Christ."—Eph. iii. 9. "Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God—that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—Phil. ii. 6, 10, 11. "And hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, who is the image of the

invisible God, the first-born of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him; And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”—Col. i. 13—17. “For in him (*i. e.* Christ—see v. 8) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”—Col. ii. 9. “Now God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.”—1. Thess. iii. 11. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his time shall show who is the blessed and only potentate, the king of kings, and Lord of Lords.”—1 Tim. vi. 14, 15. “The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.”—2 Tim. iv. 22. “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”—Titus, ii. 13. “Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”—Philem. 3. “When he bringeth the first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, who maketh the angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O

God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”—Heb. i. 6, 8. “My brethren have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons.”—James, ii. 1. “Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”—1 Pet. i. 11. “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever, Amen.”—2 Pet. iii. 18. “He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.”—1 John, ii. 22, 23. “He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”—2 John, 9. “To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen.”—Jude, 25.

Such are a few of the passages in which the divinity of Christ is taught us incidentally. We have quoted one, and but one, from each of the New Testament Epistles. From several of them we might have quoted many more, as apposite as the one selected; and had we extended our examination to other parts of the Word of God, our quotations might have been almost indefinitely increased. The proof afforded by such incidental teaching is all the more conclusive,

because it is incidental. It shows that the doctrine is involved in other doctrines of Scripture, and was thoroughly incorporated with the faith of the Apostles. And just for the same reason, that in judging of human character, we attach as much or more importance to the little every-day incidents of ordinary life, as we do to the great deeds done when the eyes of the world are upon the actor, so in the case before us; this incidental teaching of Christ's divinity carries with it a weight as great, and to many minds even greater, than that which belongs to the passages in which that doctrine is expressly taught.

§ 2. *Christ truly God, or Christian Worship is Idolatrous and Christian Revelation a Failure.*

“Thou shalt have no other God before me.”—EXODUS xxii. 3.

I. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ Jesus has been received as a doctrine of Scripture by the great body of the Church of God in every age, and every country into which the church has extended. This fact will not admit of question: and does, of itself, furnish a strong argument in favour of the doctrine, altogether distinct and apart from the favorable presumption arising out of its belief by so great a multitude.

As Jesus has been enshrined in the faith of the

church as very God, as very God has he been worshipped by the church in every age. We speak but what Christians everywhere will confirm, when we say that if they have ever rendered adoring worship to God, they have rendered such worship to God in the person of Christ—indeed it is in the person of Christ, that the idea of God presents itself most frequently to the Christian soul. The Christian's love to God, as he learns its nature from his own conscious experience, is primarily a love to God in the person of Christ; his trust in God, is a trust in God in the person of Christ; his hope in God, is a hope in God in the person of Christ. And such was evidently the case with inspired Apostles. Hence Paul exclaims, “who shall separate us from the *love of Christ?*”¹ *i. e.* both Christ's love to us, and our love to him; and to the Ephesians he writes—“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first *trusted in Christ*, in whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,”²—and in giving expression to his own *assurance of hope*, he does it in the words—“For I know whom I have *believed* (‘our Saviour Jesus Christ,’ v. 10), and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”³

¹ Rom. viii. 35.² Eph. i. 12, 13.³ 2 Tim. i. 12.

If Jesus Christ be not very God, all such worship, and love, and trust, and hope as this, is idolatrous. It is giving to a creature—and it will not alter the case, however exalted that creature may be—that worship and service—heart-service—which is due to God alone. It is a direct and positive transgression of that commandment which God delivered *first* from the top of Sinai, in the words—“Thou shalt have no other God before me;” and Christianity is but an idolatrous superstition; more subtle and more mighty than the heathen forms of idolatry, and therefore, more to be feared by man, more hateful to God.

II. And let it be noticed further, that the church’s belief in the divinity of Christ is a belief derived immediately from the Bible, it is not one of the doctrines of natural religion. It is not an article added to the church’s creed at the bidding of philosophy; it stands in that creed as a doctrine of pure revelation—it has always been received by the church as a doctrine of pure revelation.

The Bible may, without impropriety, be styled, God’s written protest against idolatry—just as his church is his living protest against it. If, then, the Bible was not intended to teach the divinity of Christ, if it be not true that Christ is very God, the Bible as a revelation has proved a failure—and a most disas-

trous failure, since in every age, and every country, it has led the great body of those who have trusted themselves to its guidance, into soul-damning sin; and this the very sin which of all others it was given to guard them against.

It is partly to such argument as this, argument which the plain Christian can feel as well as understand, that the constancy of the faith of the church in the divinity of Christ is, we believe, to be attributed. The more particular connection of this doctrine with Christian experience, we shall point out hereafter.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE LAMB OF GOD."

"The next day, John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."—
JOHN, i. 29.

SUCH was the announcement of Jesus, by John the Baptist, who "came in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

The title "the Lamb," a title often given to Christ Jesus in the New Testament, especially in that book of prophecy with which it closes, is a title given him but in one instance, and that a quotation from the prophecy of Isaiah (see Acts, viii. 32, and Isaiah, liii. 7), to set forth his meek and unresisting submission under the trials imposed upon him by his enemies. In all other instances, the title is given him with direct reference to "the lamb" offered in sacrifice, in every age from that of Abel, to that in

which the New Testament was written. This is evident from the language of the passages in which the title is given, viz. “the Lamb of God which *taketh away the sin of the world.*” “Ye were redeemed by the precious *blood* of Christ, as of a lamb *without blemish and without spot.*”¹ “And they overcame him by the *blood of the Lamb*”²—“the Lamb *slain* from the foundation of the world.”³

This idea presented in this announcement by John, is an idea which meets us in various forms in the New Testament.

The terms by which the sacred writers designate the work of Christ, are, either terms having prime reference to sacrifice, such as “*atonement*”⁴ and “*propitiation,*”⁵ or they are terms which admit of such an application, and are so applied, less or more frequently, by these writers themselves.

Is his work set forth as a procuring for us “*salvation,*” it is salvation by his death: “For God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain *salvation* by our Lord Jesus Christ, who *died* for us.”⁶ Is it “*reconciliation,*” it is such reconciliation as the priest made for an offender under Moses’ law: “That he might be a merciful and faithful *High Priest,* to make *reconciliation for the sins* of the

¹ 1 Peter, i. 19.

² Rev. xiii. 8.

³ Rom. v. 25.

⁴ Rev. xii. 11.

⁵ Rom. v. 11.

⁶ 1 Thess. v. 9, 10.

people;”¹ it is reconciliation by his death: “When we were enemies, we were *reconciled* to God by the death of his Son.”² Is it “*redemption*,” it is redemption by blood; such redemption as that which the Israelite paid for the forfeited life of his first-born (see Exodus xiii. 13): “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have *redemption through his blood*.”³

In the epistle to the Hebrews, in order to set forth the marvelous fullness of the grace in Christ Jesus, he is represented as, at once the sacrifice and the priest by whom that sacrifice was offered: just as in the gospels, Christ represents himself, in one and the same discourse, as “the door” by which the sheep are to enter the fold, and the good shepherd “who is to lead them in.”⁴

“But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal

¹ Heb. ii. 17.² Rom. v. 10.³ Eph. vi. 7.⁴ John, x. 7, 11.

spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with blood of others, for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.”¹

In all these ways does the New Testament present Christ Jesus to the faith of the church as a sacrifice.

Let us turn to the Old Testament, where the nature of sacrifice is particularly set forth in Moses' law, that law which in its provisions was “a figure for the time then present,”² “a shadow of good things to come,”³ that we may learn what is meant by presenting Christ as a “sacrifice;” by calling him “the one offering of God”—“the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

¹ Heb. ix. 11-14, 24-28.

² Heb. ix. 9.

³ Heb. x. 1.

The most important particulars embraced in the law of sacrifice are these; viz. :

1. The offerer, when he presents a victim for sacrifice to God, was to lay his hand upon its head (see Lev. iii. 2, iv. 4), an action which, in some instances, if not in all, was accompanied by a confession of the offerer's sin, and was understood to represent the transfer of the guilt, *i. e.* liability to punishment, of the sin thus confessed to the victim. (See Lev. xvi. 21, 22.) This laying on of the hands immediately preceded the slaughter of the victim.

2. In the case of all offerings for sin—and such only are called sacrifices, in the distinctive sense of that term—it was the blood of the victim to which especial regard was to be had; and the reason assigned for this is that “the life of the flesh is in the blood.” “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”¹ When then the blood of a victim was offered in sacrifice, it was the offering up of the life of him who brought the victim, in the person of a substitute.

3. The object of sacrifice was to make an “*atonement*” for the offerer. (See Lev. iv. 4, ix. 7, xvi. 24.) The Hebrew word translated atonement is *kaphar*, the

¹ Lev. xvii. 11.

literal meaning of which is “*a covering.*” The sense in which it would be applied in the case before us we may learn from such passages of Scripture as— “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is *covered.*”¹ “Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast *covered* all their sins.”² Sin renders the sinner hateful in the sight of God “who cannot look upon iniquity,”³ as the body of a leper would be rendered hateful in the sight of his fellow man, by his loathsome disease. A covering will hide the leper’s disease, and thus he may approach into the presence of another unchallenged, may even be a welcome guest.

4. The practical effect of an atonement was the remission of the penalty which had been incurred. As an illustration of this, we refer the reader to the incidents recorded in Numbers xvi. 46, 48. “And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an *atonement* for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and behold the plague was begun among the people: And he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between

¹ Ps. xxxii. 1.

² Ps. lxxxv. 2.

³ Heb. i. 13.

the dead and the living, and the plague was staid."

Such were the sacrifices for sin offered under Moses' law. In announcing Christ Jesus, as John does, as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and representing him, as Paul does, as "a sacrifice once offered to bear the sins of many," they plainly teach us that in God's plan for human redemption: 1, Man's sins, in their guilt, have been transferred to the person of Christ the redeemer; 2, That Christ has offered to God his own life in the place of the forfeited life of the sinner; 3, In this way man's sin is covered, so that a holy God sees it not, takes no note of it, either in dispensing his blessings here, or in passing judgment on him hereafter; and 4, Thus the sinner is reconciled to God, and sin, in its deadly working, is staid.

In this view of Christ, the redeemer, as the "one perfect sacrifice," the "Lamb of God," well may Paul, though the "chief of sinners," exclaim: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died."

This view of Christ's work was the one presented throughout the whole period of the Old Testament dispensation, in the sacrifices offered, not to atone for sin, but as types, to foreshadow that work which,

in the fullness of time, Christ should appear to perform. This view of Christ's work is the one which, far more prominently than any other, is presented to our faith in the New Testament. As “the Lamb of God,” “the one perfect sacrifice” for sin, Christ needs to be apprehended, in order that the sinner, convinced of sin, may find peace in believing.

CHAPTER V.

"THE LAST ADAM."

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The first Adam was made a living soul, *the last Adam* was made a quickening spirit."—1 Cor. xv. 22, 45.

"For if by one man's offence—(*Adam's* transgression, who is *the figure of him that was to come* (verse 14)—death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."—ROMANS, v. 17, 18, 19.

In our examination of the history of man's ruin (see book ii. chap. viii.), we have seen that the Scriptures teach, that it was "by one man's (*Adam's*) disobedience many were made sinners," and this by a special constitution, under which the headship of our race vested in him, and he became its representative. Through the operation of a similar constitution, under which the headship of

his people vests in Christ Jesus, and he becomes their representative, the Scriptures teach us that redemption has come to man in his ruin. Hence Adam is styled “the figure of him that was to come,” and Christ is styled “the last Adam.” This is the doctrine which Paul sets forth in his words, “by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life; by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

In the two cases, it is worthy of especial notice: 1. That the constitution or covenant, as it is often called, originates with God; and it is he who determines the nature and extent of the headship which shall be established under it.

The headship which vested in Adam, was a headship of those, all those, and only those who should descend from him by natural generation. By his disobedience, these all, and these only have been “made sinners.” The man Christ Jesus, though his genealogy is expressly traced back to Adam, by Luke, yet, as he descended by supernatural and not natural generation (see Luke, i. 35), was born “holy,” “without sin.” The headship which vests in Christ, “the last Adam,” the Scriptures teach us is a headship of “the church which is his body,” and these “the church of the first-born which are written in heaven,”¹ are

¹ Heb. xii. 23.

the "many who are made righteous by his obedience."

2. God deals with "the many" who compose the body on the ground of the act of their head.

It was not on the ground of any personal demerit, but solely because of the disobedience of Adam, that "many were made sinners." It is not on account of any personal merit, but solely because of the obedience of Christ, that "many shall be made righteous." It is in this view of the matter, and with especial reference to man's own deservings, that "justification of life" is styled by Paul "a free gift."¹ With reference to Christ, and his obedience unto death, he styles it "a purchased possession."²

3. The same general principle of equity underlies both of these constitutions; and it is substantially the same which God has incorporated in the structure of society, in consequence of which a nation or family is blessed in the virtue of its head, or suffer for his vices. (See book ii. chap. ix.)

In our examination into the history of man's ruin, we found that the doctrine of Adam's headship and man's ruin by his disobedience, as that doctrine is set forth in Scripture, afforded the only credible explanation of the state of things existing in the world around us, and in the soul within us. And thus, in this

¹ Rom. v. 18.

² Eph. i. 14.

state of things, we had a confirmation of the Scripture doctrine of "the fall." From the nature of the case, we cannot have, in this world, a similar confirmation of the doctrine of man's recovery; but in the fact that the one doctrine is but the counterpart of the other, we have incidental proof that it is also true. If man's ruin is a felt reality, redemption is no less a felt necessity; and in teaching us, as the Scriptures do, that as the one came through our headship in Adam, so the other must come through a headship in Christ, they are consistent with themselves; and, at the same time, teach a doctrine which is in perfect keeping with what we see of God's government of our race in the actual administration of his providence.

4. There is no inconsistency between the two representations of Christ, as "the Lamb of God," and as "the last Adam." They set forth the same great truth, that man's recovery from ruin is through the "obedience unto death"¹ of his Redeemer.

In the representation of Christ as "the Lamb of God," his redeeming word is set forth just as it needs to be apprehended by faith, in order to the salvation of the soul. As in the ancient sacrifices, the offerer laid his hand upon the head of the victim, and thus confessing his sins, had those sins, in their guilt,

¹ Phil. ii. 8.

transferred to that victim; so must the sinner come to "the Lamb of God," and have his sins, in their guilt, transferred to him. As the life of the victim thus "made sin,"¹ was offered up to God in the place of the life of the offerer; so has this "Lamb of God" died in the sinner's stead. As by the offering of the life of the victim, the offending Israelite was reconciled to God, his sin was "covered" and its penalty remitted; so is it that "the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world." Just in this way does the sinner, convinced at once of his sin and ruin, need to apprehend the redeeming word of Christ that he may "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."² Doubtless it is for this reason, that Christ is presented to us in Scripture as "the Lamb of God," a sacrifice for sin, so much more frequently than in any, or all other ways together.

The representation of Christ as the "last Adam" is intended to set forth the doctrine of redemption, with especial reference to the principle of equity which underlies the transaction; to show us how God can be just and yet accept the "obedience unto death" of Christ in the place of the obedience of the sinner. There is no absolute need that this point should be cleared up in order that Christ may be believed in, to the salvation of the soul. And hence

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21.

² Rom. v. 1.

the view of redemption presented in Christ as the "last Adam" is not dwelt upon in Scripture, as is that presented in Christ as "the Lamb of God." In only two passages is it presented with any degree of fullness: viz. the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where Paul is giving an elaborate exposition of the doctrine of justification by grace;—and the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, where he is arguing, at length, the question of the resurrection.

The Scriptures treat the doctrine of redemption just as they do the doctrine of sin. The great fact that man is a sinner, a ruined sinner, meets us in some form on almost every page of the sacred volume. This fact man must believe that he may be saved; and hence the frequency with which it is brought to his attention. The way in which man became a ruined sinner, and the principle of equity which underlies God's dealing with our race, as embraced in the doctrine of the "fall," it is not absolutely necessary that he should understand. We believe that there is many a saved one in heaven now, who on earth hardly gave a thought to the subject. And hence it is, that the doctrine of "the fall" is nowhere elaborately set forth in Scripture, excepting in the second and third chapter of Genesis, and the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

If the question be asked, why are these doctrines of "the fall" and Christ as "the last Adam" introduced into Scripture at all? a satisfactory answer is furnished in the fact, that the subjects of which they treat, are subjects upon which the human mind will speculate, and some of the most dangerous errors which have ever intruded themselves into the Church, are errors arising out of mere human speculation on these very points.

The doctrine of redemption as set forth in Christ as "the Lamb of God" enters as a fundamental doctrine into "the common faith;" and the Church of God has always received it as a fundamental doctrine. Of the doctrine of redemption as set forth in Christ as "the last Adam" the same remarks cannot be made, and yet, we believe it is true, that when the more thoughtful and intelligent among the people of God, have sought for light on the points it covers, directly from the Scriptures, it is this view of the doctrine which they have come to entertain.

There is no inconsistency between the doctrine of redemption as set forth in Christ "the last Adam," and that taught in chapter 1; that mortal life, and all its accompanying blessings, are granted to those who prove finally impenitent, for Christ's sake. As in the ruin which came through the headship of the first Adam, the curse did, as it were, o'erflow

its banks and the brute creation, and even the earth itself were involved in its disastrous effects—and this for man’s sake,¹ *i. e.* in consequence of their connection with man—so, in the redemption which we have in the last Adam, do the Scriptures teach us, that the whole creation shall be blessed (see Rom. viii. 22); and in the parable of the wheat and the tares, when the servants ask—“wilt thou that we go and gather them (the tares) up,” their lord answers—“Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, *ye root up also the wheat with them.* Let them both grow together until the harvest; and at the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather ye the wheat into my barn.”² It is the divine constitution which determines how far the curse and the blessing shall extend.

It is in this view of redemption we have the most satisfactory answer, in any way to be obtained from Scripture, to the question—Are those who die in infancy saved? As they were lost in “the first Adam” without any personal demerit on their part, so may they be saved in “the last Adam” without any personal merit. The question of their salvation turns altogether upon how God—and especially, God in the person Christ the redeemer—regards infants.

¹ Gen. iii. 17.

² Matt. xiii. 28-30.

Whilst he was on earth, "God manifest in the flesh," "they brought young children unto him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."¹ In view of such a fact as this, the common faith of the Church in the salvation of infants, dying in infancy, cannot be regarded as a faith without foundation in the word of God.

¹ Mark. x. 13—15.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE.

"By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."—Rom. v. 19.

IN the soul of the awakened sinner, the conscious desert of death—death in the comprehensive sense in which that term is used in Scripture—begets the fear of death; and this fear of death generally overmasters all other feelings until it is allayed. This doubtless is the reason why the Scriptures give such prominence to the sufferings of Christ—the reason why the doctrine that these sufferings were endured in our stead—that "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities,"¹ is presented so frequently, and in such a variety of ways.

Yet in setting forth the doctrine of redemption in his view of Christ as "the last Adam," Paul makes no distinct mention of his sufferings, but speaks of his

¹ Isaiah, liii. 5.

“righteousness”—his “obedience” alone. The explanation of this is furnished in the fact, that viewing Christ as the constituted head of his redeemed, his sufferings form a part of the obedience which he rendered on their behalf.

As man was originally created, he was under an obligation of perfect obedience to God’s law. When man became a sinner this original obligation was not destroyed; but in consequence of his sin, man came under an additional obligation, viz. the obligation to suffer the penalty which the law denounces against sin. In his suffering in our stead, Christ has fulfilled for us this latter obligation; and thus his sufferings appear as essentially a part of his obedience.

In this view of our Lord’s sufferings, Paul writes: “He 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.”¹ And again, “For it became him, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the *Captain* (*archagon*, Gr., first-leader, or founder), of their salvation *perfect through sufferings*.”²

But the sufferings of Christ are not the whole of

¹ Phil. ii. 7, 8.

² Heb. ii. 10.

that obedience which he rendered on behalf of his redeemed. He met their original obligation of obedience to God's law also. The proper consequence of his suffering in the sinner's stead, is that sinner's deliverance from the curse. And had Christ done nothing more, all that could have been claimed for the sinner would have been annihilation; or at most, a second trial, similar to that which Adam had in Eden. By his obedience—obedience in the distinctive sense of that term—the redeemed sinner is admitted into heaven.

The doctrine of man's redemption as set forth in God's word, and as it enters into "the common faith" of the Church, embraces both of these particulars. By Christ's sufferings we are made guiltless; by his obedience we are made righteous. By his blood the stain of sin is washed out from the guilty soul; clad in his righteousness, we are "accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of God's grace."¹

Paul rejoices in the hope of being "found in Christ, not having his own righteousness which was of the law"²—for well does Paul know, and deeply has he felt that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,"³ and a garment of filthy rags is not one in which to appear in the court even of an earthly

¹ Eph. i. 6.

² Phil. iii. 9.

³ Isaiah, lxiv. 6.

sovereign, much less is it one in which to present himself before Him whom Isaiah saw in vision—
“The LORD, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up,” before whom the seraphim “cried one to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”¹ Well may Paul rejoice that there is provided for him a perfect righteousness, the “white raiment” which Christ counsels the Laodiceans to buy of him that
“the shame of their nakedness may not appear.”²

¹ Isaiah, vi. 1, 3.

² Rev. iii. 18.

CHAPTER VII.

OBJECTIONS EXAMINED.

§ 1. *The Doctrine too wonderful to be believed.*

“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”—
PSALMS, l. 21.

It is sometimes objected to the doctrine of the atonement as set forth in Scripture, that, viewed as “a statement of fact,” it is too wonderful to be believed.

“The monarch of a whole continent would never move from his capital, and lay aside the splendor of royalty, and subject himself for years to peril, and poverty, and persecution; and take up his abode in some small islet of his dominions, which, though swallowed up by an earthquake, could not be missed amid the glories of so wide an empire; and all this to regain the lost affections of a few families upon its surface. And neither would the eternal Son of God—he who is revealed to us as having made all worlds, and as holding an empire, amid the splen-

dors of which, the globe which we inherit is shaded in insignificance; neither would he strip himself of the glory he had with the Father before the world was, and light on this lower scene for the purpose imputed to him. Impossible, that the concerns of this puny ball, which floats its little round among an infinity of larger worlds, should be of such mighty account in the plans of the Eternal; or should give birth in heaven to so wonderful a movement, as the Son of God putting on the form of our degraded species, and sojourning amongst us, and crowning the whole scene of humiliation by the disgrace and agonies of a cruel martyrdom.”

1. As this objection is directed against the credibility of the gospel narrative, and not against the doctrine of atonement; for it is against the fact of the humiliation of Christ, and not the reason or object of that humiliation, it has force, if it has any force at all; it might be sufficient to answer: The gospel narrative is supported by such an amount of evidence, that its *great event* must be shown to be impossible, and not simply very wonderful, before we can reasonably be called upon to reject it in the face of such evidence.

2. All the plausibility of this objection arises from our thinking of God as “altogether such an one as ourselves.”

It is in the *love* of *God* the Scriptures lay the foundations of the work of atonement which they reveal. "For *God* so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."¹ "*God* commandeth *his* love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."² Now, God's love, like his other attributes, is *infinite*, and it is vain for us to attempt to measure its depth with mortal sounding-line.

Who can comprehend the infinite wisdom of God, even as exhibited in material creation. As we pass from the contemplation of worlds upon worlds, innumerable, all moving in perfect harmony, to that of the animalcule, too small to be seen by the unassisted eye; and find the latter, finished and fitted for its place with the same display of wisdom with which worlds are finished, the human mind must confess its utter inability to comprehend what we term the *infinite wisdom* of God. All must confess that God's wisdom is very different from ours. Had mortal wisdom possessed the comprehensive grasp needed for constructing worlds, it could never have stooped to fashion the animalcule; or, had it been fitted to finish the animalcule, it could never have constructed worlds.

¹ John, iii. 16.

² Rom. v. 8.

The infinite love of God, that attribute which pervades and envelops all others, for "God is love,"¹ must be even more incomprehensible to us than his infinite wisdom; and hence, in the spirit of a sound philosophy, we say that which would be utterly incredible when told us of the out-working of the love of man, may be worthy of all credit when told us of the out-working of the love of God.

When you bid me look at the sun, shining in his strength, I expect to see a light above that of a "farthing candle." When you bid me listen to the booming ocean wave, as it breaks upon the shore, I expect to hear a sound different from that of the pattering rain drop. So, when you tell me of a manifestation of the love of God, I expect to hear of something far exceeding all that the human heart has ever furnished; something which would be incredible if told of man.

Rob the Redeemer, Jesus, of his divinity, and both the gospel narrative and the Scripture doctrine of atonement are incredible. But receive the testimony of Scripture that he "is God,"² "the mighty God,"³ and in the whole matter, both as to its history and its doctrine, the Bible is credible—consistent with itself and with human reason.

¹ John, iv. 8.

² John, i. 1.

³ Isaiah, ix. 6.

§ 2. *The Doctrine gives a repulsive View of God's Character.*

“O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom, and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”—ROMANS, xi. 33.

It has been objected to the Scripture doctrine of atonement, that “it gives a repulsive view of God’s character, representing him as the subject of vindictive passions which can be appeased in no other way but by the blood of his own son, thus excluding the possibility of our loving him.”

1. The assumption that this doctrine involves such a view of God’s character, that its belief “excludes the possibility of our loving him,” is utterly at variance with all the known facts in the case.

Turn to the history of the past, and judging of the existence of love in the human soul in any reasonable way—either by the express testimony respecting his own consciousness, of him who feels the love, or by that exhibition of itself which love in the heart naturally makes in man’s life and conduct—and you will find it true, not only, that those who have believed this doctrine, have been the very persons who have loved God, with the most thorough devotion, often a devotion which has carried them to the gibbet and the stake; but also, that this their love had its very fountain-head in their belief of this doctrine.

“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,”¹ is the language of Paul, afterwards a martyr for Jesus; and such has been the feeling of God’s people in every age. They believe that Christ died—died for them—and therefore they love him with the heart’s devotion.

We reject this conclusion, then, because it is utterly at variance with all the known facts in the case. That which has often been, and now is, cannot be impossible.

2. What is sometimes called—perhaps unfortunately—“vindictive justice” on the part of God, as it is exhibited in Scripture, is in fact, neither more nor less than *perfect or inflexible* justice: and by no means includes the idea of angry passion, in any such sense as when used with respect to man. The grand exhibition of that justice is in the simple fact, that God having made a righteous law, executes that law—having denounced death as the penalty of transgression—and who can say that this is not a righteous penalty—inflicts that penalty.

All the essential attributes of divinity exist in harmonious perfection in the Godhead, as exhibited to us in Scripture. Between God’s justice and love

¹ 2. Cor v. 14, 15.

there is no conflict; and there is none because each is perfect. God is none the less love when having made a righteous law, he executes that law; nor is his justice sacrificed, and his love degraded into imbecile good nature, when, according to his own glorious plan, he appears "in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."¹ For sin-ruined man, it is in the cross of Christ, and there alone, we see that "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."²

3. The plausibility of the objection we are examining arises out of a misconception of what the Scriptures do teach us respecting the sufferings of Christ: and Christian authors, it must be confessed, have sometimes written in a way which gives some occasion for such misconception.

The Scriptures nowhere teach that Christ must die for us, if he would redeem us, because God delighteth in blood; nor do they anywhere authorize us to say that God receives the life-blood of his son in atonement for sin, as the exacting creditor receives his gold—so much blood for so much sin. They simply teach that God having made a righteous law will execute that law; that even when his only-begotten son takes the sinner's place, the execution of that law shall not be staid.

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

² Ps. lxxxv. 10.

Nor do the Scriptures teach us that the sufferings of Christ were a mere "governmental display of divine justice," that his death was nothing more than a bloody tableau, enacted for the purpose of striking terror into the hearts of any of his subjects who might be harboring thoughts of rebellion against him. They do teach us that God's justice shines forth from Calvary in even greater glory than it shone from the top of Sinai when that mountain "was altogether in a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire;" but they teach us at the same time that no exhibition of the love of God has ever been given to man, half so glorious, as that which is given in this same scene.

What the Scriptures do teach us respecting the way in which the sufferings of Christ avail for our redemption, has been already set forth in treating of his relation to us as "the last Adam." The Bible doctrine of man's recovery in Christ, is but the counterpart of the doctrine of his ruin in Adam. The same principle of equity underlies them both. As they actually present themselves to the eye—we have, in the one, an exhibition of the grace of God converted into a curse through the deadly operation of human sin; in the other, an exhibition of that grace, retaining its gracious character, through the mighty love of God, in spite of human sin.

PART II.

REGENERATION.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE WORK AND THE AGENT.

“That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.”—JOHN. iii. 6, 7.

THE penalty of transgression as announced to Adam, when, as the constituted head of our race, God placed him upon trial in Eden, is in the words, “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”¹ The death here denounced, is death in the comprehensive sense in which that term is often used in Scripture: and includes, not natural death alone, but spiritual death also, and this, as it presents itself in the history of the lost, ripening into eternal death.

But for the “grace given us in Christ Jesus before

¹ Gen. ii. 17

the world began,"¹ this sentence had been fully and instantly executed in the day that Adam sinned. In answer to the prayer of our "Daysman," who said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom,"² man yet lives—natural death has not cut off the race: he lives on earth—eternal death is kept in abeyance for a season; but he lives, "dead in trespasses and in sins."³ No sooner did our first parents eat the forbidden fruit than they became dead with this spiritual death, and hence, even in Eden, they are, "afraid" of God, and with the fatuity which has characterized the conduct of their sinning descendants ever since, they sought to "hide themselves from the presence of God among the trees of the garden."⁴

When Adam begat a son, it was "in his own likeness,"⁵—not "the image of God" in which he was created; but his own likeness, such as sin had made him—and ever since, "that which is born of the flesh, has been flesh;" ever since, it has been true, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."⁶

The two great necessities of man, as presented in the word of God, and as they present themselves in the conscious experience of man the sinner, are: 1, an

¹ 1. Tim. i. 9.

² Eph. ii. 1.

³ Gen. v. 3.

⁴ Job, xxxiii. 24.

⁵ Gen. iii. 8.

⁶ John, iii. 3.

atonement, to deliver him from the condemnation due to sin; and 2, a new-birth, or regeneration, to deliver him from its power.

“The redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” as disclosed in Scriptures, embraces both atonement and regeneration. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus” said the angel, when announcing his birth to Joseph—“for he shall save his people *from their sins*.”¹ “Those whom Christ saves, he saves *from their sins*; from the guilt of sin by the merits of his obedience unto death, from the dominion of sin by the spirit of his grace. Christ came to save his people, not *in their sins*, but *from their sins*; to purchase for them not a liberty *to sin*, but a liberty *from sin*, to redeem them from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,”² Thus, and thus only, can the salvation man has in Christ, be a full recovery from the ruin he suffered in Adam.

As the Scriptures represent man’s ruin in Adam as a death, so they naturally, and very properly, represent our recovery in Christ, as a life; and as our natural life begins with our birth, they represent the commencement of our recovery, as a “quickenings,” a “being born again.”

In the economy of human salvation, this work of

¹ Rom. iii. 24.

² Matt. i. 21.

³ Titus, ii. 14.

“quickenings” man dead in sin, is assigned to the Spirit; to him whom Christ promised to his disciples in the words, “And the Father shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPIRIT.

“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—MATT. xxvii. i. 19.

IN this, the divinely appointed formula for baptism, the Holy Ghost, or Spirit, is distinctly associated with the Father, and the Son, as at once a separate person, and on an equality with them.

This fact appears peculiarly significant, when we remember that baptism is the initiatory rite of the Christian church; and to be baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” can be regarded as nothing less than a profession of faith in them as that God whose the church is. In giving us this formula for baptism, Christ has, as it were, over the one entrance-door of the church of God, inscribed the name of the Holy Ghost, along with his own and the Father’s name; and every applicant for ad-

mission there, he points to this inscription, and says, "read—believe."

I. That the titles, "the Spirit"—"the Spirit of Truth"—"the Spirit of God"—"the Holy Ghost"—"the Comforter," are not applied in Scripture to "a mere manifestation of the power or wisdom of God," or "used as a circumlocution for God himself," but designate a distinct person in the godhead, appears in many passages.

1. The account given us of the baptism of Christ Jesus is in the words, "It came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."¹ Hence, the Son, in bodily presence, is seen ascending from the Jordan; the Holy Ghost is seen "descending upon him in bodily shape like a dove;" while from the opened heavens the voice of the Father is heard declaring, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."

2. In his parting discourse with his disciples, Jesus says—"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth,

¹ Luke, iii. 21, 22.

whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Here, the Spirit appears as a distinct person from the Son, in that he is "another Comforter" to "come to them," and "abide with" the church forever, after Christ shall have "gone to the Father." He appears a distinct person from the Father, in that he comes, a gift of the Father in answer to Christ's prayer, and is to abide with the church on earth, while Christ in departing from that church "goes unto the Father."¹

On such evidence as this, *the personality*, as it is termed, of the Spirit, has formed a part of the creed of the Christian Church, with very inconsiderable exceptions, in every country, and in every age.

II. Along with the personality of the Spirit, the church has always received the doctrine of his divinity, and this upon such evidence as the following, viz.:

1. In many passages of Scripture, *i. e.* the divinely appointed formula for baptism, he is represented as on an equality with the Father and the Son. In Christ's parting discourse with his disciples, the Spirit is spoken of as "another Comforter," Christ himself having been the first; he is one to

¹ John, xiv. 16, 17.

² John xiv. 12.

“abide with them forever,” supplying the place left vacant by Christ’s “going to the Father;” and he is such a person that Christ declares “it is expedient for his disciples that he go away,” that this other Comforter may come unto them. Such language, in speaking of the Spirit, seems irreconcilable with any other idea than of his proper divinity.

2. “All manner of sin,” said the Lord Jesus, “and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come.”—(Matt. xii. 31, 32. See also Mark, iii. 28, 29; Luke, xii. 10; and 1 John, v. 16.) We may not be able to determine with certainty just what this sin which “hath no forgiveness” is; but this we know, it is a sin against the Holy Ghost. And here, as in the awful glory which once encircled the top of Sinai, when “the LORD descended upon it in fire—and all the people said unto Moses, speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us lest we die,”¹ the soul instinctively acknowledges the presence of divinity.

3. The work of the Spirit, in producing and

¹ Exodus, xx. 19.

carrying on the new life in the soul, as that work is set forth in Scripture, and as it presents itself in the conscious experience of the people of God, furnishes an unanswerable argument for the divinity of that Spirit; and it is upon this argument, we believe, to a very great extent, the faith of the church rests.

Can he alone “see the kingdom of God, who is born of the Spirit,”—he is also one, “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Are those only who, “are led by the Spirit, the sons of God,”¹—they are at the same time those “who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.” And just as a deep and thorough conviction of sin causes the convicted soul to desire a divine redeemer, so does a thorough conviction of the ruin which sin has wrought, cause the soul to rest satisfied with nothing short of a divine sanctifier.

¹ Rom. viii. 14.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRINITY.

“Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven? What canst thou do? deeper than hell! what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.”—JOB. xi. 7-9.

If there be any subject where revelation must be incomplete, not only because the human mind is incapable of comprehending the whole truth, but because human language is incapable of expressing that truth; if there be any subject where known truth must be mingled with mystery, and consequently, where faith, rational faith, should be our guide rather than human reason, that subject is the nature of God.

Yet nothing is more evident than that it is absolutely necessary that a revelation embodying a religion for Man should teach us something on this subject. Until we know, not only that “God is,” but that

“he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,”¹ there can be no such thing as religion for us.

Anything like a full and clear exhibition of the gospel plan of salvation necessarily involves a somewhat extended revelation of the nature of God. Without a knowledge of the divinity of Christ the Redeemer, man cannot comprehend the full weight of the obligation resting upon the sinner to believe in him. It is to the divinity of “the Lamb of God” that the soul of the Christian clings when “sinking in deep waters.” It is to the divinity of “the last Adam,” her Head upon the throne, that the Church has ever turned in her hours of darkest trial.

In such circumstances, all that we have a right to expect in a revelation from God, is that the information given us shall be clearly given; and there is no truth which it is more important that we should bear in mind than that this information must be incomplete; that every line of light, however bright it may be in the common centre, must sooner or later be lost in surrounding darkness.

The Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, as it is called, is made up of its doctrines of the personality and divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and of the unity of the Godhead, as its elements.

We are distinctly taught that the Father is God in

¹ Heb. xvi. 6.

so many ways and on so many occasions, that his divinity has never been called in question. His personality is taught us, *i.e.* he appears as distinct from the Son and Spirit, in that of him, and him alone it is true that he has "*sent*" the Son and the Spirit on their mission of mercy to our lost race, and to him again they must *return* when that mission is complete.

We are taught that the Son is God. (See book iii. chap. iii.) His personality appears most distinctly in the fact that he, and he alone, became incarnate and for a season dwelt among men. That he, and he alone, as "the Lamb of God" and "the last Adam," "being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross,"¹ and now ever liveth in heaven, to carry on the work of human redemption.

We are taught that the Spirit is God. (See book iii. chap. x.) His personality appears in the facts, that he, as "another Comforter," comes from the Father after Christ has gone away—comes to "abide with us forever,"—to "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," to "take of the things of Christ and show them to us,"—and, in general, to carry on, on earth, as the Son in heaven, the work of human redemption.

¹ Phil. ii. 8.

We are taught the unity of the Godhead in such clear and explicit declarations as these—"Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD."¹ "And there is none other God but one."² "God is one."³

"If we but limit ourselves to the statements of truth above specified, and which may be said to form the primary materials of the doctrine of the Trinity, there is nothing in any one of them, by itself, that is at all mysterious. The whole mystery is raised by our bringing them together and attempting their reconciliation. But the Scripture does not itself offer, nor does it ask us to reconcile them. It delivers certain separate propositions, and thus it leaves them, to each of which of course it requires our faith, but each of which, it must be observed, is in and of itself, perfectly level to our comprehension. It is when we take them up, and endeavor to form a system or harmony out of them—when we attempt that which the Scriptures have not attempted—that we plunge ourselves into difficulties."—CHALMERS.

We would here ask the reader to notice :

I. That the mystery in the doctrine of the Trinity meets us just where we have reason to expect that there will be mystery.

With our finite understandings we cannot "by

¹ Deut. vi. 4, quoted in Mark, xii. 29.

² 1 Cor. viii. 4.

³ Gal. iii. 20.

searching find out God, find out the Almighty to perfection." And yet, how is it possible that we should form "a system or harmony" of these separate truths respecting the divine nature, unless we can first determine all the particulars in which the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinct persons, and all the particulars in which they are One God; that is, in other words, unless we can first "find out the Almighty to perfection?" Man possesses two natures, a spiritual and a physical nature, in one person. We know something of the particulars in which these natures are distinct, and we know something of the particulars in which they constitute but one person. Yet no one has ever pretended to make out a perfect philosophical harmony of man's nature—no one has ever pretended to clear up all the mystery which covers the point at which these two natures merge into his one personality. It would be easy to ask questions as perfectly unanswerable on this subject, as any that are asked by objectors to the doctrine of the Trinity; and unanswerable for the very same reason. We can no more fully understand how two natures constitute but one personality in man, than how three persons constitute but one nature in God. In each instance, when we have pursued our investigations to a certain point, we are estopped by mystery; and such

must always be the case where our knowledge of a subject is incomplete.

II. We have the light of a clear revelation in this doctrine just where we have a right to expect it.

The great end of Scripture revelation is to disclose to man the way in which "God is reconciling the world unto himself." We cannot conceive how it could be possible to give anything like a complete and full exhibition of that "way of reconciliation" without revealing less or more of the personality and divinity of the Son, and also of the Spirit. Now it is, not in the form of a disquisition on the nature of Deity, but in setting forth the peculiar parts taken by the Son and the Spirit, in the work of human redemption, that the Scriptures—we might almost say, incidentally—give us the information which they do give on these subjects. And their revelation is clear and distinct in just so far, and no farther, than is needed in setting forth the several parts of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in that work. There is all that faith requires; there is nothing to gratify mere curiosity.

III. There is no contradiction in what the Scriptures teach us respecting the Trinity in unity of the Godhead.

If they taught us that the Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost, were three in the same sense, or same particulars, in which they are one, there would be a contradiction, and we could not receive their testimony, because in itself incredible. But they contain no such doctrine. They teach us that there is a sense, there are particulars, in which each is distinct from the other; and these constitute what we term the personality of each; of course, employing the word *person* in a somewhat peculiar sense, as we must the language of earth when we apply it to heavenly things; and they teach us that there are certain particulars altogether different from these, in which they are one. Plainly, there is no contradiction here.

IV. In all other cases of incomplete knowledge, the fact that there is much that we do not understand in no way interferes with our reception of so much truth as comes established by sufficient evidence.

I know something of my two natures, physical and spiritual; and yet when I attempt to follow up this knowledge in almost any direction, I soon find myself involved in mystery. This mystery in no way interferes with my belief of that which I do know. I cannot tell how my body moves in obedience to my will; but I know that it does so move, and in all the business of life I act upon that know-

ledge. It is in just the same way that the Christian acts with regard to the known and the unknown in God's nature. He knows that "God is one," and as the one God he worships him. He knows that the Son has come a Saviour into our world, and to him he turns for salvation. He knows that by the power of the Spirit "we must be born again," and by the same power the new life thus begun must be maintained and perfected, and to the Spirit he gives himself up as his "Comforter." Mystery which lies altogether outside of these practical truths in no way interferes with the Christian's belief of these truths. Mystery of such a kind as that which attaches to the doctrine of the Trinity never can interfere with our rational faith, if we will but be guided in matters of religion by the same common-sense principles which guide us in our every-day life.

CHAPTER XI.

REGENERATION A NEW BIRTH.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”—JOHN, iii. 3, 6, 7.

THESE words of the Lord Jesus were addressed to “a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews,” who had come to him with the confession, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”

The Pharisees, as we learn from other portions of Scripture, attached great importance to their descent from Abraham, and their scrupulous attention to the rites and external observances commanded in the law. In so far as their religion was not bald hypocrisy, and what is told us of Nicodemus, and of Paul before his conversion, makes it plain that the religion of the Pharisee was not always nor altogether hypocritical—it was a religion, aiming to

secure God's favor by meritorious deeds of obedience, and any reformation of character which might be needed to fit man for heaven, by a steady effort of man's own will, and the reaction of such observances as fasting, and prayer, and alms-giving.

Nicodemus came to Jesus as one who by his miracles had established his claim to be "a teacher come from God," and had he spoken fully just what was in his mind, he would probably have asked—What new observance do you inculcate? What new rite have you come to add to those already established by Moses and the elders? And telling him of his tithe-paying, his alms-giving, his fastings, his prayers, he would have added in the words of another, "All these have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?"¹

As the declaration of a religious system, radically and irreconcilably at variance with that of the Pharisee, our Lord meets him with the words "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again (born from above—*marginal*), he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Thus evidently setting forth a great and radical spiritual change, as something of which

¹ Matt. xix. 20.

man must be the subject ere he can "see the kingdom of God ; and this, a change to be wrought, not by the determination of man's will, nor the reaction of such observances as fasting and prayer, but directly by the power of God the Spirit.

This great spiritual change Christian writers are accustomed to call "the new birth," or "regeneration," in this, adopting the language of Christ himself.

CHAPTER XII.

REGENERATION A QUICKENING OF THE DEAD.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”—EPHESIANS, ii. 4, 5, 10.

MAN's condition as one “dead in sin,” has been already set forth in some of its particulars (see book ii. chap. iii). Regeneration is a “quickenings,” *i. e.* a raising to life, the one thus dead.

When the Spirit, in fulfillment of his mission, “reproves of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,”¹ the sinner finds himself convicted, not of sins actually committed alone, but of a spiritual ruin also; and this, a ruin such that when he understands what God requires of him, and fully admits the righteousness of these requirements, he finds himself utterly unable to meet them.

He understands, for example, that he ought to

¹ John, xvi. 8.

believe every word which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, more especially, every word which he hath spoken respecting Christ Jesus, and the salvation which there is in him; and this with no wavering, half-hearted faith, but with a faith which would control his life and determine his conduct.

Surely, if there is any one in the wide universe who ought to be believed, it is "God that cannot lie." Surely, if there is any testimony of God which ought to be believed with implicit faith, it is God's "record respecting his Son," a record confirmed by his oath, and sealed with blood. Surely, if there is any time in man's life, or any place on earth, when and where the searching eye of God should detect no wavering in his faith in this record, it is when he, a sinner, comes before God in prayer, that he may himself become a partaker in this salvation which is by grace through faith, and yet, when he attempts to pray, he finds that he does not believe this record with a faith, worthy the name of faith; and by no process of study and reflection, by no effort of his own will, can he make himself believe.

He is "dead in sin," and he must be "quicken'd" ere he can believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation.

When by the power of God the Spirit, this sinner, "dead in sin," is "quicken'd," he begins to believe

“God’s record respecting his Son,” and to find peace in believing. Believing that Jesus came “to save his people from their sins,”¹ *i. e.* not from the consequences of their sins alone, but from sin itself, and understanding that this his unbelief is among his chiefest sins, he comes to him for salvation from it—comes just as he is, with no attempt to cover his sin, with no attempt to make himself better—comes with the prayer, Lord save me from my unreasonable, my guilty unbelief. And afterward, when faith has begun to spring up in his soul, his oft-repeated prayer is, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”²

From this illustration of the nature of regeneration, or the “quickenings” of one “dead in sin,” in the particular of faith—and this is a fair illustration of the nature of the work in all other particulars—the reader will see:

1. That in so far as the Spirit uses the instrumentality of truth, it is not that of any new truth, now for the first time revealed by dream, or vision, or suggestion in any way, but that of truth long ago put upon record in the Word of God. The sacred volume closes with the solemn warning, “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book;”³ and an apostle writes, “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed.”⁴

¹ Matt. i. 21. ² Mark, ix. 24. ³ Rev. xxii. 18. ⁴ Gal. i. 8.

2. It does not consist in giving to the soul any new faculties, but in restoring to life faculties in which sin has wrought a deadly paralysis. Paul compares this quickening with the quickening of the dead body of Christ, "when God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."¹ As in that quickening, there was no new organ or limb added to the body, but simply the re-vivification of a corpse which "had not seen corruption," so in regeneration, the soul dead in sin is simply made alive, its faculties are made to act just as they would have acted if sin had never paralyzed them.

3. The effect of regeneration is properly a religious effect. The deadly paralysis which sin has wrought in the soul, is a partial paralysis in the sense implied in the fact, that the faculties act with some good degree of vigor and righteousness in so far as our fellow-men, and the things of this world are concerned. We can and do believe a man who has shown himself worthy of credit. It is only with respect to the proper out-goings of the soul toward God that man is "dead." In regeneration, these faculties are made to act with reference to God, and our relations to him, as they have before acted with reference to man and our earthly relations.

¹ Eph. i. 20-23; ii. 1.

CHAPTER XIII.

REGENERATION A "SETTING FREE."

"I am carnal, sold under sin."—ROM. vii. 14.

"If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—JOHN, viii. 36.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."—2 COR. iii. 17.

WHEN the Scriptures would set forth regeneration as a radical change, to be wrought not by any effort of the human will, or by the efficient agency of meditation, or prayer, or fasting, or any human observance, but directly by the power of God the Spirit, and thus present Christianity in its contrast with Phariseeism in all its forms, it is represented as a being "born again," "born from above," "born of the Spirit." And no more suitable representation than this could be selected for setting forth this great fundamental doctrine of Christianity, in this aspect of the case.

When they would set forth regeneration in its ef-

fects, as exhibited to the world in the life and conduct of the regenerated persons, or as they exhibit themselves to himself in his changed views, and feelings, and principles of action, they represent it as a "quickenings" of the dead, or a "creation in Christ Jesus unto good works."¹

When they would set it forth as it presents itself in the conscious experience of the subject of regeneration, they use yet different language, and represent it as a deliverance from bondage, a "setting free," an introduction into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

In the 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where Paul describes, so graphically, the conflict between what he calls "the law in his members" and "the law of his mind," "sin dwelling in him" and "himself," it is in this form that the working of the principle of the new life presents itself. And it will not affect the case in so far as we are concerned with this passage, whether we consider the conflict here described as that of a soul just born again, in the first conscious exercise of the new life, or that which is constantly going on in the soul of the regenerate, between the old carnal nature, not to die until with the body it is left in the grave, and the new spiritual nature brought into being in our regenera-

¹ Eph. ii. 10.

tion; since in either case it is by the same living, spiritual nature the warfare is waged: and life in its feeblest beginnings is essentially the same with life in its greatest perfection.

It is as a "making free" rather than as a "new birth," or a "quickenings," that the doctrine of regeneration enters into the theology of Christian experience; and in this view of it we will examine it more particularly.

In order to a full understanding of this representation of Scripture, let the reader remark—

1. It is not of the intimate nature of spiritual life, but of spiritual life in its operations, the Scriptures speak when they represent regeneration as a "new birth," "a quickening," or a "making free." No man can tell what natural life is. And the nature of spiritual life is no less inscrutable. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."¹

2. The Word of God contains a revelation of such truth as would lead every awakened sinner, at once to commence the life of a Christian, if reason and conscience could determine his course without let or hindrance. Such is the truth—"God will render to

¹ John, iii. 8.

every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.”¹ He is a fool who will jeopardize, even for a day, “eternal life,” and risk God’s “indignation and wrath” for anything this world can offer,—“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.”² “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”³ Is it true that God has provided a full and free salvation for the sinner, and even condescends to “beseech” that sinner to be reconciled to him? surely he *ought*, at once, with thankful heart to accept the offered grace.

So long as the sinner, from any cause, either knows not, or thinks not of his lost condition, or of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, he may lead a life of utter worldliness. But so soon as he is thoroughly awakened, and convinced of the truth, he must at once commence the life of a Christian, if he will do the bidding of either reason or conscience.

3. When awakened and convicted, with reason

Rom. ii. 6-9.

² Mark. viii. 36.

³ 2. Cor. v. 20.

and conscience clearly on God's side, the sinner attempts the Christian life, he finds an insuperable difficulty in his way.

His habits of sin, habits mighty through long indulgence, habits some of which trace back their beginning to a very early period of his life, and have acquired all the strength of a second nature, he cannot hope to master at once, if he can at all. And mingling with this adverse influence of habit, and undistinguishable as it becomes known to the sinner in his own conscious experience of its power, is the influence of his inborn corruption, that terrible legacy which he has inherited from the "first Adam." Together these constitute an insuperable difficulty in the way of the awakened sinner's leading the life of a Christian; believing in Christ, and loving God, as reason and conscience demand that he should.

4. It is this influence of sinful habits, and of our inborn corruption, to which the Scriptures mainly refer, when they represent regeneration as a "making free." Such language as that of Solomon—"the wicked shall be holden with the cords of his sins"¹—and that of Isaiah—"The Lord hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison-house to them that are bound"²—and that of our Lord—"Whosoever committeth sin, is the

¹ Prov. v. 22.

² Isaiah, lxi. 1.

servant of sin. If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed,"¹ needs no labored exposition to lay open its meaning to the popular mind. Such forms of expression as "the bonds of habit," "the slave of lust," have been in common use in every age and every country; and they show that evil propensities and sinful habits present themselves in man's conscious experience as fetters or bonds.

5. In regeneration, the Spirit, besides convincing the sinner of his sin, and pointing him to Christ as a Saviour suited to his need, thus *persuading* him; must also *enable* him to believe in Christ, and to love God; or all his work of persuasion is in vain.

It is this *enabling* work, this breaking of the bonds by which the sinner finds himself holden, which constitutes his regeneration as it presents itself in his own experience: and to represent the work of the Spirit as merely, or mainly, "a work of moral suasion" fails to meet the plainest requirements of Christian experience.

A bound captive, suppose, lies asleep in some dark prison-house. The prison-house is on fire, and yet the captive feels no alarm, because he is asleep; he sees not the glare of the fire, nor hears the crackling of the flames. A friendly deliverer approaches. He descends into the prisoner's cell, and throwing wide

¹ John, viii. 34, 36.

open the door, that the threatening danger may be visible, he stoops down and awakens the prisoner from his slumber. The awakened prisoner becomes aware of his danger; and immediately the desire to escape springs up within him. If ignorant of his bonds, or forgetful of them for the time, he will make the effort to escape, when nothing more has been done than just to awaken him. This effort, however, will prove unavailing; and it will prove so because the prisoner is bound. The friendly deliverer must do something more for him if he is to be saved from his impending fate. He must loosen the prisoner's fetters; and if he has been so long bound as to have lost the right use of his limbs, he must lend him his arm to lean upon, or restore to him the use of his freed limbs, ere his escape can be effected. The throwing open of the prison doors, and the awakening of the sleeper, sets forth the Spirit's work of *persuasion*: the loosening of the prisoner's fetters and restoring strength to his palsied limbs, his *enabling* work. And anything short of a representation which will embrace both of these particulars will fail to set forth that work as it presents itself in the conscious experience of the regenerate.

In this view of the case, we can understand how it is that the conscious freedom of the subject of regeneration, throughout the whole process of his "turning

to God," is consistent with the Scripture doctrine that "he is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"¹—how it is that "irresistible grace," as it is sometimes called—such grace as that the Christian prays for on behalf of his ungodly friend, when he prays that God may turn his heart unto himself—is consistent with man's conscious experience of no violence done to his humanity in his being turned unto God.

The friendly deliverer, in the case supposed, has irresistibly determined the course of the prisoner, and yet, he has done no violence to his humanity; has treated him throughout as a man. And it is just because the prisoner is a man, and therefore feels and reasons as a man, that his course is irresistibly determined—the grace shown him is irresistible grace. Were he a brute, like the horse, he might rush back into his burning prison-house again, and perish in the flames after all that had been done for him. Instead of interfering with the prisoner's freedom, his deliverer sets him free.

The liberty of the children of God is not, as some have supposed, a liberty to do evil without incurring guilt, but a liberty from sin, by which they have been held in bondage; a liberty conferred upon the unbelieving, unloving sinner, to believe in Christ, and to

¹ John, i. 13.

love God, as his enlightened reason and conscience demands that he should—a glorious liberty, which will be complete, when "the spirit of the just made perfect" shall, with angels, bow in holy adoration before the throne of God, and of the Lamb in heaven.

We can understand too, how it is that the awakened sinner's conviction of his utter helplessness in so far as his own efforts to change his own heart are concerned, instead of leading him to despair, or to sit idly down until in some happy moment he shall be "born again of the Spirit," leads him only the more earnestly to cry, "Lord save me!"

By the prayer "Lord save me," he means, not simply, Lord save me from the condemnation due to my sins. In his own apprehension this idea is often completely overshadowed by another—Lord save me from this "sin that dwelleth in me."

What will be the first thought of the awakened prisoner, when he finds himself fettered in his burning prison-house? Will it not be—Is there no way in which these, my fetters, can be loosed? Must I lie here and perish with my eyes open? Supposing now that on looking up to the friend who has awakened him, he sees a bundle of fetter-keys hanging at his girdle, one of which may—probably will—unlock his fetters; will he not cry—Friend, save me!—mean-

ing thereby, take the key from thy girdle and unlock these fetters which bind me? And the more perfectly hopeless the work of breaking his own fetters appears, the more earnest will be his cry, Friend, save me!

BOOK IV.

THE NEW CREATURE.



“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”—2 CORINTHIANS, v. 17.



PART I.
CONVERSION.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY OF CONVERSION.

“Sinners shall be converted unto thee.”—Ps. li. 13.

THE history of the conversion of a sinner to God, in the sense in which the term conversion is used in common conversation, embraces an account of all the religious exercises of that sinner, from the time at which his awakening commenced, to that at which he began to entertain a scriptural hope that he had become a child of God.

To the Philippians Paul writes—“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.¹ Conversion, as the term is used in common conversation, is the first era in this life-work

¹ Phil. ii. 12, 13.

of the Christian of which Paul speaks. Its history embraces an account of his awakening, of his earlier exercises of faith and repentance, and of the first fruits which these yielded to the glory of God.

The literal meaning of *conversion* is, simply, *turning*: and it may be applied—and, in Scripture, sometimes is applied—1, to the turning of one already a Christian, from some particular error; as in our Lord's address to Peter—"When thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren."¹ And 2, to that turning to God which is a consequence of repentance, and therefore excludes repentance itself; as in Peter's exhortation to the Jews—"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."² 3. At other times, it is evidently used in the same sense which it has in common conversation at the present day; as in the passage quoted from the Psalms at the head of the chapter. In this last-mentioned sense we shall use the word throughout this treatise.

I. Could one place himself beside the eternal throne, and looking down upon earth, see all that God sees and as God sees it—the Spirit, working through the instrumentality of the truth, and the carnal heart shutting itself up against that truth,

¹ Luke, xxii. 32.

² Acts, iii. 19.

would doubtless be the objects which would "fill the eye" in the conversion of a soul to God. And should he then write out an account of that conversion, it would be in some such terms as those in which the conversion of Lydia is recorded—"And a certain woman named Lydia, which worshipped God, heard us, *whose heart the Lord opened*, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."¹ "God working in man" is *the* agent, and the opening of the heart which sin has closed against Jesus is *the* work, in the conversion of a sinner to God.

II. The candid "man of the world," seeing just what man sees, and as man sees it, in witnessing a conversion, has his attention fixed exclusively upon "man working"—"God working in man" being invisible to mortal sense. And should he write out an account of a conversion, it would be in some such terms as those in which the conversion of the jailer is recorded. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of sleep, and seeing the prison-doors open, he drew out his sword, and would

¹ Acts, xvi. 14.

have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.' Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out, and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.' And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."¹

There is nothing here recorded but what is either directly evident to mortal sense, or else so intimately connected with that which is so evident, as a cause with its effect, that we feel no hesitation in passing from the one to the other. Faith, in the heart, is not evident to sense; but having seen the jailer "come trembling" to Paul and Silas with the question—"What shall I do to be saved?" and having heard their answer—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"—and then, seeing him rejoicing; we unhesitatingly infer that he has believed.

¹ Acts, xvi. 25-34.

III. Should a Christian, after he has attained to something of maturity in grace and knowledge, write out an account of his own conversion as memory brings it up in the review of the past, he would write an account different from either of these.

At the time of his conversion he was not directly conscious of the operations of the Spirit; although convinced then, and yet more thoroughly convinced as he has grown in the knowledge of his own "desperately wicked heart," that *the* work in conversion is wrought by a mightier agent than man, he ascribes all the glory of his conversion to "God working in him." Nor was his knowledge confined to that which was evident to mortal sense. He was himself the "man working out his own salvation." He was himself the conscious subject of a spiritual change, and the conscious agent in spiritual exercises.

Such an account of conversion as the Christian would give, when writing out his own history, we have in the words of David—"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God."¹

It is in this last mentioned form that the history

¹ Psalms, xl. 1-3.

of Conversion enters into the Theology of Christian experience; and to a particular examination of the history of conversion, as presented in the above quoted words of David, the reader's attention will now be turned.

CHAPTER II.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

“The horrible pit, and miry clay.”—PSALMS, xl. 2.

IN the account which David gives us of his conversion to God, the reader will notice three several stages of progress, logically distinct, and occurring in a certain order; though not always, nor even often, so in the conscious experience of the convert,—viz. : 1, His conviction of sin,—described as his finding himself in a “horrible pit, and the miry clay;” 2, His “striving to enter in at the strait gate,”—described as a “waiting patiently upon the Lord,” so that the Lord “hears his cry;” and 3, his rejoicing in hope, described as his having “a new song put into his mouth, even a song of praise unto God.” Let us examine these three stages in progress of a conversion, in the order in which they have been mentioned.

In his words a “horrible pit (pit of noise, *marg.*) and the miry clay,” David’s language is figurative. By the “horrible pit” some expositors understand a

lion's den, such as that into which Daniel was cast ; others, a deep pit into which water is falling, and gradually filling it—the noise spoken of being that of the falling water.

Let us adopt the first-mentioned of these expositions—according to either, it is the same truth which is set forth—and the idea presented is that of a man who in some way has gotten into a lion's den ; and thoughtless, or ignorant of the nature of the place, has lain down to sleep there. Partially awakened—more than once, it may be, in the course of the long night, the thought has occurred to him, this may be a lion's den in which I am. But he neither sees nor hears the lions. Because he is quiet, the lions have not been aroused from their slumbers. At length the night wears away ; and the morning light streaming down into the den, thoroughly awakens him. The same light awakens the lions too, and they start into view in every part of the den. He must escape and that quickly, or be torn in pieces.

When partially awakened, and whilst the night as yet continued, he thought with himself of many ways of escape of which he could avail himself should the place in which he was slumbering turn out to be a lion's den. He turns to one and another of these now ; but whichever way he turns, "there is a lion in the path ;" to advance seems certain death. Direct-

ly over-head there is an opening which the entering light of morning has disclosed to him. But, alas! it is so high above his head, that unaided he can never reach it. If some friendly hand were stretched down to him, he might be lifted out of the "horrible pit." And the thought occurs, it may be that some one will pass this way; and the possibility of this leads him to "cry" for help. And now, that he has found every other way of escape closed against him, and this has become his only hope, he can do nothing but cry. And his cry becomes the more earnest as his danger becomes more evident and more threatening.

Turn we now from this figurative representation to the reality. Even the most thoughtless sinner living in a Christian community, has occasional periods of serious reflection. At such times he learns enough of his case to perceive that all is not right between God and himself, and he purposes at some future time, before death shall overtake him, to become a Christian. He thinks that it will be an easy matter for him to become a Christian whenever he pleases. He thinks but little of his actual sins, and knows less of the desperate wickedness of his heart. He has seen and heard of ungodly men turning from their evil courses, feeling contrition for sin and sorrowing even unto tears, becoming diligent in the worship and service of God, and so being converted: And he thinks with

himself, at some convenient season I will do all this, and be converted too.

This man is awakened, and attempts to put in practice the scheme of conversion he has formed. He attempts to pray—and prayer, as a means of grace, stands so prominently forth upon the sacred page, and in the life of God's people, that it is generally to prayer the awakened sinner first turns. But in the light from heaven which has awakened him, prayer appears a very different thing from what it once did. Coming to ask for the pardon of sins, so numerous and so aggravated as his now appear, he feels that he ought to come with a heart filled with the desire of that for which he prays. Coming to plead for grace with a God who hath sealed the testimony of his love with blood, he feels that he ought to come with an unwavering faith in all that the Lord hath spoken. Coming into the presence of a holy God, the very God against whom all his sins have been committed, he feels that he ought to come with tears filling his eyes, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. But alas, for him! he has no such spirit, and no such feelings as these: and the more he labors to produce them, the more hardened does his heart seem to become.

He turns from prayer to some other means of conversion on which he has hoped: to attend-

ance in the sanctuary, to converse with God's people, to reading the Scriptures, to meditation on the truths therein disclosed. But, to his dismay, all these means are alike ineffectual; even the touching story of "Christ and him crucified" moves not his stupid heart. He is ready to say—

"To hear the sorrows thou hast felt,
Dear Lord an adamant would melt;
But I can read each moving line,
And nothing moves this heart of mine."

This man is in "the horrible pit" of which David speaks. The evil of his own heart now made evident, and aroused into activity, by light from heaven, cuts off every hope of escape in the ways to which he had trusted. His feet are in "the miry clay;" and every effort which he makes to extricate himself seems but to sink him the deeper.

Such was the conviction of sin which led David to wait patiently for the Lord," so that "He heard his cry;" and such, essentially, is conviction of sin in every case of genuine conversion to God.

Yet conviction of sin, as it presents itself in the experience of different persons, varies in particular non-essentials; and to some of the more common and important of these variations, let us now turn our attention.

I. Conviction of sin, if it covers the whole ground of a sinner's sinfulness, must embrace a conviction, 1, of sins actually committed; and 2, of the desperate wickedness of the heart. A conviction, such as enters into a genuine conversion, must embrace both of these particulars.

In some cases, the conviction of sins actually committed predominates, and such a conviction, especially if it be a clear and distinct one, will naturally be accompanied by much emotion—terror in view of the consequences of sin, and remorse and painful self-reproach in view of the grace and long-suffering of God, against whom it has been committed. In such cases there will be “trembling and astonishment,” the earnest “cry,” and many a tear on the part of the awakened sinner.

In other cases, conviction of the “desperate wickedness of the heart” predominates: and if this conviction be of wickedness in the form of what the Scriptures call “the heart of stone,”¹ his case will present itself to the convicted sinner in an entirely different light. Instead of trembling and tears, his great trouble will be—to use his own language—that he cannot feel; mistaking the true nature of conviction, and supposing that it is essentially a matter of feeling, —whereas, conviction is but being convinced, and

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

is only indirectly a matter of feeling, in the popular sense of the word feeling—he thinks he has no conviction of sin at all.

Such a case is well described and treated by Dr. A. Alexander, in his tract, “Sinners welcome to come to Jesus.” “Some one,” writes he, “may be ready to say: All admit that none ever come to Christ until they experience conviction of sin; but I have no conviction, or none worth mentioning. My mind is so blind that I can perceive nothing clearly, and my heart is so hard that what I do see to be true I cannot feel. O, if I could experience some tender relenting—if I could get this adamant heart broken into contrition—if I could even feel pungent pain or alarm on account of my sins, my case would not appear so hopeless. But how can I come to Christ with this blind and stupid heart?”

“Now, my friend, I beg you to consider that this blindness, and unyielding hardness, is the very core of your iniquity; and to be convinced that you are thus blind and stupid is true conviction of sin. If you had those feelings which you so much covet they would not answer the end of conviction, which is to show you how sinful and helpless your condition is. But if you felt as you wish to feel, you would not think your heart so wicked as you now see it to be. And the truth is, that you are now in a better situa-

tion to come to Christ than you would be if you had less conviction of the stubbornness of your heart. The use of conviction is to show you your need of a saviour, and to set clearly before your mind your utterly helpless condition in yourself, and that a holy God would be perfectly just in leaving you to your own fruitless efforts, and punishing you forever for your sins."

" Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream ;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him."

II. Another variation in conviction of sin, as the matter presents itself to the subject of conviction, arises from the way in which Christ as a Saviour is revealed to the convicted soul.

In some cases, almost as soon as conviction of sin commences, Christ as a Saviour begins to be revealed to the soul ; and as the conviction increases in power, so does the believing view of Christ increase in distinctness also. - In such cases, there is little or no violent emotion awakened at any time.

In other cases the soul is overwhelmed with conviction, before even a glimpse of Christ as a saviour is obtained ; and hence, from the very nature of man, deep emotion must be awakened. Such conviction as this is often greatly desired, and even prayed for by those with whom the Spirit is dealing more gently—

not for its own sake, but because they imagine that such conviction alone is genuine conviction of sin.

“I once called upon Dr. J. M. Mason,” writes Dr. McCartee, “in much distress of mind produced by the fear that I had not experienced in a sufficient degree what the old divines were wont to call ‘the law work.’ He listened to me patiently, while I described my mental difficulties and desires, and then said, ‘Dear M., take care that you don’t become rash in your prayers; while I was in Scotland, as a student in divinity, I was myself tempted just as you now are. I called upon a venerable clergyman with whom I was upon terms of intimacy, and told him my troubles. He replied to me, “My son, take heed what you ask of the Lord. I was once thus tried, and I prayed the Lord earnestly that he would enable me to realize deeply the terrors of the law. He answered my request, and cured me of my folly. His spirit, as I may say, took me up, and for a time shook me over hell. It was enough. I have since asked the Lord to lead me by his love, and to save me from the terrors of the law.” And such,’ added Dr. M., is my advice to you.’”—*Annals of the Am. Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 14.

“The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,”¹ writes Paul. The end of conviction of sin

¹ Gal. iii. 24.

is—not in any wise to make atonement for our sin ; the work of atonement was complete when Jesus “said, it is finished, and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost,”¹—not in any wise to break the stubborn heart into genuine contrition ; it is God’s prerogative to “take away the stony heart out of man’s flesh, and to give him a heart of flesh,”²—not in any wise to commend us to God’s favor ; for there is nothing gracious in an unbelieving conviction—but to show us our need of Christ as a saviour, just such as he is disclosed in Scripture—“A Saviour exalted to give *repentance* to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”³ And any conviction of sin which answers this purpose, answers the purpose for which conviction is intended as a part of conversion to God.

No more unreliable criterion of the genuineness of conviction of sin could be selected, than the one to which the awakened sinner is most apt to turn, viz. : the amount of painful emotion with which conviction is accompanied. No case of more agonizing conviction is recorded in Scripture than that of Judas, and yet Judas’ conviction was an unbelieving conviction, and he lost his soul. Nathaniel, on the other hand, seems to have acknowledged Jesus, as “the Son of God and King of Israel,”⁴ with little or no painful emotion accompanying his conviction.

¹ John, xix. 30.

² Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

³ Acts, v. 31.

⁴ John, i. 49.

CHAPTER III.

“STRIVING TO ENTER IN.”

“I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me and heard my cry.”—PSALMS, xl. 1.

THE marginal reading here is, in waiting, I waited,” instead of “I waited patiently:” the emphatic repetition of the word “waited” implying, 1, perseverance in waiting; and 2, waiting to the exclusion of all other means;—I waited perseveringly—I simply waited, I did nothing but wait.

I. David’s waiting, evidently, was not idly sitting down, doing nothing, until in some favored moment, and in some unaccountable manner, he should find himself converted;—as in “the Arabian Nights” men sometimes go to sleep in a hovel, in utter poverty, and, through the enchantment of a good genius, awaken to find themselves upon a throne, surrounded with all the pomp and luxury of an oriental court. It is true, ungodly men, when hard pressed for an excuse for not “seeking the Lord” as their present

duty, will sometimes profess to believe that such is God's plan of conversion, and even attempt to "wrest the Scriptures" in support of such an idea. Yet this is all mere profession on the part of these very persons, and they can learn how settled is their conviction that the Lord is to be found in no such way, by asking themselves the question: How would I receive the tale of one who should tell me that he was converted by accident, or in his sleep, or when there was no thought of God in his mind?

David's *waiting* was of the same kind with that of "Aaron and his sons *waiting* on their priest's office;"¹ and that of Cornelius, who "*waited* for Peter,"² when, having, by God's direction sent messengers after him, he "called together his kinsmen and near friends," and stood ready to salute Peter with the words, "now, therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God;" and of "Joseph of Arimathea, who *waited* for the kingdom of God,"³ and so waited, that, at the peril of his life, he "came and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus."

Thus only can we understand what he adds immediately, "and he heard my cry." Thus only, will there be no discrepancy between these words of David and his declarations in other of the Psalms:

¹ Numb. iii. 10.

² Acts, x. 24.

³ Mark, xv. 43.

“When thou saidst, *Seek* ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek;”¹—“O God, though art my God; early will I *seek* thee;”²—and the emphatic declaration of the Prophet—“And ye shall *seek* me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart;”³ and the yet more emphatic words of our Lord, when “one said unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, *Strive* (be in an agony) to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”⁴

With the truth taught in these words, thus interpreted, Christian experience, everywhere, and in all time, agrees. No man ever yet was converted, without being deeply in earnest about it—without giving up all for Christ’s sake. And we have the highest authority for saying, “whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be Christ’s disciple.”⁵

II. The emphatic repetition of the word “waited,” is employed by David to express the fact, that he “simply waited, he did nothing but wait.”

Paul tells us, of the Jews in his day—and so it has been with awakened sinners in the first stages of their awakening in every age—that “being ignorant

¹ Psalms, xxvii. 8.

³ Jer. xxix. 13.

² Psalms, lxiii. 1.

⁴ Luke, xiii. 23, 24.

⁵ Luke, xiv. 33.

of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."¹ When light from heaven reveals to the sinner something of the insufficiency of his own righteousness, he goes about to prop up the old "refuge of lies,"² now shaking under the breath of the Spirit; but finding the structure all rotten, and discovering that its foundation is in the sand, he turns from it that he may "submit himself to the righteousness of God." It is this frame of mind, that David gives expression to, when he says, "I did nothing but wait upon the Lord."

His "cry," the cry which God heard, was, in substance, the same with that of the publican, who "stood afar off, and would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." His cry was for mercy, *i. e.* favor to the undeserving. And the mercy for which he cried had regard, not alone to an escape from the condemnation due to his sins, but to a present deliverance from sin itself also. This is evident from the nature of the conviction of sin in which his cry had its origin. His cry was uttered while he was in "the horrible pit," and it must have been a cry for a present deliverance from the wild beasts which threatened to devour him—while

¹ Rom. x. 3.

² Isaiah, xxviii. 17.

³ Luke, xviii. 13.

his feet were in “the miry clay,” and it must have been a cry for a present deliverance from the clay, in which every effort of his own to escape, but sunk him the deeper.

III. The emphatic repetition of the word “waited” is intended also to express the idea of the perseverance in waiting.

When, on a certain occasion during our Lord’s sojourn upon earth, “a woman of Canaan came, and “cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me O Lord, thou son of David,—He answered her not a word.” When she continued to cry, even his disciples “besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.” And when the woman, pressing up to his feet, “worshipped him saying, Lord, help me,”—He answered her—“It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs.” And she, instead of being repulsed by such an answer, “said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then”—and not till then—“Jesus said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”¹

Doubtless Jesus heard the first cry which this woman uttered; and his purpose was then fully formed to grant her request. But for wise and gracious reasons, this answer was withholden for a season. Thus

¹ Matt. xv. 22, 28.

was the woman thoroughly humbled; thus was her faith strengthened; and when the answer did come, it came as a greater blessing in fact, as well as in her own estimation, than had it come immediately upon her utterance of her first cry. In the case of this woman we have a scriptural example of perseverance in waiting—of waiting patiently for the Lord.

To the apprehension of the waiting soul, as well as in fact, there is no shadow of injustice in God's withholding an answer to his cry, for a season. 'Tis for mercy he cries. The criminal, seeking his sovereign's pardon, a pardon which, if granted, must be granted through grace, will not quarrel with that sovereign because the pardon is not forthcoming at his first cry. And besides this, if at any time a disposition should arise to "charge God foolishly" on this account, the remembrance of how long and how patiently God has waited with him, and how often he has called upon him, and his call been unheeded, would cause him to stand with "his hand upon his mouth," before God.

In this spirit of submission, does the thoroughly awakened sinner "wait patiently," "forsaking all that he hath,"¹ that he may cast himself at Jesus' feet. And let the reader notice, it is one thing to be willing to forsake all that one hath, and

¹ Luke, xiv. 33.

follow whithersoever the Lord leadeth, provided we can first know that we are accepted of him; can feel in ourselves that we are Christians—and an entirely different thing, as a poor, ruined sinner to do this, leaving all the consequences of such a course—both our continuance in it, and its final result, in God’s hands, and depend upon his grace. The one is, at best, but an attempt to bargain with God; the other is submissively waiting upon him. Many a one is willing for the first—will say, If I could but know that I was a Christian, I would gladly “deny myself, take up my cross daily, and follow Jesus,”¹ who never does become willing for the second, and falling into fatal error here, loses his soul.

Thus actively “waiting for the Lord”—as a poor ruined sinner “crying” unto him—perseveringly, submissively following whithersoever he might lead, and forsaking all, that he may follow Him, did David “in waiting, wait upon the Lord.”

When the awakened sinner first asks the question, “What must I do to be saved?”² it is often done in very much the same spirit in which the young ruler asked our Lord, “Good Master, what *good thing* shall I do that I may have eternal life?”³ And if in any way the exact thought of his heart could be brought out, as it was in that instance, it would be found to

¹ Luke, ix. 23.

² Acts, xvi. 30.

³ Matt. xix. 16.

be—many a good thing “have I done from my youth up; what lack I yet?” And hence it is, that when a reply is made in the very words of Scripture, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,”¹ he is offended. Had he been told to clothe himself in sack-cloth—to subject himself to a long course of fasting—to go on a pilgrimage to some distant shrine, or to do some other deed of this kind, he would have closed in with the offer at once. But when a course so humbling to the self-sufficiency and pride of the carnal heart, as simply believing in Christ, simply crying unto him as David did, or trusting him at a venture, as it seems to him, as the woman of Canaan did—or parting with all that he hath that he may follow Jesus, as was required of the young ruler, is pointed out to him, he is offended, and either turns back to the world again; or, he begins to cavil, because, as he says, he cannot understand what is meant by such an answer as this.

To such a one, we say, In the sense in which you use the word “do,”—*i. e.* in the sense of good deeds, deeds meritorious in God’s account, and therefore deeds which can atone for sin, or deeds efficient to change the heart,—there is nothing for you to do; and, we add, on your knees, thank God that there is nothing for you to do. Christ has done all. And now, what is

¹ Acts, xvi. 31.

required of you is, that as a guilty, ruined sinner, you “come to him”¹ just as you are; you “trust him”² for your whole salvation; you “look unto him,”³ as the bitten Israelites did to the brazen serpent, raised upon the pole, that he may save you, not alone from the condemnation due to sin, but also from sin itself, and first among your sins, from your unreasonable, your guilty unbelief. In this spirit “wait patiently for the Lord,” for thus waiting, was David’s cry heard, and “a new song put into his mouth.”

¹ Matt. xi. 28.

² Matt. xii. 21.

³ Isaiah, xlv. 22.

CHAPTER IV.

REJOICING IN HOPE.

“He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God.”—
PSALMS, xl. 2, 3.

Under the Old Testament dispensation, God's people had not the full and particular knowledge of the divine method of salvation for sinners which it is our privilege to possess, and yet their faith, both in its nature and its subject-matter, was the same with ours.

Christ had not then come into the world, and rendered unto God his “obedience unto death” on our behalf. But the method of the sinner's acceptance with God, was clearly set forth in the sacrifices they were taught to offer upon God's altar; “the blood” of the victim, in which was the life,¹ being an offering of that victim's life in the stead of the forfeited life of the offerer. The Holy Spirit, by whose power we are “born again” was not then abundantly shed

¹ Lev. xii. 23.

forth, as has been the case since Christ has "gone away" to the Father; yet the divine method of regeneration was clearly typified in the "divers baptisms" instituted of God, as "a shadow of good things to come."

In the faith of the Old Testament saints there was a less explicit recognition of Jesus, the Saviour, as the Son of God, in his personal distinction from the Father and the Spirit, and of the divine Spirit, as the agent in the new birth of the soul, than in ours. And yet the substantial identity of their faith and ours, even as to the proper divinity of the Saviour and the Sanctifier, is evident from such language as—
 "There is no God else besides me; a just God and a Saviour; Look unto *me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." ¹—"Wash me," *i. e.* "Do thou, God, wash me," "thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow." ²

It was in a clear perception, and a hearty reception of the truth expressed in the words—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is staid on thee.

¹ Isaiah, xlv. 21, 22.

² Psalms, li. 2, 6, 7.

Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength (*marg.*, a rock of ages)"¹—that David began to feel that "his feet were set upon a rock, and his goings established." Under this our better dispensation, it is when the sinner, taught of the Spirit, understands and believes the gospel—"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save SINNERS,"² that he begins to feel that his feet are upon a rock. It is when, effectually humbled, he has become willing to be saved by Christ, in his own way, and on his own terms, and goes forward resting upon the sure promise—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour,"³ that he begins to feel his "goings established."

Does any one inquire more particularly, just how it is that the despairing sinner comes to understand and believe these things? The convert, from his own experience, can give no other account of the matter than that which David gives—"I waited patiently

¹ Isaiah, xxvi. 3, 4.

² Tim. i. 15.

³ Isaiah, xliii. 2, 3.

for the Lord, and he heard my cry; he set my feet upon a rock; he established my goings."

Does the inquirer object, This is a very incomplete account of the matter, we reply: 1, If the beginnings of our natural life are mysterious, it should not surprise us that the beginnings of our spiritual life are equally so; and, 2, this answer embraces all that it is necessary we should know for the practical direction of our conduct. Is the question asked, What shall I do to be delivered from "the horrible pit?" it gives the answer—Wait thou patiently for the Lord, so that he may hear thy cry. Is the further question asked, How can I be delivered?—it gives the answer, He shall set thy feet upon a rock—he shall establish thy goings. And these two questions cover the whole ground of what it is of practical importance for us to know respecting the method, and efficient agency, in the sinner's conversion to God.

"He put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." Delivered from his sore trouble, how could David do otherwise than sing. As the "cry" is the natural language of man in trouble, and in danger, so the "song" is his natural language when deliverance has come.

Israel, when hemmed in between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army, naturally "cried unto the Lord,"

and just as naturally they sang God's praises, when "the sea was passed, and they saw the Egyptians dead upon the shore." It is true, Israel's deliverance was but a deliverance from present danger, and a long desert journey yet intervened between them and the promised land; a journey full of difficulties and trials. But this interfered but little with their joy, because the thoughts of their deliverance were, for the time, the thoughts which filled the soul, and because faith enabled them to see in this deliverance an earnest of what God would yet do on their behalf. So with the song of David. It is a song of praise to God for what he has done; and the joy of that song is but little marred by thoughts of future trials. For the time, his soul is filled with the sense of his great deliverance; and his faith is strong in his newly-found Saviour, "that he who has begun a good work in him, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."¹

This, however, is not the only source of the convert's joy. The exercises of the renewed soul are joyous, irrespective of all relation which they sustain either to the past or to the future.

The sight of God's creation, cursed though the ground be for man's sake, will awaken joyous emotion in the breast of one who, having been born

¹ Phil. i. 6.

blind, has in some way been enabled to see. So is it with the sight which the soul gets of God, especially of God in Christ, when its spiritual blindness is removed. In some instances, the emotion hence arising is as much as the soul can well bear. The reconciliation of a returned prodigal to his father's heart and home is a source of joy to him; not simply because he is no longer in danger of starving, nor because his rags have been replaced by "the best robe;" but from the very nature of the emotion of love to that father which now fills his heart. In the case of the young convert, this joy is all the greater, from the contrast in which his present trust in God, and love to him, stands to the doubt, and distrust, and hard thoughts of God, and positive enmity to him, of which it has taken the place.

David's song of praise to God was awakened, in part by his sense of his great deliverance—that he had been taken out of "the horrible pit, and the miry clay, and his feet set upon a rock"—and in part by his new views of God's glorious character. Hence he immediately adds—"Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, that respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lie. Many, O Lord God, are the wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would

declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.”—Ps. xl. 4, 5. And in another place he writes—“Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound : they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day : and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.”¹

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16.

CHAPTER V.

“DIVERSITIES OF OPERATIONS.”

“There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”—1 CORINTHIANS, xii. 6.

As in the kingdom of nature an almost endless diversity prevails in the midst of essential uniformity, so is it also in the kingdom of grace. The human countenance possesses the same general form, and is made up of the same features in all; and yet every countenance has its individuality. “As in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man,”¹ says Solomon, and the heart-history of no two men can be written in the same words, if it be written with any degree of particularity.

The history of the sinner’s conversion to God, though essentially the same in all, yet presents an almost endless variety in its details. “There are diversities of operations, though it be the same God which worketh all in all.”

¹ Prov. xxvii. 19.

In the exposition of David's account of his conversion, given in the preceding chapters of this Book, the reader will probably have noticed, that the exact order of the text has not been followed; and that a distinctness has been given to the three stages of conversion—viz. conviction of sin, striving, and rejoicing in hope,—which they do not possess in the Psalm itself. As already remarked, these “several stages of progress, though logically distinct, and occurring in a certain order, do not always, nor even often, so present themselves in the conscious experience of the convert.” “There are diversities of operations,” and to some of the more important of these, the reader's attention will be turned in the present chapter.

I. It is never true,—as might possibly be inferred from the account of the matter already given—that an awakened sinner has done with conviction of sin before he begins to “wait upon the Lord.” Nor is it true—as many a one imagines before he learns the contrary from experience—that the convert has done with conviction of sin when he begins to rejoice in Christ, his Saviour.

It is after God has been reconciled to sinning Israel, that Ezekiel tells them—“*Then* shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your

own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.”¹ When Isaiah had long been an honored prophet of God, a new vision of God’s glory leads him to cry—“Woe is me! for 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.”² We can never have done with conviction of sin until we have done with sin itself; and we shall not have done with sin itself until “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.”³

Nor is it true that the sinner has done with “waiting upon the Lord,” when “a new song is put into his mouth.” David, giving expression to the purpose of a converted soul, writes—“Thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I *wait* all the day;”⁴—His exhortations to Christians is—“*Wait* on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart; *wait* I say upon the Lord:”⁵—and his declaration is—“The righteous *cry*, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.”⁶

II. In the order of the text, “waiting upon the Lord” is mentioned before conviction of sin by David; and probably it is so mentioned, because in his

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

² 2 Cor. iii. 18.

³ Ps. xxxvii. 14.

⁴ Isaiah, vi. 5.

⁵ Ps. xxv: 5.

⁶ Ps. xxxiv. 17.

conversion to God the work seemed to him to begin with his "waiting." Not that there was no conviction of sin which preceded his "waiting;" but because the beginnings of his conviction were so slight and indistinct, as to be lost sight of in the deeper and more painful conviction of which he became the subject, when by his attempt to "wait upon the Lord" in such a way as reason and conscience demanded, he was made to know how utterly ruined and desperately wicked he was.

In the conversion of the jailer at Philippi, the case would seem to have been different. His first act of "waiting" is performed with "trembling," and is so performed, because a deep and pungent conviction of sin was the first of his religious exercises of which he was distinctly conscious.

These two types of religious experience are ever recurring in the kingdom of grace.

The one—in which the person would say of himself: I have no distinct, certainly no pungent conviction of sin. I know that I am a sinner; and I know that I ought to be a Christian. And his thought is—if I had such conviction as I have known others to have, most gladly would I follow up the matter, and never rest until I did become a Christian. And then the reflection occurs; my lack of conviction does not make me any less a sinner, any

less guilty before God. If I sit down idly, expecting such conviction, as many have, it may never come; and my soul may be lost in consequence thereof. And the determination is formed; God helping me, I will begin now to "wait upon the Lord." It may be, He will hear my *cry*, and come and save me. In such a case, the sinner's conversion would seem to himself to have begun in his "waiting patiently for the Lord."

The other, in which the person, under some clear presentation of truth from the pulpit, or some solemn providence of God, or some other instrumentality such as a sovereign Spirit chooses to bless to that end, is suddenly awakened; and the first religious exercise of which he is conscious is a painful, alarming, conviction of sin; a conviction which sends him trembling to God's minister, or some Christian friend, with the question; "Sir, what must I do to be saved?"

The one type of experience is set forth in our Lord's parable of the "merchant-man seeking goodly pearls," and, at length, finding "one pearl of great price" which he selleth all that he hath that he may buy; the other, in his parable, spoken in immediate connection with it, of the man "finding," *i. e.* stumbling upon, "a treasure hid in a field."¹ In the author's pastoral experience, cases of the first-mentioned

¹ Matt. xiii. 44, 46.

kind have been fully as numerous as those of the last mentioned; and their result has been equally happy.

III. In some instances, genuine conversion to God, in the sense in which that term has been defined, is soon accomplished. The midnight earthquake which shook the foundations of the prison at Philippi, found the jailer a careless worldling. The last act of the day before had been to "thrust" the suffering "Paul and Silas into the inner prison, and make their feet fast in the stocks;" and then to lay him down to sleep, undisturbed by any concern for their comfort, or any sympathy with them in their sufferings. Before the morning dawned, this same man had "brought them out, and washed their stripes, and been baptized, and brought them into his house, and rejoiced believing in God." Between midnight and the morning's dawn his conversion was effected, the Spirit of God being the witness.

In Paul's case—he being struck blind by the glorious appearance of the Lord Jesus, just outside the gate of Damascus, is so convicted of sin, that, "trembling and astonished, he asks, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And being directed to go to a certain house in the city, he is led thither by his attendants, and there remains "three days without sight, fasting and praying," before Ananias is sent to

him, and his sight restored, and he "being baptized," begins to rejoice in Christ as his Saviour.¹

In David's case, a much longer time would seem to have elapsed between his awakening and his beginning to sing the "new song." His words, "I waited patiently (*marg.* in waiting I waited) for the Lord," clearly imply that he waited for a much longer time than either the jailer or Paul, before "the Lord inclined unto him, and heard his cry, and brought him up out of the horrible pit, and the miry clay, and put a new song into his mouth." Just how long he thus waited, we cannot even conjecture; But evidently David's was a case of what is sometimes called *gradual*, as contradistinguished from *sudden* conversion.

The same diversity in this particular, which appears in the recorded experience of God's saints of old, is to be met with in the religious experience of converts at the present day. The putting of "a new song" into the sinner's mouth, the closing act in a sinner's conversion, is the act of a sovereign God; and when done, is an act of pure grace on his part. The only instruction respecting this matter, which can be given to the awakened sinner, "waiting patiently for the Lord—crying" unto Him, is, "Though it tarry, wait for it."²

¹ Acts, ix. 3, 19.

² Heb. ii. 3,

IV. There is a great diversity in Christian experience, as to the distinctness with which the Christian can mark his progress in his conversion to God.

In the case of the converted jailer of Philippi, there could be little difficulty in fixing the time when he was first convinced of sin. He was aroused by the earthquake, and was "about to kill himself," when he heard the voice of Paul—"Do thyself no harm; for we are all here,"—and immediately, "he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas." And there can be as little difficulty in fixing the time when he first began to rejoice in hope. The Spirit makes the record—"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straight-way,—and rejoiced, believing in God." Such, in substance, is the experience of some of God's people at the present day.

In other cases, and cases far more numerous, we believe, those who give scriptural evidence that they are indeed Christians cannot pretend to fix the exact time when their saving conviction of sin commenced; much less can they fix the exact time when they were born again. "The path of the just is as the shining

light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,"¹ writes Solomon ; and just as gradually as the light of day breaks in upon the darkness of earth, just so gradually does light from heaven often break in upon the benighted soul.

“In the first exercises of the new convert, there is frequently no thought or question, whether these are the genuine exercises of one born of God. There is no room, at present, for such reflex acts ; the mind is completely occupied with the objects of its contemplation ; and often when these views are clear, forgets itself, and is absorbed in beholding the glory of God in the mediator, or the wonders of redemption as set forth in the gospel, or the beauty of holiness, as manifested both in the law and the gospel. Thus often Christ is received, true faith is exercised, the heart is humbled in penitence, and exercises sincere love to God, without knowing or even asking what the nature of these exercises may be ; and these views and exercises come on so gradually, in many cases, that their origin cannot be traced.”

“So far is it, then, from being true, that every regenerated man knows the precise time of his renovation, that it is a thing exceedingly difficult to be ascertained. It is not difficult to know, that on such a day our minds were thus and thus exercised ; but

¹ Prov. iv. 18.

whether these were the exercises of genuine piety, is quite another question ; or whether if they were, they were the first of this kind, is still a different question. Some, who speak confidently of the day and hour of their conversion, never were truly converted, but were imposed upon by a mere counterfeit. Others who have the same confidence of knowing the precise time of their conversion, though true Christians, are mistaken as to this matter. They were enabled obscurely to view the truth, and feebly to believe, long before the period at which they date their conversion. Some attain a full assurance of hope, who do not pretend to know when their spiritual life commenced. All they can say is, with the blind man in the gospel, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."—DR. A. ALEXANDER.

PART II.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.



CHAPTER VI.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A PERIOD OF GROWTH.

“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our “Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—2 PETER, iii. 8.

THE Christian life is represented as a period of growth in many passages of Scripture.

It is compared to the growing, or increasing light of day. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”¹ This declaration is true, not only of the Christian life in its first stages, the period of conversion to God, but also of that life as a whole. “Following on to know the Lord, the eye becomes more unveiled, the heart more enlightened, the understanding more quick in the fear of the Lord, and the taste more discerning between good and evil.”—BRIDGES.

¹ Prov. iv. 18.

It is compared to the growing corn, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."¹ "So is the gospel when it is sown, and received as seed into good ground. It grows gradually. When it is sprung up, it will go forward. Nature will have its course, and so will grace. Christ's interest both in the world and in the heart, is, and will be, a growing interest; and though the beginning be small, the latter end will greatly increase. God carries on his work insensibly and without noise, but insuperably and without fail."—HENRY.

It is compared to the growth of the human body in the course of man's natural life: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."² "This language of the Apostle suggests the ideas, at once, of life and of imperfection, What is dead cannot grow; what is perfect does not need to grow. The persons addressed have been born again; they are spiritually alive. But the principle of life is yet feeble. Their emblem is not Adam, proceeding from the hand of God in all the completeness of manhood; but the new-born babe."—BROWN.

In the passage last quoted, the Christian's growth is represented as a consequence of his feeding upon

¹ Mark, iv, 28,

² 1 Pet. ii. 2.

the "word;" and in the passage quoted at the head of the chapter, "growth in grace," is intimately associated with a growth or increase in "the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" thus presenting in another form the same truth embodied in our Lord's prayer, on behalf of his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."¹ The knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ disclosed to us in God's "word," his "truth," is the fountain in which all Christian grace has its head. We are humbled on account of sin, we have faith in Christ, we love him, because the Spirit, having first "quicken" us, "takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us," and this not by any dream, or vision, or miraculous revelation of any kind, but through the instrumentality of the "Word."

Taking the words of Peter, then, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," as our guide in unfolding the nature of the Christian's growth—and we select them because they best exhibit this growth as it presents itself in Christian experience—we remark—

I. There is always room for the Christian's growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, as long as he is in this world.

¹ John, xvii. 17.

Paul, when a prisoner at Rome, and near the end of his earthly career, writes,—“I count all things but loss for the excellency of the *knowledge* of Christ Jesus my Lord, that I may *know* him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.—Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which alas I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”¹

As an effect of his knowledge of Christ, acquired in conversion, the young Christian is humbled under a consciousness of sin; he trusts alone in Christ for salvation, and he loves him as his Saviour. But his humility, his faith, and his love, though sincere, are by no means as simple, and constant, and controlling, as are those of the older saint, who has learned the desperate wickedness of his heart by many a fall, and the power and grace of Christ by many a recovery. As it is in such sins as that of Peter, denying his Master, we see most distinctly the desperate wickedness of the heart; so is it in such grace as that which Jesus manifested when “he turned and looked upon Peter,” that the soul apprehends most distinctly the glory of Christ’s forgiving love. Doubtless, Peter loved his Master, when “he forsook all and followed him;”² but he loved him far more deeply when “he

¹ Phil. iii. 8, 10, 12.

² Luke, v. 11.

was grieved because Jesus said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”¹

II. After conversion, the Christian’s growth in knowledge consists chiefly in knowing better the very truths by which his conversion has been produced.

As the knowledge of divine truth, and especially “the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” was the means of awakening the Christian graces in the quickened soul, so a better knowledge of that truth is God’s appointed means for developing those graces. Hence it is that the religious exercises, and even the prayers, of the mature Christian, are substantially the same with those which mark the commencement of the Christian life; growth in grace manifesting itself in the fact, that the later are more simple and more discriminating than the earlier ones.

Paul, in one of his earlier epistles, exhibits a true Christian humility in speaking of himself as “*the least of the Apostles*, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.”² But later in life, and when a prisoner at Rome, his language is—“*Unto me, who am the least of all saints*, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of

¹ John, xxi. 17.

² 1 Cor. xv. 9.

Christ.”¹ When first met by Jesus, outside the walls of Damascus, he exhibits a genuine heartfelt submission in the question: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”² This same submission, in its maturity, breathes in his words: “for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”³

David’s prayer, recorded in the 51st Psalm, contains just the confessions, and the petitions, with which the quickened soul first comes to Christ as a Saviour; and as recorded in Scripture, it has served to guide many such a soul to him. Yet this prayer was written by David after he had been long a child of God; and there is not a confession or petition in it that the oldest Christian does not find occasion to offer “as long as he is in this tabernacle.” Indeed, there is a discrimination manifested, especially in the order in which the several petitions are presented in the Psalm, which none but the experienced Christian can fully enter into.

Repetition is natural to the soul burdèned with the desire of that for which it prays; and in this Psalm, the same petitions, in substance, are twice repeated, in the same order: in verses 1 to 8, and then in verses 9 to 12. “Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.” This first petition is for forgiving grace: “Create in me a clean heart, O God;

¹ Eph. iii. 8.

² Acts, ix. 6.

³ Phil. i. 21.

and renew a right spirit within me." The second petition is for renewing grace: "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." The third petition is for sustaining grace: These are the great necessities of the Christian life; and they come first in David's prayer, as they doubtless were uppermost in his mind. It is after these the petition comes, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." The "joy of God's salvation" is a joy worth having, and it is right that the Christian should desire it, and pray for it too. But it is not one of the necessities of the Christian life. Many a child of God has walked in darkness, and yet walked toward heaven. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and 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."¹

The young Christian, through lack of spiritual discrimination, is apt to attach an undue importance to hope and joy; not understanding that "these are rather the comforts of the Christian life; whilst faith, humility, and love, are the substantial graces. Joy may diminish, while faith and humility increase."—GOODWIN.

Hence, he will often reverse the order of the peti-

¹ Isaiah, l. 10.

tions in David's prayer. To the old Christian they stand in just the order he would have them.

III. "The knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," in which Peter exhorts Christians to "grow," is practical, or experimental knowledge of him.

We are prepared, in the first instance, to know, and trust, and love him, by being made to know something of the number and aggravation of our sins ; and being left to feel something of the power with which "sin reigns" in us ; and our growth in knowledge is carried forward in essentially the same way in which it was begun. Hence it is, that afflictions, and hours of darkness, and sore temptation, and many a fall—it may be, through God's grace, not an open fall ; yet many a fall, enter into the history of the Christian life of every child of God on earth.

The idea with which the young Christian comes to God with the prayer, 'Lord, grant that I may grow in grace,' is well expressed in the lines—

"I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once he'd answer my request ;
And by his love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins and give me rest."

And the Christian's experience of the way in which God answers this prayer, is equally well expressed in the lines which follow—

"Instead of this, he made me feel
 The hidden evils of my heart,
 And let the angry powers of hell
 Assault my soul in every part.
 Yea, more : with his own hand he seemed
 Intent to aggravate my woe ;
 Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
 Blasted my gourds and laid me low.
 'Lord, why is this?' I trembling cried,
 'Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?'
 'This is the way,' the Lord replied,
 'I answer prayer for grace and faith.
 These inward trials I employ
 From self and pride to set thee free,
 I break thy schemes of earthly joy,
 That thou may'st seek thy all in me.'"
NEWTON.

Paul writes of himself—"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger (angel—*Gr.*) of Satan to buffet me. For this thing, I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."¹ No doubt this "thorn in the flesh" was very painful; and Paul thought

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 7-9.

that it would be better for him if this thorn "departed." Hence his prayer, thrice repeated. And yet Paul was a better Christian for his continued suffering under the thorn—and in the end, a happier Christian too. In his days of suffering he learned that of "the power of Christ," which he never would have known on earth had his prayer been literally answered. The "Messenger of Satan," in buffeting him, but buffeted his pride and self-confidence out of him, and drove him the closer to Jesus' feet—and the less of pride and self-confidence we have, the happier are we. The safest place upon earth, for the Christian, is close to Jesus' feet.

Peter was a better Christian, and a better Apostle, for his fall—not better than he would have been if he had never felt the foolish confidence in himself which found expression in his words—"Although all shall be offended, yet will not I; if I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in anywise;"¹ but having this disposition working in his heart, he was the better Christian, and the better Apostle, for his fall. In this way humility was made to take the place of pride, and dependence upon Christ, the place of dependence upon self. And the remembrance of his fall would make him more tender in dealing with the tempted, and the remembrance of Christ's forgiv-

¹ Mark, xiv. 19, 31.

ing love would make him, ever after, to point the fallen with greater confidence to Him who is "plenteous in mercy."¹

"I used to be confident of many things," said the excellent John Newton, toward the close of his life, "but now, I know with certainty, only these two; that John Newton is a great sinner, and Jesus Christ is a great Saviour." A deep conviction of our own utter sinfulness, and a consequent deep humiliation before God, and a hearty turning away from all confidence in self—and a clear apprehension of Christ as the Saviour of sinners, just as he is set forth in the Scriptures, and a consequent simple faith in him; these are the grand elements in Christian knowledge. And in the soul of the Christian, mature in grace, all other knowledge seems swallowed up in this.

¹ Ps. ciii. 8.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A PERIOD OF WARFARE.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor 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 (wicked spirits—*marginal*) in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”—EPHESIANS, vi. 10-18.

IN the passage quoted above we have the Christian life presented as a period of warfare; and we have distinctly pointed out to us the nature of the adversaries with which this warfare is to be waged, and the means—the armor defensive and offensive—through which we are to get the victory.

I. The adversaries with whom our warfare is to be waged.

These are expressly declared to be “not flesh and blood,” *i. e.* not mortal adversaries; but “the devil” and other fallen spirits, his angels, described as “principalities, and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in high places.” The devil is called, by our Lord, “the prince of this world,”¹ and by Paul, “the God of this world,”² and “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;”³ thus leaving us in no doubt as to how we should interpret the language of this passage.

The devil is represented as the great adversary of Christ, and of his people, in many passages both of the Old and of the New Testament.

The first dawn of gospel grace upon our world is in the form of a promise of a triumph over Satan—“It” *i. e.* the seed of the woman, Christ, “shall bruise thy head”—accompanied with an intimation that this triumph shall be obtained, only, after a hard fought battle—“and thou shalt bruise his heel.”⁴ The first trial of the Lord Jesus after his entrance upon his public ministry, was his being “led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the

¹ John xvi. 11.

² Eph. ii. 2.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

⁴ Gen. iii. 15.

devil.”¹ One of the few occasions on which, during his life of trial, we are told that “he rejoiced in spirit,” was when “the seventy returned, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”² In the Epistles, the great enemy of the church is described as “Him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”³ And Christians are often warned to “resist the devil;” as in the passage at the head of this chapter, and in Peter’s exhortation—“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist, steadfast in the faith;”⁴ and that of James—“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”⁵ And the last conflict, that in which human redemption is completed, is described in the words—“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of

¹ Matt. iv. 1. ² Luke, x. 17, 18, 21. ³ 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.

⁵ James, iv. 7.

whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.”¹

As one reads such representations as these, the question naturally arises—How is it that the devil and his angels occupy a so much more prominent place in the Scripture history of redemption, than they do in the conscious experience of the people of God in this world?—for it is true, that Christians, in relating their experience, seldom refer to the agency of the devil, even when telling of their sorest temptations.

The answer to this question is to be found in the facts that—

1. Satan and his angels are “not flesh and blood,” but “wicked spirits,” and therefore are not directly evident to mortal sense. The mighty agency of God himself, in whom “we live, and move, and have our being,” is almost unnoticed in the experience of every-day life, principally for this very reason. “The fool hath ‘even’ said in his heart there is no God.”²

2. The agency of “wicked spirits,” like that of “the Spirit,” and of holy angels, is an agency

¹ Rev. xx. 7, 10.

² Ps. liii. 1.

exerted in such a way as to be known to us only by its effects. Doubtless many a Christian, in his hours of sore trial, has been strengthened by an angel—one of those “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation”¹—as was our Lord in the garden; and thus been enabled to glorify God before a wicked world; and yet, his strengthening was known to him at the time, and is remembered by him afterwards, simply as a strengthening from on high, and in answer to prayer. “The Spirit” in “reproving of sin,” and in “taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us,” acts through the powers and faculties of the human soul in such a way, that the subject of his operations is conscious of no violence done to his will; and knows of a supernatural influence exerted upon him, only by its effects.

3. The operation of “wicked spirits” in their warfare against God’s people in this world, is not in the exercises of any wondrous power; it is “against the WILES of the devil,” against “Satan transformed into an angel of light,”² against his “signs and lying wonders, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness,” we are to guard ourselves and to war.

When “Satan put it into the heart of Judas”³ to betray his master, probably, nothing was further

¹ Heb. i. 14.

² 1 Cor. xi. 14.

³ John, xiii. 2.

from the mind of the traitor, than that he was the subject of the devil's wiles, and doing the devil's work. Judas "was a thief,"¹ and Satan so mingled his suggestions and delusions with the workings of the traitor's own covetous heart, as to be unnoticed by him in the whole transaction.

In our own day, and in our Christian congregations, when "the wicked one cometh, and catcheth away the word out of the heart" of the "way-side hearer,"² it is not in visible form that he comes—There is no audible foot-fall to give notice of his approach—there is no burning hand that scorches the spirit as the truth is caught away. It is as a "wily" spirit he does his work—it is by arousing the unholy passions; by filling the mind with foolish, and wicked and worldly thoughts, by engaging the attention about the business and pleasures, and honors of this life, he accomplishes his purpose.

The effects ascribed in Scripture to the agency of "wicked spirits," are all effects the reality of which man knows from his conscious experience, or from observation. In the cases just referred to, Judas did betray his master for thirty pieces of silver. "The word of the kingdom" is "caught away" out of the heart of many a hearer. Scripture and human experience, then, testify to the same facts. What

¹ John, xii. 6.

² Matt. xiii. 19.

is peculiar to the Scriptures is, that they lift the veil, and show us the unseen agent at work in the accomplishment of these facts. And the Scriptures do this, not to gratify our curiosity; but that we may the better understand how deadly the conflict is in which we are engaged—and thus, may be led to “put on the whole armor of God,” and use it, “with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance.”

There is a difference, but no discrepancy, then, between the testimony of Scripture and human experience, respecting this whole matter—and this difference is just what reason would teach us to expect in the case of a revelation from God, given for man’s guidance through “this present evil world” to heaven.

II. The armor defensive and offensive, through which we must get the victory.

This armor is described, in general, as “the armor of God,” *i. e.* not of man’s devising or of man’s workmanship. “Seclusion from the world, ascetic and ritual observances, invocation of saints and angels, and especially celibacy, voluntary poverty, and monastic obedience, constitute the panoply” of man’s devising, which has often been substituted for “the armor of God;” and which can give no protection in “the evil day,” as human experience abundantly testifies

The defensive "armor of God" which Christians are exhorted to "take unto themselves" is particularly described in the words—"Stand therefore having your *loins girded about with truth*," *i. e.* having the knowledge and belief of God's truth contained in the Scriptures—"And having on *the breast-plate of righteousness*," *i. e.* the righteousness which is of God by faith, an infinitely perfect righteousness which satisfies all the demands of the divine law, and which therefore can afford a sure defence against the whispers of despondency, the accusations of conscience, and the power of temptation—"And your feet shod with *the preparation of the gospel of peace*," *i. e.* your feet shod with the alacrity which the gospel of peace gives—"Above all, taking *the shield of faith*," *i. e.* that faith of which Christ is the object; which receives him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of men—"And take *the helmet of salvation*." It is because the Christian is a child of God, a partaker of the salvation of the gospel, that he can face even the most potent enemies with confidence, knowing that he shall be brought off more than conqueror through him that loved him.

The weapons of Satan, specifically mentioned, are "fiery darts,"—"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all *the fiery*

darts of the wicked," *i. e.* of the wicked one, the devil.

"As burning arrows not only pierced but set on fire what they pierced, they were doubly dangerous. They serve here therefore as the symbol of the fierce onsets of Satan. It is a common experience of the people of God that at times horrible thoughts, unholy, blasphemous, skeptical, malignant, crowd upon the mind, which cannot be accounted for on any ordinary law of mental action, and which cannot be dislodged. They stick like burning arrows, and fill the soul with agony. They can be quenched only by faith; by calling on Christ for help. These, however, are not the only kind of fiery darts; nor are they the most dangerous. There are others which enkindle passion, inflame ambition, excite cupidity, pride, discontent, or vanity; producing a flame which our deceitful heart is not so prompt to extinguish, and which is often allowed to burn until it produces great injury and even destruction. Against these most dangerous weapons of the evil one, the only protection is faith. It is only by looking to Christ and earnestly invoking his interposition in our behalf that we can resist these insidious assaults, which inflame evil, without the warning of pain."—HODGE.

The only offensive weapon mentioned is, "*the*

sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"—a weapon sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow."¹ Of the temper of this weapon, and the success with which it may be wielded in a conflict with Satan, our Lord, in the days of his flesh, has given us, at once, a proof and an illustration. "It is written," was his uniform reply to the tempter, and this was a sufficient reply.

The efficiency of this weapon, the Christian learns in his own experience. "It dissipates his doubts; it drives away his fears; it delivers him from the power of Satan. All the triumphs of the Church collectively over sin and error have been effected by the word of God. So long as she uses this, and relies on it alone, she goes on conquering; but when anything else, be it reason, science, tradition, or the commandments of men, is allowed to take its place, or to share its office, then the Church, or the Christian, is at the mercy of the adversary."—HODGE.

Such is the view, which the Spirit gives us, of the warfare which the Christian must wage in this world; and in which he must prove "faithful unto death," if he would receive "a crown of life"² at the master's hands. Well then may he heed the advice—"pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the

¹ Heb. iv. 12.

² Rev. ii. 10.

spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”

“ Well let us watch our Master's eye,
And pray for faith to fight or fly.
Our strength is his omnipotence ;
His truth our sole and sure defence ;
His grace can help the feeblest saint
To watch and pray and never faint.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A RACE.

“So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.”—1 CORINTHIANS, ix. 24–27.

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”—HEBREWS, xii. 1, 2.

THE sacred writers, when they would set forth the life of the Christian as a life to be maintained in opposition to “the wiles of the devil,” represent it as warfare to be waged; when they would set it forth as a life to be maintained in opposition to “the flesh,” they represent it as a race to be run, and a race in which it is needful that “every weight be laid aside,” and self denial, and often painful discipline, such as that which the racers subjected them-

selves to in preparation for the ancient games, should be practised.

This distinction is not rigidly maintained in their writings; and, indeed, it cannot be; the most dangerous attacks of the devil are sometimes made through the agency of the flesh, and in concert with it; as in the case of our Lord "when he was *a hungered*," the tempter came to him with the suggestion, "if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made *bread*."¹ Yet, the distinction is a most appropriate one; and any exhibition of the Christian life on earth would be incomplete which did not embrace a view of it as "a race to be run."

I. Paul writes, "I keep under my **BODY**, and bring it into subjection."

Of "the flesh," in the sense of the natural body, as an enemy to grace, we have an illustration in the case of Noah's drunkenness, and David's adultery.

Of the body, not in its imperious demands alone, but even in its weakness, as a source of danger to the Christian, we have an illustration in the case of the slumbering disciples in Gethsemane, slumbering, when from their circumstances they had so great need to "watch and pray." Our Lord's words when he comes and finds them sleeping—"the spirit indeed

¹ Matt. iv, 2, 3.

is willing, but the flesh is weak” —are not altogether, if at all, words spoken in extenuation of their guilt. They are rather words of warning, intended to impress upon their minds the exhortation, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” When he adds—“the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,” it is as if he had said—Though in your case it be true that the spirit is willing, though you have no purpose of forsaking me; but on the contrary, you are willing to die with me, and sorrow hath filled your heart at the prospect of even a brief separation from me; yet, know that a willing spirit is not all that is needed to make a steadfast and faithful disciple; the flesh, even in its weakness, is a heavy weight for the spirit to bear: though the spirit be willing; through the weakness of the flesh, as it shrinks back from hunger, or shivers in prospect of pain, or faints under the cross, the disciple may fall, and so “wound me in the house of my friend.”

II. Again, Paul writes: “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us;” here evidently referring to “the flesh” in the sense in which that expression is most frequently used in the New Testament, viz., in the sense of man’s corrupt nature; a corrupt nature which, though a new life has been begun in the soul, yet lives, and will live,

¹ Matt. xxvi. 41.

until "we see Christ as he is," and in that blessed vision "are made like him."¹

The opposition of "the flesh," understanding the expression in this sense, as it presents itself in the experience of the child of God in this world, is well set forth by Dr. A. Alexander, in his sermon entitled "the new creature." "A mistake," writes he, "into which young converts are apt to fall in regard to conversion is, that when this great change is experienced, all sinful thoughts and feelings will be forever banished from the mind. They entertain the idea, that so great a change must certainly cleanse the soul from all its defilement; and that no more trouble will be experienced from the corruptions of the heart.

"Well, the first lively exercises of faith and love in the new convert, seem to favor this anticipation. But after a while, when the soul is involved in darkness, and 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit,' and a distressing conflict is experienced, the Christian concludes, that all his fondest hopes were fallacious. Surely, the perplexed soul is ready to say; I never could have experienced the great change, or I should not be thus infested with evil thoughts, and inbred corruptions. Those that have been renewed, have pure hearts, for faith works by love and purifies the

¹ 1 John, iii. 2.

heart. But alas! my heart is full of evil. Iniquities, which I supposed to be entirely subdued, show themselves anew; and I now see evils in my heart, which I never thought existed in me before. Surely, I have been awfully deceived in entertaining the persuasion that I had experienced the great change.

“Such are very commonly the feelings and complaints of real converts, after they have fairly entered into the field of conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. But let such learn to know, that we are here renewed but in part, and that ‘the old man’ will struggle as long as any life of sin remains in the soul. Let them learn that this is a scene of conflict; and that the root of sin is deep in the nature of man, and its ramifications extend through his whole constitution of mind and body; that the more the mind is enlightened, the more perspicacious does it become in discovering sin. It is comparable to the case of a person in a dark room, where he is surrounded by disgusting filth, but perceives it not. But let a ray of light into this dark room, and immediately the disgusting scene is apparent; and the clearer the light, the more distinctly are the odious objects by which he is surrounded perceived. Hence it is, that those men who have been most eminent for piety, have had the deepest and most humiliating convictions of their own sinfulness.”

As already remarked—the Christian's conflict with "wicked spirits" is, in part, a conflict with them acting through the agency of "the flesh" and in concert with it. Growth in grace, in one important view of it, is the over-mastering of our indwelling corruption by the principle of grace implanted within us. Hence, much of what would have been to be said here, has been already said, when examining the Christian life "as a period of growth" and "as a period of warfare." We therefore pass from this subject, with simply directing the reader's attention to Paul's words—"Let us run with *patience* the race that is set before us, *looking unto* JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER *of our faith.*"

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A PERIOD OF LABOR.

“We then, as workers together with him (Christ), beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”—2 CORINTHIANS, vi. 1.

THE Christian life on earth is often represented in Scripture as a period of active labor in God’s service. In the words of Paul, quoted above, as well as in his words, “for we are laborers together with God”¹—in giving to the Christian the title of a “worker together” (Gr. *sunergon*) with Christ, the same title which he gives to Timothy and Philemon (see 1 Thess. iii. 2, and Phil. 1) with respect to himself, this truth is presented in a strong light; especially, when these passages are taken in connection with our Lord’s declaration—“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.”²

The holy angels “are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 9.

² John, ix. 4.

salvation,"¹ and those "that excel in strength, do God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word."² As originally created, man was like the holy angels. He had, as they, powers and faculties conferred upon him, in the active use of which he was to find his happiness in doing God's will, and manifesting his glory.

The moral law, the law under which man lives, has precepts of positive duty, as well as prohibitions; and holiness, as presented in the Scriptures, consists not alone in the avoidance of all that is forbidden, but also in active obedience to God's precepts. When the servant who had "hid his lord's money in the earth," returns it with the plea, "lo, there thou hast that is thine," he receives the condemnation, "thou *wicked* and slothful servant"—wicked in that thou hast been slothful—and his sentence is—"And cast ye the *unprofitable* servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."³

Christ's parting commission to his church is—"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."⁴

¹ Heb. i. 14.

³ Matt. xxv. 23-30.

² Ps. ciii. 20.

⁴ Matt. xxix. 19, 20.

And in the revelation given to John in Patmos, we read—"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever."¹ Thus have we the truth, clearly revealed; that this world is to be won back to its allegiance to Christ—and to be won back through the instrumentality of his church.

Doubtless, the purpose of God might have been accomplished in other ways. The heavens, which now "declare the glory of God" as Creator, might have had the gospel written upon them in characters of light, and thus have been made to "declare the glory of God" as Redeemer. Or, the "voice of God's thunder in the heavens," which now proclaims his power, might have been fashioned into articulate sounds, as it was on a certain occasion (see John, xii. 28), and in God's name called the nations to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Or, if living agency were to be used, angels, now sent forth as "ministering spirits," might have been commissioned as ministers of the gospel also. "Every Sabbath morning, the gates of heaven might have opened, and, sent by God, on a mission worthy of seraphic fire, an angel might have lighted down upon

¹ Rev. xi. 15.

each sanctuary, and flying into the pulpit, when he had folded his wings and used them to veil his glory, he might have taken up the wondrous theme of salvation and the cross. No angel would leave heaven to be a king and fill a throne; but, were it God's will, there is not an angel in heaven but would feel himself honored to be a preacher and fill a pulpit."—GUTHRIE.

Yet such as these is not God's plan. His Church is his chosen instrumentality for the accomplishment of his great purpose respecting man, and the world's redemption. And whether or not we can understand the wisdom of this, we cannot but admire the condescending grace of God in taking us as "workers together" with himself in winning back a rebel world to its allegiance to him.

How strongly the idea of the Christian life as a period of labor had taken possession of the minds of the Apostles, we may learn, among other facts, from the frequency with which they style themselves, and other Christians, "the servants"—not the hired, but purchased servants, and therefore bound to a life-long service "of Christ." "Paul a *servant* of Jesus Christ;"¹ "James a *servant* of Jesus Christ;"² "Simon Peter a *servant* of Jesus Christ;"³ "Jude the *servant* of Jesus Christ;"⁴ "The Revelation of

¹ Rom. i. 1. ² James, i. 1. ³ 2 Pet. i. 1. ⁴ Jude, 1.

Jesus Christ—unto his *servant* John ;”¹ “Ye (Christians) are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and spirit, which are his.”² On this last quoted passage, Horne remarks: “Paul, in reference to the custom of purchasing slaves, who when bought were the property of the purchaser, by a beautiful and expressive similitude, represents Christians as the servants of Christ; informs them that a price had been paid for them; that they are not at their own disposal, but in every respect, both as to body and mind, were the sole and absolute property of God. Speaking of himself, and alluding to the signatures with which slaves in those days were branded, he tells them that he carried about with him plain and indelible characters impressed in his body, which evinced him to be the servant of his master Jesus—“From thenceforth, let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”³

Sin, as it manifests itself in the world, and as it presents itself in that conviction of sin which is the work of the Spirit, consists very largely, in not doing that which God has commanded. A salvation “from sin,” necessarily implies a beginning to do that which before has been left undone. Hence it follows that one of the first manifestations of the “new

¹ Rev. i. 1.² 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.³ Gal. vi. 17.

life" in the soul will be the awakening of a spirit of obedience.

No sooner does the new principle of life begin to work in Paul than he asks—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And when the first act of obedience required of him was—"arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do"—we read, "And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened he saw no man; but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."¹ And when, subsequently he is told—"The God of our Fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see the Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth, for thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard,"²—he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but showed first unto them at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coast of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn unto God, and do works meet for repentance."³ And with how great devotion and zeal he did this, we may learn from his reply to the disciples at Cesarea, when they besought him not to go up to Jerusalem: "What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am

¹ Acts, ix. 6, 9.

² Acts, xxii. 14, 15.

³ Acts, xxvi. 19, 20.

ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”¹

Respecting the Christian life, “as a period of labor,” as the matter is presented in Scripture, it is worthy of remark, that—

I. In the service of Christ, there is work for all; work adapted to the capacities and circumstances of the humblest. There is something for the poor widow to do, as well as the rapt prophet, or the eloquent apostle; and what is required of all alike is, that they do what they can.

In the case of the woman who anointed our Lord’s head as he sat at meat in the house of Simon in Bethany, when some found fault, “Jesus said, She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of as a memorial of her.”² When he saw, on a certain occasion, a poor widow casting into the treasury “two mites,” whilst the rich cast in of their abundance, he said, “Of a truth, this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.”³

When describing the qualifications of one who might be received into the number of the “widows,”

¹ Acts, xxi. 13.

² Mark, xiv. 8, 9.

³ Luke, xxi. 3.

Paul writes she must be “well reported of for *good works*,” and his specifications are—“if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.”¹ James declares that—“pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”² And our Lord says—“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 nowise lose his reward.”³

In our Lord’s parable of “the talents,” it is he that had received *ONE* talent, who goes and digs in the earth, and hides his Lord’s money, whilst those who receive respectively *five* and *two*, employ them so as to be approved by their master (see Matt. xxv. 16–18). Could we see just what God sees in this world, we would probably find that those called of God to some great service, are more generally obedient to the call, than those called to serve him in an humbler sphere; that there is, for example, a larger proportion of those called to preach the gospel, who are to be found in the pulpit, than of those called “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,”

¹ 1 Tim. v. 10.

² James, i. 27.

³ Matt. x. 42.

who are going about doing good. Men, in the humbler walks of the Christian life, are apt to say to themselves, "So little is committed to my charge, that it matters not how I administer that little; at the best I cannot do much for God's glory; what signifies this little whether it be done, or left undone?" and thus through carnal wisdom they make void the ordinance of God.

II. It is not by man's own wisdom, or his own might, that the work appointed him is to be effectual for the end designed. In "discipling all nations," as in "working out his own salvation," the efficient agent is "God working in him."

This Paul understood, and hence he asks—"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."¹ And when oppressed with the magnitude of his work he exclaims—"Who is sufficient for these things?"² he is enabled to go forward with a cheerful alacrity, leaning upon an almighty arm—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."³

This truth needs to be clearly apprehended by

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 5-7.

² 2 Cor. ii. 16.

³ Phil. iv. 13.

those called to tread the humbler walks of the Christian life, as well as those appointed leaders of God's host. And this, whether we have an eye to the efficient, or the cheerful discharge of the duties devolving upon them. Many a mother, called to train a child for God, when tried by that child's waywardness, his folly, his stupidity about heavenly things, has labored on year after year, seeing little fruit of her labors, and thus has come to understand how great a work the training of a child for God is, and exclaimed, we believe, with as deep feeling as ever Paul did, "Who is sufficient for these things?" and has needed, as much as ever Paul did, the support and encouragement afforded by the truth expressed in his words, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Such is the CHRISTIAN LIFE, as presented to us in Scripture, and as it presents itself in the conscious experience of the people of God in the world—a period of growth, a warfare to be waged, a race to be run, a season of labor. "This present evil world" is no more the Christian's rest, than was the desert through which Israel journeyed, to them, the land of promise.

The seeds of grace are sown here, and here they spring up and grow for a season, amid the darkness of night as well as the cheerful light of day; often striking deepest their roots as they bend before the storm. But when the harvest has come, the "full corn in the ear" shall be safely gathered into the heavenly garner.

The Christian's warfare with the devil and his angels is a warfare waged against fearful odds, if we look to man alone. But even "the least of all saints," strong in Christ Jesus, has sung the conqueror's song: "I have fought a good fight; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

The Christian's race is a race to be run under disadvantages, which would dash the hopes of the most ardent, but for the vision of "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." And, behold! "a great cloud of witnesses," all cheer the racer onward, as they tell of their trials, and of the victory which was theirs through faith.

The Christian's life is a period of labor; but he has Christ as a "fellow laborer," and therefore can never labor in vain. And there is "a rest that remaineth for the people of God," a blessed rest; a

perfect rest; a rest from sin in all its forms, and all its consequences; a rest into which the Christian shall enter, when Christ shall "receive him unto himself."

THE END.

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