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ROBERT PHILIP.

OF MABERLY CHAPEL.

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THE
YOUNG MAN'S
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BY REV. ROBERT PHILIP,
OF MABERLY CHAPEL.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY REV. ALBERT BARNES.

SECOND EDITION.



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INTRODUCTION.

It must have occurred to the observers of the aspect of the present times, to have noticed the unusual number of books that are addressed particularly to young men. Many volumes of lectures addressed to this class of our population, have been recently issued from the press. Our public speakers every where advert to their character, temptations, dangers and prospects, with deep solicitude ; and all our benevolent societies, that contemplate the moral and intellectual improvement of the race, regard them with peculiar, and with growing interest. Probably at no period of the world has there been so decided a reference to young men in public doings as in our own times. The case of the young in general, has indeed, excited the attention always of the moralist, and the friend of human improvement. But never before, has there been so much anxiety evinced to guard young men from the ways of sin, and to secure their aid in the cause of virtue.

Our own country has been more distinguished for their efforts than any other. Probably the best books adapted to this class of our population have been furnished by writers in our own country. The reason is obvious. The growing importance of this portion of our community has been here more deeply felt than elsewhere. They take a more active, and a more important part in public life here

than in other countries. They come soonest on the stage of action ; and their powers are more early called forth in the boundless fields of enterprise that are opened in this land. If those powers are not brought under wholesome restraint, and subjected to pure moral principle early, it is felt that they will soon be beyond the reach of admonition and control. And in a country, too, where all offices are in the power of the people, and the character of a people will determine the character of the government, it is felt that it is of unspeakable importance, that those who are soon to control the destinies of the nation, should be imbued with sound moral, political, and religious principles. In a government where office and power are hereditary, the accession of one generation to the place of another, is a matter of much less importance than where all offices are elective. A few years, when young men are advancing on the stage of life here, may essentially change the character of our institutions. All our offices shall pass into other hands ; and into hands too, where the only security that a wise course of measures, that may have been already commenced, shall be pursued, will depend entirely on the character of those who shall advance to take possession of the places of power. There is no titled nobility ; there is no aristocracy ; there is no privileged order, where the interest, and the very existence of the order depend on *stability*, and where that interest would be a guarantee against change. *All, here, depends on character.* We can point to no other security ; we have no other hope of stability and permanency in any of our institutions. We have no standing armies that can guard their permanency. We have no prejudice even in favour of any long-established order of things. All the prejudices and preferences in this country, tend rather to change, and to revolution ; to experiment, and to some more rapid and decided mode of attempting to advance the interests of the commonwealth.

All the institutions which we so much prize, must be soon in the hands of those who are now young men. They

will preside in our colleges and seminaries of learning ; they will occupy our benches of justice ; they will constitute the ministers of religion, the practitioners of the healing art, and the makers of the laws ; they will fill the ranks of the most humble, and the most elevated employments. Somewhere in this mass of expanding mind are now those who in a few years will occupy the seats of senators, and who shall be the presidents, and governors of the Republic. At the present time, their minds are receiving a direction, that shall in a short time direct the destinies of this vast population, and when power shall be felt in the vast plans and purposes that are to be developed in the new world.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the importance of this class of our population should attract increasing attention. Alike by the virtuous and the evil ; the sober and the dissolute, it is felt that every enterprise depends on their character. Bad men feel that *their* hope of success is there ; and good men *know* that all they hold dear must soon pass into their hands. Bad men originate plans of enterprise that contemplate the co-operation of young men, and purposes, if evil, that shall draw them from the ways of virtue ; and good men feel the necessity of endeavouring as much as possible to counteract those efforts, and of securing their co-operation in the cause of virtue.

It may be proper here just to hint at some of the causes why good men have felt so much solicitude in regard to the character and principles of young men. Some of those causes are the following :—

The prevalent vices in this nation peculiarly assail them ; and the arrangements which are made to propagate and extend iniquity contemplate peculiarly young men. It would be interesting to go over the catalogue of vices that exist in this land, and to ascertain how many of the arrangements and temptations contemplate young men, and how few have any reference to any other class of the community. Atheists and profligates have little expectation of increasing

their ranks from the aged, or comparatively from the female sex. Age has few passions to which profligacy can appeal; and the opinions of age are usually fixed either for good or evil, and the proselytism of decrepitude and years is at any rate an enlistment of little value. Let any man, therefore, look at the various arrangements which contemplate the extension of profligacy and sin, and he will find that they are *adapted* designedly to secure and ruin young men. Our taverns and dramshops depend mainly for patronage on them. The numerous houses of licentiousness in all our large cities depend mainly on them, and are sustained by them. Our theatres, and places of amusement, look to them for patronage, and but for this patronage could not be sustained. The advocates for drinking intoxicating liquors look to them for countenance; and the army of drunkards is to be filled up from one generation to another by a vast conscription, as Napoleon filled up the armies of France, from the ranks of young men. The attractions and allurements that meet the eye in scenes of dissipation are not designed for age, but are designed for young men. The charms of music; the arrangements for revelry; the gorgeous scenery; the forms of dissipated, though often fashionable life, contemplate them, and are fitted to lead them astray. There is not in this land a tavern, a dramshop, a theatre, a house of licentiousness and infamy, that would not be closed at once were it not for the support which is expected and received from young men. There would not be another opened and sustained in the land, could the efforts of the virtuous to lead young men in the way of virtue, be crowned with success.

There is a state of things in this land which is tending rapidly to undermine the sober habits of this class of our community. Not only are their morals assailed, but the already far-extended and increasing spirit of speculation is tending rapidly to unsettle the foundations of virtue. Where there is the possibility of accumulating a princely fortune in a few years, or a few months, there will be an increas-

ing reluctance to labour for a livelihood in the manner that would produce a much more certain, though slow return. The habits of frugality, and economy, and slow acquisition, will be soon laid aside for the spirit of rapid gain without toil. As a consequence the farm, and the mechanic's shop, and the counting-room, will be abandoned. The wide fields of the distant West will be traversed in pursuit of gain. The paths of industry will be forsaken. The frugality and sober habits on which a father in humble life acquired a competence will be despised. Small, but certain gains, the sure result of honest industry, will be deemed unworthy of regard, and those plans only, which promise immediate, and ample results will be judged worthy of attention. The mind will be turned away from the mild and gentle charities of life; from those things which go to adorn the character and to lay broad and deep the foundations of future usefulness, from the ways of virtue and piety, to the insatiable thirst for gold. It will be well, also, if this does not become every where the ruling passion of the young men of this nation, and if they do not regard all the precepts which inculcate morals, piety, and the love of country, as subordinate to the great purpose of this life. Never before, in the prospect of sudden acquisition of wealth, were there such temptations to dishonesty and fraud as are presented in this nation; never so great danger that all the great barriers of virtue should be trampled down under the influence of one raging, master, almost uncontrollable passion.

Besides, it cannot be denied, that the hopes of sceptics and infidels are fixed on our young men. The opinions of aged men are fixed; and their conversion to infidelity is not worth the effort. Infidels feel that it is of little importance how aged men spend the remnant of life; it is of immense importance to their cause to poison the fountains of future influence, and to direct and control those who in a few years shall have the destinies of the nation in their hand. Accordingly, it is believed, that almost all the exertions which are made in this nation to extend opinions hostile

to the Christian religion are made with a main reference to the rising generation. The facts which have been before referred to, also tend to the extension of scepticism and infidelity. It is for the present interest of every intemperate and licentious man, of every gambler and swindler, of every man of profaneness, fraud and dishonesty to be a sceptic, and to rid himself if possible of the rebukes of conscience, and of the belief that there is a God, and an hereafter. No man can pursue a course of vice with any degree of comfort, until he has banished from his bosom the hateful attendants that accompany principles of virtue. Accordingly, the great mass of profligate and dissolute men of every rank, are sceptics or atheists; and every young man that *becomes* dissolute and abandoned, by the very fact, becomes also usually an infidel or an atheist. *No good man can be an enemy of the Christian religion.* It is the only religion on earth that demands universal virtue; and it is the only religion that will do any thing to satisfy the inextinguishable desires of the immortal mind. Every good and virtuous man must desire to be the friend of God, infinitely good and lovely—and the Christian religion alone tells him how this may be done, and reveals this to him as his future inheritance. Every good man must desire to live for ever in a better world—and the Christian religion, and this alone, assures him that he shall live on till stars and suns are extinguished, if they ever are, and then as long as the throne of God shall endure. Every good man must desire that there should be one abode of pure virtue; one place where “the wicked shall cease from troubling, and where the weary may be at rest;” and the Christian religion points to the heavenly world, and is the *only* religion that reveals such pure and blessed abodes. And every good man must desire that the virtues which adorn the fireside, should be cherished; the sweet charities of life should be diffused; the blessings which may descend on the abodes of poverty and want, in producing contentment, resignation, and calmness of spirit, should be multiplied, and that

the influences which make men mild, gentle, kind, industrious, honest, pure, should be made known, and perpetuated throughout the land ; and nothing will do this but the gentle spirit of Christianity. How can it be possible that a good man can be the enemy of that which has contributed more to the purity, peace, comfort, dignity, and devoted hopes of the race than all other causes and influences combined ? And how can any one look but with deep concern on the fact that so many minds that might have risen high in intellectual and moral worth have early fallen under the blighting influence of scepticism, and that *in* that scepticism they have buried all their devoted hopes, and self-respect, and moral greatness, and have wrecked all their prospects of happiness and usefulness for ever ?

That there are many dissipated young men in this land no one can deny. That there are many sceptics, and atheists, and profligates ; many reckless of character, and regardless of God and of man, it would be folly to attempt to conceal. But we may not be disheartened ; nor should we give the enemy of virtue and religion an occasion of triumph. All are not profligates, or infidels. Nor is the majority of them in the ranks of infidelity and of sin. It is still true that the great mass of youthful mind in this nation is disposed to the ways of truth, and soberness, and industry and virtue—and we may hope too, of religion. Our young men are bold and vigorous, and ingenious, and large-hearted. They will respond to any well-directed efforts to promote their intellectual advancement, their moral purity, and their salvation. Never was there a nobler field in which to make an effort to secure a mighty mass of interesting mind in the ways of virtue ; never was there a more cheering prospect of success.

Every lover of his country, therefore, must hail with joy all efforts which are made to influence this class of our population to walk in the ways of truth and virtue. With reference to this great object, the following work will, it is believed, be received with renewed favour by the Amer-

ican people. The Rev. Robert Philip, the author, is well known in England, and his writings have been received with special marks of favour by the religious public in Great Britain. His "Guides" have been already extensively circulated in this country, and with undoubted expression of the approbation of the religious community. His writings are full of strong, original, manly thought. His manner is a fine illustration of the proper manner of treating the subject of religion. His style is manly, nervous, vigorous. He has clear views, and he expresses them lucidly, and strongly. The truths which he presents are devoted, and are free from affectation and cant, and from the mere technicality of religion. He writes like a man of strong sense; of liberal views and feelings; who feels impressed with the greatness and importance of his theme, and who is anxious only to convey his own views of the subject to the minds of others. He is free from mysticism; free from bigotry, free from all that would render his subject unacceptable to men of taste, and refined sensibilities. His writings are such as I should wish to put into the hands of an open and ingenious young man, as adapted, I should think, to exalt him to thought, to manly views of piety, and of the great object of human life. The extensive circulation of this volume, particularly among young men, I should regard as a happy indication of the virtuous tendency of the rising generation, and as highly auspicious to the cause of pure and devoted piety.

ALBERT BARNES.

PHILADELPHIA, August 23, 1836.

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MANLY PIETY;

IN ITS PRINCIPLES.

No. I.

ON MANLY ESTIMATES OF BOTH WORLDS.

SHORT as the ordinary term of human life is, it is long enough to justify both the love and pursuit of knowledge, business, and happiness. Neither the shortness nor the uncertainty of our time in this world, should be allowed to embitter life, or to cloud its rational prospect. We belong to time as well as to eternity; and it is as much our duty to meet the fair claims of time manfully, as to meet the weighty claims of eternity manfully. It is no more a man's duty to think only or always of heaven, than it is an *angel's* duty to think for ever of the earth. Angels have both engagements and enjoyments *out* of heaven, as well as *in* it. Hence Paul says, "are they not all ministering spirits, *sent forth* to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" But, whatever time or thought their duties on earth may require, their duties in heaven are not neglected. They are interrupted, whenever angels are "sent forth" upon any errand of mercy; but that errand is, itself, just as truly an act of obedience to God, as when they veil their faces in his presence, or strike their harps before his throne. They know that they are doing His *will*, whether they carry a Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, or swell the Hallelujah chorus of the new song; and, therefore, they do both willingly.

In like manner, the duties of life are as incumbent on us, as the duties of godliness. We are as much bound to be industrious, as to be devotional. It is, therefore, neither a sin nor a shame to feel within us, the workings of an active and enterprising disposition, in reference to this world. It is, indeed, both sinful and shameful to feel nothing else. Nothing can excuse or palliate the neglect of "the world to come." The neglect of it is madness, as well as crime. We, ourselves, could not think well of an angel, who should prefer to be always *out* of heaven, even if out on errands of love only. Ministering to the heirs of salvation, is, no doubt, very proper and pleasing work even for angels; but, as it is not the only work they are fit for, or called to; and as it must come to an end, when the world ends, no angel would be justified in setting all his heart upon it, nor in seeking his chief happiness from it. There is before him an eternity of higher and holier engagements; and, therefore, however necessary or pleasant it may be for "*principalities and powers, in heavenly places,*" to learn "*by the church the manifold wisdom of God,*" he would not be a wise angel, who preferred to be always "sent forth," from his place before the throne. And he is certainly not a wise man, who, because there is much to do in the world, and because he likes to be doing, dislikes or neglects to think and act for eternity. Into eternity he can carry nothing of all that he may gain on earth, by worldly pursuits. He is, therefore, labouring for what he must leave for ever; forget for ever; perhaps, *curse* for ever! "For, what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" An angel, however often *out* of heaven, carries with him on his return to heaven, the souls he has ministered unto on earth; and their society, through eternity, will be part of his bliss: but the man who lives for time only, is fit for hell only; and even to it, he can carry nothing out of this world.

On the other hand, I will readily grant, that it would

not be creditable to either the talents or the taste of an angel, to prefer being always in heaven, whilst there is work to do on earth, worthy of angels, and well pleasing to God. Were any of them capable (which they are not) of saying, I had rather minister to the heirs of salvation as they come into heaven, than be sent forth to guard or guide them ; and much rather minister before the throne for ever, than do either ;"—this preference, however well meant, would be ill judged. It seems highly spiritual ; but it is really selfish. Ministering for ever before the throne of God and the Lamb, is, indeed, the highest of all heavenly honours, and the holiest of all heavenly exercises : but, as God and the Lamb take a lively interest in the welfare of the church on earth, and choose that angels should do so too ; not to do so—would be disobedience against both divine precept and example, and thus disqualification for ministering at the throne. Nothing of this kind, however, does or can occur in heaven. Angels are "swift as electric flames," to do the will of God, whether it call them far within the enshrinements of the eternal throne to adore, or send them forth to the chambers of death to serve. And in both, they are equally happy, although not equally at home ; because they find all their happiness in the divine approbation : and that, is as much with them when they wait by a death-bed, as when they worship at "the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Such being the sober, although sublime, facts of their case, we are fully warranted to believe that, in our own case, the duties of life are as well-pleasing to God, in their own place and proportion, as the duties of Godliness. It would neither be manly nor godly piety, to prefer a life of mere musing, however spiritual, to a life of alternate and blended diligence and devotion. For, if angels do *more* than meditate and worship, it indicates sloth and weakness, rather than high heavenly-mindedness, to shrink from industry, or to regret the necessity of labour.

It is, however, arrant mental weakness, as well as arro-

gant impiety, to set up the claims of time against the claims of eternity. They only clash, when they are *made* to clash. In themselves they are neither incompatible nor inconsistent. In fact, they are intended and adapted by God, to help each other. The cares of this world, make the world to come desirable; and the glories of heaven, make the glooms of earth tolerable. He, therefore, who lives only for time, levels himself with the beasts that perish. He may build a finer house than the beaver, and amass more stores than the bee, and travel farther than a bird of passage, and rival the butterfly in show, and the nightingale in song: but, if these things engross his soul, and absorb all his time, his rational powers are let down to mere animal instincts; and the *results* of his life have no more relation to heaven than the songs of a bird or the pursuits of a beast. Is this—manly?

Eternity does not, then, interfere with the fair claims of time. "The world to come" does not interpose its glories or its terrors, to hide or hinder the proper business of this world. Instead of this, the future lends and bends all its high authority to confirm the legitimate claims of the present; making idleness "worse" than infidelity; hallowing domestic and social love; upholding the sacredness of person and property; and throwing open fields of usefulness to minds of all orders, and to men of all conditions. Should not, then, the present do equal justice to the future; and time admit and honour the claims of eternity?

O, it is pitiable, yea, contemptible, to let the things which are temporal, divert our whole attention from the things which are eternal! Were any man, under any pretence, to care nothing about the affairs of this life, or to do nothing but mope and muse, we should despise him. Life is not too short for action, nor too uncertain for enterprise. All the faculties, and the very form of man, as well as his wants, prove that he was intended for activity. He prostitutes as well as prostrates his rational nature, when in a world like this, he loves nothing, or lives to no purpose.

The *sloth* of the forest, and the *slug* of the garden, reprove such a creature. Is this censure as deserved as it is degrading? Is it the sober fact, that a space of time, and sphere of action, confessedly narrow, have yet such strong claims upon our regard, that it would be despicable to dispute or evade them? See, then, Eternity throw open its interminable duration; its entrancing glories; its unutterable horrors: its unchangeable destinies:—shall time be allowed to hide these from us, or to hush up all concern about them? Where is our sensibility or our common sense, if the immortality of our being engage none of our solicitude? A *mote* may blind the natural eye; but if a *speck* of time blind “the eyes of our understanding” to the solemn realities of death, judgment, and eternity, our mental vision must be very weak, or fearfully perverted. It is despicable indeed, when we, who would not allow the vast and awful expanse of eternity to eclipse the speck of time, allow this speck to eclipse that infinite expanse; flushed as it is with radiant glories and kindling flames. There might be some excuse both for our taste and intellect, if we cared too *little* about this world, and gave the great bulk of our time and thoughts to the world to come; but, to give all to the former, and none, or next to none, to the latter, is utterly inexcusable, and unspeakably paltry. Such a choice, and such conduct, even the devil must despise, however he may be pleased with the fools who persist in it.

Dr. Johnson has well said, “It is only whatever gives the past and the future a predominance over the present, that can raise us in the scale of *thinking* beings:” if, therefore, the present predominate over both, we must even *sink* on that scale. This is inevitable. There are, indeed, men who rise to the heights of philosophy and poetry, by their familiarity with the past. The wisdom of ages is on their lips, and the wealth of history at their command. They are far-sighted in legislation; and all tact in literature. And, could time past return, they, of all men, would be best prepared to mingle with the mighty dead, and to ac-

commodate themselves to the ancient forms and feelings of society. They would be at *home* with Plato in his taste, and with Homer in his patriotism, and Socrates in his sagacity. But as time past cannot return, this predominance of the past over the future, is as irrational as the predominance of the present, because equally irrelevant to eternity.

I do not underrate such knowledge. He is no ordinary *thinker* who can amass and apply it. It is, however, no preparation for the society of angels, nor for the fellowship of the general assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect. The mere antiquary, philosopher, or poet, however high on the scale of intellect, is low on the scale of wisdom, if he can prefer an ideal communion with antiquity, to real preparation for eternity. Besides, if it be noble to make all the lights of the *past* bear upon the present, either as beacons to warn, or as lustres to beautify, it must be ignoble and unmanly to let in none of the lights of immortality upon the present. Why should they be excluded? The history of time is not so well authenticated, as the revelation of eternity. And if the fate of heroes, or the fall of empires, teach any useful lessons, surely the final destinies of the universe cannot be uninformative. Gain, by all means, an acquaintance with former ages. A knowledge of what has been, will enable you to appreciate what *is*; and thus operate as a check on personal vanity and political extravagance. It is, however, what *shall be*—that alone can prevent you from living for this world, or prepare you for the world to come.

This remonstrance against the neglect of eternal things, and the echoes to it which your own conscience returns, must not be silenced nor disposed of by your *intention* to look eternity fully in the face, when you are older. Older is an uncertain event. And if it were not so, it is an unmanly excuse. You are old enough to understand, and to act upon, the reasons for looking the claims of this world full in the face. You feel already that you have no time to lose, if you would improve your education or your con-

dition. At least you see clearly how much time and thought would be requisite, in order to realize all that you desire. You ought, therefore, to despise all subterfuges. "The world to come," is not a secret nor a mystery. There are, indeed, both secrets and mysteries belonging to it; but, as a state of eternal bliss or wo, it stands out as palpably as the alteration of light and darkness in this world. Indeed, it is far more certain how your principles and character will determine your eternal state, than how they will fix your temporal condition. You *may* fail to rise in this world, without being to blame; but you cannot sink into hell, but by your own fault. You may be disappointed, undeservedly, so far as man is concerned, of settling down in the rank or relationship which you set your heart upon; but you cannot miss heaven if you set your heart upon it. There is no *lottery* in eternal life, however temporal life may be one.

In like manner, there is no such mystery about the way of salvation, as renders the experience of old age necessary in order to understand it. There are, indeed, mysteries in the plan of redemption, as well as in nature and providence; but it is not "length of days" that clears them up. It may suit the convenience of the worldly, the idle, and the sensual, to pretend that they know not what to believe: but, whilst they are so dexterous in evading what they ought to *obey* (about which there is no mystery,) it will not be uncharitable to suspect, that they see more clearly than they choose to acknowledge, how the belief of the gospel would involve obedience. And, what else are your evasions of the immediate claims of salvation and eternity but a betrayal of an unconfessed fact, that you know enough to render your indecision inexcusable? Yes, indeed; a glass that could concentrate into a *focus*, all the rays of scriptural light which float and flutter around your understanding and conscience; and which should then throw the imbodied blaze upon eternity, would startle you at your smiling indecision. For you know, that the everlasting

song of heaven is, redemption through the blood of the Lamb ; and, therefore, to take no interest in that song until the evening of life is infamous. You know that without holiness no man shall see the Lord ; and, therefore, not to follow holiness until you come to the last stage of the journey of life, is base cowardice, or baser rebellion. You know, that except you are born again of the Spirit you cannot enter into the kingdom of God ; and, therefore, not to pray for the promised and indispensable renewing of the Holy Ghost, or not to yield to his strivings, is both ingratitude and insult. And then, what aggravates the whole, is, that you *expect* to enter heaven at last, although it be the *last* thing you now think about, and the *least* thing in your present estimate of happiness.

How would all this *tell* at the bar of God ? When your disembodied spirit does take its place at His tribunal, it must give "*an account*" of both the deeds done in the body, and of all the motives from which they were done. Well, just try, for a moment, how your present reasons for delay and indecision would bear *telling* in the presence of God. Perhaps they would not tell well, even to your sister or your mother. You could, of course, make out a case to them, somewhat plausible and satisfactory : but, could you submit it to God, if you were before God ? I mean, if you were before His tribunal, beneath the visible glance of his omniscient eye, with all heaven around you, and the weight of eternity pressing on your spirit ? Thus you must give in your account ! What, then, is the use of *getting up* an account to others, which cannot be given in to Him ? You would not attempt to pass off, upon your mother or your sister, the explanations of your indecision, which you would give to a person who knew less of your habits and spirit : and, if your *heart* condemn you before them, " God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things."

You may easily close this book upon this close questioning ; but when God's "*books shall be opened*" on the judgment-seat, you cannot close them. The recording angel

that opens them, cannot shut them. All that you would conceal, or gladly forget, is registered in them, and will be read to you from them ; and the only way in which you can be prepared to hear it all, without being overwhelmed by despair, is, by setting your heart at once to seek for a personal interest in the great salvation you are now neglecting.

Perhaps you do not yet see clearly how you could set your heart upon that salvation, without withdrawing it from every thing else. But this is quite a mistake. The heart must, indeed, be withdrawn from whatever is sinful ; but from nothing that is truly good or rational. The religion of the Bible does not *quarrel* with the beauties of nature or art ; with the wisdom of science or literature : with musical taste, or poetic genius. It forbids and denounces the pursuit of them, as the chief good : but it does any thing rather than tie or tame down the mind to despise them. In fact, it exalts and purifies the mind, to enjoy whatever is lovely or useful ; and ministers liberally to all that is manly in character, or noble in spirit, or laudable in enterprise.

“ *A Christian is the noblest style of man,*” when he is a Christian indeed.

No. II.

ON MANLY ESTIMATES OF TRUE WISDOM.

THOSE who know best the number and character of the ancient systems of philosophy, which successively claimed and obtained the hallowed name of “ WISDOM,” or religion, in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, will least wonder that Paul should brand them with the epithet “ *foolishness.*” What else could any man call them, who could say of them, (and

defy contradiction whilst he said it,) that, "*the world by wisdom knew not God.*" That could not be wisdom, which left God unknown, and immortality undefined. Nothing is religious wisdom, that is unable to make man wise unto salvation. Accordingly, no man in the present day, who cares any thing about his soul, would be so foolish as to take up with the religious opinions of Plato, Socrates, or Cicero. Even the infidel admirers of these splendid theorists, would laugh at any man who should adopt the creed of the wisest of these sages. It was not, therefore, too sweeping nor too severe a charge, when Paul called the wisdom of the wisest heathen, foolishness. He spoke not of the *talents* of the ancient philosophers, but of the results of their application. The men themselves were any thing but fools. They were the wisest men of their respective nations, and the master-spirits of the world, in all things but religion. Some of them almost deserved the emphatic name given to them by their admiring scholars,—"*myriad-minded men.*" Never, certainly, was more mind concentrated upon the study of wisdom. If "searching" could have found out God, or unveiled eternity, they would have made the discovery. But Plato and Socrates failed! and "*what can the man do who cometh after*" these kings of intellect and imagination? Their systems fell before the gospel, like Dagon before the ark, although the arms of empires upheld them, and the glories of the arts enshrined them, and all the uninspired harps of genius vied in immortal song to immortalize them. All would not do! The world soon pronounced their wisdom foolishness, when God made Christ "wisdom" unto man, 1 Cor. ii. And now it would be as impossible to make men Platonists in reality, as to make them Druids. No system has even the appearance of wisdom now, but from the Christianity that is in it.

We have, therefore, no occasion to ask the old question, "*Where shall wisdom be found?*" for although, as in the time of Job, "the depth and the sea" still say, "It is not in me," and although "destruction and death" can only say,

‘We have heard the fame thereof with our ears,’ the gospel says, “It is in me,” and proves the assertion true, by pointing to myriads whose character on earth, and whose place in heaven, demonstrates that they were made wise unto salvation, by applying their hearts to “the wisdom which cometh from above.” Now, thus wise, you desire and hope to be sometime, and by the same means too : for you cannot imagine that the puny dwarfs of modern infidelity can ever depose truths, which the giants of ancient philosophy could not discover : nor can you dream of mightier minds arising to eclipse the reasonings or the research of “the mighty dead.” They do not know the meaning of mind, (or, with all their *talk* about the sages of antiquity, they have never studied them,) who anticipate from the influence of Voltaire as a wit, or of Hume as a logician, champions of the light of nature, who may do for Deism what the champions of philosophy could not do for it. The mind of the ancients, as *mind*, like the sculpture of the ancients as art, can never be surpassed in power or splendour. Christianity has, therefore, nothing to fear, and infidelity nothing to hope, from “the march of intellect.” The march of vice, or of mental vacancy, or of vanity, can alone facilitate the designs of sceptics and scorners. Christianity has nothing to dread or deprecate, but *inattention* to her claims.

I have made these hasty references to the ancients, not so much for the sake of the argument just hinted at, as for the *example* of attention and application to what was then deemed wisdom. And, surely, if these sages were fascinated and absorbed by mere *guesses* about God and immortality, the perfect revelation of both deserves our attention. If they bent their mighty minds to the deliberate study of nature, until their hearts burned with the consciousness of power and pleasure, we may well apply ourselves to the study of redemption. Even angels “desire to look into” it, as “*the manifold wisdom of God.*” No wonder ! Redemption flowed from all the perfections of the Eternal

mind, and from all the sympathies of the Incarnate mind. It is the fulness of the Father's grace, and the brightness of the Son's moral glory. It is the maturest plan of infinite wisdom, and the loveliest form of infinite benevolence. The silence of the past eternity was first broken by its announcement, and the echoes of the future eternity can never sleep for its celebration. The disclosure of the plan of salvation in heaven, drew around it, as students of the glorious mystery, all the armies of heaven; and the successive revelations of it on earth, made the patriarchs forget their pilgrimages—the prophets their perils—the apostles and martyrs their tortures.

This is the wisdom which solicits our attention; and it *requires*, as well as deserves serious and fixed attention. Neither cherubim nor seraphim, angels nor archangels, deem themselves equal to appreciate or understand it, without looking into it. The first created spirit, as well as the last glorified infant, bends from his throne, or burns in his orbit, with holy curiosity to comprehend its glories. Yes; and could all the varied knowledge of all the universe, be concentrated in one mind, even when all perfect minds are as powerful as the open vision of a completed heaven can render them; that mind would be studious still, and *first* in zeal and zest for continued, and even increasing, attention to this wisdom. Still, no wonder! Redemption by the blood of the Lamb, concentrated the entire and intense energies of the infinite mind, upon its principles and designs. Omniscience never wearies of watching its progress; nor omnipotence of upholding its claims; nor providence of making all things work together for its good. Emmanuel "ever liveth to intercede for," and the Holy Spirit to help, all who apply their hearts unto this wisdom.

Such being the character and claims of the wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation, its own glories might well be expected to win the heart by their own attractions, however the heart was naturally disposed in itself, or solicited by other objects. That which thus draws and ab-

sorbs the adoring admiration of beings who need no redemption, ought to gain, at once, our confidence and love ; for we *need* all the blessings of that great salvation, which they so greatly admire. But, alas, we are capable of trifling with eternal redemption, and even inclined to shut our hearts against all its claims. The very utmost that, of our own accord, we are willing to do, is, to promise that some portion of the evening of life shall be set apart to meditation and prayer. We have no natural inclination to "*number our days*" now, in order to apply our hearts now to wisdom. When our days on earth shall be nearly numbered for us, by a power we cannot resist or evade, we see no particular objections to weighing the claims of the gospel ; but, at present, we hate the thought of death, and have no natural love to salvation. Whatever we think or feel, at times, differently from this, springs from *another* source than our own nature.

Look, then, at your instinctive tendencies. They are all against the eternal interests of your soul, and the immediate claims of true wisdom. Even those tastes which are most intellectual and refined, prefer human wisdom to divine. This is as unmanly, as it is ungodly. A heart thus averse to the great salvation, ought to shock and shame you.

I am aware that it is easy to expose and upbraid this state of mind ; and I know too, that it is sometimes unnecessary to do so. There are moments, when the mind is all thought, and the heart all feeling.

"The soul, at times, in silence of the night,
 Has flashes—transient intervals of light,
 When things to come, without a shade of doubt,
 In terrible reality stand fully out.
 Those lucid moments, suddenly present
 Glances of truth, as though the heavens were rent,
 And through the chasm of celestial light,
 The future breaks upon the startled sight.
 Life's vain pursuits, and time's advancing pace,
 Appear with death-bed clearness, face to face,
 And immortality's expanse sublime
 In just proportion to the speck of time :

Whilst death, uprising from the silent shade,
Shows his dark outline, ere the vision fade ;
In strong relief, against the blazing sky,
Appears the shadow, as it passes by ;
And, though o'erwhelming to the dazzled brain,
These are the moments when the mind is sane."

JANE TAYLOR.

This is, however, but the *sanity* of moments. Such vivid realizations of death could not be kept in habitual combination with real life or godliness. Indeed, they are the warning visions of the ungodly, and not the forms in which death or eternity presents itself to believers. You mistake egregiously, if you imagine that those who "*consider their latter end,*" are thus convulsed or overwhelmed by the prospect. No, indeed : those who, like Paul, "die daily," like him enjoy life daily. Those who, like David, "number their days, that they may apply their hearts unto wisdom," are not terrified by night visions, nor thrown on the rack whenever they realize "the valley of the shadow of death." These starts and storms are the portion of those who "put the evil day afar off." Those who bring it near enough for holy purposes, are not *haunted* by it : for the fear of death, like the keys of death, is under the *providential* government of the Saviour, and thus regulated by His wisdom, as well as alleviated by His grace. In a word, the fear of death is not *allowed* to embitter or sadden life, when life is consecrated to the service of God.

Were this well weighed, the real connexion between the acquisition of true piety, and the contemplation of death, would cease to appear repulsive. I say, the *real* connexion between them, because it is quite different, both in kind and degree, from the relation you imagine them to bear unto each other. When you think of piety, you immediately connect it with the fear of death ; and thus the admission of its claims seems to you, the admission of a sad and settled fear of dying soon or suddenly : and the bare idea of this, is so unpleasant, that, to avoid it, you evade

the claims of religion. You see clearly that you must number your days, if you would apply your hearts unto wisdom ; but you do not see how wisdom *cheers* the heart that is applied to it. You forget too, that a Christian has *other* things to number at the same time with his days. You think of him, only as counting them upon the dim dial of suspense : but he is counting too, the number of the great and precious promises of grace ; the number of the lovely and lofty prospects of glory ; the number of the tender and intense sympathies of his Saviour ; the number of the sanctifying and consoling influences of the Holy Spirit ; and the number of the thoughts, perfections, and purposes of the God of salvation, which are covenanted upon his side. O, there is more to number than “ the days of the years of our life.” They must be numbered, if we would become wise unto salvation : but then, in applying the heart to that wisdom, we are allowed to number them upon the *dial* of a special providence, which the unsetting and unshifting “ Sun of righteousness” for ever illuminates. Christians, living as Christians, do not live at the hazard, nor in the suspense, you do. You utterly mistake in imagining that, because they do not put the evil day afar off, nor forget their latter end, they thus make the world one vast valley of the shadow of death to themselves ; or turn the lights of heaven and earth into sepulchral lamps : or interpret the harmonies of creation as voices from the tomb. No, indeed ; this is neither the spirit nor the tendency of the wisdom, which believers learn from Christ : its natural influence is to endear all that is good and lovely in life, and to “ turn the shadow of death into the morning” of a glorious immortality.

I am neither pretending nor painting whilst saying this. I would, indeed, fain charm you into the habit of considering your latter end ; because my heart’s desire is that you should be wise unto salvation ; but I would not *cheat* you into the habit. I will, therefore, readily, although sadly, allow, that you see many Christians in bondage to the fear

of death, and any thing but cheerful on the pilgrimage of life. This is, however, their own fault. Either they have not sufficiently applied their hearts unto the wisdom of the gospel, and thus missed its strong consolation : or they are indulging some wrong habit or temper, which grieves the Spirit of God : for neither you, nor yet an enemy of the cross of Christ, can point out *one* feature of the gospel which is in the least calculated to make a Christian gloomy, or to throw a gloom over any thing in life, that is really good, or practically useful. The gospel proclaims free pardon, paternal love, special providence, and certain glory : is there any thing gloomy or depressing in these promises ? And these are its promises, whatever may be the opinions or expectations of some of its professors. Let them, therefore, be blamed or pitied as their case requires ; but do not confound the gospel itself with the confusion of the weak, or with the distress of the inconsistent. This is as unfair and unmanly towards religion, as it is towards taste, to confound the vices of poets with poetry, or the eccentricities of artists with art, or the vagaries of philosophers with science. In understanding, be men !

I repeat it, it is *you* that live at hazard, and are most liable to the fear, and to the stroke, of death : for, whilst undecided, you have no security against either. You actually *peril* your life, far more than it is endangered by the ordinary laws of mortality ; for by trifling with salvation, and thus tampering with the patience and supremacy of the arbiter of life, you *double* the risk of a sudden or early death. Ponder this, if you love life, and desire to see many days ! I wish you many happy days ; and, because I do so, I tell you plainly, that you are placing the life that now is, as well as that which is to come, in a jeopardy, beyond any risk at which believers live. They, indeed, must die when their time comes ; but their "times are in the hands" of their heavenly Father, and their "death is precious in His sight : " whereas, your times are in the hands of God, as a lawgiver whom you disobey, and as a judge whom you forget : so

that, whilst undecided, you have no natural nor mediatorial hold upon His forbearance ; for you are doing nothing, and caring nothing, for any thing which He has set his heart upon, or for which He spares life and blesses industry.

True ; you have escaped hitherto, and as you feel no symptom of decay, nor see any ominous sign of danger, notwithstanding all your neglect of the great salvation. True also, you see many spared who are as heedless of eternal things as yourself, and not a few grown gray in ungodliness : and I have no wish to hide these amazing facts. They are, however, but *one* class of the facts which present themselves to our notice. It is a fact, that you do not wish to grow *gray* in impiety : and this settles that part of the matter. And it is also a fact, that you could name many who have been cut down as cumberers of the ground, or hurried unexpectedly into eternity, even since you began to prefer the world to God. They reasoned, just as you do, from appearances, and from probabilities, and from hopes : and now,—*where are they ?*

I tell you again, you are periling your life by neglecting godliness. Whilst you stand afar off from the cross and the mercy-seat, you are upon ground which Providence does not *watch*, by pledge or promise. Even the *intercession* of Christ does not necessarily nor naturally extend to it. If the sweep of His golden censer, or the incense of His advocacy, embrace at all the *neutral* ground on which you linger and trifle, you cannot be sure that they shield *you* ; nor can you think that they throw any protection over your life or pursuits, whilst you place no fervent prayers in the censer of the Intercessor.

I dare not let you off yet ! There is more implied in these facts, than you imagine. Depend on it, there is a gross fallacy in your opinion, or a grand defect in the appeals which are made to you, if you suppose that death stands at the door of piety, either to *alarm* or to *sadden* believers. The Saviour actually and officially keeps back the hand of death, that we may have *time* to apply our

hearts unto wisdom ; and he softens the aspect of death. that we may enjoy *composure* whilst trying to become wise unto salvation. It is not in order to confine our thoughts to death, nor in order to fix them upon the grave, that God binds us to "number our days." He calls for this consideration of our latter end, for the sake of a far higher purpose, and of a far happier emotion. God takes no pleasure in human musings about mortality, for their *own* sake ; nor does He teach us to try to find pleasure in them. Death is a *curse* ; and, therefore, the author of life and fountain of wisdom, teaches no such unnatural lesson, as pleasure from contemplating death, as death. What He teaches is, how the curse may be turned into a *blessing*, and the natural fear of death blended with a hope full of immortality. O, yes ; it is all for the sake of that *wisdom* by which this is effected, that God calls or cares for the habit of numbering our days. He knows perfectly, and we too know well, that whilst we banish all thought of dying, we can banish all the claims of salvation : and that whilst we refuse to number our days, we shall not number our mercies nor our responsibilities ; and, therefore, He teaches this *moral* arithmetic. Besides, and I adjure as well as beg you to remember it, the gospel is the word of eternal life, and, therefore, it will only treat with man as an heir of eternity. It is not chiefly because we may not live *long* in this world, that the gospel is so urgent and authoritative in its appeals ; but because we cannot "*live always*" in this world. Eternity is inevitably before us ! There is the real reason, for pressing on us the duty of keeping in sight the end of time. God's object is not to vex, nor to pain, nor to terrify us, but to *inspire* us with the sublime consciousness of our own immortality, that we may spring up from the trammels of days and years, to lay hold on eternal life. He wants man to be manly in godliness ; and, therefore, He treats him as a man, and that with god-like solemnity, and father-like tenderness. In a word, He as much consults our happiness

when He sets us to number our days, as when He crowns our days with health and prosperity : for as the latter are intended to furnish us with opportunities of becoming wise unto salvation, so the former is intended to enforce and secure the improvement of these opportunities.

Remember, then, the real connexion of death with religion : godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come. To all, of whom it can be truly said, "Ye are Christ's," God says, "All things are yours, whether *life or death.*" 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

It is, therefore, unmanly to confound the vulgar notions, which are afloat on this subject, with the *spirit* of the gospel. That, is not only opposed to all gloomy ponderings about death, but full of *securities* for life, as well as for salvation. No man has such a hold upon the *tenure* of life, or is so far beneath the shadowing wing of providence, as the man who lives unto God ; because God has great purposes to carry on in the world by godly men ; and, therefore, He takes a special interest in sparing them, whilst His work wants them. It does not, indeed, want some of them so long as we imagine ; but, as it will always go on by *instrumentality*, life must be always safest in his service. In a word, life can have no *moral securities*, apart from godliness.

No. III.

ON MANLY VIEWS OF SALVATION.

AMONGST the many points of view in which the oracles of God exhibit the salvation of the soul, that is at once the most splendid and profound, which represents it as "*the life*" of the soul. "Hear, and your soul shall live," was the appeal with which the prophets opened or closed their messages of mercy from God to man. "He that believeth on me shall have everlasting life," was the grand motive

by which the Saviour commended the claims of the gospel. Now, no familiarity with this view of salvation, should be able to hide from you, the sublimity or the glory of the promise and prospect of the eternal life of the soul. Your soul, indeed, can never *die*, in the sense of becoming extinct. The immortality of its being is beyond the reach of death or decay. No piety is necessary in order that your soul should live for ever; and no impiety can lead to its annihilation. The soul is deathless, independently of both. God cannot be provoked to extinguish the immortality of the most provoking spirit in the universe. The life of the body may be periled by sin, and cut short in judgment; but sin can never rouse judgment against the *vitality* of the soul: for devouring fire cannot consume it, nor "the worm that dieth not" waste it. All the torments of hell will as much uphold the life of the spirit, as they will torture the powers of the spirit.

It is not, therefore, natural immortality, or living for ever, that the oracles of God set before us, when they propose to us the eternal life of the soul. Its endless being is a matter unalterably settled by *creation*. Neither providence nor judgment will ever disturb that appointment. It is, therefore, the *well-being* of the immortal soul, that is called its life, by the scriptures: and this being the fact of the case, it can commence now, as well as continue for ever; for the well-being of a soul cannot be so dependent on circumstances, as to be impossible, out of heaven. It cannot, indeed, be perfect out of heaven, because the soul itself is both imperfect in its faculties, and unholy in its affections: but, as the happiness of heaven will consist in the perfection of knowledge, character, and safety, the present happiness of the soul must be attainable here, just in proportion to the degree in which we acquire part of the same *knowledge*—part of the same *character*—part of the same *safety*, which are enjoyed there in perfection. Now these sources of the soul's well-being are not confined to heaven. It is as possible to obtain some holiness here, as it is impossible

to be unholy there. The safety of the soul on earth may be rendered as certain as the stability of an angel in heaven. And, as *revealed* Godhead is the same—in essence, character, and will—as *unveiled* Godhead—much of the same knowledge, which is the bliss of glorified spirits before the throne, may be learnt on the footstool, and thus be the source of some real blessedness to the soul now.

Nothing is more irrational or unscriptural than the hollow notion, that heavenly blessedness is confined to heaven. So far, indeed, as it consists in entire and eternal exemption from all natural and moral evil, it is all *within* “the gates of the new Jerusalem:” but so far as this beatific vision is *intellectual*, glimpses of its glory flash over the walls of the celestial city, and shine down upon this world. The revealed fact that God is love, is just as true here, as that fact unveiled, is transporting there; and, therefore, it can produce in us some of the same joy. The revealed fact that the Lamb slain can save unto the very uttermost, because He ever liveth to intercede, is just as true here, as the *sight* of his intercession is inspiring there; and, therefore, the belief of it must give some of the happiness which is created by the sight of it. In a word, however much more and better God and the Lamb are known by the general assembly in heaven, they are known in no *different* character from that in which they are revealed on earth. They are not different beings on the eternal throne, from what they are in the everlasting gospel. It is, therefore, in degree, not in *kind*, that the spiritual happiness of heaven differs from the joy and the peace, which springs from believing the truth concerning salvation.

Let, therefore, no slothful or sluggish mind divert your attention from the sublime fact, (for it is as sober as it is sublime,) that the eternal life of the soul may begin now; nor from the solemn fact, that it *must* begin here, if the soul would live for ever in heaven. Eternal life there, is as much the continuation of loving and serving God here, as “*the second death*,” or eternal misery, is the continuation

of disliking and disobeying God. Both are the everlasting *on-goings* of the dispositions and doings of time. Neither heaven nor hell will be *new* things, in their great moral characteristics, to those who shall inhabit them. Hell will be as much the perfection of sin, as heaven will be the perfection of holiness. Both virtue and vice are now the foretastes, in some measure, of what they "shall be:" for the former is "*the savour of life unto life* ; and the latter "*the savour of death unto death.*"

Such being the solemn facts of the case, you ought never to think of heaven, without, at the same time, thinking of the absolute necessity of *spiritual life* now. It is mere trifling with the great salvation, to regard the gift of eternal life, as something altogether in the next world. It never can be a future blessing to you, unless you obtain the principle and hope of it as a present blessing ; for it is as much intended by God for present use, as for future enjoyment ; to bless in time, as to beatify eternity ; to improve this world, as to perfect the world to come.

On the other hand, never think of the necessity of immediate spiritual life, without, at the same time, thinking of a glorious immortality. Always look at eternity, when you sit down to weigh the present claims of godliness ; for as mere *duties*, devotion, self-denial, circumspection, and prudence, will not always enforce themselves by their own native influence. Not, however, that their innate excellence is insufficient to commend them ; for they are worthy of all attention : but because the world can easily upset their claims. It can, alas, too readily, make out a case against godliness, even when the light of eternity is let in upon duty and devotion. Things that are seen and temporal will, therefore, *carry* the point against piety, unless the things which are unseen and eternal are kept in view : for it was only whilst he "*looked*" at the latter, that Paul, even, could keep the former in their own place. There must, therefore—there must—be a frequent recognition and realization of what you intend to *be* for ever—to *do* for ever—

to *try* for ever—to *feel* for ever in heaven—if you would do, feel, or be, on earth, what becomes and behooves an expectant of glory. To leave your character to be shaped by circumstances, or modified by accident, will no more meeten it for the inheritance of the saints in light, than the waves of the sea will lash the rocks on the shore into forms of life and loveliness. The action of events upon the character may alter it somewhat for the better: but not at all according to the model of the Divine image: circumstances can no more work out a likeness to Christ, than the stormy waves can chafe the rude rocks into the symmetry and truth which followed the chisel of Phidias and Canova. “Ye must be born again”—if you would enter the kingdom of heaven: and ye cannot be born again of the Spirit of God, unless you allow the word of God to bring the great salvation before your mind, just in the light which Christ presented it—radiant with the glories, and enhanced by the glooms, of eternity. This is its real aspect in the Bible. It embraces time, but it is *based* on eternity. It does not forget that we are mortal; but it woos and warns us by spirit-stirring appeals to our immortality.

Your, soul, then, needs nothing less than eternal life; and it can only inherit that in heaven, by acquiring a title and meetness for heaven now. Do you believe this? However that may be, no one *understands* this, agreeably to the revelation of the fact, who disbelieves that sin has brought the sentence of “the second death” upon his soul, and the seeds of spiritual death *into* his soul. Do you think this “a hard saying,” to apply to yourself, or a harsh construction, to put on your condition as a sinner? If so;—if, indeed, you have any *suspicion* of its being so, do not blink it. Bring out all the suspicion and dislike which you really feel: for you can make nothing savingly useful of the gospel, until you want its grace to take off the *curse* of the law from your soul, and to *quicken* your soul into spiritual life. It is all lost time and labour to apply to Christ for any thing less than deliverance from “the wrath to

come ;" or to apply to the Holy Spirit for any thing less than a "new heart." Remember, it was to "seek and to save the *lost*," that Emmanuel came into the world, and poured out his soul unto death. He died, that we might live. You might, therefore, just as well say, that He did not die for sin, as think that you are not dead, in law, by sin. If you do not deserve the wrath of God, why did He *endure* the wrath of God? If you are not under the curse, why was He made a curse for you? Can your *dislikes* stand out in the face of these home questions? Can you even doubt, for a moment longer, whether you are exposed to the second death? For, do you not see, that if you maintain that you are not *condemned* by the law, you cannot even imagine that Christ died to *justify* you by grace. In like manner, cavils against the *deadness* which the influence of sin has produced on the soul, are, in fact, cavils against the work of the Holy Spirit; for, if no moral death has affected the powers and passions of your soul, you are not a subject for divine operations. They begin by *quickening* the soul; and "it is the Spirit that quickeneth:" so that you actually cut yourself off from the very source of spiritual life, whilst you question the fact of spiritual death in your own case.

Such solemn considerations are, I am aware, almost a temptation to believe any thing, however bad, of ourselves, rather than risk the tremendous consequences of running directly in the face of the work of the Son and the Spirit. Indeed, I would not have ventured to bring the matter to such a startling point, without more prefacing, had I not the prospect of leading you through this subject step by step, and enabling you, thus, to judge for yourself, more calmly than a strong appeal will allow. I must content myself in the meantime, however, with simply telling you, that all your aversion to divine things is just the *deadening* effect of sin upon the soul; and that it is just as sure that the curse of the law has passed upon your soul, as that you have broken the law. You may not feel it now, any more

than you feel it on your body ; but the sentence of death is upon both. How can you, then, imagine that your soul is not under it, seeing your *body* is under it ? But for sin, the body had never been liable to temporal death ; and as that cannot touch the soul, the second death is the sentence of the law on the soul. Here, then, is a predicament of responsibility and peril, that may well awaken in your soul, the piercing cry, " What shall I do to be saved ? what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? "

Now, what do you think ought to be done, that your soul may live *unto* God here, and *with* God hereafter ? You have, of course, heard and read enough of the gospel, to be aware that the proper answer to this question, is, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" Well ; does that answer at all *relieve* your fears ? Salvation is by faith in Christ : does that bring it any more within your *reach*, than if it were by works ? What do you think you can *make* of believing for everlasting life ? What do you intend to try, when you shall attempt to exercise faith on Christ for salvation ? What is faith ? What ought you to *believe* about Christ ? Why is believing made the first thing, and the only thing, required in order to obtain life ?

I multiply these questions not to confuse you, but to bring before you all the confusion which exists in your own mind on this subject. These questions could not confuse you, if you understood the subject. Let them, therefore, set you to *define* to yourself what you mean by faith. Tell yourself, what you really suppose it to be, and what you intend to do when you try to believe.

Well ; what think ye of faith ? I suppose I may safely say for you, that you regard it as "*some great thing*" which you would be very glad to possess, but which you hardly know how to obtain. I hope I may add to this, that you regard it as the gift of God ; as the fruit of the Spirit ; and thus as a holy principle of love and obedience. No believing is *true* faith, which has not this character and spirit.

Well, now ; how do you propose to *obtain* this precious faith ? Here, perhaps, is your chief difficulty. You see what the principle of faith ought to be and to do ; but, how to acquire it, is the question ! Yes ! and it is a very solemn question ! We must, however, keep our *senses* amidst all its solemnity, if we would arrive at any sober-minded conclusion. What, then, do you think of trying, in order to obtain saving faith ? Perhaps you have not made up your mind on this point yet. You see that, in some way, the gift of faith must come from God ; and feel as if you must wait, until he implant the principle in your heart. I mean by *waiting*, what you mean, not utter idleness nor inattention, but waiting in the use of means. This is your plan ; and, should you, on some happy day, feel this precious faith springing up in your heart, you intend to exercise it very freely and fully upon the Saviour : but, until you feel something of it, how can you (as you say) exercise it ?

Now I think, I at length, understand you ; and you are not displeased to see, that when your ideas are put into *words*, there is more clearness and connexion in them than you at first expected to find. It is also rather gratifying to find, that you are not *twitted* as if you were utterly ignorant or indifferent on the subject. I have, indeed, charged you with confusion on the point, but I have given you credit both for solicitude and sincerity. Well ; will you give me credit for equal sincerity, when I tell you, that however well you mean, you quite mistake the way in which believing the gospel gives life to the soul. It is not faith itself that gives life ; but the GOSPEL which is made the means of faith and life too, at the same time, by the Spirit of God.

You will understand this distinction, if you will substitute for the word "believe," another scriptural word, which is equally connected with the promise of salvation. I mean, the word "HEAR." God says expressly, "*Hear and your soul shall live.*" Now you misunderstand the gospel sadly, if you do not see that what you *hear* in it, is the only

thing there is to *believe*, or from which life can be obtained. What the gospel *says*, is the source of faith and hope too ; so that if what we hear from it do not comfort us, faith cannot comfort us ; for there is *nothing* to believe, but just what is said. Looking out to the gospel for TRUTH, and not looking into the heart for faith, is, therefore, the way to obtain salvation. All the hope, all the encouragement, God gives to us, is in what He *tells* us of his mercy in Christ Jesus. It is by "glad tidings," that He gladdens the heart ; and, therefore, it is only in listening to them, and in welcoming them as such, that the Holy Spirit renews the heart.

Let no one confuse you on this matter : there is nothing in faith itself, but believing ; and there is nothing to believe but just what God says. What else could there be, seeing that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God ?" It is indeed, "the fruit of the Spirit : " but, let the Eternal Spirit himself tell you, how He produces it. "The Holy Ghost saith, to-day if ye will *hear* my voice." Heb. iii. Remember also, how the Saviour summed up, in his apocalyptic appeal, all his ministerial lessons on the office of the Holy Spirit : "He that hath an ear, let him *hear* what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This is teaching to profit ! Here we are solemnly and authoritatively summoned away from all idle and vague *wishing* for the work of the Spirit,—to give immediate heed to the *word* of the Spirit, if we want to experience his influences. This is an intelligible process, for becoming wise unto salvation, by faith in Christ Jesus. It is also a *testing* process ! A man may flatter himself, that he is very willing to be a true believer, so long as he regards faith only as a grace or a gift he has to *wait* for ; but, let him fairly meet the claims of the gospel on his immediate attention ; and mark, impartially, how he likes to hear it seriously—to read it prayerfully—to ponder it deeply, to submit to it meekly, and act on it honestly, so far as he understands it—and he will soon see the real state of his heart before God, as well as discern the mighty difference there is between waiting

for a gift and *seeking* for one. The sober fact of your case is, that you just desire faith as much, as you delight to acquaint yourself with the way of salvation; and no more than you are concerned about your own salvation. The real degree of your willingness to be indebted to grace for the gift of faith, is, just the degree of your willingness to give "good heed" unto the things which belong to your everlasting peace. If you are not inclined to lay them to heart now, you are not willing to be a believer now, nor yet waiting for faith. You are, in fact, standing idle, in a place, a position, and a spirit, to which that gift of God is not promised. HEAR the Spirit! if you would have the Spirit to help you. Show that you prize and long for His renewing work on your heart, by listening with deep attention to His word, concerning all that Christ has done, and all that God in Christ is. This is the truth—to be believed! It is to give this truth the *force* of truth on the mind, that the Holy Spirit works and witnesses.

And, what glorious truth it is! Well may it be "the incorruptible seed" by which men are born again of the Spirit, and from which He raises the harvest of faith and holiness. O, hear it, *for* yourself, and *by* yourself! Retire alone with God, and listen to Him, as if He spoke to you only. You have not given Him a *fair hearing* in public, if you have not thus listened to him in secret. You have hearkened to the gospel, only as a system of doctrine, or as a scheme of duty, and not as the heaven-sent message of mercy and grace to your soul, if you have not gone alone with God, to hear it again, as from His own lips.

Is it necessary to say to you, that the gospel is *worth* hearing; or to ask you, whether you ever set yourself to hear it as the glad tidings of God's good will to your soul? You have, of course, listened to gospel-sermons, and compared one sermon with another, and, perhaps, compared them all with their texts, and with the tenor of Scripture. So far well. But this is not hearing that your soul might live; that you might know what God feels for you; that

you might see your own way and welcome to escape from the wrath to come. You have listened and heard ; and, no doubt, with some desire to get good from the gospel. You may even have felt, at times, that you were profiting under it ; and seen very clearly how great good might be derived from it. But, pause now, and meet this one simple question,—what do you really mean by getting *good* under the gospel ? What good do you expect ? One thing you mean is, of course, that you yourself should grow better in heart and character. So far well. Nothing can do us real good, unless by *making* us really good. That is the practical design of all that God has said to us in the gospel. He begins, however, by *doing* us good, in order to make us good. He doeth us good at once by the gospel itself ; for the moment a man hears it as “ good news,” he gets good from it, and continues to get good from it while he continues to hear it as good news. No man can hear it as good news, without getting good from it ; for it gives hopes at once—encouragement at once—by warranting an immediate application to God for mercy. This is not, indeed, all the benefit it begins with ; but, without this, nothing else could do us good.

You are, therefore, not thoroughly in earnest about salvation ; or, like “ the heath in the desert,” you “ know not when good cometh,” if what you hear in the very first appeals of the gospel to you, fail to do you good : for as it opens with the express assurance, that “ God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” “ you must be unwilling to be reconciled yet, or you are not fully aware of your need of reconciliation. That—you do need, however, as much as you need to grow better. Indeed, you never can improve in character before God, until your heart is right with God ; and right it will not be made by the Spirit of God, until you take the word of God for all the mercy and grace you require.

No. IV.

ON MANLY FAITH IN PROVIDENCE.

OF all the pompous inanities of a "*talking philosophy*," the most contemptible is the pretence, that the greatness and grandeur of the universe renders the affairs of this world, and especially of individuals, too insignificant to be regulated by a special Providence. Because, forsooth, the solar system is immense, and systems of suns magnificent, and space as brilliant as boundless, sciologists argue, that man is too mean, to be an object of divine solicitude, or of providential care. The men who talk thus, profess to be influenced by lofty ideas of God, and by a sacred regard to His majesty. They say, that it is both vulgar and presumptuous, to imagine that the Great Supreme should notice little things, or interfere with the course of human affairs. It may be worthy of Him, they allow, to sustain the great laws of Nature, and to superintend the universe as a whole ; but to hear the prayers, or heed the conduct, of individuals, they deem unworthy of God. Thus they profess to exalt the Deity ! There is, however, nothing so *vulgar* as this, in all the common notions of Providence. The language of this theory is fine ; but the principle of it is coarse, and the spirit of it mean, and its whole aspect more degrading to Deity, than the lowest notion of His providence, which the weakest Christian entertains. For, this theory confines the attention of the eternal mind to the *mindless* parts of creation—to masses and motions of mere *matter* ; whereas, the most vulgar theory of Providence, places God in the province of life and mind—a sphere which has some resemblance to Himself, and with which He can hold some rational intercourse, or feel some natural sympathy. Suns and systems, and all the vast machinery of the universe, have no affinity with the divine nature, and no consciousness of the divine care ; and, therefore, to make them the

sole or the chief objects of divine attention, is, to degrade God. They are, indeed, immense and magnificent; but, in themselves, they are as base as they are bulky, and as inert as they are innumerable.

How, then, can that be an exalted idea of God, which confines his care and complacency to mere machinery, and excludes from both, beings capable of knowing and enjoying both? O, the grossest superstition was never so vulgar, as this vapid refinement! Superstition has always, and at least, represented the Infinite Mind as occupied about mind, and as subordinating matter to the improvement of spirits; and, although sometimes too familiar, and at other times too fanciful, in its details of Providence, it was never so brutish as to fill the heart or hands of Deity with machinery. It remained for men, calling themselves philosophers! to do this. And most fully have they verified the apostolic proverb by it;—“*professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.*”

This sarcasm is not too severe, even if these *refiners* regard every star in space, as an inhabited world, and all the inhabitants as perfect beings. That is, certainly, a splendid conception, and as probable as it is sublime. It was most likely this view of the universe, which compelled David to exclaim, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him?” The holy amazement, (or as Warburton calls it, “the sacred horror”) which breathes and burns in this exclamation, must be shared by every one, who, like David, “considers the heavens” in this light.

The moment we vividly realize to ourselves a boundless universe teeming with brighter worlds and higher orders of beings, we begin to see their countless claims upon the notice of God, and to hear the sphered harmony of their worship, and to feel the superiority of their nature; and thus to find our own level. So we ought. It is, however, the brutes’ or the devil’s *level*, which that man sinks to, who concludes that God cares nothing about mankind: for it is just as likely that God should care for men as for

angels. He "humbleth Himself," when he condescends to "behold the things which are in heaven," as well as when He watches over the earth. The highest seraph is not so much above the lowest creature, as he is beneath the Creator. As, therefore, the Creator does condescend, even when he rules amongst the armies of heaven, nothing can disprove His rule amongst the inhabitants of the earth: for there is no such difference between angelic and human beings, as to render the government or the guardianship of man unworthy of God.

We are, indeed, utterly unworthy of such a Providence, and especially of such Grace, as He exercises on our behalf; but, as both are exercised for the express purpose of training up human spirits to angelic perfection and eternal felicity, both are just as worthy of God, as is the moral government of the unfallen universe. Dr. Chalmers, if he has not exhausted this subject in his *Astronomical Discourses*, has embodied it in forms of power and glory, which fascinate equally the understanding and the imagination.

It is not, however, in this department of the question, that the disbelievers in a special Providence unmask themselves fully. It is when *prayer* is proposed, as the means of averting or mitigating the calamitous visitations of Providence. Then—the disbelievers show themselves in their true colours, and meet the proposal with sneers or sophisms. I say—the *proposal* for public prayer;—for by the time that is carried into effect throughout the nation, the calamity that calls for it, has either created a public voice which drowns the hissing of sceptics, or made them "believe and tremble." The recent visitation of pestilence in this country, had this effect. Whilst that *siroc* hovered on the confines of the land, or only swept through the lanes of vice and wretchedness, the wittings of the senate, and the leviathans of the press, vied with each other in ribaldry and fool-hardiness. Prayer and humiliation were put upon a level with the *hurdle-fences*, which some one was said to have placed around his farm for protection. But when the

crisis came, and "the high places" of the earth, in common with the lowest, were perilous; and when the sound heart of the nation sent the nation to its knees, even infidels were awed into silence. Journals that had never named Providence before, except to ridicule it, and never referred to God, except by swearing, *slipt* into their leading articles, from time to time, such admissions of both, as betrayed their own alarm. The cravens of that crisis may choose to forget this fact; but history will not forget that they trembled quite as much as the men who fasted and prayed then.

Fears, I am fully aware, do not establish facts, however they may illustrate them. Let us, therefore, look at the argument against the use of prayer, as it is put forward, before the flutterings of the heart make the lips falter, or the spirits sink. Its validity, if it be valid, should not be judged, whilst its authors are almost frightened out of their wits by physical danger. Well; it is this: "that as famine, pestilence, and all kinds of peril, have, of course, *natural causes*, their removal or mitigation, in answer to prayer, would involve a violation of the great laws of nature." This is really great nonsense; but as it is called philosophy, and is sometimes gravely treated by true philosophers, we must, I suppose, notice it.

Now, certainly, a violation of the great laws of nature, is a very solemn matter. But, what law (great or little) of nature, requires to be altered or relaxed, even for a moment, in order to make room for the influence of prayer? When prayer is for life or health, there may be *moral causes* why God should not vouchsafe to answer it; but there can be no *natural causes* to prevent Him, even when the atmosphere is charged with pestilence. Even then, he has no occasion to neutralize the natural effluvia that floats around us, nor to direct its currents from our path, in order to preserve us: He has only to will the continuance of our *moral probation*, as "space for repentance," or as opportunity for service; and life is sure, the end is gained, without touching a law or a wheel of the universe. It is not by any, nor

by all, these laws, that the soul is immortal or accountable. *Moral* laws alone can effect the term of its probation : and if they require it to be either prolonged or shortened, nothing in the course of visible or invisible nature can prevent it. The probation of the man, and the course of nature, go on together. Thus all that requires to be done, in order to the continuance of life, is to continue the soul as a candidate for eternal life ; then, disease, however prevalent or pestilential, can no more dislodge the probationary spirit, than it infects the angelic spirits who move and minister among the death-beds of the heirs of salvation.

This, I am aware, is argument, only to those who believe the *revealed* responsibility and probation of man. With those who do not, it will go for nothing. True : but it makes their assumption of the Christian name, and their protests against the name, Infidel, *go for nothing* also ! Thus, if it prove nothing *to* them, it proves much *concerning* them. It does not convince them of the truth as it is in Jesus ; but it *convicts* them of hypocrisy, in pretending to pay homage to Christianity ; and thus unmasks to you the men who mock at prayer, and equivocate about providence.

Those secret disbelievers who have discernment enough to see this, and *selfish* reasons for evading detection, shelter themselves under the acknowledged cessation of miracles ; and parry off argument from general principles, by asking, whether we expect God to work a *miracle* for our preservation, when we pray in times of danger ? This also is a paltry subterfuge ! There is nothing but empty *sound*, in the talk about the natural connexion between cause and effect, when life is periled by peculiar diseases. In some states of the atmosphere, the cause of disease is equally present to all who are under the same meridian ; but it does not produce the same effect, even upon all who are of the same temperament and habits. One is taken, and another left. Some die ; many suffer ; and more escape. Now, although it would be unwise to call the escape of the many a *miracle*, it is unquestionably in consequence of the

natural effect not following the natural cause, in their case. They inhaled, unhurt, or with little injury, the same air which proved fatal to their compeers in age and circumstances.

The Christian ascribes this exemption of the many, to a special providence, which spares them for the probation of grace or of glory ; and thus he gives both a sufficient and a sublime reason for the event : but, to what can the infidel ascribe it ? He has no general principle to resolve it into, which can explain it. His great general principle that cause and effect follow each other inevitably and invariably, it gives the lie to, so far as life and death are concerned. And as to what is called accident and chance, these are things which, however he may talk of them in order to avoid answering awkward questions, are as incompatible with his system as miracles, or an extraordinary providence.

Dr. Chalmers has grappled with the infidel philosophy of our time, on this subject, in his own way : and, as I am not aware that he has published his argument yet ; and as the report I have of it, is not unlike himself, I will embody the substance of it :—

“ Observation carries us a certain way along the chain of causes and effects : but above our loftiest ascent there are other phenomena, which we vainly try to reach. So it is in all philosophy. After reaching the highest ascertainable causes, there are others still higher, which distance all our powers of research ; and a wide region beyond all our investigation, of which we can positively say nothing. It may be under the control of higher beings in the universe ; or nature may be like a chain, of which a few lower links are visible : but the upper link of which, is appended to the throne of a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. It may be by a responsive touch at a higher part of the chain than is within our observation, that prayer meets with its answer. It is not amidst the seen and visible causes where it would be a miracle ; but by an unseen, though not less efficient, touch amongst the remote and oc-

cult causes, that God answers prayer. If it be in the latter way, there may well be a providence, as special as the wants of His dependant family, without at all infringing on the constancy of the course of nature. If the responsive touch were given within the sphere of observation, then the answer would be a miracle, or a contravention of the known laws of nature. But if it be without the sphere of observation, then the answer may be as effectual, without any violence to any sequence of visible nature. The reaction of the answer strikes at a higher part of the chain, than we see : not by a visible movement in the *experimental* region below, but by an invisible movement in the transcendental region above. It is there—that the Supernal Power of the universe, the Cause of causes, puts forth an influence, which is propagated downwards to the lowest extremity of the chain ; and thus He carries forwards events in answer to prayer, without disturbing the visible mechanism of nature. It is thus we live under the care of a presiding God, and yet amid all the regularities of an harmonious universe.

“ But instead of treating it as a general argument, let us take some individual examples. When the sighing of the midnight storm sends a fearful agitation into the mother’s bosom, as she thinks of her sailor-boy, tossed on the tempestuous deep, the advocates of a hard and inflexible constancy in nature, would forbid her to pray. According to them, prayer to the God who holds the elements in his hand, is as useless as to the elements themselves. Yet nature strongly prompts her aspirations for the safety of her boy ; and, if our argument be true, there is nothing in science to repress them. God can answer her, not by interfering with second causes, or reversing the changes of the heaving atmosphere ; but by a touch of his hand amidst the deep recesses of meteorology. Thus, He might bid the elements into silence. A virtue passes out of Him, which passes onward from the invisible to the visible.” This is, emphatically, meeting the objectors on their own ground, and foiling them with their own weapons ; for they hold

no philosophical ground or weapons, if they refuse to admit that even science sees only the lower links of the chain of causes and effects. And yet, after all, this splendid and profound argument just comes to this, "that nothing is impossible with God." Thus the real philosopher and the real Christian, meet at the same point, and rest on the same principle.

To those, however, who believe Christianity, (and no one does so who disbelieves the redemption of sinners by the atonement of the Lamb of God,) the reign of grace, presents both the most satisfactory proof and explanation of a special providence. For, without such a providence as can prolong life, and preserve health, for all the purposes which God is covenanted to carry on in the world, by the instrumentality of the church, there could be no moral nor natural security for the reward of Christ, or the salvation of man. Life, health, and reason, must have some providential securities, if men are to be *trained* up for heaven, and heaven eventually peopled from the earth. All the laws of nature must be subordinate at all times, to the designs and laws of grace, so far as grace requires *time* and *opportunity* to do its work on the heart and character. Now, neither that time nor that opportunity is provided for to a certainty, by the course of nature. Much of both is, indeed, certain from the order and uniformity of that course, but not enough without providence. Pestilential vapours generate from time to time, and spread so widely, that if they wasted life or health according to the abstract law of cause and effect, a city, yea, a nation, might perish in a day!

It is, then, a *mediatorial* providence we live under; and its great object is, to promote the designs of the gospel. As sure, therefore, as you are under the gospel, you are also under both the care and correction of a special providence. You can neither sin with impunity, nor suffer by accident. Your own history illustrates and proves this already. Yes: you have met with some checks or chastisements, which

made you feel, if not confess, that the eye of God had been upon your heart and habits. Certain trials were no *mysteries* to you, whatever they seemed to others. You had a key to their secret cause, and knew well the real connexion between your sin and your punishment. In fact, you suspected at times, how certain lines of conduct would end, and were not so much surprised at the issue as you were pained by it.

You are not singular in this experience. All smart, more or less, for their misconduct, however few acknowledge the retribution. And, if you will keep your eyes open and fixed upon the discipline of providence, as it goes on in the church of God, you will often be struck with the peculiar suitableness of certain dispensations, to the character of certain individuals. This may be frequently seen even in the world: but, in the church, it is always to be seen. There, a process is for ever going on, which answers, in a great measure, all the practical purposes of the ancient miraculous gift of "discerning spirits:" character finds its level, and principles their test, and thus men are brought out in their true colours, in the long run, by the Ithuriel touch of a discriminating providence. Only wait and watch, in the case of those who cloak sin or selfishness under the garb of religion; and you are sure to see them exposed or improved eventually, by "the mighty hand of God."

I am not teaching you to be spies, nor yet to be interpreters, in the case of others; but still I say, keep your eyes open and intent on the wheel of providence, if you would keep your own conscience in a healthy state. The expected exposure of the hypocritical and heartless, can be no pleasure to you; and, therefore, you can hardly be too silent when they are detected; but neither can you be too observant: it will tell well on your own character, to mark how their "*sins find them out.*"

My own attention was drawn early to this maxim; and often and awfully have I seen it verified! Truly did Christ

say, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire." "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, my Father taketh away." I tell you again, you cannot sin with impunity, nor without detection. Providence will way-lay your movements, however secret they may be; and expose you to the world, at some point of them, where you least suspect, and can worst afford, to be found out. Remember too, that whilst providence thus un.masks the sensual and the fraudulent, it also takes effectual measures against "the lusts of the mind," as well as against the lusts of the flesh. Pride is sure to be brought low, and vanity to be mortified, and ambition to be checked, and imprudence to be chastised. Look around you, and see if they are not. What "thorns in the flesh," or "crooks in the lot," or "crosses on the shoulder," are visible in the church, wherever pride of intellect, person, or office, is a besetting sin! Verily there is a God that judgeth! Do not, therefore, provoke the Lord to jealousy; for he will "*visit transgression with rods.*"

No. V.

ON MANLY HONESTY IN PRAYER.

HOWEVER familiar we may be with the idea of retiring for secret prayer to God, or of meeting for social prayer, the *first* persons who did so for the *first time*, must have felt it to be a very solemn and sublime exercise! They could not have retired as individuals, nor met as a body, for such a high purpose, without high emotions of some kind. Prayer must have *begun* well, however it may have been carried on afterward. It seems to have begun when Enos, the son of Seth, was born. Gen. iv. 26: "*Then be-*

gan men to call upon the name of the Lord." Before this time *sacrifice* seems to have been the chief worship that was practised or permitted. At least, we have no account of any prayer by Adam, or by any of his family, until the time of Seth; and, therefore, we have no direct warrant to suppose that the privilege of retiring or assembling to pour out the heart freely unto God in prayer, was either instituted or allowed, at the same time with the establishment of worship by sacrifice. Permission to "*speak unto the Lord,*" seems to have been a subsequent privilege, wisely withheld until sacrifice paved the way for it, and the death of Abel rendered it a timely and tender mercy to all the shocked and sorrowing household of Adam. Thus God instituted prayer at first, as he now answers prayer, "*in time of need.*"

If this statement surprise you at all, there must be some defect in your estimate of the real grace and grandeur of the privilege of access to God by prayer. You mistake sadly, however, if you imagine that the first men began to pray, as we begin, as a mere act of duty; or if you suppose that they ventured to "make known their wants unto God by supplication and prayer," without a special warrant. They no more offered this "sacrifice of the lips" without express permission, than they offered the sacrifice of the altar without express command. Prayer is as little the dictate of nature or conscience, as sacrifice. Man, left to himself, would neither have prayed nor sacrificed to an invisible God.

Consider this matter. It is generally, and justly, allowed, that the idea of worshipping or propitiating God by animal sacrifices, is not a dictate of nature. Nothing but the appointment of God could have originated such a practice. Its universality amongst all nations, instead of disproving, confirms this fact. For if the light of nature could not suggest such worship to one nation, it could not lead to it in any nation. Its universality was therefore derived from the force of the original law of Heaven, and upheld by a providence as special as the revelation which introduced

that law. In like manner, the light of nature never led to prayer. Men of all nations have indeed uttered prayers of some kind ; and hence it has been almost taken for granted, that prayer is a natural duty, or a kind of human instinct : but it is no more so than sacrifice. Both have been as it were *naturalized*, in some form, by the force of habit ; but both began from the force of divine authority.

How could prayer begin otherwise amongst the first men ? Whilst our first parents were in innocence, praise was the only worship in their paradise, as it is in the paradise of heaven. And when they became guilty, they showed by flight and hiding from the presence of God, that they had either no desire to pray, or no idea of such a thing. Accordingly, they did not venture to utter a single petition, even when they heard the curse denounced and the promise given. Whatever emotions were awakened by either, no prayerful utterance seems to have been given to them, although God was visibly present. In like manner Cain uttered no prayer when his doom was denounced. See, then, the fallacy of the popular notion, that prayer is *natural* when misery is pressing. Misery pressed so heavily on Cain, that he said unto the Lord, "*My punishment is greater than I can bear ;*" but he seems never even to have dreamt of praying for any mercy or mitigation. Neither did Adam nor Eve, (so far as we know,) when their sentence was pronounced. Now, if persons in the visible presence of God, and bowed down with wants and woes, never attempted to bow their knees in supplication, how could any man by the light of nature, however laden with fear or grief, dream of praying to the invisible God ? If His presence did not suggest the idea, how could his absence teach it apart from revelation ? True, there is prayer, where there is no revelation, as *we* have revelation : but it is all founded on the deathless tradition of the first law of prayer, as all sacrifice is founded on the deathless tradition of the first law of propitiation. I feel in common with you, as if prayer must have *always* accompanied sacrifice from the very first

It was so inseparable from sacrifice, from the moment that altars multiplied, until they were all merged in the cross of Christ, that we can hardly believe or conceive that it did not form a part of the very first act of sacrificial worship. There is, however, no positive evidence of its having done so. Abel's offering was, indeed, presented in "*faith*;" and, that, to us, seems necessarily to include prayer, because it is now almost identified with prayer throughout the Bible: but the question is, was it so from the first? Now we can neither prove that it was, nor show that it must have been so. The object of faith was the promise of a saviour: but however the cordial belief of that promise may have involved an ardent desire for its fulfilment, (and it could not fail to do so, nor operate otherwise,) still, that desire neither would nor could break out into prayer, until God revealed himself as the hearer and answerer of prayer; and we do not know that He did this, when he instituted sacrifice. He did it very soon after; but there is no evidence that the appointment of sacrifice, and the permission of prayer, were simultaneous.

But it may be said, what *good* purpose can be answered by this distinction, however fully it may be established as a fact? I answer, at once—it frees the mind from low and unmanly views of prayer. Whilst prayer is looked upon as a mere accompaniment of other duties, or merely as a *duty*, it will neither be loved nor cultivated. It began, however, as a privilege, and it is the highest privilege which God could confer on man, whilst man is out of heaven. The believers in the family of Adam, must have felt this deeply, when they "began to call upon the name of the Lord." They had stood or bowed in utter silence before the altar of burnt-offering, looking, and, no doubt, longing for the day of Christ: and so far, the *spirit* of prayer was in their sacrificial worship: but it was not until God *spoke* to them on the subject of prayer, that they ventured to speak unto God by prayer. Need I say, that their words would be from their hearts when they spoke unto

God for the first time? This must have been the case, whether He was visible or invisible, when the first supplications were addressed to him. If He was visible, there certainly was no irreverence of manner, nor vacancy of spirit, in His presence. The heart could not be "far" from Him, when the lips drew so "near to Him: for no man could ramble or mutter over a heartless form of prayer in the immediate presence of Jehovah. If again, God was *invisible*, "when men began to call upon" Him, that invisibility itself would, at first, be a preventive against wandering thoughts and heartless words. It is not so, alas, to us, because we are familiar with it, and have never known any thing else, and expect nothing else in this world. This was not the case, however, with the first men. The invisibility of God must have awed them, much in the same way, as His visibility would awe us. The revealed fact He could *hear* as well in the heaven of heavens, as in Eden or at the altar, both the sigh of penitence and the prayer of faith, must have thrown the whole soul into deep amazement and solemn musing. This must have been a *sublime* fact, for a long time to all the prayerful. Even the prayerless must have been struck by the stupendous consideration, that no darkness could prevent God from seeing, and no distance hinder him from hearing prayer. Not all *our* familiarity with this sublime fact, can so divest the mind of all native simplicity, as to prevent amazement, when the fact flashes out upon us vividly.

Look at it now! Who can measure the immensity of space between the footstool on earth, and the divine throne in the heaven of heavens? but, only *breathe* a prayer in the name of Christ, and it is heard by God even whilst you are breathing it. Who can count the intervening myriads of beings and worlds between the spot where you kneel, and the light in which God dwells? You feel lost in the presence of the innumerable multitude; but, only kneel as a suppliant, and the eye of God is as much upon you in mercy, as it is upon angels in love; and the ear of God as

open to your cry, as to the chorus of glorified spirits. How sublime now is the question, "*Am I God at hand and not a God afar off, saith the Lord?*"

With more than this freshness of realization, must the revelation of the *hearing* of prayer in heaven, have struck the men who "began to call upon the name of the Lord." They could not have soon contracted an unholy or unfeeling familiarity with the privilege of speaking unto the invisible God. They must long have felt it to be a very solemn exercise. Accordingly, so late as the time of Abraham, we find him prefacing prayer thus, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes."

Here, then, is one of the advantages of studying the origin of prayer:—we see man and mind in contact with the exercise, before forms of devotion were framed, and before native simplicity gave place to artificial tameness or heedless familiarity. Prayer was then, what it ought to be still—the simple and sublime act of *speaking* unto God, as a man speaks to his friend; telling Him the secrets, sorrows, and desires of the heart. I do not mean, of course, that the men who began prayer, spoke to God with flippancy, or without awe of spirit and reverence of manner. Nothing is more disgusting to a well-regulated mind, than the impertinent *talk* which vulgar minds have invented, and called prayer. It is, emphatically, what Solomon calls, "the sacrifice of fools," if not of knaves also. I do, however, mean that prayer began in perfect *simplicity*, as well as in deep solemnity. Whether uttered as a call, a cry, or a groan, it was direct speaking unto God. He was distinctly realized as looking, and listening, and judging, and feeling, and remembering, all through the act of worship. Prayer was not an exercise of memory, nor an effort of imagination, nor the repetition of a form of words; but just the simple and solemn utterance of the desires of the heart. Men retired alone, or met together, to lay their case for time and eternity before God. They told Him humbly, but freely,

all that they felt, and feared, and desired. And whoever will go *alone* with God, to do this, will be in no danger of either prating or parading in prayer. Nothing is so solemn as the artless and childlike utterance of the heart, when a man really tries to speak unto God, as if God were in the closet listening all the time.

It may be well to mention here, that the expression in the Hebrews, translated, "Let us come *boldly* to the throne of grace," is literally, "let us come *speaking freely*." This wonderful permission simplifies prayer, without at all lowering its character or spirit. It relieves the mind from confusion and fear, by confining it to its own immediate wants, and by allowing the utterance of them in its own spontaneous words. It neither forbids the use of forms, nor renders them binding; but leaves us perfectly free to adopt either our own expressions or those of others, as we feel inclined at the time. And then it confronts us so personally with God, that we cannot imagine that we are praying at all, (whatever we may be uttering) unless we are consciously and purposely speaking unto God.

This view of prayer is not so vividly present to our minds, as it deserves to be. We do well, therefore, to rid ourselves of all artificial and conventional notions of prayer, and to come fairly and fully to the point. It is speaking freely unto God. Have you then "*any thing to say unto God?*" This is the point. You both desire and hope to spend eternity, in telling Him how much you owe to His love and mercy by Christ Jesus: and, have you nothing to say now? You are quite sure that, when you are in heaven, you would at any time, quit the company of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, even the company of your own family, if you were invited to go up to the eternal throne, to speak freely with God and the Lamb. You would not, for worlds, neglect or decline a single opportunity of speaking "face to face" unto God there. Well; have you nothing to say unto Him here: He will listen to prayer now, as readily as to praise then. And you cannot, surely, think

that He will admit you to praise there, if you dislike prayer here.

Let me persuade you to take this simple view of prayer ; as retiring to speak unto God, at God's special invitation. In this light *prayerlessness* assumes a very odious aspect, and a very ominous character. How awfully it sounds to say, "there is a man who actually *refuses* to speak to God!" How ill it looks, to be seen trying how to avoid all opportunities of speaking unto God. You would not treat the king thus, were he to invite you to an interview at the throne, or in the royal closet. You would not expect the king to repeat his invitations, if you had refused even but once. Indeed, there is hardly any man you would refuse to speak to. True, there is a mighty difference between speaking to man, and speaking to God. The difference is, however, all in favour of the latter: for if it be more solemn, it is also infinitely more honourable and useful. Nothing you could say to the wisest and best of men, would procure the pardon of your sins, or a title to heaven, or an interest in the Saviour. Were you, indeed, to speak freely about your eternal salvation, to a pious and judicious man, his counsel would be of great use, because he would sum it up by encouraging you to *pray* unto God: and that God himself calls on and encourages you to do now.

Perhaps, you rather dislike this repetition of the expression, "*speaking unto God.*" I have said, that it simplifies prayer without lessening its majesty or its solemnity; and you feel that, if I be not playing the hypocrite, I am even penetrated with the simple majesty of the idea. Yes; and it has a *hold* on you, in spite of any objection you feel to it. It will *haunt* you, even if you try to shake it off to-night, when the hour of prayer comes. Should you then force yourself into bed without prayer, you will be forced to say to yourself "*I am one who refuseth to speak to God.*" And if you try to compromise the matter, by muttering some vague words or heartless petitions, you will almost hear your conscience cry, "*this is not speaking to God.*" Mark

and remember my words, and see if the hint do not haunt you.

Here, then, is another good reason for leading you back to the origin of prayer, and into the simplicity of its native character. You have heard finer and grander names given to it; but they did not *fix you*. You could either forget them or get over them, both when you neglected prayer altogether, and when you hurried through it. In fact, "*great swelling words*" about devotion, become plausible excuses for neglecting it. They betray us into the pretence, that we are incapable of praying aright yet: but God's call, "come, speaking freely, to the throne of grace," unmasks all this feigned humility, by throwing us upon the searching and startling question—"What! have I *nothing* to say to God?" This is a point not to be got over by either the strength or the stratagem, which vaults over or evades the current forms of the claims of devotion. Try. "*Nothing to say unto God!*—although, through eternity, I expect all my happiness from adoring and serving Him! Nothing to say! although I have sinned against him, and thus incurred the curse of His law? Nothing to say, although I know not the moment my soul may be required of me? Nothing to say!—although, whilst I am spared here, I am entirely dependant on Him for every thing?" There it is! you cannot get over this; and it will not be put down.

O! if you would ascend to the sublimities of devotion, begin by simply speaking to God. This is the first step on the Bethel ladder of communion with God and the Lamb; and the *highest* step of the ladder is just "speaking freely," as to a father or a friend; for all the real grandeur of devotion is in the single fact, that God is its object, the Lamb its medium, and the Spirit its guide. What we need, therefore, in order to conquer our reluctance, and win our love to prayer, is, just to be fully sensible that we have to speak unto God, and that God will listen complacently whilst we do so.

God listen complacently to us! If you want to have

high thoughts of devotion, here they abound. You could not say nor imagine any thing higher, of the attention which God gave to the first anthem, which swelled from the hearts and harps of the angelic morning stars, when they began to shine and sing around the eternal throne. All the real glory of any mental exercise of men or angels, is, just the degree in which God notices and loves it. There would be no *moral* sublimity in the hallelujah chorus of the skies, if God took no pleasure in that high praise. Let His eye be averted from it, or His ear shut to it, or His smile withdrawn from it, and that moment all the golden harps of Immortality would be dropped, and all the armies of heaven silent, until some other form of worship was vouchsafed, on which God would look with complacency. Now, thus He looks on, and listens to prayer. The seraph's lyre is not more sure of God's attention, than the sinner's cry for mercy. Only *think* before you speak, and then speak unto God as you think and feel, and all His *heart* will be with you.

It is not, however, either so natural or common to think, or to speak as we think, in prayer, as might be expected.

When a shrewd diplomatist defined the faculty of speech, as the power of *concealing our real* opinions and designs, he little thought that his political jest implied a solemn religious warning. There is great danger of concealing from *ourselves* the real state of our hearts, by the language of our prayers, whether that language be our own words, or the words of others. We may not, indeed, intend, nor be exactly conscious of practising, any imposition upon ourselves, when we pray; and yet our prayers may be complete masks upon the motives and moods of our spirit: for we are quite capable, even before God, both of saying one thing and meaning another, and of saying much and meaning nothing.

I do not refer now to attempts to impose on God. It would be worse than useless, at present, to insinuate even a suspicion of your having any tendency to try an experi-

ment so foolish. You have, of course, no more idea that you could deceive omniscience by words, than you could defeat omnipotence by strength or stratagem. And you cannot be too firmly "rooted and grounded," in the conviction of the *folly* of attempting to do either; for both are impossible. We can neither impose upon God, nor *force* any thing against His will. And as to imposing upon others by your prayers, although that may be attempted, even in the closet, it is too contemptible to be deemed prayer, however it may be practised. Those who are afraid of being overheard undressing and lying down at night, the moment they retire from the domestic circle; or who are ashamed to have it seen that there could not be a moment for secret prayer in the morning, owing to late rising; may contrive that there shall be a short hush of silence, or a low hum of sound, that shall indicate some devotion, and thus keep down suspicion in the family: but all this mean deceit, they feel to be meanly deceitful—as much as the second Charles, when he planned that the puritan ministers who visited him on the continent, should overhear him praying in his closet. They did hear him, and were betrayed into a good opinion of him, and were thus led to favour his restoration: but he was not his own dupe. He had too much sense, not to despise his hypocrisy, however he plumed himself upon his policy. And, in like manner, those members of a family, who are averse to prayer, and yet afraid to betray the full extent of that aversion, do not impose upon themselves, by what seems to others, the noise of kneeling, and the whisper of devotion. This paltry trick, to evade detection, cannot prevent self-condemnation. It may deceive the parental ear, but it cannot dupe the conscience.

It is, however, quite possible to deceive ourselves, both *with* and *without* forms of prayer; and that, too, almost unintentionally and unconsciously. Indeed, we actually do so, however regular or reverential our prayers may be, if before and after them, we think nothing about their design or their success. For they are more than acts of *worship*;

there is confession of sin in them, and that is not felt when it is uttered, if it be never thought of, in the course of the day. It is not the real sentiment of the heart when it flows from the lips, if no sense of the evil of sin flow through the soul at other times.

Weigh this fact. You would not deem it right nor safe, to strike out from your prayers, the *confession* that you are a sinner. You could not satisfy yourself, without some acknowledgment of your sins. To pass over this point altogether, would be so unlike all the inspired specimens of prayer, that the contrast would startle you at your own singularity. No wonder. You, therefore, do confess sin when you pray. But, mark ! if this be neither preceded nor followed by any serious reflection ; if your penitence begin and end with your words ; if you forget the whole matter until the hour of prayer come round again, your confession of sin is not contrition for sin. Nay ; it even hides from you the nature of true repentance. For it is not thus you act, when you have to confess a fault to man. You never did that, without both pain and shame. You could not, however you might try to suppress your feelings. I mean by a fault, not, of course, every thing which others take offence at ; but something which you yourself cannot justify : and you never did condemn yourself, in words, to any man, without both thinking and feeling more than you said. Indeed, what you said was the *least* part of your repentance, although it may have been the most humiliating.

And, is sin against God, a lighter matter in your estimation, than an offence against man ? Does confession to the majesty of heaven, who searches the heart, call forth no blush of shame—no tear of sorrow—no throb of pain—no thrill of fear—no forethought nor afterthought ? Have you ever been *sleepless* under the stinging consciousness of a parent's deserved anger, and never felt nor feared the evil of sinning against God, but just during the few *seconds* of time which the confession occupied ? If so, your ideas of God are very *low* indeed ! True ; He is far more forgiving

than man, and far more accessible than offended parties usually are to the offender ; but He is not insensible nor indifferent to your sins. They are registered in His books, however the memory or the sense of them may be erased from your conscience. And you are aggravating them all, every time you confess them without forethought and afterthought ; for this is adding insult to disobedience. Accordingly, you would not, you durst not, attempt to settle any serious offence against a human superior, with the cool effrontery of an *unfelt* and *unweighed* apology. You would be afraid of faltering whilst you uttered it, or of being confounded under the glance of a scrutinizing eye. You would not risk the experiment of a hollow or heartless confession, before the judges of the land. And yet, you dare to utter words before the Judge of the universe, and words too about your *sins* against him, without contrition or consideration !

Perhaps you are now ready to ask,—would it then be better, not to confess sin at all, than to go through the form of confession, without corresponding feelings ? I answer at once—no ! I do not think, however, that *unfelt* confessions are of any use. I am even quite sure that the habit of repeating them, as a matter of course, in prayer, tends to sear the conscience and pervert the judgment. But both conscience and judgment would, in your case, soon sustain more injury, if you were to give up confession entirely ; because that would be followed by an utter abandonment of all prayer, if not of all the means of grace also ; and thus all hold upon you would be lost, until the mighty hand of God laid hold of you by judgments. There is, however, no occasion for giving up the usual habit of confession, nor for confessing without penitence. Remember ; the Saviour is exalted as a Prince, to “ give repentance,” as well as “ the remission of sin ;” and it is as much a part of the office of the Holy Spirit to soften as to sanctify the heart. This pleasing fact should determine you, at once, to rid yourself of all forms of confessing sin, (whether they be

your own or the phraseology of others,) with which you are too familiar, by habit, to be deeply affected. Never mind whose words you give up the use of, if you can use them without thinking, or without feeling that you are speaking to God about your own sins against God. Even an *inspired* form of confession must be laid aside for a time, if by familiarity it has become a heartless form in your lips. What God wants and waits to hear from you is, not what others have said about sin, but what you *think* and *feel* about your own sins. What you have now to consider, is whether you have any sentiment, emotion, or conviction of your own, on the subject, to submit to the *ear* and to the *eye* of God. For it is your own opinion of yourself—your deliberate and undisguised judgment of your own heart and character, that is confession of sin. Now, that judgment you must form for yourself, by weighing yourself in the balance of the eternal law. Suspend and keep that balance upon the Cross of Christ, by all means ; but let divine law be the balance. Your sins are violations and evasions of it ; and its curse is, like its rewards, eternal. Yes, your sins have incurred this curse ; and it will cleave to your soul as closely as its immortality, if not cancelled by the blood of atonement ; and that, it will not be, whilst you deem the curse itself too severe. Now, you do deem the curse of the law too severe. You may not say so ; but you think so, and even wonder that any man could judge otherwise. Accordingly, if you were to speak out your real sentiments on the subject of eternal punishment, you would almost call it *unjust* ; at least, in your own case. You know this to be true, whether you acknowledge it or not.

Here, then, is the real cause why you could confess sin, and yet feel little shame or sorrow on account of it : you never *believed* that it deserved the wrath and curse of God for ever, so far as you were concerned. Did you believe that now, you could not confess yourself a sinner again without both grief and fear. These emotions could not be kept down, were you to allow the conviction of the eternity

of future punishment to spring up in your mind. Confession would rise up from that conviction, like a body emerging from the depths of the 'sea, wet with tears, or too *full* of sorrow and shame to weep. Why, then, are you without this conviction! You have some *suspicion* that there may be truth in the threatening of endless wrath; for you are afraid to deny it flatly and openly. The Saviour himself says so much about "unquenchable fire," and the "impassable gulf" between heaven and hell, that you dare not maintain the contrary in public, however you may feel in secret. This, also, you know, whether you acknowledge it or not. You neither fully believe, nor fully disbelieve, the Scriptures on this subject.

This hesitation will not do! Both confessions of sin, and prayers for pardon, go for nothing at the mercy-seat of God, whilst sinners *differ* from God about the evil and desert of sin. It is only adding insolence to rebellion, to ask God to heed or hear an opinion about sin, which contradicts His own opinion, or comes short of what He has said.

I will not stop to prove that God has said *more* on this subject than you have believed. I tell you at once the amount of His sentence against sin: it is, "everlasting destruction from the glory of his presence." Wonder not; therefore, that the Holy Spirit has not helped you to be penitent in confessing sin, nor made you happy in praying for pardon: He could not have done so, without sanctioning your *disbelief* of God's threatenings; and He will never, by His work or witness, treat God as a liar, whatever you may have ventured to do.

You begin now to see, that confession is just to think and speak of your own sins, before God, as God thinks and speaks of them, before you in His word. You must *agree* with Him in opinion about the guilt and danger of sin, if you would have Him agree to your petitions for pardon. And as God is not unwilling to accede to your wishes, why should you be reluctant to go all the length, in judging of the evil of sin, which He has gone in declaring its evil?

He is not a man, that he should lie or exaggerate. Indeed, the only real wonder, in all that God has said of sin and against sin, is, that his words are not more and stronger; for as nothing but the sacrifice of the incarnate Emmanuel could atone for sin, nothing too strong can be said of the evil of sin. No words can express, no images illustrate, no visions unveil fully the enormity or the malignity of an evil, that could only be remedied by the blood of the Lamb. When "God made his soul an offering for sin," He said all, and infinitely more than all, that words or woes can explain. Away, away! with all quibbling and cavilling about the revealed desert of sin: the Lamb of God was slain for it; and He was slain for it, because the very *principle* of sin in the heart (to say nothing of its acts in the life) would have been an eternal barrier—an impassable gulf—between man and heaven. Everlasting banishment from the presence of God, on account of sinfulness, is no arbitrary appointment, flowing from abstract law, or from absolute will; but the natural consequence of *dislike* to God and holiness. It is because that dislike is, in itself, an everlasting *disqualification*, or unfitness, for heaven, that hell will be the everlasting prison of all who refuse to be restored to the love of God and holiness. O! in understanding be men! for they are *childish*, who talk about hell as too severe. Sin would soon make heaven itself another hell, if "the place prepared," for the unholy, might send its inhabitants there, or even if the earth might send the earthly. It is, that there may be an *eternal* heaven in the universe, that there is *one* eternal hell in the universe. And were sin less punished or less impaled, there would be no moral security whatever, that the whole universe might not become one hell.

How do you feel disposed to confess sin now? I mean your *own* sinfulness, as a rational, dependant, and immortal spirit, *averse* to God and godliness. This is your chief guilt, and from this is your chief danger of perishing. You quite mistake the matter at issue between God and your

soul, if you think only of what evil you have *done*, or if you imagine that all His threatenings are mustered against you only for *crimes*. You, are, indeed, criminal before God; and He does not forget this in His threatenings. It is, however, the state of your heart, as alienated from him; as averse to His service and salvation; as fonder of any thing than of His will and ways; as having no natural inclination to seek your happiness in His favour and image: it is this state of *estrangement* from Himself, that God looks so closely to, and thunders against so loudly. And this inward aversion to give Him your heart, has been the real cause of all your guilt and neglect. It is therefore on this point chiefly, that your attention should fix, and your confession turn, when you retire to speak with God about yourself. By all means weigh your *actions* in the balance of the eternal law; you ought and need to see how fearfully they are “wanting;” but, above all, weigh your *heart*, by the weighty claims of supreme love—of perfect confidence—of impartial submission to God; for *these* are the weights on God’s side of the balance! Well, put your heart into the scale on your own side. Ah! it “*is lighter than nothing, and vanity.*”

Can you retire now to repeat any man’s words before God, or to use your own words in the old way? Use, by all means, the words which best express your personal convictions and feelings; but make them your own words: mere *vents* for the escape of the fulness of your shame and sorrow—helps to unburden your conscience before God.

This process will give quite a new *turn* to your prayers for pardon: hitherto, they have been as superficial as your confessions of sin. In the midst of both you could easily have thought of any thing else, and at times you have almost fallen asleep over them. But now you can do neither, unless you can shake off the recollection, as well as the impression, of these *hunting* hints; and that, you cannot do, without doing direct violence to your conscience, and thus deliberately daring God to do his worst.

By this time you begin to anticipate that you shall feel *strangely* to-night, when you come to bow down before God in prayer ; for you cannot speak to him in your *old* words, unless your new feelings can put all your new meaning into them, and thus make them sound, as if you had never uttered nor heard them before. Well ; never mind, even if you can find no words to express your feelings. God looketh on the heart, and can both understand and welcome *speechless* prayer, when the spirit is overwhelmed before Him. Think of sin as He thinks—try to fall in with His views of its evil and desert—yield up your whole soul to the mould of his final decisions on the subject ; and He will interpret your “ expressive silence ” as true prayer, until you are able to clothe your desires in corresponding words.

I would have you manfully honest in this matter. Nothing is weaker, meaner, or more unmanly, than the superstitious repetition of unfelt and unweighed words, before the throne of the most high God. There is no virtue, no charm, no use, in any forms of prayer, however ancient or sublime, except so far as they embody and breathe the spirit of our own desires. Good forms may help to kindle these desires, and to test their sincerity and strength ; but they are not *our* prayers to God, any farther than they are deliberately and solemnly made so, by our own sense of personal danger, and our own solicitude for eternal salvation.

No. VI.

ON MANLY VIEWS OF DIVINE INFLUENCE.

WHEREVER the gospel is faithfully preached, nothing is more frequently or emphatically insisted upon, than the absolute necessity of divine teaching, in order to our becoming “ wise unto salvation.” All our best ministers refer us

most, to "the ministration of the Spirit." Even when their explanations of divine truth are most lucid, and their reasonings most powerful, and their appeals most heart-touching, they disclaim all pretensions to the ability of conveying saving knowledge to our minds, and throw us as fully upon the duty of praying for divine illumination, as if they had done nothing. Indeed, the more they do, in order to explain and enforce the claims of the gospel, the more they confront us with that solemn oracle, "*Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.*" Thus, when they most resemble Paul, in their planting, and Apollos in their watering, they most resemble them too, in looking to God for the "increase."

You have noticed this characteristic feature of evangelical preaching. Did it ever *surprise* you? Perhaps, it has occasionally *offended* you. Not, of course, that you ever took offence at the modesty of the ministers, who thus ascribed all "the excellency of the power" exclusively to God. Such humility is too beautiful, to be offensive. But, have you not, at times, given way to something worse than impatience, when you found that the instruction from the pulpit, in order to be savingly useful, must be followed up by prayer in the closet for the teaching of the Holy Spirit? Recollect yourself! Has not dislike to the bare idea of retiring to ponder and pray over an impressive sermon, led you into some strange reasonings about the nature and necessity of supernatural teaching? It is not uncommon to evade the claims of secret prayer for the influences of the Spirit, by asking—*how* He teaches—*what* He teaches—and whether His teaching would not amount to *inspiration*? When the question is carried thus far, it is then very easy for any one to smile down the whole matter, by saying that he cannot expect to be inspired! This is a very pitiful subterfuge. So is the question,—what need is there for the work of the Spirit, if the Spirit teach nothing but the truths contained in the Scriptures? This question may not, indeed, always cloak the base design of getting rid of re-

flection and prayer : but, like the former, it is very silly, and often used for a sinful or slothful purpose. True ; the Spirit of God teaches nothing, but the lessons contained in the Word of God : but, as they are able to make us wise unto salvation, and as we are naturally averse to learn them, why should the Spirit teach any thing else ? Nothing else is wanted for the regulation of faith or practice. No man can say, that there is not enough revealed for all holy purposes. It, therefore, ill becomes those who trifle with what is revealed, to complain that nothing more is taught, or to wonder that the Holy Spirit should be the teacher, as well as the inspirer of divine truth. It is, indeed, wonderful that He should condescend to follow up his written testimony, by his personal agency, and thus "lead into all truth," as well as lay it before us in the Scriptures ! He might, and that justly, have thrown us upon our own unaided powers, to make the best of the Bible. He has not done so ; but, as he pitied our ignorance by furnishing us with a revelation of the character and will of God, so he pities our aversion by promising to take of the things of Christ, and "show them" unto us.

The necessity of this special teaching, is but too obvious, from our dislike to learn the will of God. That dislike is so strong, that it would defeat all the powers of our mind, even if they were capable of comprehending the full meaning of Scripture, without the help of the Spirit. For, as we naturally dislike what we can comprehend, just because it is all so holy and devotional in its character and design, stronger powers of comprehension could only strengthen our natural aversion to practical and humbling truth. Do you not see this ? What you do understand of the claims of the gospel, you do not fully approve. You perceive enough upon the very *surface* of the Bible, to convince you that it clashes with your inclinations : and, if what you thus see, almost without looking, is disagreeable, because restraining, is it not self-evident, that a perfect understanding of all the holiness of the truth, would increase

your hatred to it, if your heart remained unchanged? It is, therefore, a mercy that our mental powers are not, of themselves, able to grasp the full import of the oracles of God: for, if they could do so whilst our moral tastes continued averse to holiness, knowledge would only exasperate and inflame enmity. O, they little know what they complain of, who are displeased when they are told, that they cannot become wise unto salvation, without divine teaching. The necessity of this is, certainly, a reflection upon the powers of the human mind: but it is also a refuge from the passions of the human heart, which, the more they are crossed, the more craving and clamorous they become. Whilst, therefore, the heart is set upon any sinful indulgence, or averse to moral restraint and devotional feeling, no degree of mental power could elevate the soul to "the *love* of the truth as it is in Jesus," however far it might raise the soul towards the *meaning* of that truth.

Besides, there is nothing really *strange* in fact, that nothing but divine power, can give divine truth the force of truth upon the human character, or produce the love of it in the human heart. This is, indeed, a melancholy, but not at all a surprising, fact. What else could be expected, in a world where all hearts are naturally set against moral restraint, and spiritual exercises? The very *Arts* and *Sciences* would require divine power to teach them effectually, if they involved as much holiness and devotion of the Gospel. Yes; did mathematics demonstrate the evil of sin and the necessity of holiness, just as the Cross of Christ does, *problems* would soon be as unpopular as the doctrines of the cross. Were there no progress could be made in astronomy, without as much *prayer* as watching, there would be but few astronomical students. If geology and botany required, as Mount Zion does, "*clean hands, and a pure heart,*" from all who ascended their hills, neither the strata nor the flowers of the earth would have many visitants. And, if music could never be well played, but when there was "*melody in the heart unto the Lord,*" or when

worship was its only object, music, with all its charms, would have but few votaries. Even *place* and *power* in the state, would not be objects of general ambition, if they could only be obtained by spirituality of mind, and only retained by consecration to the glory of God. In a word, were the practical and devotional requisitions of the gospel, transferred from the gospel to any trade or science, there would be just as much aversion to that trade or science, as there now is to the gospel; and as much necessity for divine influence to enforce their claims. For it is not the mystery of a revelation from Heaven, nor the mysteriousness of what is revealed, but the *design* of it all, that is offensive to human nature.

We are naturally fond of the mysterious, when it does not interfere with our comfort; and, therefore, it is only a pretence to mask disinclination, when mystery is pleaded as an excuse for unbelief, or indecision. It is "*a lion*," only in those ways which men dislike to walk in.

Thus it is not so much the weakness of our natural faculties, as it is the worldliness and carnality of our affections, that renders the Work of the Holy Spirit indispensable. It is, therefore, almost a useless, if not also a foolish question, to ask,—how much a man could learn from the study of the Scriptures, without any divine teaching? For, what if he could acquire, by dint of application, the true meaning of all the Bible: it could not benefit his soul, so long as his heart hated what his understanding comprehended. No knowledge of heavenly things could overthrow the supremacy of earthly things, in a mind that preferred earthly things.

Great knowledge might counterbalance, a little, his worldliness, by embittering some of his enjoyments, and embarrassing some of his movements; but it could not change his heart, whilst he was unwilling to exchange an earthly for a heavenly portion. The real form of the question ought, therefore, to be,—how much will a man learn of truths which reprove and pain him, and which he therefore

dislikes? And you can answer this question, from your own experience. Like yourself, he will not try to learn much, except when some fear of perishing prompts him to search the Scriptures.

In thus disposing of this question, I do not forget, that masterly defences of Christianity have been written by men, who never prayed for the illuminations of the Holy Spirit. Some, even by men who did not believe that there was such a Spirit. These works are, therefore, proofs of what can be done without His teaching. They are, however, easily accounted for, by the *premiums* of fame or rank which, in a Christian country, await the triumphs of talent and learning. There is no aversion in the human mind to write *down* a rival system, nor to write *up* an endowed system. That study of the Scriptures, which qualifies a man for such public controversy, does not involve secret devotion, nor a supreme desire to glorify God. It can begin in ambition, and go on in pride; and, at last, leave the writer more earthly-minded than it found him. It is, therefore, only another proof of the necessity of divine teaching, in order to our becoming "*wise unto salvation.*" We may, without the Spirit, become wise unto fame, or wise unto wealth, or wise unto victory, in polemical questions of great public interest; but, wise unto salvation, we cannot become, apart from the agency of the Holy Spirit, because neither talent nor study can, by themselves, produce love to God, or conformity to the image of Christ. And,—what is any degree of religious knowledge worth to its possessor, if it leave him estranged from the love and kindness of God and the Lamb?

Remember; it is *principles* you need: and they cannot be acquired, apart from the influences of the Spirit. Notions may be acquired without His help; but they can do little for you in time, and nothing for you through eternity. Accordingly, what benefit have you derived from the vague knowledge you possess of the gospel? You are not utterly ignorant of it, nor altogether indifferent about it; and yet,

its promises do not gladden your heart, nor its principles regulate your life, nor its glorious prospects soften the aspect of death, or brighten the aspect of eternity. Thus, it is, in fact, no gospel to you, as yet. It might, indeed, be mere *law*, for any comfort you obtain from it. It is, however, "glad tidings of great joy;" and this is the *knowledge* of it which the Spirit teaches. This is what you have not learned; and what you cannot learn without being "taught of God."

Consider this fact. You quite mistake, if you imagine that the gospel has no other *design* upon you, than to restrain and regulate your character. It has that design upon both your heart and life: but it has also an express regard to your happiness. Yes; to your immediate, as well as your eternal happiness! You are not happy I do not mean,—that you have no enjoyments: I mean, that you cannot enjoy yourself, when you think of God. You are obliged to forget Him, whenever you try to enjoy yourself; and that, not only when you seek happiness in the pleasures of sin, but also when your pleasures are both rational and harmless. Even then, you are glad to keep clear of all recollections of God, lest they should spoil your enjoyment. And, as to recollections of eternal things, they actually embitter the sweetest cup of your pleasure, whenever they intrude themselves. And, call you this happiness? Can you think, even for another moment, that you understand the Gospel, or that you can understand it without the Spirit, whilst you regard the God of love in this light? What a perversion of language, to call that enjoyment, which can be spoiled and dispersed by recollections of the glory and grace of Jehovah! It is such another contradiction in terms, as saying, that the sun spoils a landscape, or that the moon disfigures a sea-view.

I tell you again—you do not understand the gospel: for God, as it reveals Him, may be recollected with joy, in connexion with every pleasure and pursuit which is not criminal: and realized, without pain or embarrassment, in

every scene and circle which is not vicious. He that loveth not God, "knoweth not God, for God is love." Away with the low and unmanly notion, that God is merely a jealous spy, or a harsh judge, upon human happiness. He grudges no enjoyment but what is sinful, and frowns on no pleasure but that which displaces Him in the heart, and thus perils the soul. His supreme object is to glorify Himself by promoting our happiness.

Do not say, in answer to this—"that is, if we seek our happiness in meditation, and in prayer, and in doing good, God will promote it." That is not all; nor is it a fair representation of the fact, which it professes to describe. Meditation, and prayer, and obedience, are not exactly what they now seem to you. You are judging of them as mere abstract and absolute duties, which trench on time, and clash with convenience. You are looking at them only in their connexion with this life, and overlooking their connexion with eternal life. This is not fair. I do not mean, that the light of eternity, as you now view eternity, would materially alter your opinion of duty or devotion. You do not understand the gospel sufficiently yet, to look revealed sternity fully in the face. It is to you, as yet, what God seems to you, an object of dread, rather than of admiration. How, indeed, could either be otherwise, for all the heed you have given to them?

But, to the point! I defy you to make out, even to yourself, any thing like a proof, that the glad tidings of the gospel, as they are found in the Bible, could not make you *happy* now. You may make out a case against devotion, which, in the present state of your mind, would convince you, that prayer and watchfulness could not be pleasant. But were you an Infidel, or even an Atheist, I would openly and calmly defy you to prove the glorious gospel to be *unpleasant*. For, could it be proved to be *untrue*, (which it cannot,) even that would not alter nor affect the truth of the grand principle, on which it rests. Be not surprised at this assertion. Nothing can disprove that eternal hap-

piness would be an infinite blessing. The truth of this does not depend on the truth of any thing else. This would be true, even if there were not a soul in man, nor a God in the universe. There could not in that case be, of course, eternal happiness in point of fact; but in point of theory, it would remain incontrovertibly true, that eternal happiness would be an infinite blessing. Now, it is upon this independent fact, which no man in his senses can either deny or doubt, that the gospel *founds* its claims upon the attention and love of all men. It argues with no man about his *likes* or *dislikes* of duty and devotion, until it has offered him a boon which he cannot *dislike*, however he may try: for it is absolutely impossible, even to find fault with eternal happiness. So it is—to be reconciled to eternal misery. Both may be disbelieved or forgotten: but neither can be despised. God has taken care to render that impossible. Accordingly, it is not heaven itself, but the *way* to it, that you dislike. It is not hell itself, that you care nothing about, when you are careless of your soul. It is not, therefore, the gospel in its final results, that you can make out a case against, but the gospel in its initiatory and intermediate demands. You can no more hate heaven, than you can love hell, however much you may hate the narrow way which leadeth to everlasting happiness.

Here, then, is the point at which the gospel itself meets you, with its practical and devotional claims. God is fully aware that you do not love them, nor see how they would conduce to your happiness. He wants you, however, to love them; and, therefore, He presents to your view, and offers to your acceptance, what you cannot dislike, even if you were to set yourself with all your might, to try to dislike it; for it is nothing else, and nothing less, than certain escape from the wrath to come, and eternal happiness in the presence, favour, and image of God and the Lamb, in company with all the unfallen and restored spirits in the universe. Now it is prayer, as it secures this portion; watchfulness, as it meetens for this inheritance; duty, as

it prepares for this society, that the gospel urges and enforces : and when the claims of eternity are fairly weighed, the claims of duty and devotion will be fairly met. The latter cannot be evaded, when the former are duly and daily considered.

What think ye now of the necessity of the work of the Spirit ? Can any thing but Divine power, bring eternity so home to your habitual consciousness, that aversion to duty *must* fall before its august presence ? Do you not see and feel, that both the first and the final appeals of the gospel, are founded upon *invisible* realities, which can only be vividly realized with delight, by a mind divinely aided and influenced ? In a word ; look at the whole mass of your natural and acquired distaste for eternal things ; and then at the utter improbability of its giving way of its own accord ; and then at the absolute necessity of its overthrow, before you can love divine things ; and say, is it not an infinite mercy, that the help of the Holy Spirit is promised in answer to prayer, and in connexion with searching the Scriptures ? Who would not place himself under such a teacher as “ the Spirit of wisdom and revelation ? ” Sitting at His feet, to become wise unto salvation, is almost as sublime, and quite as useful, as meeting Him on the mount of vision was, when prophets were His scholars, and prophesies His lessons.

Perhaps it may now be well, before entering upon the still more special work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, to prove to you the *reality* of His teaching. I mean, that he does teach now. You remember the promise, “ *they shall all be taught of God.* ” Well ; be not surprised when I say that this promise is literally fulfilled, in the case of all true believers. They may seem to you, at first sight, to have learned very *different* lessons ; for they are certainly very much divided in sentiment amongst themselves. Hence arises the question, how can they all be taught of God ? He surely does not teach one to be a Calvinist, and another to be an Armenian ; nor one to be a Churchman, and another

to be a Dissenter! And yet, the pious of both parties are taught by the Spirit. How is this?

Look, first, at the grand points in which they all fully agree. All the truly pious are of "one heart and one mind," as to the *way* and the *design* of salvation, by grace. They all unite in perfect harmony around the cross, and before the mercy-seat. Now, what could produce this union of sentiment and feeling, but Divine teaching? What better proof could be given, that they have all been in one school, and under one master? For, remember; this agreement in the NEW SONG, is not confined to one nation; but in every nation, all who really believe in Christ, believe the same things concerning Christ, and for the same purpose too.

And now, as to what they differ about, the fact is, there has been no Divine teaching on either side, when the Scriptures have not been allowed to speak for themselves. The Spirit leads only into all *revealed* truth.

Personal religion is, however, my subject. Now, when the Scriptures affirm the absolute necessity of "a new heart," and call the change "*regeneration*," they do not speak in the language of the world, nor according to the natural opinions of mankind; and yet, they forbid us to reckon the doctrine of the new birth strange. "*Marvel not that I say unto you, ye must be born again.*" The Saviour expressed surprise, as well as censure, when Nicodemus attempted to mystify the subject, and thus to evade its claims: "art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"

That there is mystery in the *mode* of divine operations on the human mind, the Saviour not only did not deny, but also asserted it in unqualified terms: "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

After these explicit assurances from the lips of Him, who is both our Saviour and our Judge, it would be equally un-

manly to overlook the mystery, or to dispute the necessity of a divine change on the heart. Both are asserted by the same high authority ; and therefore ought to be treated with the same holy reverence. This is not done, however, when the declared mystery of the mode of spiritual operation, is turned into an excuse for neglecting to pray for "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." That "washing of regeneration" ought to be prayed for with as much simplicity of heart, as when we ask for our daily bread, and with infinitely more solicitude. There is mystery in the way in which our food nourishes our natural life : but, who ever rejected or neglected food, because he could not explain the process by which it sustains the body ? It does prolong life, and renew strength ; and, therefore, every sane man uses it, and every good man prays for it. In like manner, it is the fact, that the Word of God, when duly weighed and prayed over, is blessed by the Spirit of God, to the renovation of the soul. No man ever imitated David, in hiding the Word of God in his heart, and in praying for a new heart, without finding, in his own experience, the truth of the promise, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

I have already stated, that we are solemnly warned against *marvelling* at the necessity of a change of heart. And no man can look at heaven, in the purity of its enjoyments, or in the spirituality of its engagements, and "marvel," that he must be "born again," in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. This is no more a wonder, than that an ignorant man is unfit to fill the chair of Newton, or a weak man to guide the helm of a free nation. Both the place and the pleasures of Eternal Life, render the renewal of the soul as necessary, as they render the resurrection-change of the body indispensable. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Accordingly, no one

marvels, that this mortal body "must put on immortality," before it can take its place in heaven. We both admit and admire the necessity of having this "vile body" changed and fashioned, into the likeness of "Christ's glorious body." We feel, instinctively, that its present weakness, and especially its grossness, are incompatible with "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And, is not a corrupted soul as unfit for heaven, as a corruptible body? If the latter must "bear the image of the heavenly," surely the former cannot do without it.

Marvel not that ye must be born again, in order to inherit the kingdom of God! You yourself feel, that if your body were to rise from the grave unchanged, your soul, if holy, would shrink back from all reunion with it, and prefer to be "unclothed" for ever, rather than to be again imprisoned in such a clay tabernacle: and I tell you plainly, that were your body to rise from the dead, "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body," it would, as instinctively, shrink back from reunion with your soul, if your soul were unholy. Wonder not, therefore, that both must undergo a divine change, before they can enter heaven. A matter which can thus be brought home to our common sense, is not likely to be without analogies in our common nature. You may not have noticed yet, with an express reference to this subject, how much the heart can be changed for a time, by the mere force of circumstances. There are, however, both moods and emotions, common to man, which prove that the heart may be brought into a full harmony with the mind and will of God. Many providential events bring men to the very brink of acquiescence, in all that God requires; and, were the feeling of the moment followed up by consideration and prayer, full acquiescence would be the effect of these dispensations.

Have you ever lost, by death, a beloved parent, brother, or sister? Remember the state of your heart, whilst stunned or melted by that bereavement! You had no occasion to try experiments, nor to take measures, in order to feel as

the rest of the family felt. The loss affected you at the same time, and in the same way, that it did others. Your spirits sank—your heart melted—your whole soul quivered with deep emotion. You may have *wept* less than some of the family did ; but you did not feel less, when you gazed the last look, upon the face you were to see no more, “until the heavens and the earth were no more.” You had your full share in all the real suffering which pervaded the domestic circle, when you first met that circle, after the final interview in the chamber of death. Every convulsive shriek and sob, during that solemn meeting, went to your heart. For the time, all worldly recollections passed away from your mind. You could not have planned nor executed any earthly enterprise, however gainful or tempting. Whatever was the absorbing subject of public attention, at the moment, you were almost insensible to its very existence ; and too much absorbed at home, to have any personal sympathy with it. Your thoughts and feelings were concentrated upon the breach—the blank—made in the family circle ! Remember also, how attentively you listened to the *chapters* of the Word of God, which were read that evening. They were full of meaning, and almost sounded as if you never read them before. You felt no inclination to quarrel or cavil with the oracles of God. You were glad to find, that there was so much in them, suited to the house of mourning, and to the bleeding heart. Even prayer, however you may have felt it to be “a weariness” before or since, was then soothing. You joined in it instinctively, and enjoyed it much, when it placed you under the pitying eye and the shadowing wing of a paternal God. Even when it led your thoughts direct to “the blood of the Lamb,” as the only plea for pardon ; and to the grace of the Holy Spirit, as the only source of purity, you fell in with the strain of the petitions, and were not unwilling to be an entire *debtor* to the mercy of the Cross. You saw so clearly—and felt so keenly—how life, and health, and reason, depend on the will and power of God, that you could

neither doubt nor wonder that *salvation* should depend upon his good-will. In a word, you were "almost persuaded to be a Christian," whilst the infinite importance of being "altogether" a Christian, lay before you in the strong light of death, judgment, and eternity. Thus God "*maketh the heart soft,*" in the day of bereaving visitation. In such a scene, even HUME burst into tears, and exclaimed, "O that I had never doubted." Now, although all this do not amount to a *spiritual* change of heart, it was a moral change, which, while it lasted, corresponded with the providential dealings of God with your family : and still, it is both proof and illustration, to you, of the possibility of having your heart brought as fully under the power of the Word of God, by His Spirit, as it was then under the power of His rod, by His providence. For, if such be the force of *circumstances*, when they are solemn and painful, what may not the force of eternal truth effect on the heart, when accompanied by the gracious influences of the eternal Spirit ? This is the point on which I would now concentrate your attention. Add, if you will, to their tender and intense emotions I have just recalled, all the deep emotions you have ever experienced. You have been very ill at times ; and your heart was softened then. You have had some signal escapes from imminent danger ; and your heart melted then. You have witnessed scenes of wo and suffering ; and your sympathies overcame you. You have even been dissolved in tears, by reading a tale of deep interest ; and, amidst the solitudes of nature or the grave, you have mused, until your spirit was in full communion with all the aspects and associations of the scenery. Well ; to all these fine emotions, I make my appeal. You justly regard them as manifestations of good taste and right feeling ; and thus as proofs that you are not heartless nor frivolous. So do I. Such sympathies and sensibilities identify you with all who can think and feel. No mind can reach *manhood* without them. I appeal, however, to what you have felt under the pressure of affliction, or in the presence of suffering, or

amidst the silence and solitude of impressive scenes, in order to show you what you *may* feel and *ought* to feel, under the disclosures and overtures of eternal life.

Now you would be ashamed of yourself, if you had not wept when the family grave was open ;—if you had not softened, when the mighty hand of God brought you low ;—if you had not yearned with sympathy, when real and heart-rending suffering fell under your notice. And, is it no shame to be unmoved by the curse of a broken law ? No shame to be unmelted by the atoning sufferings of the Son of God ? No shame to be heedless about that “ holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ? ” Judge righteous judgment ! I will not call your sensibility vapid sentimentalism ; nor your sorrows selfish, because they terminate upon earthly things ; but I will, I must say, that it is as unmanly, as it is ungodly, to be *unfeeling*, whilst your immortal soul is in peril, and your eternal all in jeopardy. This—admits of no apology or palliation. It is equally weak and wicked : as intellectually mean, as it is morally base. You, yourself, despise this heartlessness, and denounce such heedlessness, when they trifle with temporal interests, or with human sorrows. You could not think well of any man, whatever were his rank in science or society, who could treat his lowest friend, as you have treated your God and Saviour. I refer now, not to your sins, nor to your short-comings ; but, to the sheer trifling with salvation, which you have indulged. Your soul might need neither mercy nor grace, from the way you have treated it ; or mercy and grace might never have cost the Saviour a tear nor a groan, from the way you have treated them.

This will not do ! Ye must be born again. All the character of God and heaven must change for the worse, if you could be safe for eternity, without a change to the better. You as much need a new heart now, as you will need an immortal body at the resurrection. And *you* are not the person, whoever may be so, to shelter yourself

under the question of Nicodemus,—“ *How can these things be?*” The spiritual change you need, *can be?* just as the moral changes I have mentioned, have been. You can neither deny nor doubt the power of Providence, to *soften* your heart; and, therefore, you cannot question the power of grace, to *sanctify* it. You have been moved—melted—penetrated, by what God has *done*; and as he has *said* greater things in His Word, than any He has done by His rod, greater impressions and improvements may, under the blessing of His Spirit, be produced by them, on your heart and character.

Thus, there is no mystery to you, in the *necessity* of a new heart and a right spirit; for, by your own acknowledgment, you have already experienced that change of tone and temper, which circumstances can produce: and that, although not regeneration, is quite enough to prove that the heart can be regenerated; and more than enough to explain how it may be so. Let there be, therefore, no equivocation or evasion, on this point. I tell you again, that God “hath made your heart soft,” by means, with which the agency of His Spirit is not necessarily connected, nor directly promised: and, if they could bring you “to your right mind” for a time, what may not the special means of grace (with which the work and witness of the Holy Spirit are connected by covenant) do for you, and in you? For, if the coffin and the grave of a parent, a relative, or a friend, have, without any reference to the agency or the existence of the Spirit, thrown you into such moods of thought and feeling, that, whilst they lasted, the world was a blank—business a burden—and the bare idea of amusement hateful,—what might not the study of the cross and tomb of the Saviour effect, were that study carried into the closet, and conducted with an express reference to “the mighty working” of the Eternal Spirit?

Do not evade the point of these questions by asking, whether the renewing work of the Spirit, like the softening work of Providence, renders “the world a blank—business

a burden—and amusement hateful?" You know that it does not! My design can only be mistaken wilfully; can only be misrepresented wantonly. Nothing is further from it, (and the inmost voice of your conscience tells you so!) than to convey an idea, that you must be thrown, by the work of the Spirit, into the same agitation, or into the same depression, or into the same deadness to the world, which you felt during the paroxysms of pain or grief. It is not for this end, the Spirit of God works; not in this way, that His influences operate. I mean, it is not to produce a *continuance* of painful emotions, or low spirits, that he awakens the conscience, and melts the heart. He does wound; but it is that he may heal. He does humble; but it is, that He may revive and cheer "the contrite ones." There is nothing in His work on the heart, to prevent the due discharge of social duties, or the due enjoyment of social life; but, as the healing hand of time leads bereaved mourners gently and gradually back to their wanted composure and proper business, without doing any violence to the sacredness of their sorrows; so the Spirit of all grace leads back the penitent mourner, to his proper place and work in society, under the influence of hopes and principles which qualify him to do well for both worlds.

There is, in conversion, sorrow for sin; but there is also the hope of pardon: and, what honest or rational pursuit could be hindered by either? There is, in conversion, self-abasement before God; but there is also love to God, and some reliance on Him: and what laudable enterprise or virtuous enjoyment, could these spoil or prevent? There is, in conversion, a spirit of prayer and watchfulness; but there is also a spirit of dependance on Grace and Providence, and, that must be a very questionable business, and that a more equivocal pleasure, which would be injured by either spirit. Marvel not that ye must be born again; for there is nothing in the change, to turn activity into idleness, or cheerfulness into melancholy, or energy into weakness, or manliness into pusillanimity. All the proper business

of life would be better conducted ; all the real enjoyments of life more relished ; all the noble pursuits of life more successful, and all the poetry of life more lovely, were they combined with the vital godliness of a regenerated heart. Cowper did not cease to be a poet, when he became "altogether a Christian." The harp of Montgomery rose in sublimity, in proportion as his heart ascended by the cross, to the throne.

Would there were no necessity for such remarks ! I feel ashamed of making them. Not, of course, that I doubt their truth at all ; nor that I care little for the genius which has been allied with piety : but I am ashamed to plead the claims of the Eternal Spirit, by proving that they do not clash with public duty or mental improvement. O, there ought to be no necessity for demonstrating or illustrating this fact, by appeals to the living or to the dead. The mighty God, the Lord, hath spoken, and said, "*ye must be born again*;" and the splendour of all the thrones and crowns of glory attests it ; the letter and spirit of all the songs of heaven repeat it ; the eternal harmony and communion of saints and angels imply it ; and every manly, as well as revealed, idea of fellowship with God and the Lamb, suggests and confirms the universal necessity of "a new heart."

I know not, of course, the precise circumstances, under which you read these hints. You may have stood, lately, by the death-bed and the grave of an endeared parent or friend ; and if so, you were not unmoved by the scene. You have not forgotten it ; and you feel as if you never could forget it : it was so solemn and affecting ! Well, it is not the emotions of that trying moment I want to revive. I have no wish to re-open your wounds, nor to renew that sense of desolation, which then awed and agitated your soul. I just refer to them—that I may refer you to an experimental proof of the fact, that the heart *can* be changed, in its tone and temper, by the power of solemn providences : and if they, by their own impressiveness, could give

quite a new cast to your spirit for a time, you thus see, (and cannot wonder when you see it,) how the solemn realities of salvation and eternity, may become the means of a divine and permanent change of heart and character. Your emotions *have* corresponded with the dispensations of Providence; and, in the day of calamity, you would have reckoned yourself fool-hardy or unfeeling, if you had not stood in awe of the hand of God.

Now, what is wanted, in order to your being "a new creature in Christ Jesus," is, just that your views and feelings should correspond with "the truth as it is in Jesus;" or, that what God has said and sworn in the Gospel, should make its own impression on you, just as what He has *done* has made its own impression on you. And, why should not His Word be as influential and effective as His rod? Mark and weigh, then, the facts of your *own* case. You are not a stranger to the *softening* of heart, which the subduing hand of Providence can produce. You now see, that if the Gospel were brought home to your feelings, as pain and loss have been, you *must* yield to its influence; Well; the mighty hand of God touched you, just that you might thus know by experience that your heart was susceptible of a saving change; and, that you might follow up the emotions of a *common* change, by prayer for the quickening and converting influences of the Holy Spirit. O, believe God, when He says, that He "worketh all these things, in order to save souls alive." He has not been your enemy, nor unkind to you, in thus making you to drink of the cup of sorrow so soon. He put it into your hand, for the express purpose of drawing your attention to "the cup of salvation." He made the former bitter, that the latter might be sweet. You were overlooking "the water of life;" or refusing it; or flattering yourself that you would drink in time enough, if you drank before you died. God marked this; and, in mercy, gave you a check! He loved your soul too well, to spare your feelings: for He meant you good, and not evil, when He made you feel through all your

soul, that all your comforts could be crushed in a moment. This was, indeed, a severe lesson, but a salutary one, and intended to prevent the severer lessons of judicial wrath, which time prepares, and eternity perpetuates. Whereas, God dealeth with you as with sons; "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

O, I would not for worlds entertain the vague notions of suffering or sorrow, which are afloat, even amongst those who talk about "some wise and good end, to be answered by our trials." There is such an end intended by God: but it is both wiser and better than any thing which is usually meant by this familiar phrase. All that it amounts to in popular opinion, is, that trials may be a paving the way for brighter days; and, in the meantime, improving the general character of the sufferer. Now, although there be much truth in this interpretation, the *grand* truth is not distinctly in it. That is—that trials form one of God's methods of saving "souls alive," by leading sufferers and mourners direct to the cross and the mercy-seat, to seek for grace. Salvation is the end which God has in view, by the discipline of Providence. The good He intends, is a definite, an infinite, an eternal blessing. It embraces, indeed, the general improvement of the character: but it bases and begins that renewing of the heart, by leading out the soul to the glories of the atonement; by bringing the conscience and the understanding under the authority of truth, and of the Spirit of truth and holiness.

Mark my words. God sympathizes with your sorrows, far more than any of those who weep whilst you weep. I do not mean that your friends are insincere in their sympathy: but I do mean, that they cannot hold your sorrows so *sacred* as God does. He sees in them, and intends by them, that, which may lead you safe into the heaven of heavens, by leading you direct to the hope set before you in the Gospel. Now, his design you must fall in with, if you would get real good from your trials. All their natural influence, however moral in its character for a time, will

be as the early cloud and the morning dew, evanescent. Many have wept at the family grave, who are now laughing in the chair of the scorner or the drunkard. Many, who imagined that they had buried their vices and their vanity in the parental tomb, are now filling up the measure of their iniquity, and taking their swing in both crime and folly. If, therefore, you meant well, by any promise you gave to a dying mother ; by any tear you shed at a father's sepulchre ; by any pledge you gave to the God of heaven, when he made your "heart soft," follow up, follow out your resolutions—by following Providence to the cross of Christ. Providence arose to lead you there. To bring you there—it smote you. To drive you there—it repeated its strokes. And the explanation of all its discipline is this, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ;" and lose it he must unless he set himself, by consideration and prayer, to invite and invoke the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost.

Let no man deceive you on this subject. Tell every man who makes light of a divine change, that he cannot resist the change which Providence brings on the spirits, when health gives way, or losses set in, or bereavements create desolation at home. Why should it be thought a strange thing, that the heart should be sanctified by a God, who so often softens it ?

No. VII.

ON MANLY VIEWS OF RELIGIOUS MYSTERY.

If the man who first said that, "Religion ends where mystery begins," imagined that he had uttered a *smart* thing, he must have been weaker than the wifings who repeat it. The terseness of the antithesis led them to

adopt it as a maxim. It tickled their ear, and thus betrayed their judgment. They were misled by taking for granted, that what was so well expressed, must be well founded. No such excuse, however, can be put forward; on behalf of the author of this *sounding* fallacy. It duped him before it acquired its witty form. The eyes of his understanding were hoodwinked, before his ear was tickled: unless, indeed, he was more traitor than fool. But however this may be, no man, whose sense and sincerity are equal, could be misled, for a moment, by such a sciolism. It is as false and absurd as to say, that "travelling ends where the sea begins." The mode and the medium of travelling end where the sea begins; but the motion goes on, in the new element, as well as on land. In like manner, religion *need* not end where mystery begins. There is "a path in the dark waters" of mystery, as well as on the table-land of morality. Adoration, modesty, and faith may go on wisely, even when comprehension must stop, and reason hesitate. "*We walk by faith, not by sight,*" says Paul; and in saying this, in regard to religion, the apostle said no more than every man *does*, in almost all the affairs of ordinary life. Both life, and the means of life, are full of mystery, and call for as much implicit faith, as the great mystery of godliness requires. For what aliment of our subsistence do we comprehend, either in its original elements, or in its adaptation to our nourishment? Mankind have, in fact, nothing to go by, in the use of food, but faith and experience. I say, faith—as well as experience: for no length of experience, as to the usefulness of any article of home or foreign consumption, could prove to a certainty, that the *new* supply is as nutritious as the *old* stock. Thus we are thrown, from year to year, on the principle of implicit faith, in God and man:—in God, by believing that he has not altered the qualities of the crops; and in man, by believing that neither the growers, nor the sellers of provision have poisoned it. Thus we actually live, by faith in the constancy of Providence, and in the general integrity and humanity of man-

kind. Without implicit faith in both, we should be haunted with the suspicion of *poison*, whenever we eat or drink. And, were any man to reject food, until he could understand and explain the entire nature of liquids and solids, who does not see that he must starve ?

Thus there would be no more folly in saying, "that eating should end where mystery in food begins," than there is in saying, that religion ends where mystery begins. It is just as truly ascertained by experience, that religion, with all its mysteries, does *good* to all who meekly believe them ; as it is, that food, with all its mysteries, sustains those who use it. Indeed, if mystery ought to stop or disturb any thing in the affairs of life or godliness, what would it not put an end to ; for they are all *based* on mysteries. Were religion to end where mystery begins, religion could not *begin* at all, in earth or heaven. For, were religion nothing but mere "bodily service," in obedience to simple rules, the very *utterance* of these rules by God, and the bare *apprehension* of them by man, would be inexplicable mysteries. Our familiarity with the power of words to convey ideas, renders us insensible to this fact : but, the moment we try to explain or comprehend that power, we are lost. It is as much a mystery as instinct. In a word ; a religion without mystery, must be a religion without a God : for the moment a God is admitted, mystery begins, and can never end. Unitarianism, pretends, indeed, to be a religion without mysteries : and, certainly, it is not the fault of its votaries, that any mystery cleaves to that system. They have done all that men could do to rid it of them ; and somewhat more than even the devil ever ventured to try ; for he did not venture to question the inspiration of the texts, quoted against his proposals in the wilderness, nor to evade their force by analyzing their figures. But still, after all that has been dared and done, to rid Unitarianism of mystery, even the *oneness* of its God leaves him *incomprehensible* : and, what more can Trinitarianism make him ? I readily allow that there is *less* mystery in the theory of

one person in the Godhead, than in the revelation of three persons in the unity of the Godhead : but, as even the Unitarian theory ascribes *infinity* or omnipresence to its God, it thus announces so much mystery, that the faith which bows to that infinity, need not stagger at the revealed *plurality* of the divine essence. That essence may surely subsist in inconceivable forms, seeing it is allowed, even by simplifiers, to pervade the infinitude of space. This is, however, a question of pure revelation ; and, therefore, may be soon settled. I say "soon," because there cannot be "*two sides*" of the question in the Bible. For, if it be the fact that there is but one person in the Godhead, it is also the fact, that the Bible is intended to teach the unity of the Godhead ; and, therefore, all that the Bible says must be on *one* side of the question. There is either nothing in it about the Father *alone* being God, or all that is in it ascribes divinity to no one else. But what is the fact ? It is, that the lively oracles proclaim the divinity of the Son, as much as the divinity of the Father ; and claim for Him all the works and worship which they ascribe to the Father. And, is this the way to teach, that there is but one person in the Godhead ? This is the way in which revelation teaches the unity of the Godhead. In like manner, it ascribes to the Holy Spirit, both the attributes and operations which are peculiar to deity. Accordingly, on almost all minds, in all nations to whom "the word of God has come," it has left the impression, that there is a Trinity in the Godhead. Even on the minds of those who deny the Trinity, the Bible has left a conviction, that it requires much learning, labour, and dexterity, to prevent it from making men Trinitarians. It keeps Unitarians for ever on the stretch, to counteract its natural influence on the public mind.

Weigh these facts. Had the Bible been intended to teach mankind, that the Father alone is God, there would have been nothing in it contrary to this ; nothing inconsistent with this ; nothing to cloud or encumber this ; yea,

there *ought* to have been nothing in it, that could suggest the bare idea of the Son or the Spirit being diviné also : but there is so much in it contrary to, and inconsistent with, the *exclusive* divinity of the Father, that almost all who receive the Scriptures as a revelation from heaven, become Trinitarians ; and even those who do not become so, can only maintain their existence as a sect, by expunging many parts of the Bible, and explaining away the obvious sense of more. Now, no Unitarian book produces any such impression upon the mind of its readers. Neither criticism nor caution is needed, in order to prevent us from imagining that Priestley or Belsham taught the doctrine of the Trinity. Both the letter and spirit of their writings, are uniformly and unequivocally against it. Why, then, is not the Bible equally against the Trinity, if the doctrine be untrue ? Why is there any thing in Scripture, that suggests the bare idea of three persons in the Godhead, if there be only one ? No other rational answer can be given to these questions, than that the Bible never was intended to teach the exclusive divinity of the Father. Accordingly, it has led the immense majority of all who have read it, to believe that Father, Son, and Spirit, are one Jehovah.

There is, indeed, mystery in the doctrine of the Trinity : but both the Bible and Providence would be a "mystery of iniquity," if it were not true ; for they spread widely, and support uniformly, nothing else, on the subject of the divine nature. If, therefore, there be great mystery in the doctrine, all the great miracles of omnipotence, and all the great measures of Providence, and all the signal monuments of antiquity, and all the populous traditions of the world, are on its side. It is not an unsanctioned nor an unenshrined mystery. The seal of heaven accredits its truth, and the smiles of heaven accelerate its triumphs. Amidst the number and splendour of its vouchers and victories, it is almost impossible to remember that there is, or ever was, in existence, such a petty thing as Unitarianism.

It is, therefore, *more* than mystery, that he rejects, who

rejects the Trinity. In doing that, he sets himself in opposition to all the verdicts of experience, and to all the visions of immortality: for the former accredit no other gospel but the Trinitarian, as "the power of God unto salvation," or even unto moral reformation; and the latter illustrate nothing more clearly, than that all the armies of heaven unite in "honouring the Son, even as they honour the Father."

Look at the latter fact first. You know nothing of heaven, but just what is *revealed* concerning it. No man has any more information on the subject, or can obtain more. It is not the heaven of revelation, therefore, that he looks for, who confines his adoration to the Father, or withholds his confidence from the blood of the Lamb. For, what part could he take in hallelujahs, which glorify God and the Lamb equally; or in anthems, which ascribe salvation entirely and exclusively to the blood of atonement? This is the worship of heaven; and it swells equally from the hearts and harps of saints and angels. What, therefore could a Unitarian do there,—but either confess that he had never believed the Bible; or charge all heaven with idolatry and error? This would be, in fact, his only alternative. He could do nothing, but acknowledge himself to have been a fool on earth, or impeach the whole "general assembly" of saints and angels, as idolaters. Is it not, therefore, unmanly, yea mean, even to contemptibleness, to talk of heaven, and yet to treat Christ as a mere man and a martyr? It cannot, surely, be the heaven of revelation, which Unitarians mean, when they speak of a glorious immortality; for "the Lamb is the light and glory" of the Immortality illuminated by the gospel: and, if they do mean *another* heaven, why do they not speak out, and tell us plainly where and what it is? Those should not *mystify*, who denounce mystery!

After this, never pretend that you know not what creed to adopt. If you desire to spend your eternity in the heaven which the Saviour opened in the visions of Patmos,

and announced in his sermons, adopt the creed of that heaven. Adore God and the Lamb, as all the armies of it do; and thus you can never be at a loss. There will, indeed, still be mystery—much and great mystery; but all of it openly sanctioned by all who are around the throne, and by “Him that sitteth on the throne.”

Look now at the second fact. All the verdicts of experience accredit Trinitarianism, as “the truth as it is in Jesus.” All fulfilling prophecy, and all signal Providences, are on its side. The *mysterious* creed is, thus, the only form of Christianity which has ever been successful or sanctifying, in our world. Weigh this fact.

Prophecy supposes and requires the existence and exercise of a *special Providence*, in order to its fulfilment; and an overruling Providence, once established, opens such a guardianship for truth in the world, that we may naturally expect to find the latter under the wing of the former, and the wheel of Providence in the track of the gospel, breaking up its way amongst the nations, and gradually crushing down opposition. Now, if Unitarianism be “*the truth as it is in Jesus*,” it, and it alone, will exhibit on its side, all the signal interpositions of Providence since the Christian era. For, if *they* have been on the side of Trinitarianism, God, on Unitarian principles, has been giving currency to error and success to absurdity. This hint will prepare you for the following part of this essay; in which I will endeavour to show you, that there is no alternative, but denying a special Providence altogether, or admitting that, hitherto, it has been exercised in behalf of Trinitarianism, and *against* Unitarianism. I have recourse to this argument, not only because it is conclusive, but because it is simple, and more suited than critical disquisitions, to all capacities. Every person is familiar with the doctrine of an overruling Providence, and in the habit of expecting the hand of God on the side of his own cause. This is as it should be, and a happy circumstance for one of the creeds.

Truth, you will allow, is an important thing in any state

of society ; and never was more wanted than at the time when Christ began to promulgate it to the world. Error was then triumphant, and stood Colossus-like, with one foot on Mars Hill, and the other on the Tarpeian mount. Her right hand rested on the pyramids of Egypt—and her left on the pillars of Hercules ; around her gigantic form, wreathed the incense of ten thousand altars ; her embossed pedestal was purpled with blood, and her shrine hung with the shields of the mighty, and the harps of antiquity. Beneath the shadow of her wings, lay the tombs of generations, sculptured with every emblem but Immortality—and her temples, whilst they enchanted the eye, lent all their charms to licentiousness and fiction. Such was the sway and fascination of error, when Truth, in the meek and lowly form of a servant, sat down on the Mount of Olives to teach mankind. A few indigent fishermen were her first adherents, and, until the splendour of her miracles gave *eclat* to her doctrines, her "*gracious words*" could hardly redeem her from public contempt. But her cause was heaven's cause—and heaven interfered to vindicate it, by enabling Truth to wield the elements, at will—to bind death and diseases in chains—and to reap her trophies on every field of misery and despair. And this she did successfully.

But I forget : personification is admissible only in an oration, and I am writing an essay. In plain terms, then Providence smiled upon the sermons of Christ and his apostles, and made subsiding storms, retiring disorders, and opening graves, the harbingers and pioneers of the gospel. The eyes of the blind were opened to behold its heralds—the ears of the deaf unstopped to hear them—the tongues of the dumb unloosed to hail them—the understanding of the weak enabled to comprehend them ; until the world witnessed classes of the unfortunate, once unfit to take any part in the *form* of religion, exclaiming in the *spirit* of it, "*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good*

things!" Thus the ministry of reconciliation was introduced with a degree of glory that excelled even the splendid patronage under which Judaism opened. The rocks of Gennesaret were made as famous as Baalzephon—the Mount of Olives vied with Horeb, and Calvary became more monumental than Sinai. Miracles made every element and every obstacle tributary to the cause of truth. By such "*signs and wonders,*" God taught the world to expect, that the gospel never would be left without a witness of some kind. And the expectation thus awakened, was not weakened in the least, even when miracles were withdrawn; but the church continued to calculate, as sanguinely, upon support and countenance from on High, when the pentecostal tongues of fire became extinct, as when they glowed in all the freshness of novelty; because the moment miracles ceased, the visions of prophecy began; opening a vista through *futurity*, illuminated at every point by the bright and morning Star—and terminated only by the great white throne and the brink of eternity. God did not more signally prove Himself by miracles, to be on the side of truth, than He solemnly pledged Himself, by prophecy, to continue on its side for ever. Is He, then? Has He ever been, on the side of Unitarianism? If so—when? where? how? The *right hand* of God is not such an indefinite or indistinct object, but it may be pointed to, when it is stretched out in his own cause. He has made it *bare*, in the sight of all nations: successive ages have said of successive interpositions, "*Is not this the finger of God?*" And, at this moment, the Christian world feel themselves on the verge of a moral era, the very dawn of which sets them on tiptoe as they gaze. And, has Unitarianism neither part nor lot in this matter? Is she "*like the heath in the desert,*" that knoweth not when good comes? Seriously, this hint begins to wear a dark aspect on that cause. It is nigh time for Unitarians to collect witnesses: for I should think they could not sleep, until like Ahasuerus, they "*commanded to bring the book of the Chronicles,*" of the Unitaria-

rian kingdom. Or shall I save them the trouble, by stating at once, that there has been nothing to register, but *disasters* and *defeats*? Of late, indeed, their system has obtained a name and place in the old Presbyterian chapels of England; but how was possession gained? Tell it not in Gath!—*under the mask of orthodoxy*—by means you would not connect Providence with, nor attempt to *sanctify* by their success. And, as this event stamps indelible disgrace upon those Unitarians, who “*with feigned words made merchandise*” of the Trinitarian congregations—where are the interpositions of Providence on behalf of the new system? But I forget: it claims, of course, *all* the miraculous and signal interpositions of Providence, during the *first* and *second* centuries; since, according to its own account, Unitarianism was the primitive system. Now, suppose I grant this, for a moment, for the sake of argument, what does it lead to? In fact, to a conclusion which, of itself, *disproves* the assumption. For, if it were true, that all the *miracles* were wrought in behalf of Unitarianism, it would be true, also, that all the *prophecies* were written in its behalf: but as none of the *latter* have been fulfilled in its favour, none of the *former* belong to it—because, both must be found on one side, or not at all. Granting again, however, that it *was* Unitarianism, which was ushered into the world amidst the songs of angels, and under the banners of miracles; that for it, a highway was opened into “*Cesar’s household*,” and all across the moral wilderness of the three continents; how comes it that God abandoned Unitarianism, when the banners of miracles were folded up? How do you account for its triumphs ceasing ever since, and its being left to the scorn of every church and state in Christendom? Why is it, that every thing known or acknowledged as Providence, has, since the failure of miracles, frowned on that creed? *This is not* the manner of the Most High, in regard to truth—*this is not* what we are taught to expect from his management. God, (if Unitarianism were the gospel,) has been harassing and

depressing the gospel, for fifteen hundred years, and making every vicissitude and revolution abet the cause of error.

I will allow all the weight you please, to the success of Unitarianism in America—in Geneva—in England: this *token for good* shall be as good, as Unitarians choose to call it; as encouraging as they say. Yes, weave their laurels into all the width of surface, which their *greenness* and length will go to; they are but shoots of *yesterday*, on both sides of the Atlantic. Now, this ought not to be the case—if they are the laurels of truth. Besides, if God has any hand in the recent success of that sect, how do you account for his hand being withdrawn during fifteen hundred years? Were you to claim, even the age of Socinius, as the era when the primitive truth was revived, there would be still an awful series of ages between that and the third century—and in none of them, can you discern Truth and Providence together. I multiply and press such questions, because the doctrine of an overruling Providence seems fully recognised by some of their best writers. Dr. Rees, in his oration, delivered on laying the first stone of the Old Jewry Chapel, says of the system: “It is under the protection of the God of nature and providence: and we are assured by the Word of divine truth, that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Providence will raise in this place, and in other places of a *similar* kind, a succession of those who will retain and avouch the principles of their fathers. The *stone* which is now to be fixed in its proper place, will, I trust, be an emblem not only of the durability of this edifice, but of the permanency of the *society* to which it belongs. It will, in this respect, resemble that rock on which the founder of *our* Christian faith hath built his church.”

These are excellent sentiments; but, were they not equally true and applicable, when the foundation stones of the primitive chapels were laid? Had not the Rees's of that age, when according to the Rees's of this age, Unitarianism was orthodoxy, a right to calculate on Providence “raising up a succession of those who should retain and

avouch the principles of their fathers ? Such a succession, however, were not raised up until Socinius appeared. This single fact, therefore, is fatal either to the doctrine of Providence, or to the pretensions of Unitarians. Which of the *two*, then, will they give up as untenable ; for *both* they cannot retain. I leave Unitarians to adjust these jarring events—and proceed to remind *you* of the triumphs of that system—the doctrines of which are mysterious.

I have granted, for the sake of argument, that Unitarianism *might* be the primitive system : and we have seen that it was soon forsaken by Providence. Now, only pay me back the compliment for a moment, and grant that Trinitarianism was the primitive system ; and if you find *that* forsaken by Providence, in *any* age since the Christian era, I will admit that you have established a serious objection against it.

Assuming, then, that Trinitarianism was the system taught by Christ and his apostles, the sudden death of Constantine saved it from the deep-laid scheme of Eusebius to establish Arianism in its room. Constantine maintained it in the western empire, until he was murdered. Constantius could not stifle it—nor Julian sneer it into contempt—nor Valens eradicate it—nor Apollinaris corrupt it. Even, whilst the imperial sceptre was shifting like a shadow, from hand to hand, and the state of religion modelling according to state policy, Trinitarianism held its place, from the time of Constantine till that of Theodosius, when it became dominant, and has continued so ever since. It became encumbered, indeed, under a succession of popes, with a load of folly and extravagance ; caught a form of absurdity and a spirit of fire, and appeared on the seven hills of Rome more like a destroying angel than a messenger of peace. These fiery elements, however, which glowed around Trinitarianism *then*, were not fed from the bosom of its radical doctrines, but issued from the volcanoes of ecclesiastical ambition. In proof of this, I appeal to the system since it has been disentangled by the reformers.

Luther snatched it from the electric atmosphere of Rome ; Calvin, from the feudalism of the Germanic electors ; Knox from the clanship of the Scotch ; Cromwell from the teeth of the Stuarts ; and, now that it is still farther disencumbered by the Orthodox, it is both tolerant and benevolent. It is the fact, therefore, that ever since Trinitarianism, like a vessel, was launched from the port of Judea upon the sea of public opinion, she has not only rode out every storm, during eighteen centuries, but touched at every shore, and colonized every island.

It will not do, in the face of all this, for Unitarians to affect composure, and exclaim "*Truth is great and will prevail.*" Truth has always been great—and her greatness of that kind which has always insured, what their system never had—the smiles of Providence ! And it would be still worse, to evade these arguments by saying that Unitarianism has had but a short time for her experiments on the world. It has been brief, certainly : but the *shorter* you prove it to be—the *longer* you make the period during which Providence abandoned and overthrew what they call "*The Truth.*"

If the foregoing remarks illustrate any thing to the point, it is, that public opinion, prophecy, and Providence, wear an equally unfavourable aspect towards Unitarianism. Public opinion braves the system—prophecy brands it Anti-christ—Providence which forms public opinion and fulfils prophecy, abandons their cause upon every great movement of the moral world.

I come, now, to the manifest inconsistency between the *tenor* of Scripture, and the *tenor* of Unitarianism. And, as my limits impose the utmost brevity, I must have recourse to a mode of illustration, which will give *multum in parvo.*

Unitarianism is a *system*—and according to Unitarians, a *perfect summary* of the revealed will of God to man, for the obedience of faith. Now, if it be a *perfect* digest of divine truth, (and it ought to be so before urging it on the world,) it wants nothing but the *formal* authority of the Bible, to

make it *equal* to the Bible. For, if a transfer of that authority to the system, did not raise it to an equal rank with the Scriptures—it could only be, because it is *unscriptural* in its *present* state. They say—it is *not*; and cannot say otherwise, without giving up its claims. Suppose, then, for a moment, that God, in a visible and indisputable manner, should abolish the Bible entirely, and give to the world, in its stead, *a written copy of the UNITARIAN SYSTEM*, having all the authority and sacredness which the Bible has had. You know, that God could do so, and by a few signal miracles, stamp the divinity of the latter, as high as the former. Suppose all this done, in the eyes of all nations; and the creed of every nation Unitarian; and this state of things five hundred years old; and the present Bible utterly forgotten; and the existing commentaries and orthodox writings lost; and nothing extant but what Unitarians approve of now. They can have no serious objections to these suppositions, because the chief part of them are hopes they cherish, and wish to see realized.

Now, suppose that after five hundred years, (when their system would be dominant, and endeared by as many pious and learned works, as Trinitarianism now boasts,) some minister of talents and influence, should address such a *circular*, as the following, to the Unitarian churches:—

DEARLY BELOVED,

Grace be with you, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love! All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. And let all the angels of God worship him—for he is before all things, and by Him all things consist. 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 made by Him, and for Him. His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting. When His Father addressed Him, He said, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever! Thou, Jehovah, in the beginning

didst lay the foundation of the earth : and the heavens are the works of thy hand !” Therefore, it becomes us to ascribe “ Blessing, and honour, and glory and power, unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever : because, he that honoureth not the Son, honour-eth not the Father. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

How would such a letter be received by churches formed on the principle, that divine names and divine honours, are the *exclusive* rights of the Father ? The writer would be branded as an idolater, and his letter committed to the flames. Or, if any one leaned to his opinions—an appeal would be made to the *New Bible*, (which I have supposed,) and the wavering brother dared to produce from it, *one* instance in which Christ is called God, Jehovah, or Creator. And you know, that he could *not*, if any of the existing summaries of Unitarianism were exalted in the rank of the Bible, and substituted in its room. And if these passages, which I have thrown into the form of a letter, would savour of idolatry, five hundred years hence, (under that state of things, I have supposed,) they do so now, on every principle, but that of the Son’s *equality* with the Father.

Thus, there is no alternative, but to embrace mystery, or to succumb to absurdity. Even Deists see this, and laugh at the farce of retaining the Bible, and discarding mystery.

No. VIII.

ON MANLY VIEWS OF DIVINE HOLINESS.

THE most natural and scriptural idea we can form of the divine life and blessedness, “ from everlasting,” is, that the past eternity was occupied in planning, what will take the future eternity to accomplish. And now, observe ;—the infinite *holiness* of Jehovah, was the basis of His infinite

happiness from everlasting. God has been blessed for ever, because holy for ever;—for on no other ground could eternal happiness rest or remain.

It has been often proved, to demonstration, that if God had not always been, He never could have been at all: and it is equally capable of demonstration, that if He had not been always holy, he never could have been happy. This fact is self-evident, when viewed in connexion with the eternity which preceded all created being and things; for then, besides himself, there was nothing to delight in, or to be occupied with. If, therefore, the eternal mind was not of a character to find enjoyment in itself, and to be the spring of its own felicity, it had no resource whatever beyond itself—and must have been miserable. I repeat it—God must from everlasting have been miserable, if not immaculately holy from everlasting;—because prior to the birth of time, there were no *external* sources of enjoyment: and *internal* there could not have been, if purity was wanting; because, in that case, there was no security against bad feelings—which are their own punishment. Mind, whether created or uncreated, is of such a nature, that it cannot cease from thinking or feeling about itself or something; and in proportion to its power is its activity. Now the powers of the eternal Mind being infinite, must have been infinitely active: and if active only or even often about evil—conscious misery, in the same degree, must have been the consequence. I dare not trust myself to follow out this argument; but I see, at a glance, how an *unholy* God must be a wretched being, exactly in proportion to His intellectual energy. Such a being might annihilate himself, or become insane, during the height and sweep of infinite passions. But I check my own mind: the true God is essentially and infinitely holy; and therefore has been eternally happy. No wrong thought or feeling ever passed through his mind; but, from everlasting, its powers circle around its plans, calm and bright as the sea of glass around the throne of glory. And what must the holiness of the

divine nature be, seeing it has for ever maintained the balance and harmony of infinite energies, although all in external exercise; upheld from everlasting the tranquillity and equanimity of that mind, through which all the affairs of all worlds—of all beings—of all time—of all eternity, have passed in revision, deliberation, and judgment? This mighty sum of beings, things, and events, even if all uniformly lovely in themselves, seem too immense to be contemplated with unmixed pleasure or unfailling patience:—and, diversified as they are by vice and weakness, it seems impossible to have even thought of them all, without passion or pain. And, without being glorious in holiness, God could not have viewed them, unimpaired in His own happiness: but, strange to tell!—holiness, the very perfection which makes evil abhorrent to God, is the very perfection which from eternity upheld His bliss and composure in contemplating all things. These are wonderful themes, if we only had strength to follow them up to their height: but even as bare hints, they are inspiring to reflecting minds. I love to get disentangled from time, and the chequered scenes of life,—until I live, in thought, before them all. I cannot shake off the perplexities occasioned by the aspect of nature and providence, until I get beyond their birth, and into the solitary depths of a silent eternity:—but, then, although in one sense lost, in another I am found, by simple facts; by solid principles; by self-evident maxims, which, like guardian angels, take me by the hand, and conduct me into marvellous light, and peace unspeakable. If you can hardly believe this, I will give you a specimen of reasoning, in that glorious retirement of the soul—the eternity before time.

I enter it looking for the throne of God:—I find the high and holy place:—I am assured that the Holy One has dwelt there from eternity, glorious in holiness! And now, I want no more to reason from. On this basis, I can build up the theory of the universe He is to create, and of the government He is to establish. Thus:—Will a God

infinitely holy, rise from His eternal throne to make any thing evil? No. To do any thing evil? No. To act contrary to His nature? No. To tarnish His unsullied purity? No. Then, let the universe of being rise when it will; let His system of government be promulgated when it may: all will be right—all as it should be; for the author of all is glorious in holiness. Men and things may be mysterious, changeable, chequered, in their lot, aspect, and character; but whatever evil there may be in either, a Holy God cannot be the author of it. Having got hold of this self-evident and certain truth, I bring it down to the fall and fate of angels: they are miserable in all their immortal powers: no wonder; they are unholy; and unholiness would make God Himself miserable. Even His happiness could not survive the loss of His holiness; how then could theirs? I now apply the principle to mankind: misery, both natural and moral, abounds in the world; all men are more or less unhappy at all times: they search creation for happiness in vain, and find only vexation of spirit. This seems hard; but they are *unholy*; and therefore inevitably unhappy. God Himself could not avoid being wretched, were He unholy. His creatures are, therefore, even in the depths of their wretchedness, only what He Himself must be, were He like them in heart and character. Here then I deny that there is any *mystery* in the severest dispensations of Providence, if you admit that there is *sin* in all that suffer by them. While men are unholy, they must be unhappy: this consequence is as natural and inevitable, as darkness after sunset, or cold in winter. Now the sun of divine holiness has held an eternal meridian; and, therefore, God has been blessed for ever; but the sun of human holiness has set; and, therefore, men are unhappy. In the case of the children of God, that sun is rising again, and, therefore, they are rising again to enjoyment and peace; but not until it shine in perfect day, will either be perfect. Away, therefore, with the unprincipled clamour about hard lots, heavy calamities, mysterious trials: I have had my

share of them ; but I see nothing unfair or unaccountable in them. Those, therefore, who only condole and sympathize with sufferers, defeat their own kind purpose : for the misery they strive to mitigate, admits of no effectual cure, but restoration to true holiness, or the image of God. While, therefore, I wish my heart to be like the *river-sponge*, saturated with the passing streams of another's sorrow, and weeping with those that weep, I must belie all right principle, if I do not feel chiefly for their and my own want of holiness.

Having thus given you some idea, of how essential holiness is, even to the happiness of God, you will now be prepared to go fully into the subject of this essay.

His holiness is represented as the beauty of His nature and character. Even Plutarch, the heathen philosopher, obtained, somehow, a glimpse of this fact, and said, "Holiness is the beauty of the divine essence ; God is not so happy by an eternity of life, as by excellency of virtue."

Proclus calls God, "the undefiled Governor of the world." And it was to keep this beauty of the divine nature untarnished, that some of the wisest of the heathen writers invented the eternity of matter : to that, they ascribed all sin, that they might acquit God of being the author of sin : so sacred was their idea of His holiness. In like manner, to absolve God from all taint or suspicion of evil, the Manichean heretics maintained two eternal principles ; the one the origin of all evil, the other the origin of all good : thus running into absurdities in order to avoid that contradiction in terms, an unholy God. Now, if heathens and heretics were thus careful to invest God with the beauty of holiness, we may expect that the sacred writers would not neglect to do so. Accordingly Jehosaphat summons all the vocal and instrumental powers of music, to the theme, that they might praise the beauty of holiness. To behold the beauty of the Lord, David desired to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. To illustrate it, he represents Jehovah clothed with light as a garment. In like manner, both

the Old and New Testament writers agree in exhibiting the divine holiness as the beauty, which captivates and charms all the armies of heaven : " they rest not day nor night, crying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." Thus while the Bible calls the omnipotence of God His arm ; His omniscience His eye ; His mercy His heart ; His infinity His form ; His eternity His life ; they call His holiness His beauty. And, agreeably to this fine idea, that beauty is made to beautify, with its own reflected loveliness, every thing it relates to. This is so well illustrated by a living writer, that I cannot do so well as to quote his own words : " Because heaven is the habitation of the holy God, it is called His holy heaven : because the temple was the place where He graciously afforded the indications of His presence, it was called His holy temple : the very ground on which Jehovah condescended to admit Moses to an audience, was called holy ground : the mountain on which the Saviour was transfigured was called the holy mount : the day set apart for divine worship is called the holy day : and in a far higher sense are the people of God called a holy people." I will only add to this fine enumeration, the unparalleled emblem of David, where he describes the beauty of the holiness of the Saviour's people, as " the dew from the womb of the morning." And if their infinite and reflected holiness will be eventually as the morning dew ; with what beauty must infinite and essential purity invest Jehovah ! Well may it be said, the heavens are not clean in His sight.

His holiness is represented as the *glory* of His nature, character, and government.

It is on this principle that God celebrates His justice as holy justice ; His wisdom as holy wisdom ; His omnipotence as His holy arm ; His omniscience as His holy eye ; His truth as His holy promise ; His commands as His holy law ; and all His works as holy works." Thus He is altogether glorious in holiness : for, without that, says Charnock, His patience would be indulgence to sin, His mercy

a fondness, His wrath a madness, His power a tyranny, His wisdom a subtlety. His holiness gives a decorum to all. "Were not all His perfections distinguished and adorned by the quality of holiness," says Dr. Burder, "He who sways the sceptre of the universe might be an object of dread, but not of love or confidence. Such a being might become the scourge and terror of creation."

This is, indeed, strong language; but I quote it without apology, because if I employed my own upon the subject, it would be far stronger, without being less true; for if any thing be morally certain, it is, that without holiness there would be no real glory in any one of the divine perfections, because no security for their rational or fair exercise. It is not, however, necessary to pursue this argument farther: let us, therefore, satisfy ourselves, that holiness is the glory of all the divine perfections.

To prove and illustrate this fact, in the case of each attribute of Jehovah, would occupy more space than I can command; I will, therefore, confine my remarks to His *mercy* and *justice*; for these two virtually include all the rest

Now, holiness is the glory of divine mercy, whether that mercy be viewed as the disposition of God, the purpose of God, or the act of God: in all these characters, it has its chief glory in its holiness. And, in this way: mercy viewed as the disposition of Jehovah, or as His feelings, flows from His love of holiness; for, had He not loved that supremely and unspeakably, He would have felt no sympathy for sinners, but would have allowed them to be unholy still. Had He cared nothing, or but little, about holiness, He would have had no motive nor inclination to provide a Saviour; for, of what consequence could it be, however vile man were, if God were indifferent about purity. But, because he loved purity infinitely, He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son to be the Propitiation for sin and the Redeemer from sin. His mercy, in its principle, plan, and gift, is, therefore, the measure of

His love to Holiness ; because the practical design of all his mercy is, to bring around His throne, in the beauty of holiness, a multitude which no man can number ; all without spot or blemish. That His people may be holy as He is holy, He made His Son unto them, " wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification." Thus every step, struggle, sacrifice and triumph of mercy, on behalf of man, was on behalf of *holiness* too ; love to the latter furnished the motive, inflamed the desire, fortified the resolution, found the means, of redeeming the former. Holiness, is, therefore, the glory of mercy. The plan of mercy, is a holy covenant ; the Mediator of mercy, a holy Saviour ; the Applier of mercy, a holy Spirit ; the fruits of mercy, a holy generation ; the final glory of mercy, a church like unto Him who is the express image of the father of mercies. Well, therefore, may I call upon myself and you, in the language of Jehosaphat, " Praise ye the beauty of holiness," and in the language of David, " Give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness." Well may we charge our souls to love holiness supremely ; for had not God loved it so, He would not have so loved the world, as to give His Son to save His people from their sins.

I must not quit this part of the subject, without availing myself of the fine opportunity it affords of attaching distinct ideas to the general maxim, that the cause of all that God has done in salvation, is simply the advancement of his own *glory*. Nothing can be more true than this maxim ; but let not your ideas of its meaning be vague. The glory of Jehovah is His *goodness*. Why ? Just because holiness is the foundation and spring of all His goodness. He is good, because He is holy ; for to spread, exalt, and perpetuate holiness throughout the universe, His tender mercies are over all His other works. We do not, therefore, go far enough, when we trace redemption to the love of God, as its first cause ; and to the glory of God, as its *final* end. That ought to be done, cannot be too often done ; but, whenever it is done, there is another thing that should not

be left undone : namely, tracing the love of God to its origin or moral cause ; which is the holiness of the divine nature, or God's love of righteousness. Nothing can be more certain than this ; for an unholy God could neither have motive nor inclination to love the world, in the way the High and Holy One has done. Here, then are distinct ideas of His glory being the final *end* of all His works ; it is the promotion of holiness by the exercise of goodness. Allow me, therefore, to indulge my feelings for a moment here, and to say, "Holiness ! thou art the fountain of all the love, the grace, the mercy, and the goodness, which are to us the fountains of salvation ! Thou art the foundation of all the kindness, condescension, and faithfulness, which are to us the foundations of hope and confidence ! Thou art the shield of the unchangeableness, truth and omnipotence, which are to us the shields of eternal safety and protection ! Give thanks at the remembrance of Thy holiness ! Yes, Holy One of Israel ! never will I forget it ; never remember it, without regarding it as the eternal source and the eternal security of all that is gracious in Thy heart, glorious in Thy character, wonderful in Thy works. Because Thou art infinitely holy, Thou art infinitely good ; because Thou wilt be eternally holy, Thou wilt be eternally good. I have thought of Thy holiness with suspicion or hatred : so foolish was I, that I have wished Thee less holy ! This was, in fact, wishing Thee to be my implacable and immortal enemy for ever ; wishing myself and Thee to be eternally wretched. "Thus I was as a beast before Thee !" I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee ; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes !"

I proceed now to show how holiness is the glory of divine *justice*.

Every act of justice, on the part of God, is only the exercise of holiness, however summary, severe, or final. The same holiness originates and regulates all judgment, which originated and regulates all mercy. As God does

not go a step farther in pardoning, than where He can be holy in doing so, neither will He in punishing. He will be glorious in holiness, both in saving and condemning. It is, therefore, well for devils, and through eternity it will be well for all the lost, that God is holy; for, though His being so must, in their case, for ever prevent mercy, it will for ever prevent injustice too. Nothing unnecessary or unreasonable ever has been, or ever will be, inflicted upon them; even when the flaming sword of justice waves in all its terrors, and hell burns in all its fierceness; the strokes and storms of wrath will be as much regulated by holiness, as the rest and raptures of heaven, will be so. God will be holy in all His ways, and equally holy in them all, whether Wrath walk through the bottomless pit, or Love walk through the mansions of glory. Holiness will preside, with the same equity, over suffering in hell, as over bliss in heaven.

True, it may be said, but of what advantage will this be to condemned spirits? It will afford them no relief from hell, or in hell. Certainly not: but it will afford them no pretext for charging God with injustice; for He will render unto every man only according to his works. Mark, then, the glory of justice in punishing sin; punishment will be fiercest against the neglecters of the great salvation: but such is the holiness of God, that, although provoked in the highest by that *crime of crimes*, in avenging it He will indulge no undue anger, inflict no unreasonable punishment. And yet, you say, the punishment will be eternal? Yes, that is the measure of its duration, whatever be the degree of its fierceness. Eternal banishment from His presence, is the very least curse that a Holy God can inflict upon unholy beings; for if any thing less could avenge sin sufficiently, depend upon it holiness would not have fixed everlasting destruction. It was in no passion, in no rash moment, that God decreed this as the penalty of guilt. He was never more calm, collected, deliberate, or just, than when He fixed this, as the sentence of the law, and the

sanction of the Gospel : and He will be equally so when He executes that sentence. Let, therefore, no trifler flatter himself with the hope of entire escape, or of enduring less than eternal misery, if he persist in trifling with the Gospel. It cannot be less, except God become unholy ; and, were He to become so, then ten thousand times wo to thee, beyond the wo of hell ! for then wouldst thou be in the hands of unprincipled omnipotence, in the storms of infinite passions ; the sport and prey of eternal tyranny. Man ! if devils thought that God would become unholy, they would unite in deprecating the change ; and turn hell into a house of prayer, in which the everlasting cry would be, King Eternal ! remain eternally holy. Oh ! if I durst pour out the fulness of my own thoughts, and tell you what an unholy God must be, I could terrify you at the bare idea. Letting loose the planets from their orbits, and the suns of the universe from their centres, until the material creation was dashing to atoms, like icebergs in the shock of a polar storm in the northern seas, would be nothing to the letting loose of infinite power and passion, from the magnetic control of holiness. But on this point I promised to forbear ; and I will, were it only in mercy to my own strained and startled imagination.

Having thus largely shown the light in which the Word of God places the holiness of God, I solicit your attention to the light in which the actual dispensations or works of God, place His holiness. Now there are *three* classes of God's public measures, each of which manifests His immaculate holiness. There are His retributive, redeeming and regenerating works. I notice first, His acts of judicial retribution or punishment ; and here it deserves special observation, that in Scripture, the holiness of Jehovah is chiefly celebrated by saints and angels, whenever any signal judgment is inflicted upon the wicked. It was just after the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and when they had sunk as lead in the mighty waters, that Moses and Miriam sung, " Who is a God like unto thee, glori-

ous in holiness." It was while the temple shook, and the judicial curse of a seared conscience went forth upon the Jews, that the Seraphim cried one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is filled with thy glory." It was when the Lord said, "my determination is to gather the nations and assemble the kingdoms, that I may pour out my indignation, even all my fierce anger upon Jerusalem," it was then, Zephaniah said, "the just Lord is in the midst thereof; he will do no iniquity." It is when the apocalyptic trumpets and thunders are sounding, and while the vials of wrath are pouring out on the seat of the beast and of the false prophet, that all who stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, sing, "just and true are thy ways thou king of saints, thou only art holy." Other instances might be quoted, but these will show that the most signal acts of *judgment* are viewed and adored by saints and angels, as glorious manifestations of holiness. This fact agrees with, and confirms the definition I gave of holiness, as being that principle of the eternal mind, by which God necessarily loves whatever is right, and hates whatever is wrong. Accordingly, in punishing sin, God manifests his holiness, by proving his hatred of what is wrong.

The most signal proof of this, in the case of creatures, was given in the final expulsion from Heaven, of the angels who kept not their first estate. From thrones of light, they were banished to chains of darkness; from being morning stars amongst the sons of God, they were turned into meteors of devouring fire. The place on the hills of immortality, which knew them once, knows and will know them no more for ever. They fell, to rise no more; were cast out, never to be taken in again. This act is usually called one of awful sovereignty; and, when contrasted with the treatment given to fallen man, it is the severity of sovereignty: but, viewed as it should be, by itself and in itself, I deny that it is any thing of the kind. It was essentially and simply an act of perfect *holiness*; having in it not an

iota of more severity than the demerits of the case absolutely demanded. Those who will not take the trouble of thinking, may talk nonsense if they choose ; and resolve unpitied sufferings, into unmixed *sovereignty* ; it is an easy process, a convenient abyss for burying difficulties in. I believe in a God infinitely holy ; and, therefore, I believe in no sovereignty, which is not as holy, in all its principles and acts, as Jehovah himself. I must, therefore, either maintain that He is unholy, or that the punishment of fallen angels is the very least, in nature and degree, that a holy God could inflict, and yet maintain his holiness untarnished. If he could have abated a fraction of the penalty, or mitigated their curse, He would have done it. He would have rejoiced to do it ! He would have been more prompt to lessen the weight of His wrath against sinning angels, than they could have been in asking for a diminution of it. While, therefore, there is sovereignty in not providing a Saviour for them, there is nothing of the kind in their punishment ; that is as perfectly a holy act in its principle and character, as God's approving and accepting the perfect work of his own Son. There was no more *passion* in the way He treated them, than there was *partiality* in the way He treated Christ. Away ! therefore, with all equivocating and evasion ; if God be holy, nothing but holiness shines in the fate of fallen angels. Accordingly, they themselves acknowledge as much to Christ. " Let us alone ; art thou come to torment us before our time ? We know thee, who thou art, thou Holy One of God." Thus they insinuated no charge of injustice or of sovereignty, as marking their doom ; but merely asked for exemption from the fulness of their torment, until the fulness of its time.

If you have been thinking, that all this is useless speculation upon a point foreign to our interests, you will soon find yourself in a mistake. I am not speculating, but speaking forth the words of truth and soberness, concerning the holiness of God. And now mark ; there will be nothing but holiness, in the act of punishing eternally all the

wicked. There will be neither sovereignty nor undue severity in their doom. It will be just what the interests and claims of holiness require, and nothing more or less. Men may talk of everlasting misery as horror, and shocking, and severe; and, if this be said only of the misery itself, it is true; "for who amongst us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" but, if such epithets implicate either the justice or the goodness of God, they are as foolish as they are impious, unless it be a horrid and shocking thing that God should be holy. He must become unholy, or the punishment of sin must be eternal. There is no other alternative. But do you not see, that, if God became unholy, eternal misery would be equally sure then; as it is now; because an unholy being, would actually take delight in spreading and perpetuating misery. Wretched himself, he would go about as a roaring lion through the universe, seeking whom he might devour; regardless of character or circumstances. The hell of the Bible is, therefore, the least of the two evils. What, then, must the holiness of Jehovah be, seeing that nothing less than everlasting destruction, is its sentence against the unholy; seeing this is the very *least* punishment that God can inflict, and remain holy himself? I know not how this view of the solemn fact may affect your minds; but, for my own part, I must say, that since I saw it in this light, I dread it ten thousand times more than ever I did; for now, there is no mystery about the principle on which God acts toward the unholy; no secret or sovereign reason for his severity; no passion in his procedure; but hell, in all its horrors is simply the *natural* consequence of holiness in the Creator, and unholiness in the creature. Here, my lips are shut, my reasoning silenced for ever, because I see that God can do nothing less, and remain holy. Whatever others do, therefore, as for me, I will seek escape from the wrath to come, by that sacrifice which glorified the divine holiness in the highest; for in no other way is there any hope of escape I notice next—

The *redeeming* acts of God, as manifesting his immaculate holiness. We have already seen that, if any thing be morally certain, it is, that an unholy God would be unmerciful; because, were he unholy, he must be infinitely so, and therefore, could neither be just nor kind. Such a Being could have no motive nor inclination to redeem from guilt and impurity, sinful creatures: making them holy, could never be a desirable end for him to pursue; because, were it accomplished, it would exalt their character above his own, and thus inevitably subject him to their abhorrence. But, do you not see with equal clearness, that a God of infinite purity, has powerful motives and glorious reasons for purifying the unholy? He is, indeed, under no necessity or obligation to yield to the force of these motives; but, if He do so, he acts worthy of himself, and manifests supreme love to holiness: for, surely nothing could be more in harmony with His essential character, than to *assimilate* the unholy to His own beautiful image. This is to multiply its reflections; and in the case of man, to magnify its glory; because, to restore lost holiness, is a more glorious act than to impart original holiness. The very design of redeeming sinners is, therefore, a decisive and illustrious proof of the divine holiness; because the effect of redemption will be entire and eternal conformity to the divine image.

This perfection shines gloriously in the *plan* of redemption; that too, like the design of saving sinners, is a splendid illustration of Jehovah's holiness; for, as a plan, salvation is in harmony with every perfection of Godhead, and every principle of the divine government. It provides not only for their vindication and entire satisfaction, but also for their eternal glory: Condescension made no stoop on behalf of man, but upon the wings of holiness: mercy took no step, but on the ground of holiness; wisdom no measures, but on the maxims of holiness; grace no part, but on the principles of holiness; love no interest, but for the glory of holiness. The first thing settled and secured

by the everlasting covenant, was, that God should be just ; just to all His perfections, just to all His principles, just to all His eternal designs ; and, that secured, He could then glorify himself in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus. The difficulty of being a just God, once removed, He became with all his heart a Saviour. Thus the plan of redemption proves His holiness. In like manner, the means and method of accomplishing salvation proves it. The Son of God undertook to be the Mediator of the holy covenant, and thus became the voluntary victim of holiness, in the room of the unholy. And never was this perfection so awfully or illustriously displayed, as in the treatment of Christ. Holiness took the Son from the bosom of the Father—expelled Him from his seat upon the eternal throne—veiled his divine nature in a human body—banished him for thirty years into the deep obscurity of the humblest life ; and when all this was done, Holiness was only beginning to punish its victim. It brought him from obscurity, as it brought Him from the Throne, and placed Him under the law of God and the lash of men and devils. Now, holiness led Him about Judea, homeless, friendless, destitute ; and, though His heart was broken with reproaches, kept Him labouring for the good of His implacable enemies. Anon, holiness exiled Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and exhausted by fasting : again, it drew Him into public life and labour ; and again thrust Him back into the solitude of the garden, to drink the cup of wrath. Now, it roused Him from his bloody trance, and empannelled Him at a heathen tribunal ; anon, it tore off his garments rolled in blood, and clothed Him in a robe of mockery. Now, it laid His cross upon His shoulders until he fainted ; and anon, it nailed Him to the cross. Now, it hid the sun from His eyes ; and anon, hid the light of His Father's countenance. Now, it made His soul an offering for sin ; and anon, delivered His body to the grave. Then, and not until then, did holiness finish its avenging strokes upon the victim of law and justice. And in all this awful

and heart-rending process, there was nothing but holiness proceeding against sin. All this was the very least in kind, degree, and duration, that a holy God could inflict, if sin was to be atoned for, and His own character maintained. Not one feeling of cruelty, not an iota of excess, not a shadow of unnecessary severity, marked any part of the Saviour's sufferings. The Saviour himself is the best judge of the wrath He underwent. Observe how He explained it. Prophecy introduced Him saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?* O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not: and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou *art holy*, O *Thou* that inhabits the praises of Israel." "*But Thou art holy!*" Thus He was to acquit His Father of all undue severity: and He did, when He said, "The cup which my Father gave me, shall I not drink it." He did more than acquit Him: He approved of, in the highest, all that He underwent. "*My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent me.*" Here, then, was the holiness of God: He made Him who knew no sin, a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. "Never surely," says one, "should we lose the impression of the holiness of God, were we for a single instant to hear that piercing cry, "I am tormented in this flame;" but still more affecting was the cry heard in Gethsemane, when in bitterest anguish of distress, the Son of God exclaimed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Sinner! if a holy God could not spare His own holy Son, although his guilt was only imputed, and not personal, he will not—he cannot, spare thee, if thou remainest unholy: and unholy thou wilt remain, if thou flee not to Christ for salvation.

And now observe, how illustriously holiness was displayed in the acceptance and reward of the Saviour's finished work. If God expressed his hatred of sin by the humiliation of His Son, by his *exaltation* he equally proved his

love of holiness. The same principle regulated His proceedings in both cases.

While the Saviour was fulfilling all righteousness (that is, all holiness) by His obedience, the Holy Father could not conceal His love of this perfection; but exclaimed from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." When the Saviour had become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God highly exalted Him—giving Him a name above every name. When he had seated Him upon the throne of the universe, amidst the homage and gratitude of all worlds, He explained it thus: "Thou lovedst righteousness and hatedst iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness." Thus holiness goes the very same *lengths* in loving right, as in hating wrong. The work of Christ, like the person of Christ, is perfectly holy; and, therefore, it meets with the perfection of the Father's delight. Yes; and sinners relying upon it for holy purposes, will find the *same* acceptance. While God remains holy, the righteousness of his Son can never fail to justify, in His sight, all who are clothed with it. Paul was sure of this; and, therefore, counted all things but loss, that he might be found in Christ.

I now notice the regenerating and sanctifying *operations* of God, as they illustrate His holiness.

The immediate and remote object of all divine operations upon the heart of sinners, is to renew them in righteousness and true holiness; to restore that beauty of holiness, which was defaced by sin. And, what a countless sum of these regenerating and sanctifying acts of the eternal Spirit, are going forward at this moment! On what a variety of character, conditions and minds, are they operating? On the young and the old; the rich and the poor; the learned and the illiterate; the savage and civilized; and, in all and each, effecting the same change—from sin to holiness—from vice to virtue—from ungodliness to godliness. Wonderful Spirit! thou art felt at once and alike

here, and in all quarters of the globe ; thou art for ever working on human hearts ; and upon them all to implant and promote holiness ! For this noble purpose, a perpetual act of omnipotence has been going on in souls, since the fall—is going on now—and will go on, until time be no more, and the church of the living God shall take her place before the throne, without spot or blemish, holy as God is holy. And is He not holy, who has thus appointed and employed the Holy Ghost to create, carry on, and perfect purity, in the souls of all the heirs of salvation ? Is he not holy, who conducts a special and perpetual Providence, every act of which has for its direct object, to make believers conformed to his own holiness ? If all things in nature clearly show the eternal power and Godhead ; all things in Grace and Providence, show to a certainty, that God is glorious in holiness. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, the whole universe is full of thy glory !

I have been thus minute on the subject of the Divine Holiness, because I never yet saw either a *manly* or a *happy* Christian, amongst those who have but superficial views of that glory of the Divine character.

MANLY PIETY;

IN ITS SPIRIT.

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No. I.

ON MANLY VIEWS OF DIVINE LOVE.

WHATEVER difficulty or indifference we may feel about the duty of loving God supremely, we do not, and cannot wonder, that God should both expect and require us to love Him. It may, at times, vex, or even irritate us, not a little,

to remember how much love He demands from us ; but it would both alarm and shock us, if He demanded no love, or refused to accept of any, from us. That would startle and stagger any man, however irksome he may deem the duty of loving God now : for no man could help seeing, that a God who required no love, would bestow no mercy.

Indeed, the absence or the abrogation, of the law of love, would be *ominous*, even if we needed no mercy : for if God cared nothing about our hearts, it would be impossible to believe that He cared any thing about our happiness, in time or in eternity. We feel that we have *hearts* ; and we find that nothing is really enjoyment, but what lays hold of their affections. Whatever we cannot love, we cannot enjoy. We enjoy most what we love best. Did God, therefore, require no love, or refuse to accept of any, we could not resist the conviction, that happiness after death, must be an impossibility. For, from what could it spring, when we are nothing but spirits, in the world of spirits ? O, it is the glory of both the law and the gospel, that they claim our hearts, and enforce supreme love to God.

The requisition to love Him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, may seem hard at first ; but, were there no such law on earth, Heaven could not be expected, nor hell avoided. For, why is hell what it is ? Just because there is no law of love there. And, were we released from the obligation to love God, that very moment we should become identified with all the lost in all their despair.

Thus, we may well set ourselves to look into the requirements of the law of love, even if they were harder than we suspect ; for you see at a glance, that escape from them would be horrible ! It is, I allow, against the grain of our nature to try to imitate seraphs or saints in their ardent love to God : but it is also revolting to our nature, to level our prospects to the condition of Satan, and his angels,

and victims. Accordingly, no man does so *unman* himself as to identify his lot with the devil. Even the devilish in character and temper, cannot make up their minds to share the doom of devils. They are compelled, by all the instincts of their nature, to shrink from that misery, or to flatter themselves with the hope of escape from it, in some way. They either deny its truth, or take for granted that their "place" in eternity, will not be with "the devil and his angels." Thus, if there is no natural tendency in man, to emulate holy angels, in their present and perfect love to God, neither is there any tendency in our nature to bring down our future prospects to the state of unholy angels. No man wishes or can wish, to be in hell, or out of heaven, after death.

You feel this, through all your soul. You see, beyond all doubt, that you hate and loathe the *lot* of them who hate God. You could not choose it for your portion, nor be reconciled to it as your fate. The only thing you feel capable of doing, is, to hope that it is not true, or that you are in no danger. Which, then, of these hopes, is *your* refuge from the fear of hell? Surely, not the former! for you cannot bring one proof, nor the shadow of an evidence, that there is no hell. All that you can do, is, to *wish* that there were none. I do not forget, that you can *reason* also against it. But, what are reasonings or wishes, without facts to support them? And in this matter, the reasonings are weaker than the wishes. The wish that there were no hell, is prompted by all the instincts of our nature; but the reasonings against its truth refute themselves.

Be not surprised at this assertion. It is not rashly hazarded. All the reasonings against hell are drawn from the *goodness* of God. And do you not see, that whoever admits the goodness of God is bound to *love* God, and utterly inexcusable for not loving Him? If, therefore, you do not love God, you condemn yourself, whenever you argue, from His goodness, against hell. All the argument upholds his claims upon your heart: and, therefore, whilst

you refuse to give him your heart, you are refuting the argument as fast as you utter it. Be men: for it is worse than childish, to hope in goodness which you do not love. It is both sheer folly, and shameless effrontery, to talk or think of throwing the safety of your soul upon the benevolence of a God from whom you withhold the love and allegiance of your soul.

“Behold I show you a more excellent way.” Give God your heart, and then, if there were ten thousand hells in the universe, you will have nothing to fear. Love God, and you are sure to live with him through eternity. Now, you wish to live for ever, where God reveals his glory, and dispenses joy unspeakable and everlasting. And, having *this* wish, what is the use of playing games of infinite hazard, with wishes that there were no hell? There is what is better, if happiness be your object: there is nothing but heaven to them that love God. And, do you not see that without love to God, heaven itself would be no place of happiness to you, even if you were admitted into it?

You have often heard this. You know that this is the fixed persuasion of the pious. You may never have ventured to contradict the assertion. But, do you believe it? Have you never doubted its truth? Be honest! you have thought, that you could not be utterly miserable in Heaven, however your heart stood affected towards God and holiness. You feel sure, that you would be happier there than in hell. You would take your chance (would you not?) of any possible disappointment in heaven rather than “go away into everlasting punishment, in the place prepared for the devil and his angels.” Now, I do not wonder at all this, whoever else may do so. I see the fallacy of your opinion: but I am neither shocked nor surprised by it. It is only the opinion I expect to find, in some form, in every heart where there is not cordial love to God and the Lamb. It is, however, notwithstanding all its prevalence and plausibility, the most unwarranted opinion about heaven that can be entertained. Indeed, it is just as absurd, as if a

man who had lost all appetite, or who was sick to death, should maintain that a sumptuous banquet would make him happy. It could only increase his sufferings, if he were really in such a state as to loathe food. Nowhere could he be more out of his element, than where the banquet was most abundant and luxurious. Nothing but the return of a healthy appetite, could make such a table, even bearable to him. Just so is the case in regard to the soul: if it loathe holiness, worship, and spiritual things, it would and must be out of its element in heaven: for there, all the engagements and the enjoyments are entirely spiritual, and will be eternally spiritual. Nothing, therefore, could be made of them, as means of happiness, without a spiritual taste. And, as to their power of producing taste, by their own influence upon the soul, it is useless to speculate about it. That power can never be put to the trial, whatever it be: for, without both love and likeness to God, no man can enter heaven. "*This is the Law of the House.*" And it is a just law. For, now that both love and likeness to God, may be surely obtained in answer to prayer, because both have been amply provided for, by the free gift of an atoning Saviour, and the faithful promise of a sanctifying Spirit, it would be *injustice* to the Redeemer and to the Sanctifier, to try, upon any man, who neglected them, the transforming force of Heaven's natural influence. It never will be tried, in order to *change* hearts that resist the Holy Spirit. It never will be tried to *win* hearts that stand out against the love of Christ. It never ought to be tried upon those who trifle with the blood of the Lamb, and the grace of the Spirit. Crowns of glory, with all their splendour; harps of gold, with all their music; palms of victory, with all their majesty; mansions of bliss, with all their beauty; thrones of light, with all their sublimity; yea, angelic fellowship, with all its sweet influence, ought not to be brought to bear upon minds, which have braved all the attractions of the cross, and broken through all the restraints of the gospel. No; heaven itself must not be put *above* the

Saviour or the Sanctifier ! Indeed, it would answer no good purpose, even if the experiment were fully tried. For, who that thinks for a moment, does not see that if the scenery, the society, or the glories of heaven, could have won man back to the love and likeness of God, at however distant a period, or by however slow degrees, that God would have preferred that cheap plan of saving to the costly scheme of giving His Son to the cross, and his Spirit to the church ? Immanuel left heaven, and the eternal Spirit works on earth, just because heaven, with all its charms, could not convert the soul to God.

This is no speculation, no hasty assertion. Remember ye not, that Satan and his angels fell from the love and image of God, in the very midst and meridian of heaven's glories ? How, then, could scenes or society which failed to *keep* pure spirits holy, restore or renew impure spirits ? Thus, if there be nothing more plausible, there is nothing more hollow than the supposition, that admission to heaven would be accompanied with holy effects. And, it is no reflection upon either its character or influence, to proclaim, that "the Heaven of Heavens" could not win nor wean a soul from sin, which the cross had failed to conquer.

There is, then, the very same reason for keeping them who love not God, *out* of heaven, as for expelling from it those angels who ceased to love Him. Those who have not begun to love God, nor to try to love Him, are just as unfit for His presence, as those who have left off loving Him. It is, indeed, mortifying, as well as painful, to admit this humiliating fact in our own case : but the conclusion is inevitable. We cannot avoid seeing and feeling that there is a gross and glaring *inconsistency* between the hope of living for ever with God, and the consciousness of not loving God. Notwithstanding all our selfishness and partiality, we must acknowledge it to be both unnatural and improbable, that God could admit any soul to dwell in his temple, that had no love for his service or salvation, his character or authority. Thus it is—that the dread *anathema*

of Scripture against those who love not God and the Lamb, finds some echo in our own consciences, whenever we allow ourselves to reflect seriously. Now, it is by such considerations that the general sense, of the duty and necessity of loving God, is kept alive in our minds. Accordingly we do not even think of denying or questioning His *right* to the supreme affection of our hearts. Indeed, admitting the right—is one of the ways, in which we try to palliate our want of love to God. We compliment the duty, as an apology for not complying with it. We express regret for loving Him so little, in the hope that the regret will pass as an excuse for not trying to love Him more. Thus we entrench ourselves in the abuse maxim—that God will “take the will for the deed,” seeing we do not deny the duty. There are, however, times in our lot and experience, when this process is felt to be equally fallacious and unsafe. We occasionally awake to the absurdity and criminality of trying to find excuses, for not loving “the God with whom we have to do.” We see, and cannot help seeing, that it is base as well as foolish, to evade the law of love: for, to get rid of that obligation, would be to rush into the “chains of darkness,” where God neither loves, nor accepts of love! But then—comes the question, how shall we acquire love to God? It is proper, necessary, indispensable, to love Him, if we would live with Him: but how can we produce such love as God requires? Our hearts do not naturally yield it; and they cannot be *forced* into it. Love will not be forced, whatever else may be extorted. You feel this. So do I. Accordingly when we pause, and say to ourselves, however solemnly,—“I must love God;” no love follows this solemn charge. The heart flutters with a keen sense of duty; but there is no rising of cordial affection in it. Even when we charge our souls, by all the terrors of eternal judgment, to love; fear, not love, springs up in the heart. We feel none of those warm and tender emotions towards God, which we are conscious of towards our earthly friends. We find that we cannot give our hearts

to Him, so freely as we give them to temporal things. Thus even when we *try* to love God by this process, we are compelled to confess that "we can make nothing of it." We actually discover, that the more we see the absolute necessity of loving God supremely, the more we feel the utter impossibility of doing so, by *this* method of attempting the duty.

In this dilemma, we try to salve up the matter by the fond hope that our hearts will take some happy *turn* in course of time, and come round of themselves, to a better spirit: or, we hope that some happy event of grace or providence will occur to set them right. Having heard that "the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost," we also propose to ourselves to *wait* for the work of the spirit. And a strange kind of waiting—it is! We wait *for* the Spirit, without waiting *on* the Spirit, by meditation and prayer. What is the consequence? The Spirit does not produce love to God. Even the occasional cry

"Kindle a flame of sacred love,
In these cold hearts of ours,"

brings no change of heart. Year after year passes away, in this vague hoping and vapid wishing; but our hearts neither become as "live coals," nor as "smoking flax."

Do consider this experimental fact. You know something of this idle and aimless waiting for divine influence. Is it not utterly useless? Could it have defeated itself, or disappointed you, more completely, if you had been waiting for the gift of prophecy or miracles? You pity and blame the visionaries of our times, who have been "mouthing the heavens" with clamorous outcries for miraculous and prophetic power. It is, however, much wiser, or more warranted, to wait, without fervent prayer, for the *grace* of the Spirit? If even prayer will not bring down His extraordinary gifts, how can *prayerlessness* look for his "sacred fire," to warm or renew the heart?

You got hold of a glorious principle, when, after trying

in vain to *force* your hearts to love God, you began to think of the agency of the Holy Spirit : but you took hold of this principle at the wrong end. You *left* the matter to the Spirit, instead of looking to Him with solicitude and supplication. You gave up the work yourself, but you did not place it in His hands, pleading that He would shed abroad the love of God in your heart. This is both a sad and sinful oversight. And it is not the only oversight you have been guilty of, since you were convinced of the necessity and propriety of loving God supremely. You have overlooked also, the revealed and experimental fact, that the Holy Spirit works by means, and wins the heart by motives, adapted to produce love to God. He does not kindle love as by a magical charm ; nor dart His sacred fire into the soul, as the electric bolts of heaven penetrate the mines of the earth, and by a sudden stroke of concentrated heat, transform its minerals into blazing gems. No ; it is not even by direct *impulses* on the heart, that He changes the heart from coldness to warmth ; from stone to flesh : but by bringing some divine truth to bear with divine power upon the heart. He leads men to love God by leading them to study, understand, and believe the love of God to man. It is thus, He “ directs their hearts unto the love of God.” According to “ the Ministry of the Spirit,” love begets love. Accordingly the primitive explanation of the whole matter was, “ *We love Him, because He first loved us.*” And you never can, nor will love God, as the primitive Christians did, nor indeed love Him at all, until, like them, you set yourselves to “ *know and believe the love wherewith God hath loved us.*” We are, however, naturally inclined to suspect, that God feels no particular love toward us. We suppose that He only cares for us, in the proportion that we care for Him : and as that is very little, we do not see in Him love enough to beget love in us. Indeed, God seems to us rather a hard Master than a tender Father. His great object is, as we think, (whilst we think without the Gospel,) to restrain us from our pleasures, and to cross our inclina-

tions. We feel—as if He delighted chiefly, in marking and remembering and denouncing our faults. Accordingly, we do not like to think of God; nor to retain Him in our knowledge. It is a painful subject, in general, to us. Even when we hear it proved that “*God is love*,” and when referred to the demonstration of this fact, in the gift of His Son as an atoning sacrifice, we are not at once convinced, nor much gratified. For, we have heard too, that *sovereignty* is the rule of His love, as well as that sacrifice is the medium of it; and as we do not know that we are “chosen unto salvation,” we suspect the worst at times; and, in general, feel as if success in seeking salvation, were a very doubtful thing in our own case.

This readiness to fasten upon the sovereignty of God, as a reason for questioning the love of God, or as a hinderance to loving Him, is a remarkable, but melancholy, feature of our natural character. The Divine sovereignty ought to have just the opposite effect upon our minds: for it is both intended and calculated to endear the love of God to us, and to win our love to Him.

Does this assertion surprise you at all? It certainly ought not to do so. Nothing is more capable of proof yea, of demonstration, than the fact, that the sovereignty of Divine love, is the *first* ground of human hope. God must love, according to some rule, and for some reason. Now, we can find no reason in ourselves why He should love us. We can find plenty of reasons, both in our character and spirit, why He might justly hate us. For, what else, or less, do we deserve? It is, indeed, humiliating to admit, that we *deserve* no love from the Father of our Spirits; but it is impossible to deny the fact that we have done nothing to merit or win His love. We may so far forget His revealed character as to think His anger too severe; but we cannot so far forget our own conduct as to think that we deserve His love. By no ingenuity of sophistry or selfishness could we make out, from our hearts or history, the shadow of a claim upon the love of God.

Thus, His love cannot find its reasons in us : for we cannot find them in ourselves. Unless, therefore, God finds reasons in *Himself* for loving us, there is no hope for us. We, therefore, are certainly not the persons, to whom the sovereignty of His love should be either offensive or appalling. We ought to be delighted, yea transported, with the fact, that God loves "according to the counsel and good pleasure of His own will ;" and thus finds reasons in *Himself* for caring more about man than man cares about Him. Thus, the sovereignty of divine love may become the sheet-anchor of the soul, when the other characteristics of that love fail to overcome our fears and suspicions.

Reconsider this fact. It will bear examination, and re-pay study. Now, unless we can obtain an interest in the love of God, nothing else we could obtain from Him, would avail for our salvation. There is neither mercy nor grace for any creature, for whom God has no love. Where He does not love at all, He does not save at all. Seeing, then, that we can find nothing in ourselves which deserves, or is likely to win, His love, well may we hail with hallelujahs of wonder and gratitude, the glorious fact,—that God can find in Himself, and in the mediation of Christ, and in the final ends of His moral government, *reasons* for loving sinners ! Here we can come in, although we have nothing to say for ourselves. This meets our case, whatever we be. Divine love is sovereign love, which finds both its rule and all its first reasons in itself, and not in its objects. The question of obtaining an interest in it comes, therefore, to this one point—can we do any thing else, or any thing better, than cast ourselves upon the good will of God to man ? That is, indeed sovereign ; but it is something—it is much—it is enough, to encourage prayerful hope ; whereas, there is nothing at all in ourselves to warrant hope in God. The choice is, therefore, between *something* and *nothing* ! If, therefore, the something were far less than it is, it is, in a case of eternal life or death, infinitely better than nothing. Now, I repeat, and you feel, that we have

absolutely nothing, in ourselves, to merit the love of God. We cannot assign or conceive one reason why He should love us for our own sake. This, then, is our condition, whilst we stand upon our own character, before God. But, the moment we quit that untenable ground, and take our stand upon the revealed character of God as Love, we have in that, all that any one has, to encourage a good hope through grace. Yes; all that any one has! For, what have the best to warrant hope, but just the character of "God in Christ?" And, if we cannot trust to *that*, then there is nothing in the universe trustworthy.

I am neither mystifying you nor getting beyond my own depth, in this matter. I am as ignorant as you can be, of all the secret purposes of Jehovah. The only thing I know of them, is, that they were "*purposed in Christ*;" for the sake of Christ; for the *glory* of Christ; and for the sake and glory of Christ as a SAVIOUR: and, therefore, they cannot falsify the word of Christ; which is, that, "*whosoever cometh, He will in nowise cast out.*" This, I am aware, leaves the sovereignty of divine love, just where it was. True: and, where *else* would you have it: You cannot wish that it were away altogether: for that would be to wish, that all God's own godlike reasons, and motives, and ends, for loving man, were taken away. We have something to look up to, and to rely on, in love that can find both its first cause and its final glory, in the gratification of its own sympathies: but we have nothing to hope for, if we ourselves, must furnish a *title* to the love of God, before we can obtain an interest in it.

Thus, they do not know what they are about, who take offence at the sovereignty of God. It is His own *personal* reason for all the love He bears to His enemies. And, how *strong* a reason it is to Himself, let the gift of His Son and the promise of His Spirit prove to you; let the millions and myriads already in heaven, illustrate to you; let the permanency and pathos of the ministry of reconciliation on earth, attest to you.

This, then, is the character of the God with whom we have to do. This God of love, is the God who claims our love to Himself. Now, meet fairly the question—can you love this God? Remember; He can find reasons in Himself, and reasons in the cross, and reasons in the grand end of all His works, for loving *you* with an everlasting love; for, in those moving and meritorious causes, God has found all His first reasons, for all the love which He has ever shown to any one; and, in these causes, He will find the reasons of all the love which He will continue to show from henceforth. You, therefore, stand in the very same relation to these *originating* causes of divine love, as that in which patriarchs stood before they were called; as that in which prophets and apostles stood before they were inspired; as that in which all the general assembly of the church of the first-born in heaven stood, before they were converted. God does not, therefore, claim your love to Himself, without, or before, giving you strong reasons for loving Him. No, indeed: He gives you all the encouragements, He ever gave to any one, since the time that love began to be claimed from man, by the *ordinary* means of grace.

Can you, then, ask or wish more encouragement than this? It is all that *others* have. Unless, therefore, your soul be more valuable than theirs; or your love of more importance to God than their love is,—why should *you* obtain more encouragement than others? I know not, of course, how you feel, in the grasp of this question; but I feel, that it brings a hot blush into my own face. It summons up recollections of a craving curiosity, and of a presumptuous humour, which amounted to little less, than *dictating* to God the terms on which, alone, I would love Him. But I now see that if I had even *less* encouragement than others, it could not be too little to deserve my love: for the least is more than I deserve; and *any* encouragement from a God who can neither mock nor deceive, ought to be enough to win the heart of any man at

once. O, we forget ourselves, and trifle with our eternal interests, and tamper with the patience of God, when we cavil or quibble with the mysteries of His good will towards man. Such pettish and prying humours ill become those who must confess that neither their character nor spirit presents one *winning* point of moral attraction to the eye or the heart of God. Even a shadow of hope, or the barest possibility of salvation, ought to entrance our souls so entirely that they could not rest, until they had yielded up all their affections and confidence to God. We are not thoroughly in earnest about their salvation, nor fully alive to their value, nor just to their immortality, whilst we can object or hesitate to trust them upon even a "peradventure," from the lips of a "God that cannot lie." I know that their value should make us look well to the validity of the warrant for hope : but I also remember that any kind or degree of warrant from His lips is worthy of all acceptation by our hearts. Were, therefore, God's "*Peradventure*" the only cord of love that hangs from the eternal throne ; the only "horn" on the high altar of the atonement ; the only plank in the gulf-stream of time—I would lay hold of it with the death-grasp of a drowning man, and keep hold of it as the anchor of my soul until I knew the worst, or got hold of something better. And, if you would not thus venture your soul for eternity, upon a divine peradventure—I doubt much, if it be yet committed to any thing so trustworthy. Indeed, it certainly is not, unless you have already committed it into the hands of Christ ; and there—more than peradventures guaranty the safety of the soul. For, in Him, all the warrants to hope are great and precious promises ; and in Him, none of these promises are "yea and nay ;" but all "yea and amen, to the glory of God."

No man, however, either will or can come to Christ, to commit his soul into His hands for eternal safety, unless "*the Father draw him :*" and, as the Father draws men by "the cords of love," or the loveliness and tenderness of His own paternal character, as the God of salvation, I want

you to place yourself amongst these drawing cords, that they may have a fair opportunity of laying hold upon your attention and heart. For, whilst you overlook these cords of love, by which the Father draws the heart; or keep yourself far away from their reach; or feel afraid to lay hold of them, when they are brought near to you—how can they draw you? I mean, you have neither right nor reason to expect to be drawn by the Father, apart from placing yourself within the defined sphere of His saving attractions. Remember how the Son explains the drawings of the Father. The Saviour does not lead away our attention from means to mysticism; nor leave us to pour over a “*chapter of accidents* ;” nor tell us to wait in ease and idleness, until we feel the magnetic spell of love come over our spirits, like a magic charm. No; he tells us plainly that the Father draws by *teaching*. “They shall all be taught of God.” And, that this divine teaching may not be supposed to supersede or set aside attention or docility on our part, he immediately adds, that it is the man who hath “heard and learned of the Father, that cometh unto Him.” Thus, this “truth, as it is in Jesus,” is, that the Father draws by teaching those who hear and learn of Him.

Now the great lesson taught by God throughout all His oracles, is, that He is a Father. This is always expressed or implied, in every claim that he makes upon our hearts. Even when He demands our love by positive law, His own paternal love breathes in the claim, thus; “Thou shalt love the Lord THY God with all thine heart.” And, when he condescends to entreat and beseech us, all the Father breathes and burns in his solicitations; “My son, give me thy heart.” Now, I want you to meet the claim of God upon this general ground, first, that thus you may be prepared to meet it, without suspicion or evasion, upon the special and splendid ground of the atonement. I would have preferred to have taken you there at once; and without any prefatory appeal to law or heaven, to have laid my hands upon the cross, saying, “Herein is love,

not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." This is the only truth which can ever triumph effectually over our suspicions of the love of God, or over our aversion to love God. All the hearts ever fully won to Him, were won at the cross. The human heart never burns with fervent love to God, nor breaks in real penitence, until it comes to the altar, where the heart of the Saviour bled and broke, as the sacrifice for sin. The loveliness of nature may awaken a momentary admiration of God; and the mighty hand of Providence may sober down the heart into something like softness; and the terrors of judgment awe it into an agitation not unlike repentance; but the genial glow of true love, and the generous meltings of godly sorrow, can only be produced by "Beholding the Lamb of God, as the Lamb slain for us." This was the "great sight" which arrested the attention of the world, when the gospel was first preached. To see this great sight, they turned round from the altars of idolatry, from the oracles of philosophy, from the orgies of superstition, and from the pageants of Greek and Roman festivals: not, indeed, intending, when they turned, to "*forsake all and follow*," Christ crucified; but only to gratify their curiosity, or, perhaps, to find fault with the new religion, at first. They did, however, turn to behold the Lamb of God in the mirror of the gospel; and "being turned," they saw such an express image of God in his character; such proofs of the love of God in his cross, such pledges of the grace of God in his promises, and such a manifestation of the evil of sin and the value of the soul, in all the history of the Saviour, that they could not, for a time, withdraw their eyes from the Apocalypse of mercy. Thousands wondered, wept, and were won, at the first glance; and never again looked back to the altars of Jupiter or Venus, Mars or Diana: and even those who turned their backs on the cross, were never again able to look at their altars with confidence. Thus the love of many

was won to the true God, and the false gods lost both the love and the respect of those who continued to worship them.

Why is not the cross thus heart-conquering still? Why has it not gained the confidence of your soul, and thus the love of your heart? It is easy to say, in answer to this question, that the Holy Spirit has not "directed your heart unto the love of God," by the attractions of the cross of Christ. For, why has He not? When did you *ask* Him to do so? When did you give Him any *opportunity* of doing so? Have you ever placed yourself under the cross, for "one hour," to look on the Lamb of God, as "slain" for your sins, and as "pierced" by your sins? If not—why not? You have read, thought, wept, over other histories of suffering. Our patriots, philanthropists, and martyrs, have arrested your notice; and you would reckon yourself unmanly, did you not admire their heroism, and sympathize with their fate. But could you have felt thus for them and with them, had you read or thought of them, no more than you have contemplated the character and sacrifice of the Saviour? Why then, should the Spirit work whilst you are idle? What has He to work *upon* in your mind? He works by *means*: and the means of grace are not *all* tried, when you visit the sanctuary on the Sabbath. Public means are both preparation and obligation for private study and prayer. Indeed, their first great object is to make men thoughtful and prayerful: if, therefore, you resist the Holy Spirit, when he directs you to your Bible and your closet at home, how can you expect Him to shed abroad the love of God in your heart?

Do consider, how you place yourself, by this neglect. When—where—could the Spirit of God find you at *leisure*, or so unoccupied with other things, that he could have a fair opportunity of applying the gospel to your heart? You are not ill-engaged now—if you are weighing these appeals. Well; will you make the most of this moment—and close the book—and open your Bible—and fall down

before God ; and plead, that “ now,” may be “ the accepted time” for love *from* God, and for love *to* God ?

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Have you done so ? If not—why not ? Both the love of His heart, and a heart to love Him, are worth asking for : and you *would* pray for them, with strong cries and tears, were you sure, that “ this night, your soul would be required of you.” Is not this true ? You cannot bear to think of entering eternity uninterested in the love of God. How then can you retire to rest, or to business, without prayer for this infinite blessing ? You would not sleep less calmly, after fervent prayer for grace of the Holy Spirit. And, what business would be interrupted or embarrassed, by the cheering and inspiring consciousness, that you had entreated the love of the God of love, and tendered to Him the affectionate homage of your soul ? You might thus retire from the mercy-seat to your pillow to be fanned asleep as by the wings of its watching cherubim ; or to your sphere of labour, as if led by a guiding star of its sheekinal glory.

No. II.

ON MANLY IMPARTIALITY IN REPENTANCE.

THAT the morning stars should have sang together, and all the angelic “ sons of God shouted for joy” both when the top stone of creation was brought forth, and when the Mediator of Redemption was born, does not surprise us : the events were worthy of the golden harps of all the celestial Hierarchy ; for Creation and Redemption were made for each other, and both the work of Christ : but that “ joy” should circulate thus widely and warmly amongst “ the angels of God in heaven,” when “ *one sinner repenteth,*” is as

surprising as it is pleasing. It is, however, as true, as that all the angels of God worshipped the Saviour at His birth. He who received this homage from them on earth, and to whom all their harps are tributary in heaven, bore this testimony to their general and generous delight in the repentance of sinners.

The *repentance* of a sinner is not, however, just that point in his history, at which we should expect this "joy" to begin: for, to all penitential feeling, all the angels of God are, personally, utter strangers. They are all, indeed, much humbler before the throne, than the humblest penitent now at the footstool: but then humility is unmixed with shame or sorrow, and uninfluenced by any contrasts, except those which finite perfection will for ever present to infinite perfection, and finite gratitude to infinite goodness. They never sinned, and therefore, they can no more sorrow than they can suffer. Such being the facts of their moral and mental constitution, we might suppose, reasoning from it, that their joy over a sinner would not begin, until he had made some considerable progress in holiness: or, at least, not until his *own joy* began. We could not expect, had we not been told, that angels would take up their harps to celebrate his conversion, *before* he himself took down his harp from the willows.

They do not, however, suspend their song, until he can sing too. Their joy begins with his godly sorrow; their triumph with his tears; their congratulations with his sighs. The moment he smites on his breast, saying, "God be merciful unto me a sinner," they strike their harps, singing, "Salvation, and glory, and honour, unto God the Lamb."

This is, indeed, great attention to penitents. It is, however, the *least* of all the attentions which Repentance on earth obtains in heaven: for "the HIGH AND LOFTY ONE, who inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy, saith,—I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."—Isa. lvii. 15. Thus also saith Jehovah,

“the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool ; and to this man will I look ; even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”—Isa. lxvi. 1, 2. This look of love and pity from the eye of Omniscience, eclipses all angelic sympathy : this paternal joy of Jehovah, when a lost son is found again, both eclipses and explains all the joy of angels over a penitent. Their smiles are but the reflection of “the light of His countenance ; and their songs but the echo of His welcome, to returning prodigals. And as this accounts for all that angels feel and do on behalf of the penitent, so this paternal joy of the Father has *its* explanation, in the blood of the Lamb which ransomed, and in the grace of the Spirit which regenerated, the lost sinner. Thus, all heaven thrills with lively interest and delight, whenever a human heart thrills with “godly sorrow.”

“ With joy the Father doth approve
 The fruit of His eternal love.
 The Son, with joy, looks down and sees
 The purchase of his agonies.
 The Spirit takes delight to view
 The holy soul he formed anew,
 And saints and angels join to sing
 The growing empire of their king.”

Now, must there not be, on earth, something *unfavourable* to repentance, seeing repentance is thus taken under such special and splendid patronage in heaven ? What, then, is that hinderance, in the world, and in the heart, to counteract which all heaven is thus wonderfully in array ? God does nothing unnecessary in kind nor degree. There is no parade in His arrangements, and no pretence in His words. He never dignifies what is little, nor gives undue importance to any creature or thing in the universe. There must, therefore, be something in repentance itself, that justifies this amazing concentration of angelic and divine sympathies upon it ; and something in the world, which renders such a patronage of repentance necessary ; for,

upon no other point of a Christian's history, and on no other part of his religious character, is the attention of Heaven thus signally drawn. Neither his faith nor his love, his patience or his zeal, is represented as sending sensations of *visible* joy through all the heaven of heavens. Not, however, that these graces of the Spirit are inferior to repentance: there is a sense in which both faith and love are *superior* to it: and, accordingly, they are honoured above it, although in another way. Hence more promises are made to faith, than to repentance. It is to faith, not to repentance, that eternal life is pledged. It is by faith, not by repentance, that pardon and justification are obtained. Still, it is the revealed fact, that repentance first engages the *public* attention of heaven. The harps and hymns of glory are *vocal* around it; and the whole pavilion of eternity reverberates with the welcome which sounds from the throne, when a trembling sinner is contrite.

This is as wisely, as it is wonderfully, arranged. Repentance is thus publicly and signally honoured in heaven, because it is generally *despised* on earth, and naturally *disliked* by the human heart. God has, therefore, vouchsafed to throw the whole weight of His own complacency, and all the force of angelic opinion, into the scale, *against* the scorn of the world and the pride of the heart. He knows how both the laugh and the frown of the multitude can sway the *individual*; and, therefore, upon the "contrite ones," or one by one, and even on "one sinner that repenteth," He brings all the smiles of heaven to bear at once. This is as considerate as it is condescending. Alas! however, that it should be necessary. It is, indeed, surprising and pleasing; but it places both us and the world in a sad light. It tells a melancholy tale! Repentance should not require the shield or the enshrinements of heaven, to protect it. Bare *permission* to repent ought to be welcomed with acclamation, in a world where all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Time and place for repentance, should be enough to secure it in all,

seeing that, without it, the best must perish. Besides, we do repent, and that too almost instinctively and spontaneously, when we offend a benefactor or a friend whom we love. We are not easy in our own mind, until we have done something to heal the wound given to his mind. We do not require him to implore us to be reconciled unto him again: much less do we render it necessary, that he should *double* all his former kindness, before we are willing to confess our faults. This is as it should be; and thus we do feel and act, when our happiness or success in life depends upon an injured friend. Now, our happiness and success in both worlds depend entirely and eternally on God. Without His providence, we cannot enjoy the life that now is; nor without His grace, inherit the life which is to come. But, how can we expect either, if we are unwilling to repent? We risk both, whilst we allow impenitence. It can only "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath;" and as that day will be "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," we, and all men, might well *rush* to repentance at once, and in a body, even if the call to repent were pealed only by the trumpets and thunders of the judgment-seat.

It is not, however, by terrors chiefly, that God urges repentance. He speaks, indeed, from the depths and darkness of the eternity he inhabits, even when he consoles "the contrite ones:" but this is not done to terrify or intimidate them; but to arrest their notice to His condescension, and to assure them of His perfect sincerity. God invites, invokes, woos us to repent, as if His own paternal happiness hinged upon our penitential spirit. And, lest *words* of solicitude and welcome should be misunderstood, He puts forward all His angels, not with trumpets of authority, nor with vials of judgment, but as it were with harps of jubilee that thus they may be living illustrations of His own joy, and satisfactory interpreters of His good will towards man.

It can hardly fail to occur to you now, that it is not every mood nor emotion of sorrow for sin, which amounts to

that repentance, which thus delights God, and gives joy to the angels of God. All that obtains the *name* of repentance on earth, is not likely to be held *reality* in heaven. Angels are too wise to be rash, and too holy to be partial, in judging of penitence. For, however they acquire their knowledge of any "one sinner that repenteth," that knowledge becomes "joy in the presence of God" to them: and this, it would not be allowed to become, if the repentance were insincere or equivocal. You feel at once, that neither the trembling of Felix, nor the remorse of Judas, could mislead the angels of God. The *halter* of the traitor, and the habits of the king, settle the question of their repentance, even to us. Had angels, therefore, nothing more to guide their judgment, and thus to regulate their joy, but their own high opportunities of observation, and their own native powers of discrimination, they would be in no great danger of mistaking remorse for repentance. And as neither their own powers as spirits, nor their opportunities as "ministering spirits," account fully for the extent of their knowledge, or for the height of their joy, the probability is, that their information comes to them direct from the Eternal Throne. God "*looks*" to the repenting sinner *before* they discover him; and their eye follows His; and thus they know where to find him, and when to rejoice over him. Father, Son, and Spirit, have acknowledged his penitence, before angels minister to his wants, or sympathize with his godly sorrow. Their joy is not, therefore, premature nor precarious. Time will neither refute its warrant, nor reprove its warmth. They now know as well whom to rejoice over in the "day of power," as they will know the *wheat* from the *tarès* in the day of judgment. Their harps can no more err now than their hands can err then. Men may delude themselves, and deceive others, by apparent repentance; but appearances cannot impose upon angels; because they take the signal for joy, from the paternal looks of the Father, from the public intercession of the Son, and from the positive work of the Holy Spirit.

Let us not, therefore, impose upon ourselves in this matter. A superficial repentance cannot be the occasion of angelic joy. The passing pang of regret, and the extorted tear of remorse, and the piercing shriek of death-bed terror, may have no penitence in them; for as old Bishop HALL says, "although a sincere repentance is never too late, a late repentance is seldom sincere."—"Were weeping repentance," says JEREMY TAYLOR, "Hell would be full of penitents; for there is both weeping and gnashing of teeth." Besides, it is not without wise and weighty reasons, that God teaches us to bring our repentance to the test of angelic joy. Their joy, is *impartial* judgment; and although we cannot, of course, hear the verdict of angels, in our own case, or in that of others, we *can* form our opinion from what we know of it and them, how our repentance would be likely to approve itself to their judgment, if it were submitted to them. They certainly form an unpacked and impartial jury. They have, indeed, no kindred feelings with sinners; no "like passions with ourselves:" but, then, they have no *prejudices* against us, nor any indifference to our welfare. This is more than could be affirmed, perhaps, of any jury of our fellow-creatures. When I empanel, in thought, even a circle of my personal friends, and realize the act of submitting any penitence to their judgment, I do not feel quite sure that they would do me full justice, whichever way they decided on my case; and thus I myself cannot judge fairly of it, whilst I am only confronted with men: but the moment I confront myself with angels, and ask—is it *likely* that the kind and degree of sorrow for sin, which I have felt and cultivated, would commend itself to them as cause for joy on my account,—I see, at once, the real character of my own repentance, and can anticipate the verdict I cannot hear.

This is most likely one of the great moral reasons for that heavenly arrangement, by which angels are so prominently connected with human repentance. God is, indeed, the final judge of its sincerity and its impartiality;

and we are not wise nor prudent if we do not go all the length of submitting the whole question of our personal repentance to Him, as the searcher of hearts and the discernor of spirits. We are not in good earnest about our penitence until we test it at the eternal mind, by considering what God is likely to think of it. We may, therefore, be quite sure, that it is not to divert us from self-examination in His own realized presence, that we are allowed and led to realize the *probabilities* of an angelic verdict in our favour. This intermediate tribunal must be intended, therefore, to pave our way, and help our weakness, in carrying up our appeal to the throne of God. That is solemn work, whether we feel it to be so or not! Those who are afraid to appeal to the Omniscient for the genuineness of their repentance, cannot but see, however, that this intermediate test of sincerity *softens* the application of the final test, without lessening its solemnity. I mean, that, in the same way as the expressed *favourable* opinion of judicious Christian friends, helps a timid penitent to open his heart to God for inspection and pity; so the consciousness that even holy angels could hardly doubt his sincerity, whatever they thought of him in other respects, is calculated to help forward his humble appeals and applications to the heart-searching God.

The truth of our repentance is such a solemn question, that we may well be glad of any hint which can help us to settle it. Now, although angels cannot give us any personal help, nor may we make any appeal to them even if they could, both hear and help us; (which they cannot) still, we can and may try ourselves, by asking, would a good angel think me impenitent; reckon me a hypocrite; deem me but half-hearted? Now if I feel that I should shrink from his scrutiny, and fear his verdict, I have learned, by this supposition, more of the secrets of my own heart, and am thrown with awful solicitude on the more solemn consideration, that if both my own heart and an angel's opinion condemn me, "*God is greater*" than both,

“and knoweth all things!” If again, on the other hand, I can see how a good angel would hardly feel himself at liberty to discredit, or to despise, or to doubt my repentance, I have thus also gained some clearer insight into the frame of my own spirit; and, without being at all elated by discovering some symptoms of a contrite spirit in myself, I am thus encouraged to lay them before God, as the first-fruits of His own Spirit, and to plead more fervently for their increase and maturity.

Thus it is no fanciful speculation I have drawn you into, although there be fancy in it. I want you to *think* about repentance; and, therefore, I throw you out of the *ruts* of familiarized phraseology, that you may be compelled to think *for* yourself, in a matter where you must act for yourself, or perish. Dwell, therefore, on the idea—and let it haunt you—that if you could not make out, to the satisfaction of saints or angels, a case of real penitence on your own part, how can you approve your sincerity, to the God of angels, to the Father of spirits, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men?

But, perhaps, you have never yet looked at the subject of repentance in any other light than that in which ordinary opinion places it—as something very proper and necessary in the case of all, before they die; and especially so in the case of those who have been very wild. Now, if this be your view of it, I need hardly tell you that you have not yet deemed it necessary to apply it to yourself. I mean—you do not reckon yourself so very wicked, nor so very near your end, as to require *immediate* repentance. Accordingly, you have not *tried* to be truly penitent yet. You cannot, therefore, tell exactly, how your heart or conscience would feel, were you to set yourself to try the duty, just at present. It is however, well worth your while, to ask yourself even now,—“what would I *do*, were I to set about my repentance to-night?” Well; what would you do? How would you begin? You intend to make the attempt, in the course of your life, and not to leave the duty to the hazards

of a death-bed. This is wise. But, if you do not see now, how to proceed ;—if you feel at a loss how to act ;—if you cannot help feeling, that repentance would be awkward work, even at this moment of health and composure—it is only wise, to ask, what likelihood is there, that you could make more of it at any future period of your life ? You surely do not wish that some startling *calamity* should befall you, to give a penitential turn to your thoughts and feelings. And yet if you are conscious that you could make little or nothing of repentance at present, were you to try the duty to-night—what certainty or probability is there that you would be better prepared for the attempt, some years hence ? True ; you expect to be wiser, as you grow older. Shall I, then, accept this apology from you ? No ; look at it before you offer it again : it is an actual confession that you are now so *foolish* as not to know how to proceed, if you had to repent or perish this night ! “ But,” you will say, “ the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, and thus leads to repentance ; and I do hope that He will work thus upon my mind, and give me grace to repent truly, and in good time.” This is really making bad, worse, if you really mean what you say, and have not yet *begun* to pray earnestly and habitually for the grace of the Holy Spirit. He is, indeed, the only Author of repentance unto life, and without his quickening influences no man can repent : but it is just as true that no man who is *unwilling* to repent now, has any right or warrant to hope, that the Holy Spirit will step in, some years hence, to make him willing, by a “ day of power.” God’s “ *days of power,*” are not provided for the purpose of prolonging our days of impenitence and delay : and no man has less reason to expect such a day in his own case, than *you* who know that it is absolutely necessary, and yet have not begun to pray fervently for it. There is meanness, as well as presumption, in such conduct ! Do look well at the position you have placed yourself in. The best that can be said of your case is—that you have not lost sight of the necessity of per-

sonal repentance : nor made up your mind to postpone it to your last moments : nor *cut* with all the means by which grace is communicated. Thus, you have not ventured to go "altogether out of the way," in which the Holy Spirit meets with sinners, to make them penitent. You read something on the subject of eternal salvation, and hear more, and occasionally give some time to both meditation and prayer.—You could not be satisfied, if you neglected these things entirely. You know and believe too much about your soul and eternity, to abandon them, recklessly and rashly, to mere chance. But, are you not risking them upon a very bare and slight probability, whilst neither your prayers nor meditations take a penitential form? Now, this, they have not done yet : and this, they cannot do, whilst they only wander around the general subject of religion, and but just *keep within sight* of the fatal consequences of irreligion. Such "far off," and vague glances at all the claims of piety, will never bring you to the *point* with any one of its claims. You must go fully up to, and fairly meet, some *one* of them, to begin with, if you would have the whole of them brought to bear upon your character, eventually or ever : for this vague glancing at all things in religion, without grappling with any thing, leads to nothing that is either saving or satisfactory. How could it? Piety is both a personal and progressive thing ; and must, therefore, *begin* with some definite object, and distinct purpose. And, what so proper to begin at, as repentance? Without that nothing else will go on well, nor end in salvation. Unrepented sin will not be pardoned. Unrepented folly will not be forgiven. Unrepented indecision and delay will not obtain mercy, however mercy may be asked. Indeed, there will be no asking—that amounts to *praying* for mercy to pardon, or grace to help, until the evil of sin and the guilt of shortcoming are seriously laid to heart. *Words*, however appropriate or emphatic, are neither confession nor prayer. The heart must *feel* the guilt of sin, and *thirst* for the hope of pardon, before the words

of the lips can become confession or supplication. Do not, therefore, try every thing at once, if you would do any thing well. This has been your great error hitherto. You have thought a *little* about sin—and a *little* about duty—and a *little* about grace—and a *little* about salvation—and a *little* about eternity ; but not enough, about any one of them, to bring you fully to the point in religion. In this way also you have prayed : with *some* reference to your sins—and *some* to your weakness—and *some* to your temptations—and *some* to your difficulties—and *some* to your final safety ; but without any concentration of prayer upon the *turning* point in personal religion.

This will not do. You must have a definite object, if you would be a decided Christian. It is, indeed, all very well, so far, that both your thoughts and prayers have taken “ a bird’s-eye view ” of the whole matter. Every thing you know and feel, on the general subject of piety, may be turned to good account, at any given point of piety. All the lines of your meditations and emotions may meet in any one duty of religion—and in none, with more advantage, than in repentance ; because all that you have thought, and felt, and tried in religion, will furnish *reasons* for penitence.

You now see how matters stand between yourself and God. They are not, indeed, in the worst state that things could be in ; but they are in a very unsettled state. They are any thing but hopeless ; and not at all unpromising ; but still, they are equivocal. In the emphatic language of Him who searcheth the heart, “ you are neither hot nor cold.” Thus, it is what you call your religion, or what you consider to be the best symptoms of some piety—quite as much as what you reckon to be your sins—that makes repentance your immediate duty. For, were there even less guilt on your conscience, than you must confess to be—and thus less reason for alarm because of actual sins—the state of your heart before God—so divided—so vacillating—so temporizing—is, itself, enough to startle you. Indeed, if your consciousness of personal guilt awakens but little fear,

and less sorrow, I doubt very much whether you will ever become a penitent at all, except you begin by repenting of what you have taken up with as *your* personal religion.

This is no paradox, however much it may surprise you at first. You have quite as much cause to be alarmed at your kind and degree of piety, as at your actual sins. I do not mean, of course, that you can or ought to repent of any attention you have paid to religion ; nor of any restraint you have laid on your passions ; nor of any good habit you have adhered to : but I do mean—that nothing perils your soul more, than your partial and superficial regard to religion. That—both beguiles and blinds you. It is just enough to distinguish you from such as “ care for none of these things ;” but not enough to decide your choice or your character. How could it ? You balance what is bad about you by what is good : not, perhaps, for the purpose of making the good a meritorious *set off* against the demerit of the bad : you may be quite above that vulgar legality ; but you do set off the good, as an excuse for not repenting of the bad immediately ; and thus allow the former to hush up or prevent the fears which the latter should awaken.

Meet your own case now fairly. You can look back upon the tenor of your life, without much shame ; and even on your sins, without much compunction or fear. You cannot call any regrets you feel, true repentance. You do not think yourself a real penitent yet. You admit all this. Well ; just ask yourself now,—“ what is there to melt or touch my heart, if my past sins and short-comings fail to do so ? I certainly do not intend to commit *greater* sins, in order to arrive at the proper sense of the evil of sin. That would be more likely to sear my heart and conscience, than to soften them ! How then am I to become a penitent ? The *past* does not alarm or humble me deeply ; and I do not wish with the *future* to furnish greater occasion for repentance.”

Does this bring you to the point ? If so—look into what is comparatively *good* about you, and you will find in it

abundant cause for both shame and grief. You cannot take a full view of the *bright* side of your character, without being shocked : for beneath what is best and fairest, there lurk motives, desires, feelings, and thoughts, which will hardly bear naming or analyzing. Your general reverence for the majesty and authority of God (for you have not *loved* Him yet) is, perhaps, as creditable to your understanding as any thing which distinguishes you from the ungodly. You could not take profane or vulgar liberties with His holy name. You would not dare His wrath nor arraign His justice. But you—even you—have almost wished, that God were more lenient to sin, and less severe in punishing it ; and this you have wished—on your own account, and for your own sinful or slothful purposes. Is not this cause for immediate repentance ? Can you think of what you have wished God both to *be* and to *do*, without hiding your face ?

Again ; your general veneration for the holy Scriptures, is highly creditable to your judgment and taste. You see upon their surface, and feel in their spirit, that they are the lively oracles of the living God. You would not join nor countenance an attack upon their authority. And yet, you have not often listened to these oracles as the voice of God : there are books you are fonder of than the Bible : there are some parts of it you do not like, and others that you do not willingly believe : and, although you feel incapable of jesting with it as a whole, you have ventured to utter or contemplate a jest upon certain points of Scripture. I am not making out an extreme case against you, in this matter. I leave it to your own conscience to fill up what is wanting in this charge. And, can you remember that the word of the living, true, and eternal God, has been little read, less studied, and still less prayed over, and yet be unmoved or unmelted ? You have not, indeed, treated it worse than others, nor so ill as many ; but you—even you—have trifled with His holy oracles. Take up your Bible, and let it tell the history of its treatment at your hands, since the day that your parents' hands (now perhaps closed in death,

or clasped in prayer for you) put it into them! And now—surely, you could shed a tear on that little-used, and less-improved gift. If not—you have less heart and conscience too, than I wished to give you credit for. It is high time, indeed, for you to concentrate all your prayers in the cry—
“Take away the heart of stone.”

Again; you have taken some steadfast looks at both the land and the lake of Eternity. You are not unacquainted with, nor indifferent to the glories of heaven or the horrors of hell. Your thoughts have ascended at times, like an eagle, amongst the sublime or the sweet realities of paradise, until you have—

“Wished for wings to fly away,
 To bask in its eternal day;”

and they have descended, like a stone, cast into the bottomless pit, amongst the prisons and flames of Tophet, until you were resolved to flee from the wrath to come. But you have neither fled from that wrath—nor laid hold on eternal life. You have not lost sight of either; but you have left the question—“which must be my portion”—unsettled. This is cause for both shame and sorrow. You are not ignorant, nor insensible; and yet you are undecided, in the face of realizing glimpses of heaven and hell, any one of which ought to be more influential than a flaming sword, to stop your procrastination. Do look at your heart! It is ETERNAL THINGS, which *it* thus plays fast and loose with. It is eternal worlds, which *it* allows this world to dim and displace. It is all the love of God can give, and all the wrath of God can do, which *it* trifles with. You surely cannot think of this—without seeing, and feeling too, your immediate need of “a new heart and a right spirit.”

This is, however, not all, nor the worst. Perhaps the very best feature of your case is, that both the character and the cross of the Saviour are not uninteresting to you. You have no sympathy with minds which can see no beauty

in the person of Immanuel, or no sublimity in His atonement. You cannot deem him less than God in our nature, nor reckon his sacrifice less than a propitiation for our sins.

You are, indeed, aware of the mysteries you admit, in thus adoring His godhead, and admiring His mediation : but you are aware also, that all this is done in the heaven of heavens, where neither angels nor saints can err ; and that nothing else can be made out from the Bible, without a process of refusing and refining its testimony, incompatible with all the claims of a revelation from God. Now, none of your religious sentiments is more creditable in you than this one. In no judgment of your own mind, do you come so near to the first principles of glorified minds. It is in harmony with all the creed and chorus of heaven. And yet—here it is that you are chiefly guilty before God, and most need repentance : for you have trifled with this Divine—this atoning, Saviour ! You have not fully and finally committed your soul to Him, although you know that His soul was made an offering for sin—that His blood cleanseth from all sin—that His love passeth knowledge, and that the riches of His grace are unsearchable. Here is guilt, before which the crimson of ordinary crimes become pale ! Here is treachery of heart, before which the scarlet of practical compromise becomes faint !

I am not exaggerating nor declaiming. You yourself admit your need of a Divine and Atoning Saviour ; you accord this rank to the slain Lamb of God :—and yet, you have not *fled* to his cross for refuge ; but only stood afar off, looking at it as a refuge, you intend to seek, at some future period. Is not this, to take unhallowed and daring liberties with the dying love of Christ ? Is not this base ingratitude ? Does not this touch your heart, and make tears blind your eyes, and so “loosen the joints of your knees,” that you must fall down at the foot of the cross, as a penitent ?

O, it is in what has been your religion, that you must look for reasons for immediate repentance, if you can look un-

melted upon your other sins. Your heart *has* evinced its alienation and depravity, in common with all hearts, although not in the same way. It has tampered and trifled with grace, even whilst paying some homage to law. It has put forward a partial subjection to the sceptre of the Saviour, as an apology for delaying a personal submission to His cross.

I will not ask now, if it be *unmanly* to give way to shame and sorrow before God? All the unmanliness has been, in standing out so long against the godlike claims of the great salvation. Angels, who need not that salvation, have been far more affected by it than you: ay, and have felt more holy impatience for your repentance, than you have cherished. Years ago, they would have hailed it with joy: and even now, it will fill them with joy.—And, surely, if they are not ashamed to rejoice over you, you need not be ashamed to avow yourself a penitent before men, any more than before God. For, if it be not *unangelic* to honour penitence, it cannot be unmanly to avow it. If, therefore, you are now determined to “give yourself unto the Lord.” determine also to “give yourself to the church, according to the will of God.” Let it be *felt* also in the world, that you are not ashamed to “confess” a Saviour who has promised to “confess you before his Father and all his angels.” Then, the harps that hymned your repentance with joy, will hymn with rapture, your acquittal at the judgment-seat, and your ascent to heaven.

If you be, now, concerned to “sorrow after a godly sort,” do propose to yourself, and set yourself to pursue, nothing less than to *please* God by the penitence of your spirit. This is a rule in all duty so useful and essential, and yet so little used or studied, that I cannot but refer you to my own little work on “Pleasing God; a Guide to the Conscientious.” I would not thus violate modesty, by commending any thing of my own to your notice, if I knew of any other book, founded upon the principle of *pleasing* God in repenting and believing.

No. III.

ON MANLY AVOWALS OF IMMORTAL HOPES.

UNTIL "*The hope of glory*" acquire such an ascendancy in the modern, as it had in the primitive, church, no great impression will be made upon the world. Nothing but this "good hope through grace," can arrest general attention, or conciliate prejudice. The holiness of the church however beautiful, and her harmony however perfect, would have but little influence, apart from the prevalence of a hope full of immortality. It is, indeed, equally true, that no public manifestation of hope, however tranquil or triumphant, would gain *respect* in the world, apart from corresponding holiness and peace. The world both expects and demands consistency, from the avowed followers of Christ. Not, however, that the world loves holiness, or admires harmony for their own sake, nor because of their moral bearings on the glory of God : but because inconsistencies and controversies in the church, furnish convenient weapons of assault or defence against the claims of religion. This is the real *secret* of the world's attention to the personal consistency of communicants, and to the relative spirit of churches. The falls of professors and the strifes of churches, are watched and pilloried, not because God is dishonoured, nor because religion is discredited by them ; but because they can be played off as excuses for not making any profession of religion at all. Were, therefore, the church of Christ all, in character and spirit, that the world says she ought to be ; and, in addition to this, all that God says she ought to be, "a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle," the world would drop the mask it now wears, and gnash its teeth against such a display of holiness. For it cares nothing about the want of holiness in the church, except so far as that want may affect the business of life, and furnish

pretences for the neglect of godliness. Were it possible therefore (which it is not) for the church to become, like her apocalyptic representative, "clothed with the sun" of purity, and encircled with the rainbow of peace, apart from "abounding in hope," she could not win the world. No degree of worth of character on her side, would weigh effectually on the other side, without the prevalence of more and better hopes of eternal glory, than she now avows or cherishes. Her hopes must *strike* the world, before the world will copy her holiness. Yea; she herself must be more struck with her immortal prospects, before she can grow much in purity or peace. Her holiness is low, because her hope is languid.

A glance at the history of the primitive churches, will both illustrate and justify these hints. I want you, therefore, to seek at the mercy-seat, and to accept at the cross, such lively hopes of eternal happiness, as cannot be concealed from your friends or foes, nor remain doubtful or uninspiring to yourself.—Such a good hope may be obtained and maintained, "through grace." It may beam in the eye, and breathe on the lips, and give its own character to your life, as well as any other pleasing hope. And it certainly is not a hope to be ashamed of. It will bear comparison with any and all the hopes, which brighten or sweeten life. It will stand the test of all the principles, which justify the love of the avowal of earthly hopes. You are not ashamed to cherish or manifest before your companions, the hope of success in business; nor the hope of domestic happiness; nor the hope of intellectual enjoyment; nor the hope of some eventual proficiency in your favourite line of study. You are right. You have no occasion to be ashamed of any rational hope, or laudable pursuit. Hopeless labour is always heartless labour, and generally unsuccessful. Why not, then hope openly, hope ardently, hope habitually, for eternal life? That—is not without the charms or the charities of social enjoyment: for it is everlasting fellowship with all the unfallen and restore intelligence of the universe.

That—is not without the pleasures of knowledge, or the expansion of mind : for it is access to all the arcana of nature, and to all the archives of time and eternity, with leisure to ransack, and ability to comprehend, them all.

That—is not without the calm joys of home, or the spirit-stirring ecstasies of great events : for it is alternately the retirement of a mansion in heaven, or the splendour of special audiences in the heaven of heavens.

That—is not without safety or solace : it is the eternal absence of all risk or change, and the eternal presence of all security and satisfaction ; for it is at the right hand of God and the Lamb, and there the joy is full, and the pleasure is for ever more.

Thus the hope of domestic happiness is not perfect, apart from an eternity of it in heaven. The hope of mental improvement is not perfect, apart from an eternity of it in heaven. The hope of personal enjoyment is not perfect, apart from “*everlasting* consolation.” And all this is included in “good hope through grace.” Christ in the heart, is the hope of all the glory, which God can give or eternity prolong.

And, why should not *all* this hope be embraced and cherished ? It is not more than is warranted by the promise of God. It is not more than is realized by “the dead in Christ.” This is not, indeed, exactly the form, in which the generality of Christians take up the hope of eternal life : but all this is *implied* in their expectations of rest and rapture. The rest they look for, will arise from the enlargement of their knowledge, as well as from the cessation of their cares : the rapture they anticipate, will all centre in the Saviour, because He is the source of all its sources, and the centre of all its centres : but it will spring from all the worlds of his empire, and from all the wonders of his providence, as well as from his presence and glory. There is, therefore, no harm, no sentimentalism, no refining upon sober and solemn facts, in realizations of heaven, which include more than adoring gratitude for redemption, and more

than "joy unspeakable" for perfect freedom from all sin. For in the fulness of joy, which constitutes that unspeakable glory, there is the joy of perfect knowledge; the joy of high and holy friendship; the joy of expanding intellect and exploring study, under the light of eternity, and in the company of all its first-born spirits. It is, remember—a word—a country—a kingdom—a city—as well as a temple—that is held up to us in the heaven of the Bible. It opens upon us, radiant in all that can entrance our powers of contemplation, and rich in all that can employ our powers of action. It has work for us as men, as well as worship for us as redeemed sinners. It is prepared for our rational nature, as well as for our regenerated spirit; for our social sympathies, as well as for our fellowship with God.

Now, although I am persuaded of the fact, and feelingly alive to the principle, that no man ever did or can lay hold of the hope of eternal life, for the sake of what is intellectual, or for the sake of what is social, or for the sake of what is sublime, in its immortal joys, I cannot, and will not, shut my eyes to the fact, that these things, as well as the new song, and in common with all the holiness and hallelujahs of the New Jerusalem, are component parts of the happiness of heaven; and ought, therefore, to have their natural influence upon our minds. No man, indeed, will, even for the sake of eternal fellowship with the innumerable company of angels; nor for the sake of sitting down with the noble army of martyrs; nor for the sake of unveiling Nature through all her works, and Providence through all its mysteries, and Glory through all its shrines, ever consent or desire to be a penitent at the cross, or a suppliant at the mercy-seat, or a pilgrim in the world, or a pillar in the church, or a sufferer in the furnace. Alas, no: man ceases to be manly, mind to be mental, and spirit to be aspiring, when they are brought into contact with the "glory, honour, and immortality, of eternal life." The great become grovelling, and the noble mean, and the enterprising drivelling, when they are wooed by *celestial* dis-

tinctions. Any crown, but a crown of glory, will be run for, in our world. Nothing in heaven, notwithstanding all that is in it, melts or moves any man effectually, until the *safety* it provides for his soul, touches his heart. Until then, we care nothing for its thrones, crowns, palms, or harps. They appeal to us in vain, until we become afraid of perishing.

In one sense, I am not at all sorry for this : for, did heavenly and eternal *distinctions* commend themselves to the pride, the ambition, or the envy of the human heart, just as earthly distinctions lay hold upon its passions, heaven would tend, as much as the earth, to divert the mind from the Saviour and the Sanctifier. Its glories, if they captivated as distinctions at *first*, would counteract the designs of grace. It is, therefore, wisely ordered, that we can make nothing satisfactory or inspiring of future glory, until we feel our need of grace. No soul desires heaven until it dreads hell. No soul thinks of coming to Christ for any thing that is in heaven, until it begins to come to Him for the pardon of sin, and thus for deliverance from the wrath to come. All the bright hopes of immortality unfold from the humble hopes of pardon and acceptance. It is only when we go as *lost*, to Him who lives to seek, and who died to save, the lost, that we see or feel the worth and weight of glory. In a word ; we do not look at eternal life seriously, until we form the habit of " looking for the *mercy* of the Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life."

Nothing, therefore, is farther from my intention, than to fascinate you with visions of intellectual or social enjoyments in heaven of which the Lamb slain is not the source and centre. He is " all in all," in all the glory of the scenes and the society above. Just because He is so, however, I would lead out your hopes to *all* that glory, that you may see in the full blaze of its light, the worth, the capacity, and the demerits of your soul ; and thus learn at once, your need of a Saviour, and the all-sufficiency of Christ to save you. Just because I am sure that you will

not stir one step to secure the crown, until you betake yourself to the cross for escape from the curse; I show you *all* the crown, as well as all the curse, and combine the attractions of the former with the terrors of the latter, to hasten your flight to the cross for personal safety.

Let, then, *safety* be your first object: but let it not be your only nor your chief aim. It is, indeed, much; but it is not all that is provided and promised by the gospel. It is the *basis* on which all the eternal weight of glory must rest and be raised, whatever be the eventual weight or height of that glory; but, still, it is only the basis, and not at all the "*building*," which God has prepared for them that love him.

The first Christians knew and believed this fact; and, therefore, their hopes laid hold upon all the glory that is "laid up in heaven:" upon its honours, as well as its ease; upon its raptures as well as its rest; upon its intellectual light as well as upon its moral loveliness. They hoped to "*reign as kings and priests*" with the Saviour, as well as to be with him, beholding his glory; and just because both felicities were equally promised by Christ. Nor was this all: the wide and firm hold they thus took upon the inheritance of the saints in light, enabled them to take a corresponding hold upon the inheritance of the saints in the wilderness. I mean, that such were their enlarged and lively hopes of future happiness in heaven, that their hopes of present guidance and guardianship on earth were firm and bright. They calculated on such a weight of glory above and for ever, that they found it easy to expect a sufficiency of grace below, and as long as they needed grace to help. Thus their joy became not only "unspeakable," because "*full of glory*;" but, for the same reason, it was practical, compensating and sustaining, under all the trials of life and godliness.

This was the good effect of their good hope upon themselves. And now, I want you to mark minutely, the *reaction* of their hope upon the world: for its influence did not

terminate in their own happiness ; but that happiness so attracted the notice of others, as to excite general curiosity about the "*reason*" of the hope that produced it. Accordingly, all the primitive Christians were specially taught by the apostles, to expect so much inquiry into the real cause of their hope, that it became one of their chief duties, to be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asked for a reason of the hope which was in them."

The bare mention of this fact will remind you, that the present aspect of hope amongst Christians in general, is neither so amazing nor commanding, as to excite curiosity or compel inquiry after its *reasons*. Were the hope of eternal life, as it is now held and exhibited by the church, to create a question in the world, that question, alas, must be—what is the reason that there is so little hope ; so little heavenly-mindedness ; and so much fear of death—amongst those who profess to believe the gospel ? The world does not, however, trouble the church with inquiries into the cause of doubts and fears ; but is rather pleased, than surprised, to find that they prevail to a very great extent, even amongst the truly pious. Thus, this want of positive enjoyment amongst Christians, like the defects of their character, becomes another convenient weapon for the world, to wield against godliness. "What do I lose by neglecting religion, if that feeble and fluctuating hope, is all that you have gained, after years of godliness ?" said a gay young man, to a venerable pilgrim, who was the victim of low spirits. This was not a fair question, when put to an infirm old man ; nor can it be fairly put to any Christian at all times. It is, however, a question which those who want excuses will start, when they are hard pressed, by their pious friends, on the subject of personal religion. And, how few can answer it satisfactorily—by an appeal to the triumphs or the tranquillity of their own hope ? The time was, however, (and why should it not return,) when neither the shrewdest nor the fiercest enemies of Christianity durst ask such a question. The church gave the world other

work, and forced upon it the question—how are ye so happy ; what is the reason of the hope that is in you ?

The history of this period will repay your attention. It is something like this ; whilst both the sentiments and character of the first Christians surprised their old companions who continued idolaters, it was their "*lively hope*," that excited most astonishment. Their religious opinions were felt to be singular, and their godly habits to be strange : but their hopes were utterly unaccountable : they were so many, and all so full of immortality, and thus so unlike the spirit of the age. That spirit, so far as it was philosophical, was atheistic ; and, so far as it was superstitious, its future prospects had no fascinations for the old or the young. The weary eye of age or suffering could not repose on them for solace, nor the eagle-eye of youth turn to them for inspiration. They deserved not and therefore hardly obtained, the *name* of hopes : so destitute were they of all power to charm or cheer the human mind. Accordingly, the popular, as well as the philosophic maxim was, "*Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.*"

In such a "region and shadow of death," even Athens and Rome stood. In this dark valley, both the learned and illiterate "sat for ages," looking at each other with despair or scorn. From time to time, some one started up, after profound study, and perambulated the valley, parading a new theory of mind, or matter, or morals ; and for a time, the hopeless spectators forgot their misery, in the discussion of mystery. But they discussed only to discard : for as no theory of the universe or of religion brought any cheering hopes home to their bosoms, the people soon fell back upon their old maxim, and sought relief from the cravings of their spirit, in the gratification of their senses.—But when the apostles of the Lamb penetrated into this region and shadow of death, illuminating immortality by the gospel, and throwing "*new heavens*" over the old earth—their appeal to "what was in man," and to what God had just done for man, by the cross of His Son, and the Sword

of His Spirit, could not be disposed of so soon or easily as abstract theories of morals had been. This was "a new thing in the earth." The gospel laid hold upon all the soul's natural "longings" after immortality, and addressed itself to all the points of the soul, at which the heart bled, or the conscience burned, or the understanding craved.

This appeal itself, was, indeed, treated, by the generality, as a mere theory, too, for a time: but, when here and there, all through the dark valley of heathenism, now a few, and anon many, began to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel, and to avow that hope as their own, and to stand ready to avouch it by their blood; then, even the hopeless and the hardened were absolutely amazed. And when mockery could not move, nor authority silence, nor martyrdom intimidate, the converts of the cross, "the world turned upside down" with wonder. It scorned their opinions, and hated their principles: but it was staggered by their *hopes*, in spite of itself; they were so new in their aspect, and so noble in their bearing, and so independent of all the usual motives which had ever influenced the patience, the emulation, or the fortitude of mankind.

What was to be done? Sages pronounced Christianity to be visionary. Senators denounced it as sedition. Priesthood arraigned it as impiety. Crowns rallied armies to crush it. But all in vain! When these forces moved in phalanx against it, they could somewhat hinder it from spreading on the spot where they battled: but even there, they could not quench its spirit in the hearts of its votaries nor prevent the heroism of its martyrdom from winning new martyrs. The more the world fought, the more the church conquered: for the children of hope "sung praises unto God" in all their prisons; shouted victory at the stake, and smiled composure at the tribunal. Even women "waxed valiant," beyond the daring of Socrates, and slaves proved that emperors could not shackle spirits which Christ had made free. Christians of all ranks, recognised only

the chariots of God, in the kindling flames ; only rivers hastening to the sea of glory, in the engulfing waters : only signals of a summons to heaven, in the flashing sword of persecutors. At length, the state was glad to stay the carnage, that it might save the empire : for headsmen actually wearied of wielding the axe, and soldiers of brandishing the sword, and jailers of riveting chains, and spies of detecting victims, and servants of kindling fagots, and judges of signing sentences, and emperors of issuing edicts of extermination : all were wearied out, long before the church complained.

A hope, that thus defied and defeated the world, could not be overlooked. Accordingly, public curiosity began to inquire into its *reasons*, when imperial vengeance could no longer afford to make war against its votaries. And then Christianity began to triumph gloriously. Every man had been stirred up to ask a reason for the hope it inspired ; and every Christian stood ready to give a reason for it ; and thus all the church became, virtually, preachers of the gospel. "The Spirit and the Bride," as well as the Spirit and the Ministry, said to the world, "Come and take of the water of life freely."

That this is a fair report of the case, needs no other proof than the fact that these are the express words of "Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness." He bowed the heavens, after His ascension, to testify, that the bride said "Come ;" and, that the invitation which the church thus gave to the world was, like His own preaching, first and chiefly, a call to lay hold on the hope of eternal life, or to drink of the water of life freely. Thus, there was more than *ministerial* effort and influence, brought to bear upon the world. Ministers could do more than point to "a RIVER of the water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb, and flowing openly down to the earth : they could point also to thousands, standing all along its banks, who did more than admire it—more than compliment it—more than wish to drink of it—yea, more than

wish to drink of it—yea, more than hope to drink of it: they *had* drank so abundantly of its living waters, that they could not thirst again for sinful enjoyments, nor cease to long to drink of this river at its fountain head in heaven. Thus there came from all the churches, both a loud echo to the ministerial invitations of the gospel, and a living exemplification of the immediate and immortal advantages of complying with them. And neither the echo nor the example was overlooked by the world. The Corinthian Christians were an "*Epistle, known and read of all men.*" The faith of the Romans was "*spoken of throughout the whole world.*" And the word of the Lord, so "*sounded out*" from the Thessalonians, that their "*God-ward*" and heavenward faith was "*spread abroad every where;*" and so spoke for itself, that Paul said, "*we need not to speak any thing.*"

This was the aspect and spirit of Christian hope, then, upon the earthly banks of the river of life. That aspect was solemn, but not sad: that spirit "*meek,*" but not timid. Hope embraced such an "*exceeding weight*" of eternal glory, that it could neither be flippant nor cowardly; silent nor talkative; ostentatious nor shrinking; obtrusive nor ashamed. No; it partook largely of both the solemnity and the loveliness of the immortality, of which it was so full; and, as it had filled itself at that urn, at the risk of life, and in the presence of all the forms of martyrdom, it breathed the spirit of its fountain and its fate.

Now, this is just what is wanted in the world at present an abounding of hope, which cannot be overlooked, nor passed by unquestioned, nor be suspected of vanity or imbecility. And, surely, if it could abound equally "*in all boldness,*" and "*in all wisdom and prudence,*" on the banks of the river of life, even when the waters reflected the flash of hostile arms, and the glare of threatening flames, it need not tremble, nor temporize, nor vapour, now that the sword is sheathed, and the fire quenched. Why, then, is there so little of this "*good hope through grace,*" to be seen or heard of, in the churches, the families, and the social

circles, of the pious? The grace which warrants it, is not less full or free now, than it was when Christian hope amazed the world. And yet, the degree of hope usually taken from that grace now, arrests no public attention, and creates but little private inquiry. Children do not hear it from their parents, nor servants from their masters, nor friends from each other. Even husband and wife hardly venture to breathe it in a whisper to each other. Indeed, were not what is preached and written on the hope of glory, illustrated, from time to time, by happy *death-beds*, much of it would be unintelligible; so little is there said or done to illustrate it, in the ordinary intercourse of life.

“The death of the righteous” does still, however, prove to the world, that there is hope in the church; and that “hope maketh not ashamed,” when the last struggle comes I beg your best attention to this fact, that you may not suppose that there is no hope in the church, or that what there is is useless. There is enough to maintain the credit of Christianity, as the only antidote against the fear of death. Christians may carry their silence up to the very entrance of the valley of the shadow of death; but they do not pass “through” it in silence. Hope finds it tongue, and its harp too, when in the valley. This is so common, in the case of consistent believers, that the old challenge—“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace,”—may be safely given to all the world, and unhesitatingly coupled with a defiance to all, to find one instance of an upright man dying in horror, or despair, or darkness, when his disease left his faculties unimpaired in their rational exercise. Accordingly, even the Balaams of gain and gayety, do not question the fact, that the righteous hath hope in his death. They even keep up the prayer, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” Why is this prayer thus kept up in the world? Obviously, because the church keeps up an everlasting succession of *death-beds*, where the sting of death is lost, and the victory

of the grave forgotten; and because these signal triumphs over the king of terrors, cannot be entirely overlooked or forgotten by mankind. They are not, indeed, much looked at, nor often remembered, from choice: but *necessity* keeps them in sight. The world cannot *afford* to forget them. See, how it repeats the last words of Addison, "Behold how calmly a Christian can die." Even in the theatre, where amusement is the sole object, and all things are of the earth, earthy, neither the vicious nor the vain can help responding with applause to the exclamation,

"There is another and a better world!"

Not that they love that world: but they all fear death, and cannot suppress the desire of future happiness. No man can, at all times, whatever be his tastes or pursuits. The worse these are, the weaker he is, when he looks the last enemy in the face. His own face may not betray this secret, and his lips may deny the fact; but he feels it, however he may mask or vapour, smile or swear. The mortality of his body necessitates this mood of the spirit, when decay begins: and where vice has hastened that decay, the sinking of the spirit hurries it on, by fits and qualms, which upset all hardihood while they last.

Thus the world can no more *afford* to lose sight of all the instances of hope in death, than the church could afford to do so. Very few of them, and these not the best, suffice for the world, to talk about: but still, it must have one or more to quote, whenever it must say something about death, or listen to the voice of nature within. Indeed, mankind are rather glad than otherwise, to know, that many "depart in peace." The bare fact is, however, enough for the generality. They take no interest in the grounds of that peace, and would hardly listen to the details of it. As peace founded on the blood of the cross, or confirmed by the witness of the Spirit, or perfected by foretastes of heaven, many would laugh at it: but, simply as peace in death,

they are pleased to hear of it. It gets such another place in the temples of taste, fashion and trade, as the Romans would have given to a Phidian statue of Christ in the Pantheon of their idols.

I thus apprise you of the precise temperament of mankind on the subject of exchanging worlds. No man is always nor altogether at ease in his own mind. Every man has his awful moments in spite of himself. His "flesh" will not let him alone, even if his "spirit" would spare him. His constitution breaks down, even if his conscience do not break out upon him. It cannot be otherwise, whilst man is mortal !

This is no sweeping assertion. If it seem so to you, you have not looked attentively at the world. True ; you see the crowd on "the broad way," keep up its numbers, and its noise, and its pursuits, as if all was ease and enjoyment. The places of those who sink or retire, are so soon filled up, that you can hardly distinguish the change of persons. —But there is a change of *persons* for ever going on. Now, if you will mark and follow into retirement, those who can no longer keep their wonted place in the crowd, you will soon discover that "the way of transgressors is hard," and that, however they have figured in the world, a time comes, when they are tired out, and must retreat ; when their hearts ache, and misgive them ; when their sins drop the mask, and disgust them ; when an earthly portion is felt to be an empty portion ; when conscience will not lie still, nor the visions of eternity depart at a bidding.

To this point all men come at last ; and alas, when they are here, there is, in general, little access to them. Dying Christians cannot be taken to them, to exemplify hope in death : living Christians are seldom admitted to them to explain the way of salvation ; and they themselves can make nothing of Addison's example, nor of dramatic sentimentalities, on the subject of peace or hope in death. Thus, they have to die as they can, or just as it happens, and whether that be in agony, or in stupor, it is a fool's death."

If ever the world, therefore, is to be *savingly* benefited by the church, more than "hope in death" must be exemplified in the church : for the multitude cannot be admitted, nor the trifling enticed into

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate."

It is as much as a dying Christian can well bear, to see his own family and his intimate friends. Thus the world is inevitably shut out from witnessing the best triumphs of hope. It can only *hear*, that there is a victory within. All the impression made upon the actual spectators, by beholding a Christian, in the valley of the shadow of death, filling up the intervals of pain, with angel-like praise or child-like prayer ; breathing no murmurs, even in the paroxysms of his agony ; betraying no reluctance to leave time, and no fears of facing eternity ; and, at last, falling "asleep in Jesus," as if fanned asleep by seraphic wings : all this, and the impression it makes, is lost to the world. Unless, therefore, Christian hope be allowed and made to "*shine before men*," where they can all see it, and examine it, it cannot tell effectually nor widely. Besides, its final triumphs, however true and frequent, if not preceded by some tokens of present enjoyment from religion, will give currency to the delusion, that the death of the righteous may be secured at last by a dying effort, without living the life of the righteous. Thus, by suppressing her hope, or by having too little to show, the church practically, however unintentionally, connives at errors which all her creed condemns.

This matter now wears a serious aspect to all who are concerned to stand clear of "Blood-Guiltiness, when they stand confronted with the souls of their neighbours, at the bar of God. It is not impossible, however, to clear ourselves of the blood of all men, with whom we have any intercourse. Our responsibilities do not involve violations of the charities or the courtesies of life. It was not by intruding themselves upon the privacy of their neighbours, nor

by forcing their religious opinions into the business of the world, that the first Christians discharged their conscience. They cherished all the hope warranted by the gospel, and modelled their character by that hope, and stood prepared to give a reason for all the grace and glory they expected; and this line of conduct led men to inquire about a gospel which had such a holy and happy influence upon its adherents. Thus, their hopes created both opportunities and facilities for winning souls. Now it is no great hardship, surely, to be bound, to take up a hope full of present grace and future glory. It may not, at first sight, seem easy to hope for all that God has promised; but it is really easier to do so, than to keep up a hope only *half* full of immortality. That does not make Christ sufficiently precious to the soul, nor set the soul to "look into" all the fulness of the love of Christ: whereas the man who embraces the prospect of all the grace and glory of the new covenant must acquaint himself well with the mediator of that covenant; and when He is well known as the end of the law for righteousness, and as the author of eternal redemption, to all that believe Him to be so, it is much easier to hope for *all* the great salvation, than it is to hesitate between hope and despair; because the fulness of hope sends the soul directly and fully to all the fulness of Christ. Now we are warranted to pray for all, and to expect all, that Christ has provided for happiness in this life, and in that which is to come. The gospel does not present a *title* to heaven unto one, and but a *peradventure* of heaven unto another; does not invite one class to a lively hope, and another to a languid hope, of eternal life. It opens all the riches of the new covenant on earth, and all the beatific vision of the New Jerusalem in heaven, to all men alike. You are, therefore, just as welcome to embrace the whole, as you are warranted to expect any part of the great salvation. Nothing but the blood of Christ warrants any hope; and that blood warrants unbounded hope of all needful grace, and of all revealed glory.

Now with such a hope, do you not see and feel, how it must give a tone to your spirit and conversation, and a character to your doing and suffering, that could not be overlooked nor laughed at? Whining or canting *talk* about heaven, is a most unheavenly thing; but when *actions* speak; when temper speaks; when integrity speaks—when patience speaks of heaven—the world will both look and listen with respect. They know the worth of sterling honesty, and they feel their own want of contentment and peace of mind; and, therefore, when they see these things *based* upon a bright eternity, and yet leaning naturally and prudently upon all the helps of reason, law, and religion, they cannot suppress all curiosity, nor forget the sight. Even the infidel press of France could not pass by without notice, the simple-hearted, but solemn remark of a French Christian, who said, on refusing to be a party to some questionable transaction in business, “I could never forget it, nor forgive myself, even in heaven.”

And, why should not every Christian refer, with as much simplicity, to his anticipations of his eternal opinions and prospects? Where is the real difficulty of having his immortal hopes as closely around him, as his moral principles; that thus he might see at a glance, how any act or habit of this life will *look*, during the untold and interminable cycles of the life to come? He is not ashamed to base upon law, conscience, and character, refusals to sin or circumvent. He dare not conceal from the world, his subjection to moral obligation. And he ought not to conceal the fact, that his immortal hopes, as well as his moral principles, influence all his transactions.

Not, however, by the manifestation of such a hope, does the church now try to win the world. And yet, she is neither idle nor indifferent; neither illiberal nor unenterprising at present. All real Christians are doing something, both at home and abroad, to win souls. Ingenuity is taxed to simplify and adapt the forms of knowledge, to minds of all orders and conditions of all grades. Benevolence pro-

vides something for all kinds of misery, and philanthropy espouses the cause of all the oppressed. History begins to remember the forgotten, and to vindicate the calumniated martyrs of civil and religious liberty. Even poetry pays some homage to the genius of Christianity, and is compelled to pitch her key-note in harmony with the tone of Christian morals. No bench dare avow infidelity, nor any senator assail the Bible. Even the press must bow to the majesty of revelation, however it may tamper or temporise with some revealed truths.

Now, all this influence, the church of the living God has put forth upon the world. Yes; Christians have done it in this country. It has been their influence, however unacknowledged or unseen, that has kept the march of intellect upon the highways of truth; that has kept the streams of knowledge in the channels of virtue; that has kept the progress of liberty on the side of religion. Things are not so in France. No political movement there has led to any great moral result, even when the policy was wise, and the public spirit noble, in themselves. Why? There was not Christianity enough in France, to regulate or influence the movements. They had not only no immortal hope to centre in, but no moral system to support. Indeed, they had nothing to terminate upon, but just the *temporal* purposes for which they were undertaken: and no liberty can be lasting, nor satisfactory whilst it lasts, which is not made to bear upon the glory of God, and the eternal welfare of mankind.

I thus refer to the influence of Christian principle on the spirit and manners of the age at home, to prove that the Church of Christ is neither inactive nor useless. She makes herself felt, if not heard, in all the assemblies and associations of the land. They do not and dare not forget, that there is holy fire upon ten thousand of her altars, and millions of holy men within her spiritual pale, who would guard these altars with their life, if that fire were in danger. This is much: but it is not enough. It tells widely and well upon morals, and legislation; and social order; but not

directly upon the human heart. It is a mighty impulse upon masses of society ; but not upon *individual* men. Individuals must act upon individuals, if ever personal religion become universal. The great charm of true religion is, the *happiness* it confers : and that happiness cannot be fully seen, in the fellowship of a church, nor even in the peace of a family. There is, indeed, happiness in both these spheres ; but not that precious *form* of it, which every man appreciates at first sight, and which all men feel their need of at times. The fact is, (and it is solemn enough to be repeated,) every man is occasionally a *wretched* man. Whatever may be his tastes or pursuits, and however he may appear satisfied or absorbed with them, there are moments of satiety, of disgust, of *heart-sickness* and *heart-sinking*, which compel him to confess to himself that he is wretched : that neither gain nor gayety has answered his expectations ; that all is vanity and vexation of spirit ! Now, during these awful moments and humiliating emotions, recollections of God and eternity do force themselves in upon the conscience. Their terrific flash may be as momentary as the glare of the midnight thunderbolt ; but it is as startling too, while it lasts, and not entirely forgotten when it is gone. The man himself can see the traces of it on his brow in the morning, although no one else can detect them. He feels also more than the bad headache, or the sleepless night, he complains of : his soul is as *feverish* as his body. Now it is *that* form of happiness which could remove this gnawing uneasiness, and prevent its return, that such a man requires to see : but that form of happiness—he cannot see, if there be no one in the circle of his acquaintance, manifesting the beauty of hope, as well as the beauty of holiness.”

Why should not these twin-beauties be combined in *your* character ? You know young men, and old men too, who are unhappy. You are sure, from their habits, that they cannot be otherwise than wretched, at times ; and you see, that they will not *brook* reproof nor warning. Must they,

therefore, be left to perish? At your peril—do not allow yourself to regard your old school-fellow, or former friend, as hopeless. He may have lost his character; but he has not lost *sight* of you, even if he shun you. It may be unsafe for you to associate with him much or openly; but, as you do cross each other's path from time to time, you can, by acquiring and manifesting a hope full of immortality, awaken his curiosity to the *secret* of your personal happiness. Do, "clothe" yourself with *hope*, as well as with "humility." You may thus save more souls than your own.

In order to do this, however, you must set yourself to acquire, first a clear understanding of the nature of *faith*. You cannot hope well, until you believe aright. Perhaps, the next Essay will assist your faith and hope. It will, at least, enable you to *think* for yourself, upon a subject of supreme importance, which is too often mystified by talkers and speculators.

No. IV.

ON MANLY VIEWS AND AVOWALS OF FAITH.

FAITH is as much the first and chief principle of all the business of life, as it is of all the duties of godliness. No men *act* more by faith, in pursuing their temporal avocations and objects, than those who speak most against faith as the grand principle of Religion. The glaring inconsistency would be ludicrous, were not its consequences fatal. It is, however,

"Passing strange,"

that men who can neither live nor move without faith in men and things, should yet make light of faith, when God and truth, salvation and eternity, are the objects of it. These solemn and sublime objects deserve, surely, quite as

much faith as the temporal things which make both public, and social life "a *life of faith*," in the order of nature—in the laws of nations—in the grounds of commerce, and in the promises of mankind. The confidence given to these things may not, indeed, be always called faith, (although even that is its usual name both in trade and treaties,) but it really is faith. How, then, would the mockers at religious faith like to be pitied or despised for their faith in food and medicine—in bills and bonds—in ships and mails—in banks and firms? They can neither trade nor travel without faith. They buy and sell by faith. They eat and drink by faith. In a word, they can do no business without it, nor have any enjoyment apart from it: for were they to give up their faith in the ordinary integrity of mankind, or in the nutritiousness of the fruits of the earth, they must give up too both the means and the pursuits of life. And yet, men of business, and men of pleasure, and even literary men, can so far forget all the decencies of common sense and decorum, as to laugh at faith, or try to be witty at its expense, when it is enforced as the first and chief thing in religion! Is this manly or fair?

I will not retaliate upon them by ridiculing their strong faith in each other, and in all the general laws which regulate human policy, trade, enterprise, and social life. Natural, national, and mutual faith, is too essential to the welfare of mankind, to be less than sacred in the estimation of a Christian. The world may laugh at his faith in the things which are unseen and eternal; but he will not make light of their faith in the things which are seen and temporal. I do, however, claim the right of telling the world in plain terms, that they play with a two-edged sword, when they make light of *divine* faith. If they do not know, they ought to know, that divine faith is just such a degree of confidence in divine things, as they themselves *give* to temporal things, and expect to *get* from Christians in the business of life. If, therefore, they would not teach us to distrust themselves, and to treat all their own veracity as doubtful,

why should they arraign, as useless or visionary, our faith in the character and word of God? For, if there be any thing weak in the habit of trusting Him, there must be egregious folly in trusting them. If there be nothing wrong nor rash in disbelieving God, there can be no great harm in disbelieving any man and every man.

You cannot dislike this "retort courteous;" and yet, perhaps, you do not see clearly the analogy between human and divine faith. You may even suspect that the parallels would not hold good, but break down, if it were pursued very far: and thus you may feel afraid to employ the argument. Look, however, at the facts again. You know the confidence which farmers have in the order of nature, and merchants in commercial treaties, and all men in established capital and character. There are momentary *panics* in all the markets; but business still goes on somewhere. Now, did the farmer place as much confidence in the promise of the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, as he gives to the promise of "the early and latter rain," would not that be *faith* in God? And, did the merchant repose only as much confidence in the Saviour, as he places in his bankers and agents, would not that be faith in Christ? I do not, of course, mean that it would be *all* the faith which God and the Lamb demand and deserve. It would, however, be some; and so much as *must* lead to more. And, let any man who has entire confidence in any human security, give entire confidence to divine promises, what would that be, but "strong faith?" Thus all the difference between natural and divine *faith* is made by the difference between human and divine *things*, and by the difference there is between human and divine *agency*. It is not, however, by any new or occult mental faculty that a man begins to believe the gospel; but by new motives and influences acting on his old faculties. He then believes eternal things, just as he had before believed temporal things. His faith is no longer confined to this world but extends to the eternal world. It has new objects, and quite

another kind of influence than it had, whilst it terminated on the things of time and sense: but it is not a new mental process. It is still the old or natural act of believing, drawn out and led on by the Spirit of God, to new and nobler truths and purposes. A true believer is, therefore, just thinking, and reasoning, and judging, and trusting, as naturally, and freely, as to the mental process, in the case of eternal things, as worldly-wise men do in the case of earthly things. I mean he is not doing more or otherwise in regard to eternity, than they are doing in regard to time. Alas, the only difference is, that he does *less* in the work of believing God, than they do in the work of believing man. It is, therefore, no more weak, visionary, fanatical, or irrational, to extend

“A strong and lasting faith,”

to all revealed truth, than it is to believe the ascertained facts of science and history, or the pledged word of well-accredited men. “*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater;*” greater in itself, and in all that it testifies. 1 John v. 9, 10.

This view of faith, and the argument founded upon it, being derived from the express “words which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” cannot be at variance with the *work* of the Holy Ghost, in producing faith. The line of argument is at variance, only with those vague and mystical notions about faith, which perplex the serious, and harden the slothful. Faith is, indeed, “*not of ourselves*: it is the gift of God; a fruit of the Spirit;” an effect of “divine operation.” It is also, however, the *duty* of man. If it were not, unbelief would not be a sin, and especially not the condemning sin. That, however, it is; and, therefore, we are as much accountable for our faith, as for our practice. No wonder: the grounds of accountability for *what*, and *how*, we believe, are as firmly laid in the everlasting gospel, as the grounds of it, for what and how we obey, are laid in the eternal law. The gospel presents truth to us, as clearly

as the law presents duty ; and, therefore, it demands faith, just as the law demands obedience ; and with equal reason too. Law is the *judicial* will of God : Gospel is the *gracious* will of God ; and, surely, it cannot be less our duty or interest to believe the latter, than it is to obey the former. The former reveals to us the legislative character of God, and the latter his paternal character : and as He has condescended to sustain all the pity and love of a Father towards the human family, notwithstanding all their guilt and ingratitude, well may He expect and demand, that they should believe this fact with the heart, and give implicit credit and entire confidence to its revealed reasons and designs.

Let no man deceive you, neither let your own sloth betray you, into quibbles about faith. The impossibility of believing the gospel, without the grace of the Holy Spirit, is exactly such an impossibility as the growth of grain, without sunshine and showers : it no more sets aside or lessens your obligation to "*sow unto the Spirit,*" than the other absolves the farmer from the duty of ploughing and sowing his fields. The influences of the Spirit, in producing faith, are like the influences of the heavens, in producing corn : neither supply *seed*, nor supplant human *labour* ; and both operate agreeably to the nature of the seed and the soil. Nothing, therefore, can be more absurd or impertinent, than to plead as an apology for the want of faith, that the Holy Spirit has not given you grace to believe—*what ?* yes ; what do you wish to believe ? If not the gospel—He gives no grace to believe any thing else. And, if it be the gospel, you wish to believe with the heart, *acquaint* yourself with it, if you would have Him to work mightily or effectually. His grace gives power to His truth.

What attention, then, do you give to the gospel itself ? I mean, to the gospel, as "*glad news*" from heaven to earth ? It is, indeed a system of truth, as opposed to error ; and a system of morality, as opposed to vice ; and a system

of worship, as opposed to idolatry and superstition ; and a system of grace, as opposed to merit : but it is all this just because it is glad tidings of a great salvation ; and, therefore, it is not heard or read *aright*, until heard and read as good news in a bad world, or as a message of tender mercy, direct from the eternal throne, to the unworthy. Now, is it thus you have attended to the glorious gospel of the blessed God ?

You may have studied it as a creed—as a controversy—as a system of faith and practice ; but if you have not weighed it as “ the joyful sound ” of a pardon you need—of a deliverance from wrath you deserve—of a title to glory you desire—you have not yet treated it as gospel, but as law, or as advice, or as theology.

This is the chief reason, why so many, who hear the gospel with some attention and much respect, yet remain year after year without the Spirit. They hear—as judges of sound doctrine ; as friends of good morals ; as umpires between orthodoxy and heresy ; as men of sense, or men of science, or men of taste, or men of business, or as family-men ;—but not as *sinners*, who deserve none of the mercy they need. Now, how can the Spirit of God be expected to countenance this spirit in man ? As the Spirit of truth, he is not indifferent to the fear of error : as the Spirit of holiness, not indifferent to the love of virtue : as the Spirit of wisdom, not indifferent to good sense or good taste : but He is also “ the Spirit of Christ ; ” and as His grand object is, to glorify Christ as a Saviour from hell and sin, how can He follow with a saving blessing, any attention to the gospel, which is not for the sake of an *immediate* salvation from the wrath to come ?

Here, now, is the point. If you are concerned only about a *remote* or *final* salvation, you are offering a *present insult* to the God of salvation : for He beseeches you to be reconciled to Him now, because “ now ” is the only day of salvation that you can calculate upon as “ the accepted time.” You are offering a present insult to the Lamb of

God : for although He “*now* liveth to intercede,” He has made no promise to take up your case at a future period. A regard only to a remote salvation, is, also, a present insult to the Spirit of God : for “the Holy Ghost saith, to-day, if ye will hear my voice.” Thus remote intentions, however good or sincere, are present insults to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost : and *can* the Spirit countenance such conduct ? Is it any wonder that He does not give grace to help, whilst there is no intention of making a present use of it ? Why should He—or, indeed, how *could* He, work faith in your heart, if you have no wish nor design to exercise it, until you are older or in greater danger of death ?

I do not forget the *sovereignty* of the Spirit’s influences. That sacred “wind bloweth,” both *when* and *where* it listeth. But I remember also, that it is not promised to blow at all upon any one, who hears the gospel merely as a present creed, or as a future command. Besides, if you can *judge* of its claims, to credence, as doctrine ; and of its beauty, as morality ; and of its sublimity, as philosophy ; and of its truth, as history—you can do *more* than all this ; you can weigh its claims upon yourself, as a sinner and a candidate for eternity : for you have a *conscience* as well as an understanding : and if you would not dare to silence your reason, nor your taste, nor your judgment, when the truth, beauty, and holiness of Christianity are brought before you, why should you not allow your conscience to speak out, when the refuge and remedy of the gospel are commended ? You yourself see and feel, that it would be an insult to the Holy Spirit, to expect Him to countenance levity or wilful ignorance. You do not expect that, nor wish for it. You are not unwilling to let the *general* truths of the gospel have a fair hearing, nor to allow them to have some weight on your mind, and some influence on your character. Nothing you know or feel about your need of *grace*, leads you to lay aside your *talents*, when you read or hear the gospel. Why, then, lay aside your *conscience* ? I mean—why not let it speak out, when the necessity and

suitableness of *saving* blessings are proved, as well as let reason speak out when the *truth* of Christianity is proved? The chief value of the historical truth of the gospel, is, that it justifies faith in its joyful sound: and, as conscience can judge as well of the *goodness* of the glad news of salvation, as reason can of their truth, it is as criminal not to employ conscience, as it is not to employ common sense.

Let conscience speak now. It is not altogether easy. It is not without some fears and forebodings. There is more guilt upon it, than you would like your friends or the world to know. That guilt, even after all your own softening and subterfuges, casts a dark shadow upon the swellings of Jordan, and upon the judgment-seat beyond them.—You cannot contemplate, with any thing like composure, the *opening* of “the books” on the great white throne, nor the transition of your naked spirit from the death-bed, to the tribunal. Although not worse than many, and even better than some, you are conscious that you are not prepared to meet God, nor yet to inherit glory. There is thus darkness upon your future prospects, and suspense on your spirit. And, then, you see, what many do not look at—that it will require strong faith, “*some day*,” to get over such fears.—Accordingly, you intend, what many do not, to make a believing application to the blood of atonement, for pardon and acceptance.—You have no intention of risking your soul, at last, upon a late repentance or a legal reformation. You design and desire to be indebted to Christ for salvation, whenever you proceed to act out your convictions of truth and duty.

Thus, your conscience has already discovered, that it *will* want the glad tidings of the gospel; and is now somewhat gladdened, to remember that there is something in the cross, worth looking at and relying on. And are you not as much bound to apply this conscience to the study of the gospel's *worthiness* of all acception, as to apply your understanding to the faithfulness of its testimony? You say to yourself, “I am a rational being, and must not reject

evidence: I am an accountable being, and must not trifle with truth: I am a being, equally mortal and immortal, and must not entirely peril myself, in time or eternity:”—but, why not add, “I am a guilty being, and need pardon now: I am an unholy being, and need sanctification now.” This is equally true, and far more solemn than the general fact, that it is wrong to be irreligious.

And, do you not see that this way of attending to the gospel, is just the way to meet the Holy Spirit? He can *own* and *honour* such consideration of the things which belong to your peace: whereas, whilst you consider them only as they belong to your talents, and taste, and character, he cannot witness, and has not promised to work with you. True; He wrought mightily upon those who first heard the gospel, although they had not gone through any such process of thought as I am now enforcing upon you. At Pentecost, and on other occasions of apostolic preaching, thousands were led into the faith of the gospel, as fast as they acquired the knowledge of it. They heard with the ear, and were enabled to believe with the heart, on the same day. I will not evade this fact, by calling it miraculous. If, however, you mean to insinuate, that those who believed then, went through *no* process of consideration beforehand, you have yet to study the apostolic history of both the Jews and the Gentiles. That the first converts went through no such process as I commend to you, is indeed, quite certain. But, remember, all Judea had been shaken by the fear of the wrath to come, under the rousing ministry of John the Baptist; and all the people of Jerusalem, who beheld the solemnities of Calvary, “*smote their breasts and returned.*” Was this no preparation for Pentecost? Thus, so far as Jews believed on that day, they had both thought and felt too, beforehand. And as to the Gentiles, you may well be thankful that you have no such process of thought or feeling to go through, as heathenism forced upon them.

That was not, indeed, a *softening* process, any farther than suffering tends to soften the heart; and that is not far,

when nothing else co-operates. Still, *misery*, as well as meditation, is calculated to prepare the mind for the glad tidings of eternal happiness. *Wretchedness*, as well as reflection, can draw attention to good news, and teach something of the value of a remedy. Now, wretchedness must have been as common as vice, throughout the heathen world. This is no conjecture. The time is gone by, when sciolists could dupe the common sense of mankind, by pictures of happiness amongst idolaters. It is now an ascertained fact, (as might have been anticipated, from the very nature of the human mind,) that no heathen nation is happy. The most ignorant and savage are found to be *restless*, even when reckless. A mysterious dread haunts the spirit of the hunter in the wilderness, and of the cannibal of the islands. Yea, they seek more than the gratification of *appetite*, when they sell every thing for intoxicating liquors. Their craving for excitement is not simply *animal* desire; there is *conscience* in it, although they cannot define it, nor we analyze it. How much more must this have been the case, amongst the civilized heathen of Greece and Rome? He sees only the surface of men and things, who does not feel, that the very splendour of heathen temples, altars, and sacrifices, is as much the measure of the people's *consciousness* of guilt and fear, as it is the measure of their vanity, folly, taste, or genius. Men never impoverish nor tax themselves for any religion, without a *moral* reason based in the fears and misgivings of their hearts. God, who knows "what is in man," has assured us, that they were "without hope in the world;" that they were all "their lifetime in bondage, through fear of death." Now, this, with the uncertainty and practical inefficiency which hung over all their loftiest speculations, formed, not indeed, a softening process of preparation for the gospel, but still, a preparation; inasmuch as it was *experience* of the insufficiency of all human things to confer happiness.

Thus, you have no reason to grudge the thought or prayer, which your better circumstances render the best

process for obtaining grace. It is an easy process, compared with the remorse of the Jews, or with the bitter experience of the Gentiles. Remember, therefore, that both had been on the *rack* of suspense and fear, before they heard the gospel; and that this is one reason why so many of them "received the word gladly," when they first heard it. This, indeed, was not the only nor the chief reason of their prompt and cordial belief of the gospel. That was emphatically—the fruits of the Spirit; but still, not apart from the means of grace, or from the measures of Providence. Divine influence did not follow those who fled from the preaching of the gospel, nor act on those who braved all the discipline of Providence.

Having thus seen that it is no part of the Spirit's work, to implant new faculties, nor to set aside the use of scriptural or rational means, in order to our believing aright; you may now see clearly, how our natural power of believing testimony in general, becomes the principle of *divine* faith, whenever it is honestly and prayerfully applied to the belief of the divine testimony concerning Christ and salvation. Then, just as natural tears become *penitential*, when they flow from a sense of the evil of sin; and just as natural sounds become *devotion*, when they are breathed from the heart; and just as natural smiles becomes the *visible* joy of salvation, when the soul is happy in Christ, so natural faith becomes divine faith, when it believes divine and eternal things; because that exercise of our natural power is always crowned by the saving blessings of the eternal Spirit.

You may have heard, or you may yet be told, that you cannot act honestly nor seriously in trying to believe the gospel, until you are *acted upon* by the Holy Spirit. There are not a few well-meaning, as well as ill-meaning, men, who talk in this way; and, therefore, that you may not confound them together, when they attempt to confuse you, I will deal very tenderly with this objection. Now, without going into the abstract question of how *much*, or how

little, you can do, before you are acted upon by the Holy Spirit—just look at what you *have done*, already, in believing the gospel ; for, already, you believe parts of it. So far as its historical truth, and its holy design, and some of its doctrines, are concerned, it has won your faith. Well ; you have believed thus far, either *with* or *without*, the help of the Spirit. By some means, you have gone beyond both Infidels and Jews, and identified yourself, to a great extent, with true believers, so far as the general truth of the gospel is concerned. Now, if you do not ascribe, or ought not to ascribe, this degree of faith to the work of the Holy Spirit upon your heart—then, thus much you were able, of yourself, or without the Spirit, to believe : for you have done it. I do not say (mark) that you have done it *without* His help. All I say, at present, is, that thus far you have believed : and, if you cannot trace it to a higher power, then, it is a specimen of your own power, as a rational being. And, if of your power, it is also, of course, a specimen of any man's and every man's power, who is rational. Now we shall get at the facts, in this matter. You have done wrong, so far as you have overlooked the office and influences of the Holy Spirit, whilst acquainting yourself with the doctrines and duties of the gospel : but you have done right, so far as you have acquainted yourself with the claims of truth and duty. You might, however, have given as much attention to the work of the Spirit, as to the word of God. You were as capable of reading "Owen on the Spirit," as of reading Paley's or Chalmer's Evidences. And, do you not see, in the very attention you are now giving to this Essay, that you have as much power to think of divine influence, as of divine truth ? Let no man, therefore, palm off on you, the pretence that you can do *nothing* in believing the gospel, until you are conscious of the work of the Spirit upon your heart. You have *refuted* the pretence, by what you have done. Yea, and he who would teach you this pretence, refutes himself, by expecting you to believe it. For, whether he give you credit for power

to understand and believe his statements, or hope that his statements may be blessed to you, he is, in fact, claiming from you, as much attention to his own theory, as I am claiming for the gospel. Men who talk in this way, about the necessity of the work of the Spirit, utter, what *they* reckon, a cardinal truth of the gospel. Ask them, therefore, why they address it to you? If they say—"because you can or may understand and believe it," they ascribe to you, and make you responsible for, as much power as I do. And if, on the other hand, they say that "all their hope of its doing you any good, is, that the Spirit works by means," then, they contradict their own theory, and throw open the whole system of means to your activity: for, surely, if you are bound to make a good use of their *hints* it can neither be optional nor useless to improve all means.

But I would rather reason with you, than *against* such men. Now you can (and you know it) believe God, just as well, and as far, as you believe man. Of course, therefore, thus *far*, and thus *well*, you are bound to believe God. To say or think otherwise would be equally absurd and impious: absurd, because what you really *do* in giving credit to human testimony, you certainly *can* do in the case of divine testimony: impious, because if any human word deserve your faith, not to give it to the word of God, is, to put him on a level with liars. To say, therefore, that you cannot give as much faith to what God declares, as you do give to what honest men promise, would be a greater contradiction in terms, than to say that you could not give equal faith to men *equally* honest. You can believe any number of equally upright men; and, thus far at least, you can believe "*God who cannot lie.*" Have you, then, believed Him thus far, and thus well? Do not evade this question, by asking, whether this would be far enough, and well enough to amount to saving faith. For, what if it fell far short of that? What if saving faith did not even begin, until this was done? This ought to be done, and this you are as able to do, as you are able to believe two witnesses of

equal veracity. This, however, you have not done yet, nor tried to do, on *all* the points, on which "the Mighty God, the Lord, hath spoken." On some of the great truths of the gospel, you agree with him : on others you are afraid to differ from Him : but some of its truths, you have not yet brought home to yourself, nor seriously examined. Now, whatever these neglected truths may be, and whether neglected from dislike or oversight, you are criminal in thus neglecting them : because, just as capable of considering them, as you were of weighing those which you do believe. I have told you plainly, some parts of the gospel you have not set yourself to believe yet : and I must point out others, before this question can be brought to an issue. In the meantime, however, I remind you, that you have *not* believed God, where he says, that "now" only, is, *certainly*, the accepted time, or the day of salvation. You have believed that a future time would do well enough, for your day of salvation ; and even yet, you are induced to ask—will it not answer the purpose ? Here, then, is one point on which you disbelieve God. But you do not mean to say, surely, that you *cannot* believe Him on this point. "Now" may not, indeed, be the *only* day on which you could obtain salvation ; but as it is the only day you can call your own, or that you are authorized to calculate upon, all your obligations to seek an interest in Christ, centre in this day, because all your opportunities of doing so *may* expire with it.

And yet, still you hesitate to make an immediate application to the Saviour for eternal life ! This hesitation, in a matter of such infinite moment, arises from *not* believing God fully on another solemn point—the extent of your demerit and danger, as a sinner. For, although you believe that you are in some danger, and that you cannot merit salvation, you do not believe that you are in great or immediate danger of losing your soul. But why not ? If because you think that it would hardly be *fair*, or that it would be harshly just, to cut short your probation by early

death, or by judicial blindness : then, you either do not believe God when he says, that salvation is wholly of *grace*, or you do not believe Him when he says, that his long-suffering is exercised, not to delay repentance, but to *lead* to repentance. Thus you disbelieve Him, whether you imagine that you have any claim, in justice, upon grace, or upon a long day of grace ; that you run but little risk in taking liberties with his long-suffering : for all his word declares that you have no personal *right* to the grace you need, or to the time you would take.

Observe also, how much you disbelieve God when he says, that "*all*" his "paths are peace." In regard to some of the paths of duty, you doubt the truth of this declaration.

You do not believe that it would increase your present happiness to "follow the Lord fully." There is something in which you now take pleasure, that you deem more pleasant than full consecration to God. Here again, you are at issue with Him, although He has solemnly assured you that "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace."

But there would be no end to this process of search for unbelief. All preferences of earthly to heavenly things, and all pretences for delay, are just the measure of your remaining unbelief. They are not, however, the sole *causes* of it. You have not set yourself to the task of believing God, on the points where you differ from him, or doubt his word. You have not *tried* to conquer your aversions or evasions, your doubts or delays, by confronting them one by one with all the testimony of God, and all the solemnity of eternity. You have even left some of your tendencies to trifle and compromise, to take their own way. You have not only not brought them under the full light of divine truth, but you have kept out that light, that you might not see all their sinfulness and folly. Thus, in some things, you have not believed God, because you have "not come to the light" which unmasks unbelief.

But you can "come to the light" on these points ; for

you have come to it on other points. All that you believe on the subject of sin and holiness, of salvation and eternity, is from the attention you have given to the divine testimony. You would not have believed as you do, had you not read and reflected as you have done. Why, then, should you stop this process, now that you see your unbelief taking its stand upon the perilous ground of *presumptuous delay*? For all delay is presumption. What else, or less could it be? Now, if you dare not allow unbelief to take its stand against truth in general, upon the ground of mystery, nor upon the ground of divisions in the church, nor upon the ground of aversions to moral restraint—why allow it to take its stand against the particular truth—that there is no time, *certainly* a day of salvation, but the present time—upon the presumption that a future time will do as well? You can, by reading and reflection, reason yourself out of this presumption. One hour of meditation and prayer against it, would upset it; and the repetition of this process for a week would destroy it. You know—you feel—that it could not stand long before a decided attempt to put it down. You are not, therefore, thoroughly in earnest about the safety of your soul, if you grudge or hesitate to try this process. It is even unmanly to delay longer the *full* improvement of your natural powers and religious opportunities. For, see—what you allow to prevent it! “Tell it not in Gath—publish it not in the streets of Askelon,” that you, who will not allow vice to enslave you, nor infidel sophistry to seduce you, nor the world to divert you altogether from religion, yet succumb to the hollow plausibilities of a hasty presumption, that the day of your merciful visitation will last, until you choose to fix your own “convenient season.” Nor is this all that is mean and weak, in delaying to go all the length in believing, which God has gone in testifying; and all the length in obeying, which God has gone in commanding. You are standing out now, for reasons which you know you must one day give up; which you intend to give up; yea, and to *repent* of having

ever given way to them! Is this manly? It is as weak as it is wicked; you yourself being judge.

Now, what power, but that of the Holy Spirit, can effectually dislodge all this unbelief? And what means, but trying to believe, can he be expected to work by? There can be no such thing as faith, apart from the knowledge of the truths to be believed; and knowledge of them all, can only be acquired by attention to them all: and, as you are quite as capable of acquainting yourself with the parts of the gospel you have hitherto evaded, as you were of studying those which you have believed, your duty is obvious;—“whereunto you have attained; walk by the same rule, mind the same things.” Let this be your rule, whoever rail or pity. Tell any man and every man who admits that it is your duty to read and hear the word of God, that it must be your duty to *weigh* it also, as well as you can; and to believe it as much as you are able: for, if neither reading nor hearing it, be a process of trying to do without the Spirit, *considering* it, is, certainly, not a proud nor a legal process; and *praying* over it, is any thing but dishonouring the Spirit.

Hitherto, this argument has gone forward on the supposition, that the Spirit of God has had *nothing* to do with your faith, thus far. This supposition may, however, be as unfounded, as it is gratuitous. Indeed, it is unfounded; if you have ever been deeply affected by any of the great truths of the gospel. Whatever leading part of law or gospel, you cannot forget, and dare not try to get over nor resist, has been brought home to your conscience, by the Spirit of truth. You never tremble nor wept for yourself, under a sermon, nor an affliction, but He had something to do with your serious emotions: both when you could not help praying, and when you found it difficult to extricate yourself from what seemed the grasp of an invisible hand on your soul, drawing you out of the world into your closet. He was striving with you, and stirring you up to flee from the wrath to come.

You are not, therefore, an utter stranger to divine influence. God has left a witness in your heart by His Spirit, as well as in your hands by His word. Nor is this disproved by your delay or indecision, in personal religion. They are, indeed, awfully aggravated by the resistance you have made against your convictions: but they are not proofs, that the Spirit had no hand in producing these convictions. Indeed as your own spirit did not *seek* for them—and as Satan would not have excited them—where could they have come from, but from Him whose office it is, to “convince of sin?” Remember; “the carnal, or (natural) mind,” whilst entirely in a state of nature, “is enmity against God, and not all subject to the law of God,” from choice: and therefore, some degree of divine power has operated upon it, whenever its enmity to God and law, give way at all to the truth of the gospel. Do consider this. It may both lead and warrant you, to say of more spots than Jacob spoke of, “*Verily, God was in this place—although I knew it not!*” He was—in all the places, wherever you felt His character, as the God of salvation, to be attractive; or His law to be as “good” as it is holy.

Now see—what encouragements and facilities *you* have for believing the gospel fully. I mean for believing its “joyful sound.” Let nothing divert your attention from its “glad tidings of great joy.” Systematize its doctrines into a creed, if you will; or adopt, as your confession of faith, whatever formula you reckon most scriptural; but do not substitute this *theologizing*, for believing the message of mercy which the gospel brings to you. That—“is your life; and upon it, your faith and hope should fix, as the condemned criminals fix upon the royal message of pardon. That—is his first and chief object of attention. He may, afterward, admire the seal and the style of the document; but for a time he is absorbed with the great subject of it. His life was in jeopardy, and his heart in fear; and *that* relieved both at once. Your soul is in great peril, whether your heart be equally afraid or not; and nothing can relieve

either from eternal pain, but the cordial belief of the glorious gospel.

Again, I say, "in understanding be men." You cannot but see, that all the truths, which the gay and the giddy, the heedless and the heartless, refuse to believe now, they *must* believe when they stand at the bar of God. But then belief can do no good. It can do good now. No one ever *tried* to believe the Gospel, in vain.

No. V.

ON MANLY DEVOTEDNESS TO THE DIVINE GLORY.

"We must run glittering like a brook in the open sunshine,
Or we are unblest."

THIS is emphatically true of all minds, and especially of great minds. Great objects are necessary for them. For what purpose? That great minds may not prey upon themselves. Unemployed and misapplied talents, are sure to revenge themselves upon their possessors. They will not lie in the mind, like lightning in a cloud, without injuring their sanctuary or losing their energy; but will impair, at once, their shrine and themselves. Great powers were created for great purposes; and, when not applied to them, they assail each other, like wild beasts in a cage. Memory keeps conscience sleepless, and imagination torments both. The visions of fancy become the realities of sensation. The brain burns sensibly; and the palpitations of the heart are the pulsations of the soul. Thoughts are substances, and feelings convulsions.

Men of some talent, and of much taste, when they witness these woes of genius, feel thankful that they themselves are not geniuses; and prefer, infinitely, their own healthy sensations and orderly conceptions, to all the

sublime flights and brilliant flashes of morbid power. Well they may! An orbit like the comet's is, indeed, fascinating, by the vastness of its sweep, and the variety of its scenery; but a mind with the motion and character of a comet, is no enviable distinction. Better shine like the faintest star of the galaxy, than blaze like the meteors of the universe.

There is, however, no essential nor inseparable tendency to morbid disease, in great mental powers. It is not by any law of their nature that they run wild. Accordingly, when they are so engrossed, with great *public* objects, that self is absorbed in pure philanthropy, they work well. The moment a great man ceases to be his *own centre*, he begins to enjoy himself: and whenever he forgets himself on behalf of mankind, his powers move as regularly as the stars in the firmament, without tarnishing the beauty, or disturbing the repose, of their sanctuary. The reason is obvious: they find in real philanthropy, a sphere commensurate with their might, and even *surpassing* it. It is this that restores and establishes the balance of great mental powers. They cease to be felt, or to appear, *too* great, whenever the field of moral desolation opens in all its width and woes. Idolatry, slavery, and superstition, when understood, impose upon the mightiest mind—not exactly such a sense of its own weakness, as renders their overthrow hopeless; but such a conviction of the inadequacy of all mere human power to overthrow them, as the ocean, in a storm, produces, of the insufficiency of any human power to calm it. Talents are thus brought to their real level, as well as into their proper element, when fairly confronted with, and committed upon, the grand and eternal interests of the world. It is the *too little*, not the *too much* of power, that is then felt. The greatest rocks, in common with “the sands” upon the shores of the aggressive sea of evil, feel their own insufficiency to repel its waves.

This is a conviction which nothing else can produce. The ordinary pursuits, are so ordinary, that they only inflate

the consciousness of mental power. One man could produce sermons which would eclipse all the triumphs of the pulpit ; another, which would electrify a public meeting ; another, a book which would immortalize him : but they do not. Why ? They think it beneath them to appear in the arena of emulation. So it would, if the effect terminated wholly or chiefly in their own fame. To be the first preacher, the first orator, or the first writer, of his age, is a distinction unworthy of a great man to covet on its own account. In this connexion, his mind would as soon weary of it, as his head would of wearing the iron crown of Charlemagne. It would be more than an incumbrance : it would prove a curse, by throwing his mighty powers in upon himself, and loose upon each other. He might soon become a *dram-drinker*, from utter sickness of his own fame. But—let the same man espouse one or more of the grand moral interests of the world at large, and identify his being and his bliss with it, for time and eternity, and make his purpose of carrying it, his fate, and hold it to be *himself*—what aspect, then, would the pulpit, the platform, and the press wear to him ? Not that of arenas to shrink from, or to be ashamed of : but vantage grounds, on which to exhibit, not himself, but prostrate and perishing millions, crying out for liberty and salvation. Let the man who wishes to hide himself, put *them* forward ; and he will soon cease to think of himself, or to be thought of, except as their representative. How impossible it is to conceive of Wilberforce, or Howard, or Martyn, or Bogue, or Fuller, or Hughes, as thinking of *himself*, or of what others might think of his *talents*, whilst he was planning and pleading for the welfare of mankind ! What fills the public eye or the public ear, when these great names are mentioned ? The *causes* they espoused ; the *misery* they represented ; the *triumphs* they achieved. Wilberforce is only another name for African liberty : Howard, another name for philanthropy ; Bogue, and Fuller, and Martyn, and Dr. Philip, other names for missions ; and Hughes, for the Bible and

Tract Societies. Why, then, are there not more names of note, equally identified with these noble enterprises, and absorbed in them? Oh! it is not a sermon preached officially; nor a speech extorted by force; nor a solitary pamphlet upon an emergency, that amounts to an espousal of the cause of God and man. If that cause be worth any thing, it is worth more than countenance, or an occasional official effort. It demands and deserves high and habitual enthronement in the minds of great men. But, alas, it is not thus enthroned by many of them. In reference to the paramount interest of the world at large, the parable of "THE TALENTS" is often reversed. Many who have received "ten talents," bury them in the earth: whilst many, who have but "one talent," gain by its wise application, the plaudit of the judge. Only a few of the great minds of the age are thoroughly *engrossed* with the great enterprises of the age. Many profound thinkers live only to think. Some of our best writers write least. Most of the fine imaginations waste their creative power upon worthless objects; and, like amber, embalm *flies*. And, "verily, they have their reward!"

In the case of *perverted* talent, that reward is often fearful. "Weeping and gnashing of teeth" succeed unhallowed speculations; and, occasionally, the "outer darkness" of reason is both the natural and judicial consequence of unholy theorizing. Even "unprofitable servants" do not escape with impunity. They, too, have their depressions and hallucinations; their days of darkness and nights of horror. The lava-flow of their blood, and the soul-withering glare of their visions, are as much realities, as the remorse and fear of a guilty conscience. Our sympathy with men of genius, when they suffer thus, must not shut our eyes to the causes of this self-torment. If they have thought deeply, only for the sake of deep thinking: or speculated wantonly, only to show the strength of their wings; or "meddled with all knowledge," only to prove their power; what else could be expected, but the dislocation of some

mental faculty, and the disease of the whole? It is a mercy to mankind, that the perversion of intellectual power disorders or impairs it. Wild and wanton theories are but too abundant, as it is; and, could such men theorize to any extent, without unhinging their own minds, and blasting their own happiness, the public mind would soon be unsettled and poisoned. But "the lusts of the mind," like "the lusts of the flesh," cannot be indulged with impunity. They sap or shatter the mental constitution, as effectually and certainly as sensuality undermines the body: and, therefore, their effects should be as freely exposed, that they may operate as warnings.

It is, however, *inaction*, rather than extravagance, that these hints are intended to bear upon. Perverted genius is almost irreclaimable, because in general, it is irreligious. An irreligious man, however great, cannot serve any good cause effectually. BYRON could not have regenerated Greece, nor hastened her liberty, however long he had been spared to the cause he espoused, but by abandoning many of his own principles. He must have made real or pretended advances towards the Cross, in a struggle against the Crescent. He could not have raised the throne of liberty, without venerating the altar of religion. The spirit-stirring history of ancient Greece, however appealed to, or employed, would not have inspired modern Greeks, apart from the history of Christianity. The poet would have been compelled to accommodate himself to the creed of the country, before he could have wielded or awakened the energies of the country. Accordingly, he began to blend highpriests with the heroes of Thermopyle, in his appeals to the national patriotism. In like manner, all our ungodly great men find it necessary to appear to have some religion, whenever they attempt to be philanthropic.

But, it may be said, are not all our great men, who are good men, embarked in the benevolent enterprises of the age? Some of them have written powerfully, others preached eloquently, and all subscribed on their behalf.

Who, but them, originated and established our institutions? True. But ought it not to strike them with the force of a sensation; that, if their occasional efforts have been thus successful, their habitual efforts would have been *glorious*? If each of them had "lived, and moved, and had his being," in one of our institutions—throwing all his soul into it, and enthroning it wherever he went, and bending all things to its promotion, what would have been the effect? Upon *themselves*, it would have been as dew upon the tender herb, both refreshing and invigorating. They would have had no time to watch their morbid symptoms, and no temptations to indulge melancholy. Who ever heard of an active philanthropist being "devoured by the vapours?" It is impossible to conceive of a Howard, a Wilberforce, or a Carey, suffering from *ennui*, or sick of life. And, as to *insanity*, it seems physically, as well as morally impossible, in the case of minds absorbed with rational plans for the glory of God. When mighty minds become mercy-seats to the world, like the ancient mercy-seat of the temple, they are guarded by cherubim, and enshrined by the divine presence. No cloud but "*the cloud of glory*," can settle upon them.

At first sight, there may seem more fancy than fact in this assertion, and it is not true, in the case of minds which have been shattered, *before* they were consecrated to the good of mankind. These will, of course, be liable to interruptions of light and peace, however absorbed in their new object. But even such minds would gain, unspeakably, in composure and healthiness, by throwing themselves fully into a great object. No regimen of skill would so abate their unnatural action.

It must be acknowledged, however, that both popular theory and supposed fact are against this opinion. The *excitement*, inseparable from public efforts, is held to be "a lion in the way." And, certainly, if habitual effort had the same effect as occasional, shattered minds might well shrink from publicity. There are also some kinds of publicity

which highly susceptible minds ought to shrink from. But the ways in which great public objects may be promoted, are as various as the objects themselves. They may be as effectually served in the parlour and in the study, as in the pulpit or on the platform. He who dare not speak, may write with safety. He who cannot move assemblies, without agitating himself, may inspire a succession of small circles.

But the inactive are afraid of appearing *ostentatious*. Stepping forward to espouse a great cause, after having long shrunk from publicity, seems to imply a recognition of their own greatness, if not to amount to a proclamation of it. *There it is!* They have not lost nor forgotten themselves in a great cause. Its bearing upon *themselves* is still the first question with them; a plain proof that they have not studied it sufficiently. The thing to be put forward is, not themselves, but the state of others, and the man who cannot both hide and forget himself, in his exhibitions of a fallen world, has never fully sounded the *depth* of its fall, however great he may be in mind or morals.

Say not to yourself, "what has all this to do with me?" You have mind enough to make you miserable, if you live for yourself; because you live at a time when it is impossible to live ignorant of the wants and woes of a perishing world, or to pass unpunished for selfishness. The curse, even the bitter curse of Meroz, will find you out, wherever you skulk, if you come not to the "help of the Lord against the mighty." You must move on with the armies of the Living God to promote the glory of God, or be left in that sphere where neither grace nor Providence can be calculated on, to work for your good.

Say not, either, to yourself, "I cannot glorify God: nothing I am capable of doing, could amount to such service." Let us examine this objection. Now, whilst it is certainly and emphatically condescension on the part of God, to regard Himself as *glorified* by the works or the worship of the angelic hierarchy, still, it is obvious, that, if any thing

can glorify Him, their pure worship and perfect obedience must do so—because nothing finite can rise higher, or be holier, than the work and worship of angels. It is, therefore, not very difficult to conceive how God felt Himself to be really glorified, when these “morning stars” sang together over creation—and when they shouted Alleluia over the mysterious scenes of Providence—and when they sang a New Song on the completion of the majestic scheme of Redemption. For what more or better could they have done? They concentrated all their powers of observation upon these wonderful works of God, and celebrated them with all their powers of feeling and utterance. Accordingly, God condescended to accept of this adoring homage, just as they intended it—as the highest tribute of glory they could present.

Even we ourselves feel, that, if we could burn with seraphic ardour, or bow with angelic humility, or serve with cherubic alacrity, that our worship would amount to something, somewhat like—glorifying God. It would, indeed, even then, be *less* than God deserves: but still, it would be immensely better than it is now, and more like a tribute of glory. As it is now, we find some difficulty in calling even our good works, *obedience*; or our best worship *devotion*. Even when we give most liberally to the cause of God, and suffer most patiently under the mighty hand of God, we hardly venture to say or think, that we have glorified God. And were any one—however much a stranger to all flattery and compliment—to say to us, after the most signal act of obedience or submission—“Well, you have glorified God in this matter,” we should feel afraid to say, “Yes” and even hesitate to say, “*I hope so.*”

Is this low estimate of what we do and give in the service of God, entirely from *humility*? Could no other cause be assigned for our modesty, than our conviction that, after having “done all, we are but unprofitable servants?” Does not our shame arise oftenest from the consciousness of not having done *all* that we might have done for God?

However this may be, one thing is certain ; that both in doing and giving, in the service of God, we ought to aim expressly at *glorifying* God. He condescends to regard the service of men, as well as of angels, as a tribute of glory to Himself ; and, therefore, it is neither humility nor good sense, to shrink from viewing duty as God represents it.

Why did not Paul say to the redeemed Corinthians, "SERVE God with your body and spirit, seeing ye are bought with a price ?" Serving or obeying God, includes all the acts and efforts which glorifying God includes : but still, Paul says, "*Glorify God.*" Why ? Obviously, because what is done with a view to honour or glorify God, will be *better* done, even if there be no greater amount of obedience in the action itself. In general *more* will be done from this motive ; because we are always more generous, when we design to pay *honour*, than when we proceed to discharge debts. We apply the rule of bare justice to debts : but when we wish to honour a man, we do our utmost.

So it is in the service of God. Until we are concerned both to please and glorify Him, we shall calculate how *little* will pass for service. But the moment we propose to ourselves to give God a mark of our love, or a pledge of our zeal, we shall try to do our best.

Let us inquire into the *extent* of the obligation to glorify God. Is it universally binding on all men, or is it binding only upon the redeemed ? Now so far as the oracle, just quoted, is concerned, the duty is enforced only upon those who are "*bought with a price,*" or redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. All such are emphatically—"not their own ;" but each of them under infinite obligations to glorify God.

Are you, then, "your own," and under no such obligation, if you be not sure, that you are redeemed by the blood of Christ ? Are you at liberty to employ your body and spirit, your time and talents, just as you like, so long as you do not, or cannot, regard yourselves as "the Re-

deemed of the Lord?" Does moral obligation not *begin*, until personal redemption is ascertained, to our satisfaction, and sensibly enjoyed?

If not—it is evident that there would be very few to enforce the obligation, to glorify God, upon. Yes: very few; for many of the avowed followers of Christ are afraid to say, "*He loved me, and gave himself for me.*" Were, therefore, the duty to be confined to those who possess the *assurance* of faith; and were all free, to live as they choose, who doubt their own redemption, how little could be done for the promotion of the divine glory at home or abroad?

What ought I say on this subject? You see at a glance, that it might be rendered deeply and terribly controversial. It will not, however, be rendered so by me. I will confine myself to simple first principles, and keep you close to them, so long, at least, as you continue to read.

Now it is our interest to live to the glory of God, even if we knew nothing else about our personal redemption, but just that we *need* to be redeemed.

Men who need the redemption of their souls from sin and hell, can only double their guilt and danger, by neglecting to glorify God. Indeed, we could not do better, nor yet so well, as try to glorify Him, even if we did not need deliverance from the wrath to come.

Were we, therefore, absolutely, "*our own*," and thus irresponsible masters of our time and talents—of our powers and property—it would be our interest to consecrate ourselves, body, soul and spirit, unto God. For, mark!—we must give ourselves up to *something*. Neither the soul nor the body, can be kept out of all employment, or kept clear of all purposes. They will do something, and do it for the sake of some object. Money will go for something. Time will be well filled up in some way. Influence will forward some purpose. They cannot terminate entirely nor chiefly in themselves. We must have an *object* to live for, whatever it be.

Now there is no object, to be compared with the glory

of God. What is done and given to promote that, can neither be lost nor repented. It will *tell* on both the temporal and eternal benefit of mankind. It is as sure to do good as that God cannot lie. Accordingly, all that has been done for the glory of God in any age, has done positive and permanent good to the world. In fact, more than one half of all our national privileges and social advantages spring, instrumentally, from what former generations did for the glory of God. Our remote ancestors did not, indeed, act on very pure principles, nor from the best of motives, when they filled the land with sanctuaries, and enriched it by seats of learning. There was much ostentation in their zeal, and more legality in their charities. They rather aimed at propitiating and bribing God, than at glorifying Him. But still—what they spent in this way, God overruled for His own glory and thus for good to the country.

The matter comes, therefore, to this—What could we give ourselves to, that would be so good for ourselves or others, as the promotion of the divine glory? Are they gainers, in health or happiness, who do nothing for God? They act, indeed, as if they were their *own*; but they are the servants, if not the slaves, of something which often sickens them in this world, and never brightens the aspect of the next world. Even men of genius and talent (as we have seen) are invariably the victims of their own mighty powers whenever they live for their own fame, or for an object unworthy of eternity. Let us, however, look at ourselves. Now we are not our own, whatever may be our relation to the redemption which is by Christ Jesus.

Were we even excluded from it, or past redemption, we could not be absolutely our own. No man can be really independent of God. No man has any such possession of life, health, reason, or property, as to be sole *master* of them. He may refuse to glorify God with them; but he cannot resist God, if God lay His hand upon them.

One man may look at the mystery of redemption, and excuse himself; and another, at its holiness, and dislike it;

and another, at its claims, and grudge them; but all three are equally at the *disposal* of God. They cannot take themselves out of His hands. It is, therefore, the very height of folly, as well as of effrontery, to evade the claims of God upon our time, property or power: for we have no time, but just what He allows; no property, but just what He spares; no powers, but just what He sustains; and, therefore, we can only *peril* them all, by devoting none of them to His glory. We are masters of nothing, but of what He makes us masters; and of that, no longer or further than He thinks proper: and surely it is not the way to *prolong* possession, to employ it contrary to the designs and demands of God.

Whatever, therefore, be our real or imaginary position towards redemption now—this is our actual position towards all we are or have;—entire and total dependance on the will of God. It is not, therefore, redemption, that *makes* a man not his own. That increases and confirms his obligations to glorify God; but it does not create nor originate them. He could not be his own, even if there were no Redeemer; and as there is a Redeemer, able and willing to save unto the very uttermost, we ought willingly to consecrate ourselves to the divine glory. For it certainly will not, and cannot, hinder the redemption of any man, to do whatever he can to glorify God.

What! it may be said, is there no danger of falling into self-righteousness and self-dependance, by trying to be good, and to do good, before conversion? May not a man rest in his doings and givings, and thus ruin his soul by overlooking the Saviour?

Alas! this is possible—for there is a natural and strong propensity in the heart, to make a merit—even a righteousness, of well-doing and benevolence. There is, however, another side of the question now before us:—will *evil* doing, or doing *no* good, forward a man's salvation, or prevent him from overlooking the Saviour? No well-doing will or can merit salvation, certainly; but neither can the *neglect*

of well-doing procure it, or tend to lead to it. Indeed, nothing can so peril the soul—as sin and selfishness—because their direct tendency is to harden the heart, and to sear the conscience: and thus to send away and keep away the man from all the means of grace. Whereas, in doing something in the service and for the glory of God—the unconverted are brought and kept under the gospel; and thus exposed to the perpetual influence of a check upon their self-righteous and legal tendencies.

That minister pays but a poor compliment to the gospel itself—and he tacitly passes a heavy reflection upon his own preaching of it, who is afraid to urge upon the unconverted and undecided, the duty of departing from evil and doing good. What is his preaching worth, if it cannot prevent such hearers from imagining, that they are meriting grace or mercy? A minister ought to be as able to strip them of their own righteousness, as to stir them up to works of righteousness and charity. He ought as much to remember and teach that solemn oracle, which declares—“He shall have judgment without mercy, who showed no mercy,” as that which declares, that, “by the deeds of the law, no flesh living shall be justified.” Besides, trying to glorify God by good conduct and benevolence, has a direct tendency to promote the redemption of the soul.

We have seen that it cannot *hinder* salvation by grace, if the duty be wisely inculcated. How it can *help* it, is ~~not~~ quite as obvious, when calmly considered. I mean, however, by help—nothing more than when I say that reading the scriptures and hearing the gospel, help to promote the redemption of the soul. Now these are real helps towards acquiring the knowledge of the *way* of redemption—and knowledge of the *need* of redemption—and knowledge of the freeness, value, and holiness of it. Neither reading nor hearing help to ransom the soul—nor to pay its debts—nor to purchase its pardon—nor to merit heaven: but they do help to bring the soul acquainted with the worth of these blessings, and to bow the soul in humble

prayer at the cross and the mercy-seat, for them. Now, just in the same way—is trying to glorify God, a help. It merits nothing—it balances no account—it compensates for no sin ; but it promotes the redemption of the soul, by promoting the knowledge of it, and concern for it.

And in this way :—let any man visit the death-bed of either a saint or a sinner, to glorify God by manifesting sympathy, or by giving relief if it be wanted ; and he will both hear and see, in the case of the former, how the hope of salvation can sustain patience under suffering, and impart composure even in the valley of the shadow of death : and, in the case of the latter, he will see either the anguish of remorse, or the insensibility of impenitence, which the neglect of the great salvation always produces. And will not this help to promote concern for his own salvation ? Or, let him, from a regard to the glory of God, visit the Sunday school in his neighbourhood, and mark, at once, both the patience of the teachers, and the varied manifestations of character in the children ;—and let the visits be repeated, and the progress of religion watched in this nursery for eternity ; and he cannot fail to feel, that ours is a world that needs redemption : and that man, even in childhood, is a creature naturally unfit for heaven, as well as unworthy of it.

Or, let him consult the glory of God, by considering the case of the perishing heathen—along with whom he is passing to eternity—with whom he must be confronted at the judgment-seat—and for whom he could now do something by sending the gospel to them—and *like* whom, he would not be for worlds :—and, will not this contrast of his own case with theirs, tend, and that mightily, to enhance the value of his privileges, and make him alive to his responsibility ? In a word, there is no department of zeal or benevolence, but may prove instructive and impressive to any man ; and thus useful to his soul.

Consider now the peculiar force of the motive, which personal redemption furnishes on behalf of living to the

divine glory. "Ye are not your own: you are bought with a price." Paul does not say—a great price, nor an infinite price. He knew its greatness too well to attempt a description of it by words. In this he imitated the Saviour, when he spoke of the love of God, in providing a Redeemer. He did not say how much, nor how warmly, God loved the world: but with a simplicity, which proves that description was baffled, he said, "God *so loved* the world, as to give His only begotten Son." In like manner, the precious blood of Christ is a ransom-price for the soul, which cannot be reckoned. Like his love—"it passeth knowledge."

Now, it was to this view of the redeeming price, that the apostles and the primitive Christians, *adjusted* the scale of their doing, giving, and suffering, for the glory of God and the Lamb. At Pentecost, no man, but Ananias, said, "*that aught he had was his own.*" They even took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and the loss of their lives. There, was the force of the motive! The world never saw such a movement. It was, however, in fine harmony with all that had happened on the great day of atonement, when the price of redemption was paid. Then, the sun felt that its light was not its own—and shone not. The earth felt that its strength was not its own—and trembled. The dead felt that their graves were not their own—and came forth. Angels felt that their harps were not their own—and were silent. No wonder! The Lord of life and glory was not his *own* on that awful day. He was then "the propitiation for *our* sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." He neither lived for Himself, nor died for Himself, whilst he was in our world; and both in living and dying, he left us an example, that we should walk in his steps.

That example is as *inspiring* as it is perfect. Why, then, should the inspiration be lost on your heart, or its constraining influence, uninfluential on your habits? You are not excluded from the benefits of his atoning sacrifice. You

are as welcome to trust in His cross, as you are obliged to copy His example. It is as much your duty to hope in Christ, as to obey Christ. Let no man deceive you on this point. No man knows anything to the contrary, and you do not, cannot *wish*, to have neither part nor lot in the great propitiation. Whatever, therefore, you may have to suspect, or others insinuate, against your personal warrant and welcome to hope in Christ, neither you nor they can *disprove* your warrant or your welcome. Nothing could disprove either, but an express message from God, prohibiting hope in your case: and even an *angelic* messenger would not be a sufficient voucher for the truth of such an interdict. You or I would, indeed, think it only too true, were "an angel (seemingly) from heaven" to announce it. We could never, perhaps get over such a discouragement: but still, the testimony of no single angel, unless accredited by as many and majestic miracles as the gospel presents, would warrant any man to believe, that God had cut him finally off from mercy. And if there would be good *reason* to suspect, that an apparent seraph, with such a message, was but "Satan transformed into an angel of light," what is the worth or weight of any man's speculations, or of your own suspicions, about your *personal* welcome? Nothing can disprove or discredit it, whilst God continues you under the gospel. It would, indeed, be ominous, if you were struck blind, like Simon, for your past treatment of the good ways of God: but even in that case, apostolic counsel would be, "repent of thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

In a word, you have to do with nothing, but the gospel, so far as the question of your own warrant to hope for salvation, is concerned. Neither man nor angel can invalidate the invitation, or the command which it presses upon you. Take care, therefore, that you yourself neither adopt, nor give way to, any opinion, or surmise, which tends to make the gospel not "*good news*," to you. No matter what such a suspicion is drawn from, nor in what spirit it is indulged;

it impugns the *grace* of the gospel, just as infidelity impugns the *truth* of the gospel. There is, indeed, a mighty difference between the man who suspects, that he has no part nor lot in the great redemption, and the man who denies the truth of redemption. The latter is both a sceptic and a scerner: whereas the former may have no ill will nor bad design against the gospel. Nothing, therefore, can be farther from my intention, than to identify the two. Still, if a man so strip the gospel of its grace, that he can only "tremble" whilst he believes; he is, however unintentionally, impugning its character. It was not sent to make him tremble of sorrow, as one for whom there is no hope. It is as much glad tidings as it is true tidings: and, therefore, if he would shrink with horror from raking up the ashes of heresy and controversy, to make out a pretence against its truth, he ought not to rake up either the ashes of his old sins, nor the plagues of his own heart, to find reasons for doubting its grace. Any heart or life would, indeed, furnish overwhelming proof, that there is an utter unworthiness of grace, and no possibility of meriting it. Salvation is, however, graciously promised, in answer to prayer, and that by a God who cannot lie; and, therefore, it is just as wrong to doubt of success, as it would be to demand legally.

It is not, however, here, that you are in most danger. The kind of doubts to which the last paragraph refers, are not very likely to cross your mind, except when you want an excuse for living unto yourself, or for neglecting to glorify God in your body and spirit. Most solemnly, therefore, do I warn and abjure you, not to tamper with the questions which are kept afloat, about the extent of redemption. At your peril take nothing from that quarter, to excuse yourself from activity or benevolence, in the cause of God. Your body and spirit are His, however you may speculate about "secret things." Your all is in His hands, at His disposal—at His will: you, therefore, risk every thing, if you do nothing to glorify God. And in your case, temporal ruin, or the more tremendous curse of a portion in this life only,

must be the consequence of sloth and selfishness ; because you have little or no temptation to doubt, except for *worldly* purposes. An ignorant or weak man may stand idle amidst the activities of the church, from sheer inability to comprehend the connexion between diligence and dependance, means and ends ; but you can plead no such excuse.

Bring together now the hints thrown out in this essay. Let both the warnings and the wooings commend disinterested public spirit to your heart and conscience. Resolve not to live unloved, nor to die unmissed. Never think of going to heaven alone ; except when you want to be stirred up to try how *many* you can take with you. Make sure of one, and you will be sure to try to win more.

Let not these claims upon your co-operation surprise you. You can co-operate in promoting the divine glory. Had you no other talent, but the power of teaching children to read in the Sunday school ; and no other time, but the intervals of public worship—you may be a great blessing in your neighbourhood. And whatever be your talents, this would not be unworthy of a part of your time. That young man's mental vision is either weak or jaundiced, who sees no *glory* about Sunday schools. True ; they are not "the sun that rules by day, nor the moon that rules by night," in the moral world ; but they are the stars of its firmament, created and sustained by the same hand that planted the sanctuary and pointed to the closet. They are too, stars that will fight "in their courses," against the *Siseras* of tyranny, and superstition, and infidelity. He who "bringeth out the hosts of heaven in their seasons," brought out these schools, in the season when the history of the world was about to begin anew, and when the institutions of the world began to be remodelled. Rational liberty wanted them. The age of Bibles wanted them. Missionary enterprise wanted them. Slavery could not have been abolished without them. They have "greatly helped" on, all that is good or promising at home and abroad. Not that they taught children the elements of wise policy,

or of public spirit : but the men who taught children, and saw children learn to read the Bible, saw also what a nation reading the Bible, should be and would be. Philanthropists learnt *more* than they intended to teach. Even mere politicians, although they knew not how it was created, found a public opinion abroad in the country, upon which every moral question could fall back without losing ground, and rest until it was irresistible. For, why can no great moral question be lost now, from the moment it is mooted? Obviously, because its merits can be appreciated at once, by all the friends of education. And they see them, not only in the abstract, but also in their practical bearings upon a Bible-taught community. Thus whilst there are no politics in Sunday schools, they help mightily to place and keep all national objects in their true light.

But the grand bearings of these seminaries are upon eternity. This is not seen, however, when attention is confined to the instances of *early* piety, which individual schools present to the eye. These are not few : but they are nothing, to the general preparation which is made for eventual piety. There is something for the gospel to work upon—to appeal unto—in all who learn to read the word of God. They can never forget all their lessons, nor lose all their early impressions. Both prosperity and adversity will recall the memory of their teachers, their class, and their convictions of duty ; and thus Providence, as well as Grace, will find much to turn into account. And they will turn it to *good* account. This sowing “to the Spirit,” is itself, a pledge that Providence will watch, and the Spirit water, the seed of eternal life. God would never have put it into the hearts of so many, to sow the precious seeds in the hearts of the young, had He not intended to produce an eventful harvest of ripe fruits, which should bless the earth, and even beautify the heaven of heavens. Consecrated teachers will, therefore, see, long before the day of judgment declare it, that they had not laboured in vain. They will often hear the harps of angels struck to celebrate

the repentance of some of their scholars. Their mansions of glory will be frequently gladdened by the entrance of some spirit, to whose childhood they ministered on earth, and in whose maturity and fellowship they shall rejoice for ever. Be a teacher, if you can do nothing else. There will be a "Sunday-School *Jubilee*" in heaven, as surely as there will be a ministerial jubilee.

But you can do more than teach children: you can learn "to speak a word in season," to the sick and the dying. Amongst them too, a harvest may be reaped, which shall sweeten your own life, and swell the songs of eternity. The lingering death-beds of the poor and the wretched, are the last appeals which God makes to our sympathies, on behalf of their souls. It is not by accident that they suffer so much or so long. He is giving them "space for repentance," that we may give them the knowledge of salvation. He forbears to cut them down at once, as cumberers of the ground, that we dig about them, and thus see if they will bear fruit. Work, therefore, for God, if you would not weep, in time. Work, if you would not weep through eternity.

No. VI.

ON MANLY ESTIMATES OF THE EVIL OF SIN.

IT is just as true that *trifles* are not sins, as that *sins* are not trifles. Whilst, therefore he is emphatically a fool, who "mocks at sin," he is certainly not a wise man, who reckons every thing sinful, which some good people call so. There are *singular* consciences amongst the pious, as well as "seared consciences" amongst the profane. Better, indeed, "strain" equally at a gnat and a camel, than "swallow" both at once, or either with equal ease. Singularity is infinitely better, as well as safer, than insensibility; but,

as both are extremes, they ought to be carefully avoided : the former, that our "good may not be evil spoken of;" and the latter, that we may not make "shipwreck of a good conscience."

It has long been proverbial—and long may it continue so—that singularity is the safest side to err on : but still, an *error* in judgment, even if in favour of piety, is not a desirable auxiliary to piety. It furnishes those who dislike religion with a pretence against religion.

You have heard of the "*pious frauds*" of Popery. This name is given to the *first* series of false miracles and visions which were got up in favour of religion, before the Romish Church *traded* in "lying wonders" and popular delusion. And although, of course, no fraud can be pious, it is not improbable that some good men really meant well, when they connived at the pretence—of holy relics, and heavenly visions, and miraculous images. At least, they did not intend to furnish infidelity with weapons against revelation ; nor anticipate that the scorers of future ages, would confound Christianity itself, with the superstitions of that age. Good intentions did not, however, prevent bad consequences. The school of Voltaire and Volney unmasked these frauds, and impudently charged them upon Christianity, although *it* had both predicted and denounced them as "lying wonders." In like manner, there is no small danger of thinking too lightly of *sin* itself, when trifles are held up as sinful, or singularities paraded as virtuous. Sin is the transgression of the laws of God, and the penalty of sin is the wrath of God : things, infinitely too solemn, to be enforced against trifles, or matters of doubtful disputation. We ought, therefore, to be very careful to confine the epithet *sinful*, to the actions and dispositions which God calls sinful ; and never to confound real infirmities, or mere accidents, with sins. For, when every thing that is not strictly religious, is reckoned sinful, what is really sinful will not be reckoned very criminal or dangerous.

It is not—O, it is not ! by confessing that "in all things

we sin," that we shall acquire the deepest hatred or fear of sin. Such a confession looks humble, and may be well meant ; but it is any thing but holy in its influence, except on those who are far advanced in holiness. Upon the generality, it has just this effect ; they regard sinning, as so much a matter of course ; that they are *afraid* of nothing but flagrant crimes. Accordingly, if they keep clear of them, they make no great effort to be very circumspect ; for having laid their account with sinning in all things, they excel in nothing. Because they can do nothing perfectly, they do not try how *well* any thing can be done. Because "we deceive ourselves" if we say we have "*no sin*," they do not exert themselves to avoid sin, nor to discover how little it may be reduced to. Because they confess it in all things, they imagine that they cannot forsake it entirely in any thing. "*This is a sore evil under the sun.*"

Should these hints commend themselves to your common sense, you must not be surprised if some people both question their truth, and express alarm at their tendency. Eminently good people will, indeed, be glad to see you discriminate between weakness and wickedness, infirmity and sin : but those who have not conscience enough to try how *well* they can act, will, in order to hush up their suspicions of themselves, suspect you of some doctrinal heresy. Let no clamour tempt you, however, to confound trifles with sins. If you come to do that, you will soon confound sins with trifles, and take both easily. Better try how much *truth* you can speak, than have to confess lies, however humbly. Better try how *temperate* you can be every day, than have to weep over excess, however penitently. Better try how much you can *govern* your tongue and temper, than have to stand self-condemned for the neglect of self-control. Those who deem it enough to ask *pardon* for such sins, without guarding against the recurrence of them, may insinuate, that you are too proud to feel your need of daily pardon ; and too ignorant of the spirituality of the divine law—to be aware of your sinfulness. All this is easily

said; and you ought to retort it solemnly, whenever it is said by those who *blunder* through life without much rule or conscience. You have, indeed, much to learn, both in regard to the extent of the divine requirements and your need of daily pardon: but you will not learn either well, by leaving truth, temperance, or self-control, to accident and circumstances. In fact, nothing could blind you more to the spirituality of the eternal law, than falling into the habit of regarding it as a matter of course, that sinning in all things is inevitable. *Imperfection* in all things is inevitable: but there is a mighty difference between coming short of the standard, after an honest effort to do well, and the sin of making no effort, or the sloth of letting duty take its chance. Try, therefore, to do your very *best* in something good, if you would ascertain either your own weakness, or your absolute need of mercy and grace.

On the other hand, great care must be taken, lest the real distinctions between sin and imperfection, fault and foible, be perverted. "A straw will show which way the wind blows;" and things, in themselves, but trifling, reveal the real state of the heart. It is, therefore, no answer to a charge of ungodliness, when it happens to be made in connexion with the animated pursuit of some amusement, to ask—"What harm is there in that amusement?" This is an unmanly subterfuge, if the pursuit engross all your spare time, and absorb all your thoughts. Then—it is no trifle! for it has banished God from the mind, outweighed eternity, and infatuated the soul.

It is very easy to get up special pleadings on behalf of a favourite object, and to prove that there is nothing in its nature or tendency, which is morally wrong: but the real question is—what place does it occupy in your heart, and what portion of your time does it consume? Music is not sinful, nor painting a waste of time, nor science unworthy of a Christian; but if they usurp the throne of the heart, what more could the worst vice do? It is the heart that God claims; and if it be withheld from Him, a literary

excuse will avail as little as a sensual or secular apology. How could it be otherwise? It is, indeed, right to improve the mind by literature, and not wrong to blend some amusement with study: but it is an utter perversion of terms—an outrage on common sense and decency—to call that an *improvement* of the mind which banishes God from the mind: to call that an *amusement*, which renders divine and eternal things unpleasant to the heart.

How language can be abused! “I am only improving my mind;” said a young man who was leaving neither time nor thought for religion. Science and literature were his all in all. He confessed that he never prayed—seldom opened the Bible—and never enjoyed the sanctuary: and yet, he pretended that he was *improving* his mind! I need not, surely, expose either the fallacy or the effrontery of this pretence. He might just as well have talked of the morning star, improving its brilliancy by receding from the sun. He certainly forgot, that the eternal improvement of the mind will arise from eternal contemplation of divine things. How then can that be a step towards it, which is a departure from them? But I forbear. Harmless and even proper objects, may be pursued, in a spirit, and to a degree, which render them as fatal to the soul as flagrant crimes can be.

Is it not, then, of immense, yea, of infinite importance, to form solid and solemn views of the evil of sin? It should be as impossible for us to think lightly of any sin, as of the shrieks of bodily agony, or the yells of mental disease. It should be held as infamous and unnatural, to smile at sin, as to mock at suffering: for “*sin is the transgression of the law.*”

If this consideration do not make you tremble at sin, you must have very vague notions of the eternal law. Did you ever look at the exact amount of your knowledge of divine law? Did you ever question yourself on the subject? True, the law is the rule of life to us; but it as much so, as if an angel walked at our side, pointing out the path of

duty and waving a flaming sword against every sin. It is more! It is such a rule of life, as if we heard the actual voice of Jehovah behind us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, and turn neither to the right hand nor the left." Yea, were the King Eternal visible, we could not be more obligated to dread sin, than we now are, however much more awed we might be. We are, indeed, very much the creatures of circumstances; and, accordingly, were Sinai to thunder again from time to time, or its lightnings again to lighten the world, the law would command attention. But, what are thunders however loud, or lightnings however vivid, compared with the *calm majesty of Jehovah's solemn silence*? In that deep calm, we hear the beatings of His heart against *sin*; and yet all in sympathy towards sinners. God is too much in earnest to *thunder* law, now that man can read it—and now that nations do not require forty years' discipline in a wilderness, before they can discern between good and evil. Having finished redemption from the curse of the law, by the atonement of His Son, God has finished, too, the process of enforcing obedience by miracles; and thrown man, in the manhood of the world, upon the mighty energies and resources of the new covenant; that thus conscience might be the *Sinai* of the law, and memory and judgment its *tables*, and the heart its *ark*.

Thus God treats us as men, that we may be manly in our veneration of divine law. It is to the moral universe, what the laws of nature are to the material universe—the source and the secret of strength and order. Who would tamper with the law of *gravitation* in the solar system, or try to stop the smallest wheel in the machinery of that system, even if he could disturb them? The bare idea of falling stars, and loosened comets, would paralyze the boldest hand; or an indignant world would arrest and chain it. He is, however, a greater enemy of his species, and of his own soul, who would destroy or disturb the authority of *moral* law, as a whole, or in any of its parts.

It will also help you to form solid and solemn views of the evil of sin, if you will calculate the tendency of any sin, to prolong and spread itself. It does not stop when the sinner stops, nor die at his death. "The guilty ambition of Jeroboam put into operation a principle of evil which gathered strength and malignant energy by the lapse of ages, and gave rise to a complication of crime, and a continued accumulation of suffering, which omniscience alone can fully estimate or understand."—(Dr. Gordon.) This awful case, although singular in degree, is not so in kind. Even in degree, Voltaire was the *Jeroboam* of France. 'The leaven of infidelity, which he infused into the lump of continental society, has not, indeed, "leavened the whole lump:" but how widely it has wrought—how deeply it has penetrated—how direfully it has operated! And, when is it likely to work itself out, or be eradicated?

It is not, indeed, so easy to trace the *trail* of the seducer, a gambler, a forger, or a drunkard, throughout all the circle and cycle of his influence: but each of them, also transmits to posterity the *venom* of his own besetting sin. Their immediate victims are not their only, perhaps not their chief victims. The immediate victim of a seducer is, a daughter of parents whose hearts are well nigh broken by her fall: the sister of brothers or sisters whose place and prospects in life are lowered by her fall: the mother of a child who inherits shame, and has no fair chance of acquiring character. Thus the evil begins to ramify! And all this is but the beginning of sorrows and sin. Her brothers and sisters, thrown into a lower sphere of life, with less self-respect, and fewer friends, continue to sink in the scale of society; and, then, their offspring, like her own, rise up to spread and perpetuate misery and crime. The seducer originates this incalculable and interminable line of evil! Employ it, therefore, to fathom his *depth* in guilt, and in the bottomless pit.

The fraud and forgery of extravagance work in the same way. The guilt of the gay Lothario is not measured, nor

its results calculated, when the money he has squandered is summed up, nor when the feelings of his family are reckoned. More than the *hopes* of his parents are blasted. Their *place* in society is altered, however much they retain the sympathy of society. They cannot place another of their sons, however steady, in the confidential situation which their prodigal abused. Even their daughters, however deserving, are thrown from the *vantage* ground of commanding influence. Not, indeed, that either the sisters or brothers of the prodigal, are at all identified with him in principle or character, nor at all suspected: but still, they have not all their wonted influence. They cannot do nor attempt all, they once could. Even when others can forget or overlook the cloud which has fallen on their house, the family themselves cannot. They are unable to breathe under it, with their usual freedom; or to walk beneath it, with all the natural independence of their original bearing. They do not exactly stoop, nor succumb, nor shrink, nor falter: but yet, they are not altogether their former selves. Thus the fraudulent spendthrift breaks the heart of his parents, and cripples the energies of the whole family. And, what is he himself, wherever he may go? True, he may retrieve his character abroad. There are solitary instances of successful reformation, amongst both voluntary and transported exiles. But whatever else they gain or regain, they never recover *self-respect*. When that morning star of the breast has set amidst the tear and shame of home, it never rises again in another hemisphere, however character may rally, or property accumulate. Even *piety* cannot restore lost self-respect. It is not intended to do so. It is one of its glories, that it deepens self-condemnation, in the very proportion that it relieves the heart from the fear of final condemnation. Wherever, therefore, such an exile is—whether amidst the sunny plains of Australia, or the solemn forests of America—every attempt he makes to render the wilderness a fruitful field, and especially its success, when “the wilderness blossoms like the rose,” forces

back his thoughts to his father-land and entangles them with all the painful associations of home. For he cannot help assimilating his foreign house, and garden and fields, to the home-model ; and thus, as they advance to perfection, they throw him back at every step upon the scenes of his youth. He cannot forget, whatever be his character : and if he is indeed, "a new man," he never can forgive himself, however vivid or strong his hopes of divine forgiveness may be. Self-condemnation will be a perpetual and ponderous balance-wheel upon all his hopes and joys.

He may marry well, and be justly beloved both as a husband and a father ;—but he has a *secret* which he dare not confide to the wife of his bosom ; and he must tell his children a *garbled* tale, when they ask him about his country parents ; and he may acquire and deserve the esteem of his neighbours ; but even that, when it is most gratifying, will awaken "the gnawing worm" of his deep consciousness—that if they *knew all* they would not respect him. He may even take a commanding place in civil and religious society, and become as useful as he is reformed ; but no public confidence nor private deference, he may receive, can ever restore the early sunshine of his conscience. It is impossible, in the very nature of things. The *millstone* he hung around his own neck, at home, he must carry with him wherever he goes ; and even if no one see it or suspect it, it will often sink his spirits in a sea of agony or abstraction, which he cannot entirely conceal from others.

It is necessary to speak out on this painful subject. I would not take from any parent or his prodigal, any thing that the proverb—" *many a broken ship has come to land*"—really teaches. Such a broken ship, however, can no more sail on trading voyages, in her old seas : and in new seas she must sail *water-logged*, however well she may be repaired or piloted.

These hints on the evil of sin are additional to those in the first part of this series of Guides ; and should not

be judged of, apart from the arguments, there, founded on the character of God, and the cross of Christ.

No. VII.

PAUL'S MANLY GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

"God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross." God forbid! Paul? Why, God has forbidden all glorying which is not in Christ crucified. Accordingly, the express and authoritative command of God is, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Glorying in any thing but his cross, is solemnly forbidden by the voice of all the sacrifices. From the altar of Abel to the last altar in the second temple, their united voice is, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." It is forbidden by all the harps of prophecy: they mingle their sweet notes around the cross of Emmanuel, and the swell of their harmonious chorus is, "Neither is there salvation in any other." It is forbidden by all the trumpets of the gospel: their uniform and re-echoing peal is "Christ is all and all." It is forbidden by all the armies of heaven. Cherubim and seraphim forbid it, by their adoration of the Lamb slain. Angels and archangels forbid it, by their admiration of the sufferings. The noble army of martyrs and the general assembly of the redeemed forbid it, by their universal and eternal song. "Unto him that loved us and washed us in his own blood, be glory for ever." Nothing—no sin, in the whole catalogue of crime, is so often, so loudly, so solemnly, forbidden, as glorying in any thing save the cross of Christ. Paul knew all this well: far better than I can express or conceive; and yet he felt it necessary to pray, in the face of all these facts; "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross." Why? The apostle was afraid

of his own heart ; and therefore felt anxious, that what God had spoken by his word, should be respoken by his Spirit ; and thus all legal glorifying be effectually forbidden in his mind for ever. And is not such an inward forbidding wanted in your soul ? The outward prohibition has sounded in your ears like the Sinai trumpet, long and loud ; but how few glory at all in the cross—how many glory in any thing rather than the cross. Oh ! there is need for prayer, and reflection too, that this neglect and coldness toward Christ crucified, may be overcome and remedied. But this it never will be, by the formal and passing “ God forbid ” of the slothful or thoughtless. Neglect will, however, prove their ruin, if they do not procure its ruin ; and kill the soul, if not killed in the soul. Consider this, ye that forget God.

The language of Paul is not, however, chiefly that of prayer : it is a burning burst of holy indignation against false teachers and false doctrine. Paul had sown the Galatian field with “ good seed,” and the enemies of the cross had come after him sowing tares. He had formed a church around the cross ; and for a time it was united, steadfast, and holy. Its standard was its strength. Satan knew this, and turned his strength against the cross. Reproach opened all her mouths to defame it ; persecution wielded all her weapons to defeat it ; philosophy branded it as foolishness ; legality gnashed her teeth at it, in mingled rage and contempt ; until in Galatia it was held disgraceful, and found to be dangerous, to glory in the cross of Christ. Then its summer friends, like swallows, fled from the winter of its unpopularity. Its avowed enemies erected a new standard formed out of the wrecks of Judaism ; and, by compulsion or fraud, were gathering a new church around it. Paul saw this melancholy defection and wept ; saying, “ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified.” Paul saw this shameful defection, and kindled as the ancient

prophets were wont, when they beheld the rival altars of Baal and Moloch: "If any man," said he, "preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." The conscientious apostle looked upon the ministers of this heresy, and seeing them truckling to the public taste; entangling the weary and terrifying the weak—he despised their baseness; and, feeling himself crucified to the world, which enslaved them, exclaimed, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross."

The holy and happy apostle looked also upon the wandering sheep of his scattered fold: the dew of heaven was no longer on their fleece; Mount Zion no longer yielded green pastures, nor the river of life still waters for them; the Sun of Righteousness ceased to shine upon their souls, and the joy of the Holy Ghost was withdrawn from their hearts. They had forsaken the cross for another standard; and the consolations which are in Christ forsook them. Paul saw this; and pitying them, and feeling all his own happiness unimpaired, exclaimed, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross!"

Thus, too, I look around upon the ministers ashamed of the cross, and the ministers who deride it; and seeing the former afraid of the world's dread laugh, and the latter not afraid to mangle the word of God, I, too, adopt the apostolic maxim. And when I see the heartlessness and unhappiness, the suspense and uncertainty, the hopeless death and dark eternity, of those who do not glory in the cross—I must pray and cry, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross."

These general hints will prepare us for a more minute and spirited examination of this apostolic maxim. Consider it as the sentiment of Paul himself: "God forbid that I." What are *you*? Paul was too humble to publish his whole character, except as a sinner. But remember, what he was as a man of talent and strong common sense. His grasp of intellect, and solidity of judgment, give weight to all his fixed sentiments, and especially to the one grand sentiment

in which he gloried. He had not only examined the doctrine of the cross ; but was able to examine it, with a discriminating eye, and a calm judgment. He threw all his mighty mind into the question of salvation ; and *this* was the result of his profound deliberations, " God forbid that I should glory save in the cross." Now, if on a question of astronomy, it would show no wisdom to differ in opinion with Newton ; nor with Milton, on poetry ; nor with Raphael, on painting—it cannot be creditable to any understanding, to differ from Paul on the way of salvation. No man can think him weak or credulous. If therefore, great names should have great weight, Paul's is as great as it is good. There is not a greater in the ample roll of immortal fame.

And then he is not *alone* in thus glorying only in the cross. He himself, I have no doubt felt the weight of the names which preceded his own, in this preference of Christ. It is perfectly in harmony with the character of his mind, to suppose, that the memory of the venerable patriarchs and holy prophets influenced him, in adopting this maxim. As if he had said, " God forbid that I should glory save in the cross : Abraham, in all the majestic calmness of his character, did so : Moses in all the vigour of his intellect, did so : Elijah in all the glow of his energy, did so : David, in all the loveliness of his genius, did so : Isaiah in all the loftiness of his eloquence, did so : Job in all the integrity of his heart, did so : John the Baptist in all the stern simplicity of his character, did so : and shall I, Saul of Tarsus, not do the same ? Compassed about, as I am, with so great a cloud, witnesses who all glorified in the promised Saviour, just as he was promised, as " the Lamb slain," can I do less ? No, indeed ; in Him all the hoary patriarchs gloried ; in him all the holy prophets. I am not alone on Mount Calvary. The mountain is covered with horses and chariots of fire ; and above it, cherubim bend from their thrones of light, archangels sweep their harps of gold ; all glorying in the same Saviour. " God forbid

that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And, do you say, Amen, and Amen? Do you hesitate? The hesitation is neither creditable to your taste nor judgment. And yet you wish, yea hope, to sit down in the kingdom of heaven, through eternity, with these mighty spirits, and with all the spirits of just men made perfect! You never will, if you sit not down with them under the cross, glorying in it as the only refuge of your soul. I congratulate all who have done so; in coming to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, they are come to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Remember Paul's learning as well as his talents. A powerful intellect, when not disciplined by education, and regulated by general knowledge, is often rash and singular in its habits; inquiring where it should reason, and reasoning where it should adore. But Paul was as well educated, as he was highly gifted. He examined the doctrine of the cross with a mind equally cultivated and powerful. His choice, is not, therefore, liable to suspicion, as the eccentricity of a bold genius or the dazzling vision of a daring imagination. What he admired, he had examined; what he adored, he had scrutinized; what he gloried in, he had weighed in all the balances of Scripture and sound learning. With Jewish law he had been familiar from his infancy; and with Gentile philosophy his acquaintance was intimate. He was therefore qualified to judge of the agreement of the doctrine of the cross, with the whole scope of Judaism and the entire principles of right reason. And the result of this learned process, was the settled conviction—the sublime resolution—to glory only in the cross. I place that fact in this point of view, that the scholar may have no literary excuse for hesitating to imitate Paul; nor the unlearned be afraid to confide in his judgment. All are safe, and all act rationally, to abide by the apostle's verdict, on the question of salvation. Remember also his holy regard to pure *mor-*

als. This gives immense weight to his glorying in the cross. Men have sought refuge under it for sin, and turned the grace of God into licentiousness—and thus proved that there is a kind of glorying even in the cross which “is not good.” But it was not to indulge sin, nor to avoid self-denial, that Paul was the champion of the cross: he gloried in it, because by its influence he was crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him. He clung to it that he might excel and persevere in all personal and relative virtues; and whoever took a different view of its practical design, he denounced as “enemies of the cross, whose glory was their shame, and their end destruction.” If, therefore, misled, at all, by legal clamour, or legal caution, you are afraid of such glorying as I contend for, I triumphantly answer, that the greatest champion of the cross was at once the greatest champion and example of morals the world ever saw, (Christ excepted,) from the day he began to glory only in the cross, until the moment that he died for it. I challenge even his enemies to prove, from one act of his apostolic life, that his glorying was not good. You perceive that my object is to commend and enforce the example of Paul; and therefore I will remind you that his glorying only in the cross was highly consistent with his views of himself as a sinner.

He was now a saint, but he never forgot what he had been. The wormwood and gall of his natural state—his soul had still in remembrance, and was humbled within him. No wonder! He had been the chief of sinners: and, having found mercy through the cross—might well glory only in it. No where else, could Saul of Tarsus have found refuge for his guilty soul. Methinks, the mercy-seat of his own temple would have shrunk from his approach; the cloud of glory shot out avenging lightnings, and the cherubim flapped their wings to spurn the blaspheming persecutor! Paul felt more than this: that even the eternal mercy-seat of the heavens must have spurned him, had it not been sprinkled by the blood of atonement. Well,

therefore, might he glory in that cross which furnished the blood, which was set at once his ransom and his plea. Besides, he knew (and let the best of your class remember it) that Abraham with all his faith, Moses with all his meekness, Job with all his patience, David with all his devotion, Isaiah with all his holiness—that all the holy men of old, required to glory only in the cross for their salvation. And, could *he* do less? Can *you* be saved in any other way than such men needed? If they all washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, what else can cleanse you or me? Come, let us realize, until we surround ourselves with the spirits of just men made perfect. Look at the glorious throng around the throne. Some of them were once worse than us. Granted. But oh! how many were much better! Better than we can pretend to be. Well, the best of them all, the brightest stars in that firmament of glory, owe all their salvation to the cross of Christ. How then can you escape if you neglect or do not glory in that cross?

His glorying only in the cross, was highly consistent with his views of himself as a child of God, and as a minister of the gospel. He did not cease to glory in the cross, when he became an heir of eternal glory. Nay, he did not glory in it less, when at the height of his holiness, than he did at the beginning of it; but his glorying in the cross kept pace with the rapid progress of his sanctification, and kindled into new ardour as he advanced in meekness in heaven.

The fact is worthy of profound attention. Paul was now safe for eternity, and knew that he was safe. The settled persuasion of his mind was, that "neither things present, nor things to come, could separate him from the love of God." Both his calling and election were sure to himself. He had no more doubt of his being a child of God, than of his existence as a man. Now, how did this full assurance operate upon his mind and character? We see many far less holy or happy, who decline in that glorying in the cross

with which they began their profession of faith. Having obtained some hope of salvation, and some shadow of sanctification, from the blood of atonement, they seem, if not to forget the cross, to feel less indebted to it, and less dependant on it. There is about some, an evident falling off from the devout, adoring, and lively interest, which marked their fast clinging to this tree of life : and as their fears of perishing have lessened, their attachment to it, has languished. Now to such, and to you, I point out the fact—that it was not so in the case of Paul. His sense—his assurance—of final safety, neither finished nor diminished his glorying in the cross ; but the habit grew with the growth of his piety, and strengthened with the strength of his assurance. Familiarity with the cross, and happiness from it, had the same effect on his mind, as for ever singing the new song in heaven, has on the minds of glorified spirits—the effect of endearing it more and more, and of keeping it for ever new. And, be it known, that this was not a needless nor an uncalled-for glorying in the cross, now that Paul was safe for eternity. You mistake the matter widely, if you imagine that his Sonship left it optional or indifferent, whether he grew or declined in this habit : for, Paul owed it to himself to persist in glorying only in the cross.

He was now indeed a saint ; but he was not perfect. The law of God was indelibly engraven on his mind ; but the law of sin was still in his members. He was crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him ; but, in the emphatic language of Christ, he was still “in the world,” and needed to be kept from the evil of it. And, although, his attainments in piety were great, he counted not himself to have attained ; but, forgetting the things behind, reached forward to things before him, that he might apprehend that for which he was apprehended by God. He could not, therefore, afford to cease or slacken his first glorying in the cross. Perfection of heart and character, was now his supreme object ; his grand pursuit : nothing else would

satisfy him ; and, as nothing but the cross could secure it, in nothing else would he glory ; and in that, nothing *less* than when his piety was in its infancy. But he also owed it to others, as well as to himself, to persist in this habit. His heart was set upon winning and keeping souls to Christ ; and, therefore, in both cases, it was equally his duty to glory only in the cross. For this, in the case of those who were won, was the best check he could put on their tendency to declension. Now we have seen, that there is a sad tendency to decline from "first love," even where that love is genuine ; and a disposition to argue from some growth in grace, as if we could do with less attention to the cross than we began with. But, here, we are met by Paul the aged ; in the very beauty of holiness, in the maturity of his experience, at the height of his piety ; and he—he at this stage—he in this state, cannot do, tries not to do, with any less clinging to Christ crucified, than when he first laid hold on him for eternal life. Now, if he was *right* in acting thus—we are wrong whenever we relax our hold of the cross, or try the experiment of living less by faith on the Son of God. Oh, let the example of "Paul the aged," shame us, who believe, out of sloth and supineness, and charm us into the habit of hanging, as it were daily, on the Saviour's cross ; breathing the Saviour's prayer—"Father, unto thy hands, I commend my spirit." But the apostle's example has an equally important bearing upon the case of those who are awakened but not won to Christ. Such, seeing nothing good about themselves, and much that is truly excellent about some true believers, imagine, that until they attain some goodness, they cannot be welcome to believe on the Saviour for themselves. Their prevailing assurance is, that while their hearts are so bad as they feel them to be, they have no right nor warrant to hope in Christ's salvation ; and, that it is owing to something good about believers, that they are able and warranted to hope as they do. Hence the frequent expression, addressed by such to the pious—"Were I as good as you are, I might venture

to hope and to take comfort from the promises, but while I am what I am, I dare not venture."

Now it ought to be a sufficient answer to this false reasoning, that every godly man will say at once, "if there be any thing good about me now, it all began when I began to hope in Christ for salvation. It is all the effect of believing; and in nowise the cause of my faith. And even now, I feel more deeply than at first, that there is nothing between me and hell but just the blood of the Lamb. I am as much if not more than ever, shut up to believe entirely, or despairing entirely." This, I say, should be a satisfactory answer to all the objections which awakened sinners start and strain against themselves; but if this will not suffice, here is a living lecture on the subject—Paul, the improved, the holy, the laborious, glorying only in the cross. Yes; when he was the wonder of the world for piety, and the most majestic pillar of the church for every thing great and good, even then, he saw nothing between him and hell, but glorying in the cross alone. It was all his salvation and all his desire. Every hope he cherished, was founded on the blood of atonement; and every grace of his character was acquired by faith in it. He saw nothing, thought of nothing, depended on nothing, in or about himself; but clung to the cross as simply as the dying thief. What a lesson to all, and especially to those who are afraid to trust their naked souls, to the finished work of Christ. And be it known to you, that in all this silence about every thing but the cross, Paul was not carrying his self-denial, or humility to an extreme. His conduct was humble, compared with that of many: but he did, he felt, nothing more than is necessary, when he thus fully put and kept out of sight every thing but his faith in Christ. He was silent on nothing, that deserved to be mentioned: for nothing deserves mentioning but the cross of Christ, when the salvation of the soul is spoken of. Indeed, every thing we admire about the apostle, was part of that salvation, and the effect of glorying in the cross; and, therefore,

could be no *cause* of either. Paul, therefore, owed it to others, to exemplify this fact by his own spirit and habits.

But he owed it likewise to God and the Lamb—to continue glorying only in the cross. The Saviour never tires of appearing in the midst of the throne, as a Lamb that has been slain ; nor does God cease to be well pleased with the atonement of his Son ; nor does the Eternal Spirit weary in glorifying Christ ; and therefore, both as a minister and as a child of God, Paul owed to the Father, who loved him, to the Son who died for him, and to the Spirit who sanctified him, to cherish an undecaying, an evergrowing attachment, to the cross. And this he did. He died with noble readiness, for what he lived with manly devotedness. He gloried in the cross when it brought him to the scaffold. He was right ; his way was as direct, and his welcome as sure to Heaven, as the entrance of Christ the forerunner, could make them : and that was certain !

MANLY PIETY,

IN ITS REALIZATIONS.

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No. I.

ON MANLY REALIZATIONS OF GOD IN HEARING.

THE preaching of the gospel, is "the ministry of reconciliation;" and God so identifies both his character and authority with it, that it is, "as though God did beseech us to be reconciled" unto himself. The apostles believed this, and preached the gospel of the kingdom, as the ambassa-

dors of the King ; urging reconciliation on the world, and on the church, in the very spirit in which God and the Lamb would press it, were they to preach their own gospel, or plead their own claims in person.

This was taking very high and holy ground, indeed, as ministers of the gospel ! We concede to them, however, the right of placing their preaching on such vantage ground. They were well qualified to sustain and justify their title, when they stood forward in the face of the world, saying, "*We are ambassadors for Christ.*" They could demonstrate the legitimacy of both their office and their embassy, by miracles, whenever it was necessary to prove them by such signs or wonders ; or, they could rise to such heights of wisdom and eloquence, as accorded with both the loveliest and the loftiest views of the God in whose name they spoke. Their reasonings were not unlike His manifold wisdom ; nor their appeals unlike His paternal kindness ; nor their remonstrances unlike His judicial authority. Thus there was much that was *godlike* in their preaching. We readily feel and confess this. We see at once the "demonstration of the Spirit," in the boldness of Peter, in the sublimity of Paul, and in the heavenliness of John. When we think of them as preachers, we feel quite sure that we should have recognised and revered them as the messengers of God. We can even revel in imagining the delight with which we should have hung on their lips, and sat at their feet. But, when we try to transfer this feeling to uninspired preaching, how its fine spirit changes ! Both its love and liveliness evaporate, the moment we attempt to transfer them from apostles, to modern evangelists, in general. Towards a few modern names, we can, indeed, easily transfer no small portion of that veneration and deference we feel for the apostles of the Lamb. Transcendent genius, learning, or eloquence, commands a homage, somewhat akin to what we pay to inspiration ; but, towards men of like talents with ourselves, we are slow of heart to attach any importance, beyond what their superior piety

wins for them. Is this altogether creditable to us? It is, indeed, very natural: but is it wise? True, it would be unwise to identify ordinary ministers with inspired apostles. It would be impossible to do so, even if it were not improper. It is, however, highly improper. No man, however gifted or holy, has any right to such deference as we give to the first ambassadors of Christ: and to give it to every good man who preaches the gospel, could only lower our respect for inspiration itself. Besides, no really gifted or good minister would thank us for identifying him with the apostles.

But, after all, it was the *truth* which the apostles preached, that was the main thing, even in their ministry. Neither their gifts nor their graces added an iota to the goodness of the good tidings they proclaimed. Their miraculous powers gave no *saving* power to the gospel. Miracles accredited its truth, and demonstrated its importance; inasmuch as they were all too good to be the vouchers of a lie, and too great to be the seals of a trifle; but they added no glory to the glorious gospel itself; they only illustrated and attested its inherent glory. They proved the greatness of the great salvation; but they did not, could not, make it any greater in grace or glory, than it was before the world began. That salvation is, therefore, no less now, that miracles and apostles too are gone. It lost nothing of its grace or its glory, when it lost their services. The covenant of grace was "well ordered in all things, and sure," before they ministered at its Ark; and it was nowise deranged or altered when they were withdrawn. The gospel is still, and as much as ever, the ministry of reconciliation, now that ordinary men proclaim it, as when its ambassadors were like mighty angels flying in the midst of heaven to preach it.

We forget what reconciliation with God is, if we doubt, or do not feel this. That message of mercy would be majestic beyond all comparison and comprehension, even if babes were the messengers, or the birds of the air its bear-

ers. "*Be ye reconciled unto God,*" is a voice that should arrest and charm us at once, and equally whether hymned by an angel, or hummed by an insect. No human tones can render this good news harsh, and no human nor angelic talents could render it more worthy of our acceptance. We forget our alienation from God, or underrate the peril of it, if there be not celestial music to our ears and hearts, in every and any whisper of reconciliation.

I am no apologist for harsh tones or inelegant terms, in preaching the gospel; but, I must say, that if either can turn us against the gospel, or even lower it at all in our estimation, we do not love it as we ought, nor feel our need of it much. It cannot be lessened in the esteem of any man who believes it cordially, by the manner of any man who preaches feebly or coarsely. Well-regulated minds will, indeed, feel grieved, just in proportion as they are warm-hearted, when the glorious gospel is tamely preached; and disgusted, when it is disgraced by vulgarity or levity. These feelings will, however, terminate upon the man who excites them, and in nowise extend to the truth he utters. It will be revered by believers, however much he may be pitied or despised.

It is of great importance to cultivate such an adoring sense of "the word of reconciliation," that no form of stating, or delivering it, can weaken our love to it; and this is not impossible. We have only to ask ourselves, whilst hearing a very poor sermon on the subject of salvation, Would I not be thankful even for this faint glimpse of the cross, if I could obtain no other? Would it not bind me, beyond all release from the obligation, to lay hold on Christ for eternal life? It is, indeed, a poor exhibition of a rich subject; but still the Saviour is in it—the call of God is in it—the promise of the Spirit is in it; and all so in it, that I could not excuse myself to Father, Son, or Spirit, if I were to neglect their great salvation, although thus feebly set before me. I durst not say, at their tribunal, that the poorness of the sermon prevented me from

embracing the richness of their grace. Thus any sermon which indicates, however dimly, the way of acceptance with God, and which whispers, however weakly, the welcome to believe and be saved, is such a message from God, as renders unbelief or indifference utterly inexcusable.

This is not, however, the general character of evangelical preaching. Its average, if plain, is not common-place, nor tame. Were it, however, both, it would still be the best source of wisdom and consolation that our world furnishes. I have no objection to join any one in deploring poverty of thought, feeling, or language, wherever it is found ; and none to condemn that poverty, wherever it is the effect of idleness ; but after all the deductions and objections which can be made, I must hoodwink both my judgment and conscience, before I can cease to see, that the most ordinary preaching of the gospel is infinitely better than all that is extraordinary in the appeals of nature, or the discoveries of philosophy. Of evangelical preaching, as of Christ, it may be said, "*To whom else can we go ? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life.*" The words of poetry may be found in nature, and the words of patriotism in philosophy, and the words of wealth in science, and the words of amusement in literature ; but "*words whereby we can be saved*" as sinners, or soothed as sufferers, or cheered at death, are found habitually and systematically on no human lips but the preacher's. His lips keep the knowledge that maketh wise unto salvation.

I know and love the voice of nature, from its softest whispers up to its loudest thunders ; from its tinkling rills, up to its roaring cataracts. I have listened to her voice, both in her Edens and her wildernesses ; on her mountain-thrones, and in her ocean-caves ; on the bosom of her seas, and in the depths of her forests ; under both her sunlight and moonlight ; and asked all manner of questions in these scenes : but all in vain, whenever the questions touched upon immortality or salvation. Then nature was as silent

as the grave ; her light was darkness, and her loveliness proved nothing, until I opened my Bible.

Men may talk of finding

“ Books in running brooks,
Sermons in trees, and good in
Every thing ;”

whilst the only good they seek or feel the need of, is temporal. Sermons from trees and flowers, rocks and stars, may answer their purpose whilst the soul cares for nothing but its own capacity of interpreting and enjoying the aspects of the creation ; but when the soul feels that its powers are responsibilities, and that its eternal prospects are clouded by guilt and depravity, no sermons but such as Peter preached at Pentecost can relieve its anxieties. Accordingly, men soon quit the temple of nature, when they begin to ask, “ What shall I do to be saved ?” Only the house of God is a temple then ; and then it is a temple, even if its minister be an itinerant. Let him only be a good man, and mighty in the Scriptures, and his weakness in any other ministerial qualification will not be thought of by a soul thirsting for salvation. As the feet of the messengers of peace were “ beautiful on the mountains,” although disfigured and torn in running from the camp to the city, to make the good news early news to the fearful, so the humblest preacher of the gospel, if his heart be in his work, will be loved “ for the truth’s sake that dwelleth in him,” by any man who feels the need of that truth. He will not, however intellectual or refined, refuse to be comforted until “ a master in Israel” preach to him. He will gladly take the cup of salvation from the first hand that offers it full ; and, although he may soon seek some stronger hand to fill it again, he will never forget, or cease to bless, the hand that filled it first. In like manner, if he be a lover of nature, his return to her temple, although sure, will never be at the expense of the sanctuary of God. He will wander and muse again in his favourite walks, but not at the time of

the Sabbath morning, or evening sacrifice. He will still love solitude and scenery, but he will not prefer them to the ordinances or the fellowship of the church.

It is not, however, necessary, in order to maintain the importance of preaching, to rest the argument upon the case of those who are crying out or longing for the water of life. Men, who

“Must drink or die,”

will not, of course, be very fastidious in their taste. The claims of preaching can, however, be justified, apart from all appeals to the timid or the trembling. Even that kind of preaching, which never won applause by its eloquence, nor kindled public curiosity by its fame, has made Britain and America whatever they are as “*holy nations*,” and much of what they are as free and powerful nations. Most readily and cheerfully do I grant, yea, contend, that the great preachers of both nations gave the impulse which rendered preaching popular, and made ordinary preachers enterprising. They won or compelled much of the homage which the pulpit enjoys in both hemispheres. Without these highpriests there would have been fewer Levites, and the Levites less successful. The tall cedars of Lebanon have sheltered its fir, olive, and myrtle trees, when the tempest has broken on the mountain of the Lord’s house. In this point of view, great men have done great good by their preaching. It has “greatly helped” ordinary men to be useful. But still, it has not been by wonderful sermons, but by wise and warm-hearted sermons, that most good has been done. The great majority, both of the dead in Christ, and of the living in Jerusalem, were won to Christ, not by the giants of genius or erudition, but by the watchfulness and fidelity of hard-working pastors. The claims of the pulpit do not, therefore, rest upon the memory of its brightest ornaments. They rest far more upon the memory of its countless converts. Its “record is on high.” The gen-

eral assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect, is its great cloud of witnesses. All in heaven who washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, are the vouchers and the trophies of its instrumental triumphs. The pulpit—the *ordinary* pulpit has always been the chief means of filling heaven. The eloquence of the senate has occasionally freed nations from despotism; and the eloquence of the bar, from conspiracies against liberty; and the chairs of science and philosophy have often dissolved popular superstitions; and all these triumphs have wrought together for good to the souls, as well as to the bodies of men; but the *conversion* of souls to God, and the training of souls to glory, have been the achievement of the pulpit. No other “chair of verity” can point to the multitudes around the eternal throne, and say, “Behold the children whom God hath given me.” The pulpit can say with truth of all the redeemed from amongst men, “All these souls are mine,” instrumentally; whereas it is more than doubtful whether there be *one* soul in heaven, to whom any thing on earth was so useful as preaching. Neither literature nor legislation, science nor philosophy, can trace their triumphs in that world. They are all “of the earth, earthy;” for whatever influence they have had upon any one in heaven, the gospel made it heavenly.

In thus magnifying the pulpit, I do not forget the mighty influence of good books and godly parents upon the influx of souls to heaven. I claim, however, the best of both for the pulpit. All the most useful religious books emanated from it, and almost all godly parents were its children. It trained the fathers and the mothers, who have trained up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Whatever we owe directly to pious parents, we owe indirectly to the pulpit. It has, therefore, no occasion to throw its defence or its claims upon the *sun-stars* which have shown in it from time: the ordinary stars of its holy galaxy have been the chief lights of the world, in leading many sons to glory; and its brightest stars themselves were kindled by it.

But whilst the grand record of the pulpit is "on high," it has also a goodly record below. The history of preaching, like all other history, is, indeed, disfigured, and even stained, by crime and folly. Nothing too severe could be said against the nonsense and noise, the quirks and cant, the servility and extravagance, which have often issued from the pulpit.

Still, on the other hand, nothing too kind or too grateful can be said of the moral and ameliorating influence which, notwithstanding all these faults, it has had upon the character and condition of this nation. In nations where preaching is a secondary thing in public worship, public worship has but little moral influence. It does not tell well upon law or order. It neither purifies social life, nor improves public opinion. Itself a form, it gives nothing but *form* to morals and demeanour; whereas, wherever the pulpit is as sacred as the altar, both tell powerfully upon public and private life.

We are more affected, and perhaps, not improperly, by what the pulpit fails to accomplish, than by its beneficial influence on the community. The good it does, makes no parade of itself; whereas the evil it cannot reach, or fails to cure, obtrudes itself upon our notice, in rampart forms. Any one can tell what the pulpit has *not* done for the nation; but, it is not every one can calculate what it has done, or comprehend the amount even when it is summed up.

I frankly confess that I cannot. I have often tried, but always failed: never, however, without determining to try again. Failure always inflamed curiosity. I can easily, and at any time, see what God has done by the pulpit, whilst I number its living converts and its dead vouchers; whilst I look at the order, and listen to the domestic worship of all the families in the land, whom it has taught to fear God; whilst I pass from congregation to congregation, and church to church, marking how many in each it unites in heart, and how many of the united it confederates in the

glorious work of teaching the ignorant, visiting the afflicted, and spreading the gospel. I can even see, with some clearness, how the preaching at home creates and keeps up all the agencies, which are now shaking idolatry and superstition abroad. But, whilst I can thus trace the influence of the pulpit, as its "line is going out through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world," I cannot trace that line as it runs through all the frame of society, strengthening good laws, and pushing out bad for ever; giving integrity to trade, and honesty to policy; working out the freedom of slaves, and the equal rights of freemen; turning national patriotism into universal philanthropy; making the arts chaste, the sciences modest, and literature moral. Here I am lost? I know that the sanctifying and sustaining line blends itself with all that is good and great, in national character and public spirit, and moderates all that is bad or base in both; but it is so widely extended, and ramifies itself so minutely, and works so calmly, that, like the principle of gravitation, it eludes the eye, although universally felt. As in the sea, although all the rivers run into it, they so soon blend themselves with its own waters, that the stream of the mightiest river cannot be traced far upon the bosom of the great deep; but still they all uphold its volume, and maintain its salubrity: so, in society, the distinct influence of preaching is felt through all its frame, but is undefinable as affects the whole frame. Perhaps, therefore, the best way of estimating its beneficial influences, is, to ask ourselves, what would be the consequence of extinguishing the pulpit? Suppose it extinct and forgotten; and thus all the families of the land thrown upon their own mental and moral resources, guideless, creedless, and without Sabbaths or sanctuaries; how long would British liberty be the day-star of the world; or British philanthropy be the hope of the heathen, or the home of the destitute? How long would property or life retain their present sacredness? Let France answer these questions. She tried to do without either the pulpit or the altar of God;

but, although science, policy, and heroism put forth all their energies, in union, to make her the queen amongst the nations, they made her only the beacon of the world, and the victim of her own impiety and caprice.

I am, therefore, not ashamed to "magnify my office." It is God's ordinance, and gloriously has he owned and honoured it in the world. What, but preaching, overthrew ancient heathenism all over the Roman empire? What, but preaching, broke the iron sceptre of modern Rome? What, but preaching, by the agents and energies it has called forth at home, has added the islands of the Pacific to Christendom, and brought the idolatry of India to a crisis which fills even its priesthood with despair?

Most fully and frankly do I concede, that the pulpit is neither what it ought to be, nor what it might be: but still, I fearlessly maintain that, even as it is, nothing else does so much good, nor could any thing be invented in its room that would do more or equal good. Any mode or system of teaching, that was *less* elementary, would be useless to the poor; and one *more* elementary would be unedifying to the intelligent and the educated. Whatever, therefore, a few fastidious minds may think or say, who take more interest in the poetry and the philosophy of religion than in the conversion of sinners, or the consolation of saints, it can be proved, indeed it requires no proof, that *their ideal* pulpit would answer no practical purposes. They themselves are living proofs of this. Their refinements, whether sublimated thought, or exalted feeling, terminate upon themselves, and never lead them out to teach the ignorant, or soothe the wretched. The utmost that these sentimental critics of the pulpit do, is to sentimentalize a few of the young, who happen to have little sense and less care. And they must have very little of both, to listen to *idle* men, pitying or despising working ministers. It is well for the world that ministers have not such refinements as such critics plume themselves upon. If they had, they would soon be as *useless* as their critics.

Look always, therefore, at the *whole* state of the world, before you fix a standard to judge preaching by. The pulpit ought, indeed, to keep pace with the march of intellect and the progress of knowledge. It should never be in the rear of the school, nor its ministers behind schoolmasters. The march of intellect, however, does not outrun the march of suffering and sorrow; the progress of knowledge does not stop the progress of death or disease. The *hereditary* ills of life follow society like its shadow, however society advance. The pulpit must, therefore, adapt itself to the permanent mass of suffering, as well as to the accumulating mass of knowledge. There must be no such haste to overtake intellect, as would hurry a minister away from softening calamity. Breaking hearts, and bleeding consciences, must not be sacrificed nor forgotten, in order to keep up with expanding minds or exploring spirits. He is, therefore, as "cruel as the grave," although polished as a cenotaph, who prefers the gratification of his own literary taste to the comfort of the tried and tempted, the disconsolate and bereaved. The mental food he calls for would be mockery to the wants and woes of suffering humanity, and moral poison to the souls of the thoughtless. And yet, there are men so selfish and mean, as to writhe with impatience, or to manifest disgust, when preaching weeps with them that weep, or woos them that tremble, or guides them that mistake. This is pitiable, yea, contemptible, in the extreme! A well-regulated mind, however original or powerful, would rejoice to see preaching condescend to men of low estate, and especially to mourners in Zion. That mind is both ill regulated and ill disposed, that grudges milk to babes, or balm to wounded spirits. It may dream of seraphic ardours and angelic ideas, but there is not a seraph, nor an angel in heaven, has any sympathy with the vulgar and vitiated taste of that man, who revolts at experimental sermons, or frowns on efforts to cheer the weary and heavy-laden. Fallen angels only sympathize with his taste.

I cannot conceive a better test of a well-balanced mind, than a disposition to take a lively interest in whatever is likely to be most useful to the greatest number, and to the chief varieties, in a congregation. There is comprehensiveness as well as candour, strength as well as tenderness, in the mind that follows the "dividing of the word of truth," when the minister is giving to every one "his portion in due season." It thus goes round the circle of the various wants of real life and godliness, and by linking its sympathies with them all, proves that it can recognise in each want and wo of other minds, what may become its own case at a future time. And the good sense and good feeling thus evinced, are both invigorated by the habit of marking how the gospel furnishes "a word in season," to all the varieties of human experience. Such a hearer is not tame nor tasteless, because he is not impatient for his own portion whilst greater sufferers are receiving theirs; nor because he continues to look and listen with interest after he has received his own: for, whether waiting patiently for it, or watching afterwards the distribution of the bread of life to others, he is laying in a stock of experimental knowledge, which will save him from many mistakes, and come to his help when his soul may be in darkness or distress. Nothing, therefore, is more false than the notion, that no good can be got from a sermon which is not personally interesting to us. If it be really suitable to any one, it may be useful to us, because the case it meets may some time be our own case; or, what is better, it may prevent us from involving ourselves in the dilemmas of such a case. Paul evinced as much philosophy as philanthropy when he said, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others also." He did not mean by this, that we should "hear for others," but that we should learn from what suits them, as well as from what is adapted to ourselves.

Besides, it is, although not in the popular sense of the word, truly, "*fellowship*" with the Godhead, to take a

lively interest in the spiritual welfare of all classes under the gospel. The man who has been reconciled through the blood of the cross, participates in the paternal feelings of the Father, and in the mediatorial solicitude of the Son, and in the gracious sympathies of the Holy Spirit, when he forgets his own personal joy, in the joy of hearing others beseeched to be reconciled unto God. The man who has but few cares, and no perplexities, never has more fellow-feeling with the Eternal Mind, than when he melts with pity, as the successive trials and temptations of penitents and pilgrims are exhibited and met. We come, also, into sublime fellowship with "the innumerable company of angels, and with the general assembly" of saints in heaven, when we listen with delight to sermons calculated to lead sinners to repentance, and adapted to teach penitents to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. In all this, our spirits would delight, were they in heaven, looking down from the throne to the pulpit; and, surely, it is not less becoming, when looking up from the pulpit to the throne.

You are now somewhat prepared for the unqualified assertion, (for, as I could not qualify it, I delayed it until now,) that the kind of preaching which some call for is not provided for in the word of God, nor agreeable to the will of God, nor suited to the real wants of the world: I mean, the demand made by minds of a certain order, for flashes of imagination, and feats of reasoning. This class care for nothing but talent and taste in the pulpit. Now, if there were nothing but talent and taste *around* the pulpit, I would be among the first to maintain, that more ought to be put forth in it. Reasonings might be more profound, and illustrations more splendid, without at all darkening doctrinal, or sentimentalizing experimental truth; for, whilst there is nothing so lowly as the gospel, there is nothing so lofty. It demands simplicity, but it admits of sublimity. Is that really *sublime*, however, which a few literary men, and not a few youthful minds, regard as such? They recognise no sublimity in sermons which set the spirit to commune with

itself; nor in sermons, which lead the spirit into communion with the Father of Spirits; nor in sermons which place all souls in the only position in which a sinner can find mercy. Are they, therefore, competent judges of the sublime or the beautiful in thought or feeling, who have thus no relish for the grand ends of either? What real glory can there be in any line or form of thought, which does not lead the spirit in upon itself in scrutiny, and out to God in supplication? That only is grand in idea or diction, which brings God and man into willing communion with each other. The splendour of all thought which carries away the heart from Him, or draws it to Him in any other character than as the God of salvation, may resemble the genius of devils; but it has no affinity to angelic eloquence, and is no prelude of those

“Thoughts that breathe and words that burn,”

in heaven. The only truly sublime ideas are those which will be *eternal* ideas, when the mind is all light, and the spirit perfect. It is *glare*, not brilliancy, that burns in all those wandering stars of sentiment and conception, which will sink into the blackness of darkness for ever.

Consider this: evangelical preaching brings before your minds, from Sabbath to Sabbath, all the grand truths which you will admire and love to all eternity in heaven. If, therefore, you think and act with any express reference to the eternal themes of heaven, and the immortal emotions of your spirit, you cannot but rejoice, that the pulpit gives prominence to the truths which the throne will prolong for ever. The notes which preaching gives of the new song, may be weak and unequal, but they are all *key-notes* of the everlasting anthem of redemption. And this, you know, cannot be said, with any semblance of truth, of the kind or forms of sentiment, which mere literary taste, or mingled taste and fancy, regard as most sublime. That is most sublime which sublimates taste, to relish what is the chief joy of immortals, and what Deity for ever approves.

I may now, surely, call upon you to admire both the wisdom and kindness of God in committing the ministry of reconciliation to the trust of ordinary men. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man;" and in earthen vessels of various dimensions and polish, because the treasure is intended to enrich minds of all orders, and men of all conditions.

No. II.

MANLY REALIZATIONS OF GOD IN DEVOTION.

WHATEVER propriety there may be in bowing our knees and lifting our hands before God, when we worship him, it would certainly be impossible to *love* or *fear* God, if either postures or sounds amounted to acceptable worship. It might, indeed, from our natural aversion to thoughtful and spiritual devotion, please our slothfulness, and suit what we call our convenience, if an humble position of the body or a solemn vocal sound, would pass for worship: but, if they did, we could not think *highly* of God. He would not rise in our estimation by thus lowering his demands to mere "bodily service." For, however unwilling we may feel to "worship him in spirit and in truth," we are absolutely incapable of admiring or adoring a God who could reckon himself worshipped *without* "spirit and truth." Accordingly, he is neither loved nor revered by those who content themselves with forms of bodily service. His character and authority stand just as low in their estimation, as the level they bring his services to. They see nothing attractive or trustworthy in God and the Lamb. They are merely *afraid* or *ashamed* to neglect all the forms of religion.

These facts deserve more notice than they usually re-

ceive. We are very ready to suspect, when we hear much about the necessity of *spiritual* worship, that it would require more time, and involve more attention than is compatible with a due regard to the ordinary business of life. We even try to make out a case against it, as impracticable or impossible. We allow, indeed, that something ought to be, and may be done, in the worship of God ; but we very much doubt whether a uniform habit of spiritual devotion could be combined with temporal enterprise and enjoyment. It seems to require more leisure than the busy can command, and more thought and feeling than the active can afford. Thus we exaggerate and caricature its claims, by making them to elash with the duties of life.

This is unmanly ; for it is not true that spiritual devotion makes any demand upon our time or attention, beyond what we can pay without temporal loss or risk. No man can prove, that an *honest* business would be injured by a devotional spirit. Business and prayer have been divorced by the vast majority of tradesmen, but the trade of the country is no real gainer from the separation. There is more of it, but it is less healthy in its action, and less sure in its results, than when it was more religious in its character. Our pious forefathers seldom failed to realize a competency by their business. Their credit was not shaken nor their ultimate success hindered, by their regular habits of closet, family, and public worship. They made less noise and dash in conducting their business, but they "guided their affairs with discretion to the end." The balance-sheet of no single year enabled them to vie with the mansions or the equipages of hereditary wealth, but the balance-sheet of successive years enabled many of them to retire from public life in sober affluence, and kept most of them in easy circumstances. If they had no sudden elevations, they had no sudden downfalls ; and in old age, what pictures of vigorous health, and venerable gentility, our pious ancestors were ! The rose was upon their cheek, and "their gray hairs were a crown of glory" over it. They equally won

and commanded respect by their perfect urbanity, and decorous manners. All eyes either blessed them in the gate, or blushed in their presence. Neither the fops nor the nabobs of business, however successful, obtain any such heart-homage now, from the young or the old. The reason is obvious; they are men of the world; altogether of "the earth, earthy." Nothing about them beams or breathes of immortality. By no effort or stratagem can the opening or the enlarged mind link their lot with grace or glory. It is opulent or showy—that is all. And is that enough to live for? No; not even if all the appearance, and the reality too, were as easily obtained as they are naturally desired. But that, they are not. Besides, what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Men of business are, in general, *calculating* men; but no class of men, who have credit for this prudential faculty, are more chargeable with "reckoning without their host." In general they do not take God into their account at all, except to postpone his claims to the last. They adapt none of their measures for getting on in the world, to the maxims of his grace or providence. His great moral laws against fraud and circumvention are, indeed, both recognised and revered in all honourable business, to a very great extent. They must be so: business could not go on without them. But how few merchants or tradesmen have the wisdom to pause at the outset, or in their progress, and ask themselves, What will be best for me in the end? I may get on in the world without religion—many do. But still, I may not; for many do not. Even clever men are not always fortunate men. Should I, however, be fortunate in this world, there is another world; and in it, I cannot be happy. I must be for ever miserable without religion! I, indeed, both hear and think about becoming religious in the evening of life, but I must confess that I see very few who do so. I join with others in hoping the best in the case of those who die decently, after having lived only for this world; but I feel that I should not like their chance for my

own soul! I do not venture to pronounce or conjecture on their state; but neither durst I venture my soul upon their soul's probabilities. I cannot wish to die their death! It may be safe, but it is too suspicious to hazard my soul's eternal happiness upon.

How few of our calculating men calculate even in this way; and yet, this is little more than the plain application of plain common sense, and common honesty, to the consideration of familiar facts. Indeed, it would only be good common sense, to grapple fairly with the question, "What must be the natural effect upon my own mind, of leaving no adequate time for prayer?" I have many temptations to dispense with it now, and for years to come. I am getting so placed and pledged in the world, that I want all my time for my business. An immediate attention to closet piety seems utterly incompatible with my immediate interests. It would be more convenient for me to lay aside all devotional piety, until I am more settled in life and business. Is it, however, quite sure, or at all likely, that I would become prayerful, when I had got on somewhat well in the world? Now years of neglect are certainly not likely to produce a new era of inclination to prayer. Might they not rather extinguish all sense of its necessity, or disincline me more than I now am? Besides, it cannot be safe to calculate that God would answer prayer years hence, even if I could calculate upon myself for becoming prayerful then. For, why do I wish to keep clear of the closet now? It really is because I care more about this world than about the next: more for time than for eternity: more for human things, than for the divine favour.

This is the fact, if I must speak out; and it is all naked and open to God, however I may conceal it from others. Now, is not this enough to prevent him from answering prayer, even if I did pray much and fervently, after having served myself at the expense of his immediate claims? In a word, would I bear such treatment from any man, as I have thus thought of giving to God? Were any man, de-

pendant on me for all his support and comfort in the evening of his life, to plan how much he could avoid me, until he could no longer do without me, would I welcome him when sheer necessity alone forced him to apply to me? True, God is not like man in this matter. Many have come to him late, and yet have found both mercy and grace. But, they did not *plan* to come late, nor delay in the face of such convictions as I feel. My neglect of prayer for the sake of business would be deliberate neglect. I see clearly both the sin and the shame of the liberties I am tempted to take with God. The real question, therefore, in my case is, not how God may treat the late prayers of those who do not know what they are about, but would he answer *my* late prayers? I do know what I am about, when planning to keep clear of my closet. I cannot plead ignorance of either the duty or the danger. Shall I, then, dare to "sin wilfully?" Ah, my convenient "season," could not be "an acceptable time." Even my own conscience tells me so.

These, also, are not very profound calculations; but, simple and sober as they are, they are not very common. They are, indeed, glanced at, when they *glare* upon the prayerless; but, how few invite them, or go fully into them, even when they force themselves upon the conscience! And it is not painful calculations only, that are avoided: *prudential* reckoning is not common. A special Providence is acknowledged in words, but denied, indeed, almost defied, in practice. How else could any man dream, that the way to do well in the world, is to put religion quite aside for years; is, to push on without prayer; is, to banish all concern about the soul and eternity? No man can show that this is a likely way to keep Providence on his side for good. It is, indeed, often a successful way, but always for evil of some kind. Success is a very *ominous* thing, when it is obtained apart from piety. No misfortune nor poverty is a token of so much danger to the soul, as prayerless prosperity. The "evil things" of Lazarus were certainly

trying things : but the "good things" of Dives were curses in disguise.

I do not mean, of course, that there is nothing but *judgment* in prayerless prosperity. There may be much mercy in it, for a time. God may allow it, in order to give the man every facility for becoming a pious man. For as some natures are so stubborn as to require the rod to bend them ; others are so weak, or so mean, as to require some temporal blessings to conciliate them. They would not think of God at all, if nothing went well with them. In pity, therefore, to such minds, he places them in circumstances which furnish no excuse for the neglect of his great salvation. When, however, prosperity itself is perverted into an excuse for neglect and delay, then the blessing begins to rot into a curse. Dives' purple and plenty are then omens of eternal ruin ; and will end in that, unless they are taken as *warnings* of it.

Would I then have a man to care nothing about success in business ? Certainly not ! A man utterly indifferent about his lot in this life, is not likely to care much for the life to come. Success is a good thing, when obtained by good means, and applied to good purposes. Success is also a *sure* thing in our world now, because the church is thrown upon it for the means of evangelizing the world. Christians, acting as Christians, are as sure to get on, as the cause of God is to go on. Business need be no lottery, now that the gospel is spreading. Providence will take care of their interests, who are devoted to his glory. Both the silver and the gold are his, and he will make them run in the channels where the best use will be made of them. They will not flow long upon the old channels. They ran into the hands of the ungodly, whilst there was nothing but conquest and commerce to push over the earth ; because such hands were fit for nothing else. But, now that the world is thrown open to the spiritual conquests of the church, wealth will change hands, because "the Lord hath need of it," for his own work. I do not mean, of course, that all

his poor will become rich, nor that the existing rich men of the world will be impoverished ; but, I do mean, that Providence will gradually "turn the tables" upon trade, and give the *market* of the world to the men who do most for the salvation of the world. God will not starve nations hungering for the bread of life, to pamper individuals who loathe it, or grudge the expense of spreading it. Their old times are going as fast as the kingdom of God is coming. Neither Boards of Trade, nor Chambers of Commerce, can long sway the world against Boards of Missions and Bibles. Every regenerated nation, although it will not reject ungodly traders, will give the preference to godly traders ; and consign to Christians what capitalists have hitherto monopolized.

Worldly men will not believe this, I know ; and Christians will be afraid to believe it. It is, nevertheless, true. Just as true, as that the gospel must be preached unto all nations ; which it can only be, by transferring, in the course of Providence, the means of sending it, into hands that will send it. The time is, however, hardly yet come for unfolding this mystery to the church. She is not prepared yet to do business for God, on God's principles : for she has not studied them much. She has something like a settled conviction that no man is "a loser by what he gives to the cause of God ;" but the *philosophy* of this proverb she does not understand.

And the church will be unable to understand it by study. The proverb, like prophecy, will only explain itself by its fulfilment. Its truth will not come out by searching for it ; but evolve gradually, as good men, from disinterested motives, adjust their business to the principles and spirit of the gospel.

What I want to teach now, therefore, is the criminal folly of running in the face of Providence, by trying to get on in the world without God, or without such a regard to his claims as amounts to devotion. Now, although this may not hinder success, it will, and must, render success a curse,

and not a blessing, in the end. It may gain the world, but it will ruin the soul. It will not, however, save the soul, to combine devotion with business, for the sake of gain. That process would end as fatally as the plan of separating them ends. Providence can neither be bought nor bribed over to any man's side by *selfish* prayers. It may come over to his side, and is likely to do so, when he is more concerned about eternity than time ; about his soul than his circumstances ; but it will not strike a bargain with him, to pay for prayer in money or bills. The grand object of prayer must be the salvation of the soul. Other blessings must neither be expected nor sought for, but as they are conducive to that end, and to the promotion of the divine glory.

It is not necessary, however, to keep the temporal bearings of Providence out of sight, lest they should tempt us to selfishness. God has brought them into sight, and therefore they should not be overlooked nor underrated. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Thus God asks no one to serve him for nought, nor sends any one on a warfare at his own charges. What is good the Lord will give, and what is evil he makes to work for eventual good, unto all that love him. It is, therefore, both a wilful and gross mistake, to suspect that we should be losers by devotional piety. Many of the pious are, indeed, very poor ; but they would be still poorer than they are, if they were not pious.

The design of all these preliminary hints is, to solicit and conciliate your attention to that "fervency of spirit, in serving the Lord," which the Lord connects with "diligence in business." Now "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Such only are "true worshippers ;" and, as the Father seeketh such to worship him, thus we should seek to pray.

Mark the words ! "*the Father seeketh such to worship him.*" He finds them, unsought in heaven—and, shall he

seek without finding, on earth? Will you refuse to "worship him in spirit and in truth?" In the spirit of love and truth, he invites and beseeches you to draw nigh to his mercy-seat, believing that he "is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Can you refuse to seek, when God thus assures you, that you shall find all things really "pertaining to life and godliness?" Remember, God will permit none to draw nigh to the throne of glory, who refuse to draw nigh to the throne of grace. All who keep afar off from the latter, will be kept, by "an impassable gulf," far off from the former. Pray or perish, is the only alternative! Can you wonder at this? Is it a hard or a harsh alternative? Consider! You must allow that something should be done, to *prepare* for heaven. Now could you name any thing easier than prayer; which would be equally adapted to prepare your spirit "to meet God" in peace and glory? Try. You cannot. Nothing you can think of would have the same tendency to pave the way for the worship of eternity.

Oh, the wonder is, that prayer is permitted! And that the Father should *seek* us to worship him, is wonder unspeakable. "The Father seeketh" spiritual worship! Again, I ask, shall he seek in vain from you? You will need such a Father through all eternity. You may soon need all his paternal pity in time: for you know not what trials may await you on earth. Should trials be, however, both few and slight in your lot, still you need such a Father to be its guardian and glory. There is no moral loveliness, no dawn of heaven, in the splendour of godless prosperity. Its garlanded votary is a doomed victim to the judicial altar of vengeance. And the Judge will find you, if the Father seek you in vain. "The Father seeketh you!" Oh, let this sublime and solemn fact seize upon all the powers of your soul, and sink into all the recesses of your heart. He seeketh not fallen angels. Yea, with less effort than he puts forth in seeking you, even by a word or a wish, the Father of your spirits could create myriads of spirits all

of whom would vie for ever with the first created spirits in the universe in worshipping him. But he loves better to redeem human spirits than to multiply angelic spirits. He prefers to seek and save a lost sheep to creating new orders of worshipping intelligences. He wants the old order on earth brought nigh to him, before he begin another creation in heaven. He seeketh you now. He will not, however, seek you always as a Father, nor for worship. He may soon seek you as a Judge, for punishment: and then he will find you out. You may evade his call to the throne of grace, but you cannot evade his summons to the bar of judgment. You may refuse to pray, but you cannot resist punishment. Why, then, should you risk it, seeing the Father seeketh you to worship him?

When Martha said to Mary, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee," Mary, "as soon as she heard that, arose quickly, and came unto Jesus." Now you approve of her promptitude: you would have blamed her if she had not gone at once, when he called her. Why? If, because it would have been unwise, ungrateful, unsafe, and thus exceedingly sinful, to neglect or evade the Saviour's call, whilst he spake on earth; then, remember, and apply to yourself Paul's solemn oracle—"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for, if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. When Paul weighed this awful consideration, he immediately applied it to himself and the believing Hebrew thus: "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."

This is a long appeal; perhaps you are tired of it. Do you, then, really so dislike prayer, that warnings against the neglect of it irritate and vex you? Can you defy them recklessly, or defeat them by stratagem? Do mark well the precise state of your own feelings at this moment! If the law of prayer "work wrath" in you, and if your heart

can rise and writhe against it, are you not yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity?" How can there be "any good thing in you, towards the God of your Fathers," if you hate to draw nigh unto him in that spirit which he requireth from all who worship him?

This reluctance must be looked into. It is not the feeling of the moment, chafed only by remonstrance; it is your natural spirit breaking out in its inherent and hereditary aversion to "worship God in the beauty of holiness." And this spirit will not go away of itself. It will grow upon you, if you do not grapple with it at once, and at all hazards. The force of direct effort, however, will not subdue it. No, nor will the power of solemn warnings put it down. There must be consideration as well as excitement; hopes as well as fears, before our natural reluctance to spiritual devotion can be overcome: for the Spirit of grace and supplication works by both; and therefore we ought to employ both.

Now, one consideration which I have found to be very useful is this:—"Were God as reluctant to answer prayer, as I am to pray with the understanding and the heart, how *alarmed* I should be for my soul! And yet, why should he care more for me than I care myself? If I grudge the time, thought, and feeling, requisite to plead my own cause seriously, why should God take any interest in it, or the Saviour take it up in his intercession? God and the Lamb will not, cannot—nor can I expect them to do so, whilst I myself do not think my own salvation worth asking for." Thus, by asking ourselves, how we should like God and the Mediator to feel and act towards us, in the matter of *answering* prayer, we see at a glance how they must require us to feel and act toward them in praying for mercy and grace. Do not then *mock* God by neglect or formality, if you would not provoke God to "mock when your fear cometh." You know it will come. The time is coming when you will be glad to "pour out your heart before him" with strong cries and tears. You intend to do so. You would

do so *now*, if you were sure that you would never have another opportunity. Yea, if you strongly suspected, that you may be unable or unwilling to pray on your death-bed, you would make a decided stand now against your reluctance, rather than risk the awful peradventure of a seared conscience or a delirious understanding at last ; for you cannot bear the horrid thought of dying insensible or insane, hardened or helpless.

Another consideration which I have found to be very useful is, How small, in itself, is the point on which I am standing out against God ? I am not unwilling to be moral in my life, nor to be sound in my creed, nor to be regular in public worship, nor to do some good, according to my power, to the poor and the perishing. I can go on with some heart in public work and worship ; but I stop, I stand out, at my closet ! There, both my good principles and feelings break down shamefully. And at what ? If it were at the idea of spending hours every day in my closet, there might be some excuse for shrinking back now and then from secret prayer. But I know better than to imagine that "long prayers" are required or expected. I may talk to others or to myself about the want of time, and the pressure of business ; about care in the morning, and fatigue at night ; but I cannot hide from myself the fact, that I find time for things of far less importance than prayer. I contrive, notwithstanding all the pressure of labour and fatigue, to read a good deal, to amuse myself not a little, and to improve myself somewhat in my favourite tastes. True, I require this relaxation. Both body and mind need to unbend after being on the strain all day. Health and spirits would break down altogether, if the routine of daily labour were not cheered by some exhilarating pursuit. All this is true ; but what does it prove ? Why, this, that I could find time for prayer too, if I had as much taste for it as for the pursuits in which I relax myself. Besides, if health or spirits be dear to me, I am really *perilling* both by heartless prayer ; for, however music or painting, literature or

science, may soothe the mind after care and fatigue, they cannot *insure* health or spirits. I am entirely dependant upon God for both. I cannot place myself out of the reach of his "mighty hand" by any stratagem. Am I not, therefore, provoking that hand to strike me, whilst I am all but prayerless? Thus, even upon my own principles, that something is necessary to diversify and lighten labour, lest health break down under it, I am imprudent, as well as criminal, in holding back from "fervent prayer." "Ah, it is not the *time* it requires, that holds me back. I am unwilling to give my *heart* up to the objects and emotions which belong to prayer. This is the real fact, whatever I may pretend. I am not indifferent about my soul or salvation; but I have no such love to them, as loves devotion for their sake." Have you not? Then you love something more and better than the salvation of your soul; more and better than you love eternal life! What is that something? Whatever it be, you cannot get it, nor keep it, in spite of Providence, however much you love it. Indeed, if it be not a sinful object that your heart is set upon, you are taking the sure way to miss or lose it, by thus preferring it to the great salvation. God will not bear with this preference. He will either cross you in it, or curse you with a portion in this life. And if the object of your preference be *sinful*, you are arousing all the perfections of his character against your soul. Do look at the awful dilemma you thus place yourself in! It is very awful, however laudable in itself may be the object you now love more than salvation: for you cannot get it and salvation too, whilst you prefer it to salvation. God will never place his gift of eternal life in the *left* hand of any man, who gives his *right* hand to an earthly portion. God will not lay his great salvation beneath the feet of your little projects. He will have it and make it *uppermost* in your heart, or he will give you up to your heart's lusts. You cannot escape him. Down your idols must come, or down your soul must go. This is the only alternative. Providence will either cross you at every

step, until you are *heart-sick* of the world, and glad to give all your heart to salvation ; or curse you with success until you are conscience-seared with prosperity. This is the invariable rule of Providence. It mends or ends the man to a certainty, by some means. You are doing God great injustice, and your own understanding no credit, if you think this a harsh process, or a hard alternative. It beams and burns with love throughout. It is all tender mercy in its intention. God could not do you a greater kindness than set his providence against the things which you prefer to his salvation : for, if he should not do so and thus leave you to take up with an earthly portion, you would deplore it to all eternity ; whereas, to all eternity you would adore him, should he even lead you "through fire and water," to the wealthy place of glory. It is not however, necessary to bring matters to this issue. Neither your soul nor your circumstances need be thus perilled. The alternative set before you now, is not the loss of all the world, or the loss of your soul. It is this—will you give your heart to your eternal interests from choice, or compel God either to break your heart with adversity, or to harden it with prosperity ? Thus the choice you are called on to make now, is not between salvation and adversity. What is really "good" for you in this life, God will give you, from the very moment you "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." He knows all the other things you have need of, and he will *add* them to the gift of eternal life, whenever you lay hold upon it, in a spirit becoming its value and holiness.

This, then, is the real connexion in which God seeketh you to worship him in spirit and in truth. He seeks you to do so for the sake of your own interests in both worlds, as well as for the sake of his own glory. Can you, then, refuse any longer to pour out your heart before God in secret ? Are you now resolved to "enter into your closet, and shut the door, and pray unto the Father, who seeth in secret, and rewardeth openly ?" If so, enter, wondering and adoring, that you are permitted to appear before God

alone. You would not like friends, nor strangers, to hear the matter or the manner of your first fervent prayers. You have that to confess and deplore, which they ought not to hear. God does not want them to witness your "strong cries nor tears." He wants all your secrets for himself, and he will *tell* none of them to any one. He will inform angels of your repentance, that they may rejoice over you; but he will draw no human attention to what passes between you and himself, except as he drew that of Ananias to Paul, by simply and delicately saying, "*Behold, he prayeth!*" God did not tell Ananias all that Paul told him in secret. In like manner, he will not betray your confidence when you confess your sins. He will humble you by revealing himself to you; but he will not mortify you by exposing your case to others. Closet secrets are sacred with him! David knew this, and prayed thus: "Put thou my tears into thy bottle."

Enter your closet, also, determined to be thoroughly *honest* before God. Do not attempt to hush up any thing, however painful it may be to confess freely. "If your heart condemn you, God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things" already. You cannot impose upon him. All things in your heart and your history are naked and open to the eyes of the God with whom you have to do.

"He knows the words we mean to speak,
Ere from our opening lips they break."

Do not, therefore, try to conceal or equivocate on any point. The point to which you feel most reluctant, because most ashamed to come, is the very point to *begin* at, in penitential confession. If you fail or falter there, your general confessions will all go for nothing. They will not even pave your way to the point which you thus dread and dislike to come to. Come to it, therefore, first and fully. You can easily go into general confessions of sin and shortcoming. They are sure to follow, if the great matter between God and conscience is honestly and humbly gone into.

You know what I mean. Every "heart knoweth its own bitterness," and what embittered it too. Now, be that what it may, what it *is*, in your case, you must go fully into, and fully through with. To palliate it is to mock God, and to hurry it over is to trifle with him. The very inclination to evade it and shrink from it shows that you either love the sin still, or that you would fain throw the blame of it upon any thing rather than on yourself. This will not do! The single fact, that you have turned it over in your mind so much and so long, in order to *divide* the blame between yourself and others, is itself proof, that you are deeply to blame. Conscience would not bring it up so often, nor fear shrink from it so instinctively and constantly, if you were not the chief criminal. There was, of course, temptation, and there may have been strong temptation, and even some deception practised upon you, but you were not duped without your own consent. Accordingly, you would not deem yourself innocent, or only half to blame, were you to yield again to the same force of temptation. True, you now know the *consequences* of yielding, and thus are more upon your guard; but you then knew that God had forbidden the sin, and yet, in the face of his interdict, you tampered with temptation, until you fell before it. Thus, you defied him then at all hazards; a crime which you can never palliate, whatever wisdom you may have learned from experience since. It is not without occasion that I thus enforce thorough humiliation before God. You know that your heart holds back here. You are inclined to skirt the edges, or to skim the surface of your own case, and thus to hush up what most needs to be gone fully into. And nothing needs such a full disclosure before God, as the sins and the idols which have hitherto made you ashamed, or afraid, or unwilling, to be alone with God in your closet.

You will not, however, be thoroughly honest or humble in your closet, even now, if you go there to meet God, only as a God who will not be trifled with, and cannot be deceived. You never will like to be alone with him for con-

fession, until you are as much alive to his love as a Father, as to his omniscience as God. You must realize his eyes as beaming to pardon iniquity, if you would not shrink from them as burning "to mark iniquity." Their paternal mildness—their looks of love, pity, and solicitude, form the only lasting link between the heart and the closet. You will not come to God there often, nor continue long, until you firmly believe that "He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Prayer, almost hopeless, will soon become altogether heartless. Only believing prayer will be persevering prayer.

Remember, therefore, that it is as a *Father*, God seeketh you to worship him. He is a Spirit; but he is a paternal Spirit. This should touch your heart to its inmost core, for you know what this means. Either from the experience of paternal tenderness, or from the want of it, you can judge of the worth and warmth of the love of God. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." And if this cheering fact do not open on you in light and loveliness, emanating from *home-associations*, you can at once supply their place by the memory of the prodigal's father. He was what God is. God will welcome you, as he did his lost son.

Let this sink into and settle in your heart, whenever you retire to pray. This is not the reception you deserve, after keeping away so long from your heavenly Father. He might justly upbraid you, and that bitterly too; but he will not. He will leave all his reproofs to your own self-upbraidings. He will trust the fidelity of your conscience to the melting of your heart as you listen to him, saying, "This my son, was lost, and is found; he was dead, and is alive again." He will leave his love to produce its own effect, by folding you in his arms, until you feel the beatings of his own heart pressing on the throbbings of your heart. Be not staggered at this strong language. Remember again, that God *seeketh* you. The father of the prodigal ran to him, when he saw him afar off; but he did

not go in search of him to the city of his extravagance, or to the fields of his wretchedness. We know of no step he took on his behalf until he saw his face turned homeward. He saved the lost then, but he did not seek him before. God has, however, often sought you, whilst you have been wandering, and shunning him. You have often felt that he was seeking you to return. Sometimes the drawings of his Spirit were so strong in your spirit, that you knew not how to resist them. You have felt him bring you to a stand, and leave you utterly without the shadow of an excuse for wandering a moment longer. You feel something of this now. Oh, let all these considerations prove to you, that God will welcome you in the closet. He would not thus seek you if he were unwilling to receive you. Do then seek Him, who thus seeketh you that he may save you. I wrote in a figure, because I wrote feelingly, when I said that God would fold you to his bosom, as the prodigal's father fell upon his neck and kissed him; but you know what I mean. God's *promises* of pardon and acceptance amount to as much as if he did all this literally. What he says and swears in his word is as true as if you saw him lift his right hand to the heavens, and heard him swear to you by His life, that he has no pleasure in your death. Now, you would go any where to see and hear this. Enter, then, into your closet, open your Bible, and realize all that God is, from what it says of him and for him; and what less do you find at the mercy-seat, than an embracing Father? What more could he show by voice or vision, than that he is as much and as essentially love, as he is a Spirit.

Now, if all this do not reconcile and win you to secret prayer, what probability is there that you ever will be won? You may well tremble for yourself, if you are yet disposed to keep away from your closet. Take care! God may shut you out, if you do not shut yourself in, this night. Shut your closet door on the *inside*; for if he shut it on the *outside*, your future knocking will not make him open it

again. He is now within, calling for you to enter, and commune with him ; but when once the Master of the secret house of prayer is "risen up," and ye begin to knock, he will say unto you, "Depart ; I never knew you."

What shall I say more to commend or enforce devotional habits ? Do you yet feel averse to them ? If by any ingenuity you can still evade them, you are far gone in "the snare of the devil." Where, then, may he not lead you, if he can already keep you away from that closet—where God awaits to be gracious ; where the Saviour manifests himself to the soul ; where the Holy Spirit helps infirmities, and sanctifies the heart ; and where all who now fill heaven with praise, found, by prayer, the grace which led to glory ? Arise, for the Master calleth thee ! The Father seeketh thee to worship him. Say to him, with David, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face ; my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

No. III.

ON MANLY REALIZATION OF GOD IN THE WORLD.

WERE there a spot on earth or in the universe, which God could not see, or where God would not look, it would be no desirable residence, however starred with natural beauty, or rich in all that could gratify the senses. It would only be but just better than hell, whatever were its scenery, society, pursuits, or pleasures. There is, however, no such spot in all the infinitude of space. "The eyes of the Lord are *every where*, beholding the evil and the good." Were there, however, a place, here or hereafter, where we could be as much invisible to God, as God is invisible to us, would we prefer it, to an abode where "all things are naked and open unto God ?" This question, although fan-

eful, and even founded on fiction, is not useless. It will bring to light both facts and secrets of the heart, which we do well to consider. Suppose, then, that there were a place on earth, where God took no account nor notice of what was done or felt by its inhabitants ; where no religion was expected, and no punishment followed sin ; would it have any attractions for us ? Would we, in order to escape accountability and observation, prefer it to our present *responsible* place, if it were in all other respects comfortable ? I am not supposing a place of torment, solitude, or desolation ; but one exactly like the bright and busy scene we are now in, in all things but religion. Let all the arts and sciences be in it ; all the forms of trade and commerce ; all the ordinary charms and charities of social life, and the whole mass of human literature, luxury, and amusement. Look at it now steadfastly, and observe how you *feel*—whilst you think of business, that Providence would never cross ; of pleasure, which had no perils ; of weeks which had no Sabbaths ; of nights and mornings, which required neither prayer nor praise ; of death, which had no terrors ; of an eternity, that would be quite as good, in all respects, as time.

How would such a world suit your taste ? Would it be pleasing, were it possible ? Would you prefer this freedom from all religious duty and spiritual danger, to being as you now are marked and remembered at every step by God, and bound over to appear at the judgment-seat of Christ ? Many, you are aware, act as if our world was just such a world as I have supposed. My fancy-picture is only their real-life history, so far as their *wishes* go. They wish for all these exemptions from present duty and future danger, and even try how little they can think about either. Would you accept a *real* exemption from both, if you could get it ? Would it gratify you to have nothing to do or fear, through time and eternity so far as God is concerned ?

Now, however you may feel in the grasp of these questions, it is quite certain that many would be very glad to

be thus released from all religious obligation and future accountability. You know many who would be quite in their element, in such a world as I have imagined. They would be more than contented ; they would be delighted with such liberty.

Let us then look at them, observing minutely, and jealously, how far we are inclined to choose or wish as they do. This process, also, will bring to light the secrets of the heart. These are not easily got at in their real forms. We are very ready to give ourselves credit for yielding rather to the force of circumstances than to our own inclinations, when we neglect or compromise in religion. We often ascribe to the want of ability, or of convenience, negligences which ought to be traced to a want of *good-will* towards duty and devotion. Most of our *cannots* are really, *will nots*, however reluctant we may be to confess the fact to God or man. The extent, however, to which this is true, is not very easily discovered. Hence the necessity of plying ourselves with all kinds of questions, which place our hearts before ourselves, somewhat as they are seen by the heart-searching God.

Take, then, a man who would be glad to have nothing to do with God. Suppose him exempted from all duty and danger, here and hereafter ; what has he gained ? Any thing you envy ? True ; freedom from all fear is a great thing. This you never have had. This you may never obtain on earth. Would you, then, prefer the absence of all fear to the presence of some good hope, through grace, of being loved by God now, and eventually elevated to live with him for ever ? Could you dispense with a hope full of immortality, if you might have a lot void of all care, and a heart void of all fear ? Would you exchange the prospects of eternal life in the divine presence, and of entire conformity to the divine image, for the possession of a world without God ? If you would, or at all feel that you *could* do so, it is high time for you to take the alarm at your own tastes and inclinations. They are " of the earth,

earthy;" yea, there is much that is both sensual and devilish, as well as brutish, in them. What? Content to be for ever like man as he now is, when you may be for ever like God, in the purity of his character, and in the perfection of his happiness? Content to be for ever what you are, when you may be for ever all that angels are in bliss and beauty? Content to bear for ever the image of the earthy, when you may acquire "the image of the heavenly," in all its splendour of intellect and glory? No, no; surely not! This would be to forego "angels' food," for husks. You were made for better things; you are capable of higher pursuits. Eternity cannot exhaust the life nor the energies of your spirit. Infidelity alone can bound your knowledge or your happiness. Seraphs have no joys which you may not reach, and archangels no glory which you may not realize. You may be, in body, all that the glorious body of Christ is; and in soul, all that the eternal Spirit of holiness can make you. And then the material universe would be the range of your studies; the intelligent universe the circle of your friends; the Godhead the source and centre of your bliss; and immortality the duration of all this "exceeding weight of glory."

Can you still fall back upon an earthly portion? Do your thoughts or feelings fall

"Plumb down"

from this heaven of heavens, to seek a more kindred element in a world without God? Do mark your own emotions and tendencies, whilst your spirit is thus "caught up into the third heavens." You see the bent of your mind now. Your heart is naked and open to yourself. You feel that you are less in love with heavenly things than you suspected. You gave yourself credit for more good-will towards future glory than you now find to exist within your spirit. Thus, the image of the earthy is broader and deeper upon your soul than you imagined. Oh, it is not without

infinite reason that the Scriptures say, "Ye must be born again." The necessity of a new heart and a right spirit is no "marvel," when we look at either the enjoyments or the engagements of heaven. You see, at this moment, that our natural taste for them is any thing but strong or habitual.

Part of what you feel at present, however, is, no doubt, partly owing to the *kind* of view we have just taken of heaven. It is too *intellectual and abstract* to reach the core of the heart, or even touch its most sensitive points. I do not mean, of course, that the view is at all beyond your comprehension. You have often, no doubt, soared higher, and circled wider in your realizations of eternity. I mean, therefore, by "intellectual and abstract," in this view of heaven, that it has appealed to you rather as intelligent than as accountable; rather as rational than guilty; rather as judging creatures than as sinners passing to the bar of God to be judged. Now, this is not a fair view of heaven; and, therefore, the heart has not fair play when it is tried by a merely intellectual test. God does not try it in this way. He sets heaven before us as sinners who deserve hell; as sufferers who need rest; as mortals who love immortality; and this I have not done here. It is, therefore, partly my fault that you have felt less interested about heaven than you wish to do. There is, however, only too much truth in some of the glimpses you have got of your own heart, whilst I questioned and cross-questioned its tastes and tendencies. It is not from instinct, nor from natural choice, that any one prefers conformity or accountability to God. If left entirely to our own bias, a *holy* heaven would have no attractions for us. We could content ourselves in a world without God, if it were not worse than this world. It is, therefore, well, yea, a mercy, that we have no choice but between heaven and hell; and no alternative but to submit to the government of God here, or to endure his wrath hereafter; for were we not thus "shut up" to choose between eternal life and the second death, even heaven, in

any of its revealed glories, would have but few moral charms for our earthly minds.

But it may be said, What has all this to do with the *omniscience* of God? I answer, at once, "Much every way;" for it is not every recognition of his heart-searching eye, that can keep the heart from taking up with an earthly portion, or bring the heart to choose a heavenly portion. It is one thing to admit as a matter of course, that God sees us; and quite another, to be so penetrated with the conviction as to pause often beneath his eye, saying, with solemn awe, "*Thou God, seest me.*" Any one, even a deist, will confess His omniscience; but how few confront themselves with it, or lay open all the soul to all its scrutiny? This is what is wanted, in order to a right appreciation of time and eternity, in their respective claims upon our attention. That vague sense of divine observation, which allows a man to take liberties under the eye of God, that he durst not venture upon before the eye of the world, is very little better than an actual denial of omniscience. Even that sense of it, which leaves the conscience at ease, except when open sin is perpetrating, is but *half* a recognition of the divine scrutiny. It extends to the whole frame of our spirit, and to all the secrets of our heart, and to the exact kind and degree of attention we give to divine things. It looks to the meaning of our words, to the spirit of our forms, to the motives of our actions, to the centres of our affections, and to the precise character of our desires, as well as to our practical doings and prevailing temper. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, that, like a two-edged sword, penetrates even to the joints and marrow of our moral frame, dividing them asunder, and laying bare the whole hidden man of the heart.

This is omniscience! Nothing is hid from it, or overlooked by it. It also remembers as imperishably, as it marks impartially. It never mistakes, and never wearies. Now, we do not like this minute and everlasting observation. It is both too rigid and too constant for our taste. We may not

exactly dispute nor despise it ; but we are very willing to forget it, and very ready, when it is forced upon our notice, to try to persuade ourselves, that we could do nothing else, if we were to attend to our hearts as it requires. For, who has not got up a case against such watchfulness as the omniscience of God seems to call for ? Thus we exaggerate its claims into an impossibility, and then excuse ourselves for neglecting them. This is a very paltry subterfuge ! We are afraid to deny that God keeps his eye constantly upon us, and yet we venture to affirm that we cannot be expected to keep our eye constantly on Him. This, however, is not true. It is, of course, quite true, that we cannot be always thinking of God, nor for ever on the strain to keep every thought, feeling, and desire, up to the mark of a high spirituality ; but this is not what He expects. He does not apply the measure of an angel to the abilities of a man. He regards business done in his fear, with as much complacency as the devotion which preceded and followed it, in the habits of a pious man. He would reckon perpetual musing no homage to him, even if his own character were the subject of it, if the muser loved meditation because he disliked labour. Idle men, however absorbed about divine things, are as far from coming up to God's standard of a Christian, as active men who care nothing about divine things. God exercises his omniscience for the on-carrying of the ordinary duties of life, as well as for the enforcement of the duties of godliness. He looks after *work* as well as worship. It is, therefore, sheer hypocrisy, or utter silliness, to pretend impossibilities, when he calls on us to do and endure, "*as seeing Him who is invisible.*" God has a *practical* object in view as much as any other father, who looks well after his family. He does not look at every thing in our hearts and lives for the sake of looking, nor only that he might find fault, nor chiefly because he will bring all things into judgment at the last day. The minuteness and constancy of his observations are for our good on all days, and not for evil even on that day. No ; Om-

niscience is not trying how much it can get up against us at the judgment-seat, but how much it can keep down the clauses of our indictment there. It is not collecting evidence with a view to our condemnation, but for the express purpose of rousing us, by a sight of all that it has seen, to seek that robe of righteousness in which we may be acquitted when the thrones are set for judgment.

I wish I could say something on this point which you could never forget, nor lose sight of again; for I strongly suspect, that the omniscience of God is regarded as a jealous *spy*, rather than as a watchful friend. This is very base! for, next to the gift of a Saviour and a Sanctifier, the greatest proof that God is love, is, that he searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, and thus acquaints himself with all our ways. This assertion should not surprise you at all. It is no paradox nor pretence struck out to meet an emergency, or to evade a difficulty. I know, indeed, too well, that omniscience wears a repulsive and prying aspect to the generality; but I know equally well, that they have not studied its revealed character or design. They do not think of it at all, but when it stands in their way as an angel with a drawn sword, holding them back from their sins and follies. It is thus they come to regard it rather as an enemy than a friend.

Perhaps, you have never seen any thing amiable or pleasing in this perfection of God. Perhaps, you even doubt whether his sleepless omniscience could be construed, by any ingenuity, into a proof of paternal love. Or, if you do not altogether question this, you do question the possibility of bringing you to *love* it as much as you now fear it. That you think impossible in your own case. You do not even see how any man could really *delight* in having the eye of God for ever fixed on all his movements and emotions. There seems something irksome and embarrassing in such observations, whatever were its motives.

I bring out these suspicions, because I know they are *in* the heart. I am not suggesting, by thus embodying them

in words, ideas or feelings which you have been strangers to until now. You never have loved the omniscience of God, nor allowed yourself to suppose that you ever could love it. For, why else are you *surprised*, that I call it a lovely attribute?

You too, however, would think it so, if your heart were thoroughly set upon an immediate personal interest in the great salvation. Did that absorb your spirit in deep solicitude—in fervent prayer—in insatiable desire for acceptance with God through the blood of the Lamb, you would be delighted to remember, that an omniscient eye saw all your desires, and examined all your feelings. You would not for worlds have it otherwise, were you *intent* upon true repentance towards God, and on true faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. You would be so willing to repent and believe aright, and so anxious to be sure that you did so, and so afraid of mistaking at all in a matter of such infinite importance, that you would actually rejoice in the pleasing fact, of an omniscience which marked all your sincerity, and understood you better than you could express or explain yourself. “*Thou God, seest me,*” will be one of the sweetest considerations that ever passed through your mind, when your mind tries to pour all its strength into fervent prayers for mercy and grace. Then, the eye of God, like the cross of Christ, will appear to you “*altogether lovely;*” and you will appeal for ever after, when examining your own love to God, as Peter did, “*Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.*”

Thus, it is not impossible to delight in the omniscience of God. It becomes an anchor to the soul, when the soul cannot find words nor tears to express its concern for salvation. But you say, “*How will it appear when this absorbing concern subsides? It may be very pleasing whilst all the soul is concentrated upon obtaining the hope of salvation; but, when that hope is obtained, and both worlds resume their proper place in the heart, how will Omniscience commend itself to the heart then?*” I will not evade

this question by insinuating, that you want to make some provision for doing, thinking, and feeling, at times, what you would not venture on if you could not forget the eye of God. Take care, however, that there be no lurking design of this kind at the bottom of the question. I suspect none, but you do well to suspect yourself.

It is, then, the constancy of divine observation, under *ordinary* circumstances, that seems irksome or unpleasant to you. You cannot see how it could be a *daily* source of pleasure to a man who has to stand the tear and wear of the business of life ; so many thoughts and feelings must pass through his mind inevitably, and the majority of them must be so worldly, that nothing but *pain* or *shame* could well arise from closing the day by a solemn review of what Omniscience had noticed and marked in the course of it. This is plausible. It is, however, untrue. In order to see this, you have only to ask yourself—Would it not give me pleasure, if God did not notice the frame of my mind during the bustle of the day, nor during the hours of relaxation ? Suppose his eye were upon me only when I was in the closet and the sanctuary, would I like that better than its following me every where ? This would, indeed, relieve me from some embarrassment : but how would it place me, as to *safety*, during the interval that the eye of God was not upon me ? I need its watchfulness at all times, and every where, however I may dislike its scrutiny. Might there not, however, spring up some thought, feeling, or passion, whilst He lost sight of my heart through the day, which would prove fatal to my principles or character, before he renewed his observation at night ? Might not my mind take some turn, or get some bias, whilst he left it to itself, which would prevent my return to the closet or the sanctuary ? Besides, would Satan slumber even if God slept ?

“ Ay, there’s the rub ! ”

We do not know what we wish, when we desire to be

less noticed by Omniscience, Were "He that keepeth Israel" to "slumber or sleep," the enemy of souls would ruin our souls in the intervals of divine watchfulness. Omniscience is *watchfulness* as well as scrutiny. Whilst, therefore, I readily grant, that both pain and shame must accompany a review of the thoughts and feelings of any day, I deny that nothing else better can accompany it. I challenge contradiction when I affirm, that it is both sweet and soothing to discover that, however the world may have divided the heart from God, and the things of time and sense diverted it from eternity, they have not been allowed to alienate it entirely, nor to turn it against religion. It is, indeed, humiliating to come home from the toils and turmoil of life, deadened, distracted, and carnalized; but, bad as this is, it is better than coming home seared in conscience, or perverted in judgment. And I defy any man to prove that *this* might not happen, if God did not interpose checks upon the tendencies of the heart, and counteraction upon the influence of Satan and the world. It is not, therefore, only for the sake of marking what is evil in the trains of our thoughts and feelings, that God keeps his eye upon them all; but, chiefly, that he may *stop* them at all the points where vain thoughts might become vicious, and bad feelings reprobate. I tell you, therefore, in plain terms, that had God taken less notice of your heart than he has done, it would have been harder than it is, and even "past feeling," long ago. Now this you would not like. This you deprecate. You cannot, therefore, dislike now (as you did) the all-seeing and all-searching eye of God. It has kept the eye of your understanding somewhat open to the truth and importance of eternal things, and the eye of your conscience from confounding evil with good. Is not that a lovely attribute, then, which thus condescends to watch the workings of the mind, and the effect of temptations and circumstances upon the mind, that it may interpose when prejudice would ripen into enmity, and distaste into settled aversion, for divine things? Do your views of Omniscience,

and your feelings towards it, begin to alter a little now? Do you see that more can be said to endear it than you supposed at first? Well, I am only skirting the edges and skimming the surface of its grace and glory. "These are a part of its ways;" but only a small portion of them is known when all this is understood. For, what think you of the grace of Omniscience, in so watching over the movements of the public mind, as to maintain a tone of thought and feeling, upon the whole, favourable to personal piety? I mean, that you may be pious without perilling life or reputation, although the great bulk of mankind are still ungodly. This is no accident, nor a small advantage. Now, it is by searching all hearts that God can turn all hearts, like rivers, into any channel he pleases. Did he not keep his eye upon the spirit of the age, and thus regulate its passions, there is enough both of infidelity and popery in it to rekindle the fires of martyrdom, and turn the finger of scorn into the fist of cruelty.

No. IV.

ON MANLY REALIZATIONS OF FINAL JUDGMENT.

WE shall never do well in the service of God until we act in all things with an express regard to the final "WELL DONE" of the Judge. We shall neither be good nor faithful servants if we do not set our hearts upon his *commendation*, as well as upon his acquittal at the judgment-seat. Indeed, he will acquit none whom he cannot commend also for something. To none will he say, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom," but to those to whom he can say first, "Well done." Where he cannot say of something, "Well done, ye blessed," he will say, "Depart, ye cursed." Thus it will be at the last day exactly as the Saviour said on the first and last days of his public ministry on earth: only

those who "have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life : they that have done evil shall come forth unto the resurrection of damnation." John v. 29. There will be no *well-being* then, where there has been no *well-doing* now.

This solemn fact does not affect all minds alike : but it brings out, whenever it is brought home, both the secrets and the real state of all hearts. It is a glass in which every man sees at once his own character and disposition. At the first glance it sets the clever compromiser to try all his theological dexterity, in order to evade or neutralize the startling truth. He is not inclined to do much in the service of God, nor to do well the little he attempts ; and therefore he tries to perplex the question about well-doing. "Men are not saved (he says) *by* doing good, nor *for* doing well ; and therefore it is very *legal* to set them such a task, as trying to deserve the commendation of the Judge. No one could merit that. He is no Christian, who imagines that he deserves to be welcomed into heaven by the 'Well done' of the Judge. All must enter the kingdom as sinners saved entirely by free grace. Christians must not, indeed, do evil when they can avoid it ; but neither must they do good for the sake of a reward."

Thus the compromiser perplexes the question, and perils his soul upon a quibble ; for it is a quibble to say that it would be legal, or self-righteous, to do the work of faith or the labour of love well. Trying to do them well, is the true and sure way of not depending upon them. He who does best, or tries how well he can do, in the service of God, is sure to feel most, that he cannot merit salvation. Accordingly, the holiest Christians are always the humblest ; and the most exemplary in character, the most frequent at the cross, and most fervent at the mercy-seat. Theory may say, that the man, who is doing little, and nothing well, would be oftenest and humblest there : but all experience proves the contrary. They are any thing but very prayerful, who are very inconsistent in their habits or

spirit. They glory least in the cross, who run least for the crown. This is the *fact*, whatever the theory may be. None feel or confess themselves entire debtors to grace and dependants on Christ, so much as those who do and try most to resemble the Saviour in character, and to glorify him by devotedness. And all this is only what might be expected. Sound theory, as well as sober fact, lead to this conclusion. For, how could he be expected to pray most or much, who does nothing else well? He is not likely to love prayer, who dislikes practical godliness. He has, indeed, most occasion to pray much, but he has, naturally and inevitably, least inclination, because least hope of success. Besides, it is in religion, as it is in the intercourse of life: the man who is all the day long neglecting the advice of his best friend, will not court his friend's company at night, for many nights together. He will soon weary of being alone with him, and invent as many excuses for not meeting him at night, as for not acting on his advice by day. And, at length, sheer shame will keep him away altogether, unless sheer necessity drive him back. So it is in religion: nothing is so irksome to an idle or inconsistent professor, as being alone with God in the closet. There, he is completely out of his element. In fact, he dare not stay long enough upon his knees to go into his own case before God. It will not bear looking at, and therefore he hushes it up, and hurries away.

Not so, however, with the man who tries to do well through the day. He is not afraid of his closet at night. He is, indeed, ashamed of his failures and imperfections, even when he has done best; but it is a shame that draws him into his closet; that endears his evening interview with God in secret; because there, he regains the hope of pardon, and thus renews his spiritual strength for an attempt to do better to-morrow.

There are, however, some truly pious persons, who, although they are deeply afraid of doing evil, are also conscientiously afraid of calling or considering their good,

“well-doing.” They have no hope—no idea—of hearing the “Well done” of the Judge applied to any thing they do or try. The very utmost they venture to look for is, escape from condemnation. A silent, or even an unseen admission into heaven, would more than satisfy them. If only allowed to “steal in,” however unnoticed, it would be enough for them : so deeply sensible are they of their utter unworthiness.

Now this is a fine spirit, so far as it makes Christ “all and all,” in salvation. But whilst it does honour to him as a Priest it does not do justice to him as a *King*. It is the only right spirit in reference to his cross ; but it is not so right towards his sceptre. He feels and takes a higher interest in all who love him, than to provide only for their admission into heaven. That would not satisfy Him, however it might content them. More than acquittal is laid up for all that “love his appearing :” a crown of righteousness will be given to them. He will honour as well as own them.

This should not be overlooked. It is not humility, to think of nothing but bare escape at the judgment-seat. Were, there, indeed, nothing more provided or promised, it would be pride, yea, arrogance, to wish for any thing beyond mere pardon. But as Christ has “prepared a place,” and promised “a crown” to all his followers, it is their duty to look for both, and to prepare themselves for both. This would produce greater humility than the mere hope of safety calls forth ; for if it bow my soul in adoring wonder, to think of being allowed a place of safety at the right hand of the Judge ; if I feel that I could not stand there, however unnoticed without being overpowered with a sense of my own unworthiness and of His grace ; how much more would all these humble emotions prevail and abide in my soul, were I to anticipate a welcome—a smile—a kind word or look from Him ! The thought of that, dissolves the soul in humility, as well as

“In wonder, love, and praise.”

Why is this fact so much overlooked by some who love both humility and holiness? They certainly judge ill, however well they mean, in thus looking for less than the Saviour has promised. Their difficulty, I apprehend, lies here: they cannot connect his "Well done," with *ordinary* well-doing. It must, they think, be confined to the extraordinary well-doing of public champions in the cause of God. They can connect it with martyrs, missionaries, faithful ministers, and a few eminently devoted Christians; but with their own poor and private well-doing, they never think of linking it. That seems to them altogether *out of question and of character*.

This is, however, quite a mistake. It is not thus that the Saviour estimates service done to him. We look only or chiefly at splendid and public well-doing; at efforts and sacrifices which tell powerfully upon the world and the church, and which draw down tokens of the divine approbation now, that amount to pledges and preludes of commendation when the thrones shall be set for judgment. But, although we are not wrong in thus attaching the chief importance to public men and measures, so far as *new* triumphs of the cross are wanted and to be won, we are not right when we forget even the humblest trophies of its *old* triumphs. They are quite as much connected with *sustaining* the glory of Christ, as the others are with *extending* it. It is the worth of private Christians that bears out public men in maintaining that the gospel is worthy of all acceptation. It is the prayers of private Christians that bear up the spirits and hopes of ministers, missionaries, and philanthropists. Were not poor Christians cheerful, and suffering Christians patient, and bereaved Christians resigned, and tempted Christians steadfast, public champions could not appeal to facts when enforcing the claims of God and godliness; for although their claims do not rest upon the number nor the excellence of private Christians, still these are the living proofs and demonstrations that they are *well* founded. Thus, the public servants of Christ

are enabled to do well, by the well-doing of his private friends. The great things attempted and achieved for his glory, by extraordinary men, are upheld by the prayers, the character, and the spirit of ordinary Christians, and therefore his "Well done" is just as sure in the case of the latter, as in that of the former. Both are but instruments by which he works ; and, perhaps, the silent influence of private piety has not less to do with his glory, than the commanding influence of public "standard-bearers."

It is, therefore, a pity that such facts are overlooked. The poorest, in common with the wealthiest Christian, and the plainest in common with the most talented or eloquent, have it in their power to secure the commendation of the Judge : for prayer as well as preaching, character as well as gifts, patience as well as enterprise, promote His glory. Were this well understood by all the humble followers of the Lamb, they would do more and better in his service, than ever they did. It would not lead them to attach too much importance to themselves. It would not set them to trace out the precise degree of their own consequence in the church on earth, nor to guess at their place in the church in heaven. The greatest dare not yield to that temptation, whilst looking forward to the judgment-seat, and the least would never think of such calculations. No man can become consequential or self-important, by acting as one who is preparing to give an account at the great white throne of the deeds done in the body.

Were there, however, even some positive danger of being betrayed into self-complacency by trying how *good* an account we could give "at last," there is far more danger in not trying. That may betray us into sloth, heedlessness, or even into Antinomian presumption ; a spirit not so easily "cast out," as self-complacency. Accordingly, whilst you have seen many professed Christians too worldly, slothful, and self-indulgent, you never saw an exemplary Christian pluming himself on the prospect of being able to give his "account with joy, and not with grief," nor

puffed up with the hope of being found "in peace on that day."

This is now the point at which I may safely venture to say, that there is a sense in which Christians attach too *little* importance to themselves *as* Christians. Had they more respect for themselves, as members of God's family on earth, and as heirs of his kingdom in heaven, they would act better than they do.

Self-respect is a very different thing from self-importance. It is even a security against self-importance. A Christian, who respects himself as a Christian, cannot be consequential or assuming. He has too little respect for himself, if he can give himself airs of importance, or carry himself at all proudly. Whenever any man does so, it is not his Christianity, not his hopes, nor his principles, that he respects; but his talents, his taste, his property, or his power: the very *least* things in his character as a Christian. All vamping, and ostentation, and assumption take their stand, not upon the measure of grace a man has, but on the measure of gifts, money, or influence he possesses. You never hear a Christian boasting of his grace or holiness. The men who would say to others, "Stand aside, for I am holier than you," are Pharisees, who have little or no dependance on grace. In like manner, all who plume themselves on being special favourites of Heaven, and despise others as non-elect, pay, of all men, the least respect to the grace they pretend to have received. They either turn into licentiousness, or employ it as an excuse for idleness.

When, therefore, I speak of a private Christian respecting himself as a partaker of the grace of God, I mean what you mean, when you say of Ministers, that they ought to have such a respect for their ministerial character and sacred office, as to be above all meanness, mercinariness, foppishness, and frivolity. You expect and demand that they should "be clean, who bear the vessels of the Lord;" that they who watch for souls, should watch as those who have to "give an account" of the souls committed to their charge;

that they who are intrusted with the gospel, should *live* the gospel, as well as love and preach it. Well ; if this argument be valid and cogent, it holds equally good in the case of private Christians. Those who eat and drink of the vessels of the Lord, as well as those who "bear" them should respect their own character as

"The sacramental host of God."

Paul felt this, and told them, "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." Those, also, who deem their souls worthy of ministerial watchfulness, and thus respect them, should respect them enough to bestow on them such personal watchfulness as shall prevent surprise at death, and confusion at the judgment-seat. My meaning will be still better understood when I say, that I am pleading for nothing but the single and simple duty of Christians to regard themselves in the same light as God regards them ; to treat themselves as He treats them ; to think of themselves as He *speaks* of them. Now, God speaks of all true believers, however weak or obscure, as his children, his heritage, his temples, his jewels. These titles are not empty names, nor idle compliments. He means what he says : he feels what he professes. Thus, then, God respects them, and thus they should respect themselves : those of them who do not, do wrong.

True, many of them are afraid to regard themselves as the children of God. They are not sure of their adoption or conversion. The only thing they are quite sure of is, that their hearts are set upon being "*The children of God, through faith in Jesus Christ.*" That, however, they do desire and seek after with great solicitude and deep humility. Now, such ought to know and believe, (for they are expressly told the fact by God himself,) that they are his children. They welcome Christ ; and to all who receive him as their Prophet, Priest, and King, God gives "power," that is, warrant or liberty, to regard themselves as the sons

and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. They really are so, whether they venture to do so or not. They gain nothing, but lose much, by not doing so ; for, by thus leaving their case uncertain and undefined, they are for ever laying anew the foundation of piety, instead of building up the fabric of it.

I would be the last to speak harshly, or to think meanly, of those who are afraid to regard themselves as the children of God. I think far more highly of many of them, than I do of any who despise the doubting, or who pretend to be superior to all doubts and fears. I cannot, however, shut my eyes to the melancholy fact, that in consequence of leaving it unsettled from year to year, whether they are believers or not, not a few fall into the habit of acting, which is like any thing rather than like preparing for the judgment-seat of Christ. They do nothing very bad ; but they do nothing very good, well. It seems accident, rather than design or effort, when they resist a temptation, or get honourably through a difficulty, or keep their good from being evil spoken of. Somehow, they are seldom to be calculated on. Their best habits, like their hopes, are as changeable as the wind. They are always getting into dilemmas of credit, temper, or character, and rarely get well out of them. Their word is not to be depended on, nor their version of reports safe to be repeated. They are, in a word, a strange *jumble* of good, bad, and indifferent, which no candid man can altogether despise, and no conscientious man vindicate. If they have any piety, it is not manly.

Here, then, is the consequence of not acting with an express regard to the "Well done" of the Judge : the oversight prevents well-doing, and brings the mind and conscience into that blunted state, which leads to perpetual blundering and compromising, even in things that are easily well done. Now we have seen that the final commendations from the throne will not be restricted to splendid doings, nor to heroical sufferings in the service of God ; and that good ordinary men, as well as good extraordinary

men, may be counted worthy of public honour at the last day. You, therefore, have no excuse for not trying to do well. It is imperative, because it is not possible through grace. Grace is both ability and obligation to do well.

If these hints throw any light on this often mystified subject, the best use you can make of them, in the first instance, is to try to do some *one* thing well; for trying how well you can perform one duty is the true way of acquiring a taste and habit for doing your best in all duties; indeed, you will do nothing uniformly nor perseveringly in the service of God, until you set yourself to do something as well as you possibly can; and that you will not attempt, until you set the Judge before you. The praise of *men* will not inspire well-doing in the service of God for any length of time; nor will legal principles ever lead to many good works. Those who work for salvation do least in obeying, and worst in suffering, the will of God. They, of all men, "make void the law" most, who seek to be justified by the works of the law, instead of the finished work of Christ.

This is a remarkable fact! Can you account for it? Look at it again. All who regard salvation as the reward or the result of good works, are least "zealous of good works;" whereas, all who have no more dependance on the moral law for salvation, than on the "laws of the Medes and Persians," are fond of the divine law as a rule of life, just in proportion to the strength of their dependance on grace. How is this? It might be expected, surely, that the man who stakes his eternal safety on good works, would abound and abide in well-doing far more than the man who has no dependance on them. But all experience contradicts this expectation. Well-doing prevails most amongst those who seek all their well-being, for time and eternity, in the finished work of Christ. The fact is, concern about salvation sits very lightly upon the minds of those who prefer the law to the gospel. They care little and think less about the matter. It is not from any love to

the works of the law, that they prefer it to the gospel ; but because they can play it off as a plausible excuse for neglecting the claims of grace. Were law as much and as often pressed upon their consciences as gospel is, they would show equal enmity of heart to it. Instead, therefore, of there being reason to expect that they would obey it best, who *trust* to it most, all the real reason of the case is on the other side. The generality of them care little about the salvation which they talk of trusting to the law for ; and thus their good works come naturally to be as few as their concern for their soul is feeble. And then, as God does not help any man to obey the law, who neglects Christ and grace, it is only what might rationally be expected, that even those who try to do well on legal principles, should fail very much ; for, having no strength of their own, and no aid from the Spirit of God, how could they succeed ? God will no more help a man to *save* himself, than he would help a man to *ruin* himself, now that Christ has suffered and ascended as the only Mediator. God will not displace nor dishonour him, to enable any man to obtain justification by the law. On the other hand, it is only what might be expected, (if Scripture be allowed to guide expectation,) that those should obey most and best who rely on Christ alone for salvation. The tendency of their hope must not be judged by the *abstract* principle—that the exclusion of the law from all place and part in justifying, must exclude it from all place in sanctification. That does not follow either in logic or in probability. The real question is not, how will a man obey the law, who has no dependance on it for salvation ? but, how will a man obey the law who is redeemed from the curse of it, and thus has no occasion to hate or dread its sanctions ? How is he likely to love it, upon whose heart the Spirit of God is *writing* it ? What may be naturally expected from an emaciated slave, when he is adopted as a beloved son ? These are the real tests of the real tendencies of a “good hope through grace.” God can help, and does help, such a man to obey. Well-

doing in obedience must not be left, however, to depend upon the holy tendencies of gracious principles. It must be both "under law to Christ," and influenced by the judgment-seat of Christ. It will not be fully under law to Christ, until it is also under a full sense of accountability to him. He must be recognised and revered as our Judge, if we would habitually or impartially obey him as our Lawgiver.

This remark will enable me to explain to you still further, and more clearly, why many who mean well in the service of God, do not act so well as they ought and wish. They bring their conduct to the test of the present *mercy-seat*, more than to the test of the future judgment-seat of Christ. I do not mean that they think too often, or too much, how their conduct during the day will affect their hopes, their peace, or their spirits at the throne of grace at night; but, that they think too seldom how the tenor of their life will look at the throne of judgment. It is this oversight that betrays and weakens them. Their recollection through the day, that they must appear before the throne of grace at night, to review their conduct, and give in their confession to God, has a fine influence upon them. It operates both as a check and a charm against many temptations; for they know well how the doings of the day will tell upon the devotions of the evening. They can see pretty clearly, even from amidst all the bustle of the world, how certain actions, tempers, and pursuits, will affect their composure in the closet. Not all the din and dust of worldly things can blind them to the solemn fact, that there is a *line* of conduct which if they overstep, they will be unfitted for and afraid of prayer.

It is delightful, also, to trace the sweet and holy influence, which the prospect of having to appear at the *sacrament* has upon the well-doing of Christians. It both leads and compels them to pause often, in the course of the month, to ask themselves, "How will this line of conduct—this frame of spirit—this ascendant habit, affect my

enjoyment at the sacramental table? I shall be expected there, as a matter of course, by my pastor and friends. My absence would create surprise at home: it might excite suspicion elsewhere. I must not absent myself! And yet, how can I appear at the altar of God, if I give way to a wrong spirit or to irregular habits?" Here, also, the realization of the sacramental tribunal stimulates to well-doing, and restrains from ill-doing. Thus the daily interview with God in secret, and the monthly commemoration of the love of Christ in public, aid all the good principles of the heart, and operate as an antidote against the ensnaring influence of the world.

Now, the man who can bring his conduct to the test of those devotional tribunals, can do more. He who is thus eagle-eyed to discern how all that is wrong will embarrass his hopes and embitter his enjoyments there, is equally capable of testing his spirit and habits at a higher tribunal. He must appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and therefore ought to act with as much reference to it as to the mercy-seat of the altar. This, however, is not generally done; and the consequence is, well-doing is not so uniform or spirited as it might be.

I have thus tried your patience, no doubt, in leading you round and round this subject, without having once gone fully up to its solemnities or glories, or grappled with its chief difficulties. I have done so purposely. I want you to see, through the medium of *others*, how your own heart and conscience stand affected to the grand principle of acting with an express view to the commendation of the Judge. He will not call that well done, which is *ill* done or left undone. He will deal with "deeds and works," on the great day of reckoning, and render to every man "according to his works and deeds." To them who, by "patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, he will give eternal life;" but "tribulation and anguish" will be the doom of "every soul of man that doeth evil." Romans ii. 6-10.

Say not, "Who then can be saved?" Say rather, How *easy* Christ has made it for us to do well! This is the fact, whatever may be your feelings on the subject. I have already shown you that well-doing is both practicable and profitable in any sphere of life. Christ taught this, when he commended the "widow's mite," as well as Mary's "box of costly ointment." He taught it, when he said that "a cup of cold water" given for his sake, should no more lose its reward, than the sacrifice of life or property." He exemplified it, when he promised the dying thief an immediate entrance into Paradise; for although the only well-doing he had time or opportunity for, was, to give a public testimony to the Saviour's innocence, when his friends forsook, and his enemies insulted him, even that was publicly rewarded. It deserves special notice, also, that, in his account of the last judgment, he identifies himself with the poor and the afflicted members of God's family, as well as commends the benevolent, who visited and relieved them. "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. xxv. 40. Here, not only is relief to *one* reckoned well-doing, in order that all who have but little to spare, may do well, in common with those who have much; but even those Christians who *got* what was thus given for the sake of Christ, are commended by *implication*; for, by owning them as his brethren in poverty and tribulation, it is implied, that their patience, for his name's sake, was reckoned well-doing on their part.

Thus all may share in the "Well done" of the Judge, who are willing to do well, according to their ability. Nothing, therefore, is more unfounded than the suspicion, that the judgment-seat cannot be realized without fear and suspense. Christ teaches no such doctrine to his followers. The gospel calls on them to "*lift up their heads*" in prospect of his second coming. They are, indeed, taught also, to prepare for it by watchfulness and diligence, that they may be "found of Him in peace on that day;" but they are

not taught to look forward to his coming with terror or distrust. None who honour him as a Saviour need fear to meet him as a Judge. Only those who dislike well-doing for his name's sake, are in danger from his sentence.

Were these facts more frequently inculcated, when the last judgment is described from the pulpit and the press, more good would be done than usually results from terrific appeals to

"A God in grandeur,
And a world on fire."

It is by far too common to speak and think most of the dread solemnities of the last day. When that grand asize of the universe is the subject, imagination imbodyes all its darkest visions; eloquence speaks in all its deepest tones; zeal pleads with all its heart-thrilling remonstrances; pity weeps big and burning tears; and thus the preacher and hearers, however pious, become so absorbed by scenes of conflagration and horror, that both resign themselves to fear and trembling whilst the appeal lasts, and only recover their composure as the flaming vision fades away or is forgotten. I am not finding fault with such preaching. It is often wanted, in order to rouse the righteous, as well as to arrest the wicked. He trifles with souls, and perils his own soul, who does not empanel, from time to time, all souls at the judgment-seat, and make its thunders reverberate the threatening, "*The soul that sinneth shall die.*" This is, however, but one part of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." "*Come, ye blessed,*" will sound as loud from the throne as, "*Depart, ye cursed;*" and, therefore, it ought to be as frequently repeated in the pulpit, and as much employed to promote hope and composure amongst the well-doing, as the latter is to alarm the idle and the ungodly. Wherever this is not done, there will be a spirit of bondage to the fear of judgment, that will not tempt Christians not to think of it often; for

no man will think oftener than he can help of what only terrifies him.

Again, therefore, I say, there is no need for terror on the part of the well-doing followers of Christ. The judgment-seat will not disannul the pardons obtained at the mercy-seat. Conscientious obedience will be as surely owned at the former, as fervent prayer is answered at the latter. The inevitable imperfections of duty will no more prevent it from being accepted, as well-doing, at last, than the imperfections of devotion hinder it from being accepted as prayer now. A Christian, therefore, who is doing his best from right principles, has no more occasion to fear the worst on that day, than to despair of success at the mercy-seat, because he is ashamed of his own imperfect prayers. He is not ashamed of them without reason; but still he is sure that they are not insincere, not heartless, nor formal. He can appeal to the heart-searching God, that his cry for mercy and grace "*goeth not out of feigned lips.*" Accordingly, whilst all his hope of success in prayer hinges exclusively upon the intercession of Christ, this testimony of his own conscience helps him to rely on that intercession, and to look with some composure to the throne of grace. Now, thus also he is warranted to look forward to the great white throne of judgment; never fearing the worst, whilst conscientiously trying to do his best.

I am well aware how the familiar phrase, "doing my best," is both vulgarly and viciously employed by many. It is the language of the ignorant, when they speak of the gospel as a provision for making up the defects of their own obedience from the merits of Christ. It is the excuse of the slothful and the heedless when they would palliate sin by an appeal to the force of circumstances, which, they say, prevented them from doing better. It is also a standard which every man may vary to suit himself, if he be so unprincipled as to call *any* thing "his best." I see and feel all this; but still, I will not give up the phrase because many pervert it. It is as emphatic as it is familiar. To

the well-disposed it is a fine rule of well-doing. It recognises both their obligations by law, and their ability by grace, and thus throws them upon their best principles in doing their best for God.

How, then, does this matter appear to you now? How do you feel affected towards "patient continuance in well-doing?" Do deal honestly with yourself on this point. Not to like well-doing is virtually to say of Christ, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" and to such he will say, as the books are opened on the throne, "Bring out these mine enemies, that would not have me to reign over them, and destroy them in my sight." You will not, surely, risk this fearful threatening! Even if you still feel some reluctance to try how well you can do, you cannot, in the face of this warning, deem it safe to indulge that reluctance. Take care, however, not to wink at, nor to hush up, the question; for all the *probability* of your salvation turns upon your willingness to serve Christ. Until you are willing to do well, you are not only strangers to Christ and grace, but also setting them both at defiance. He died for you, that you should be zealous of good works. The grace which bringeth salvation, brings it teaching us to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world. They are, therefore, both the enemies of the cross, and the perverters of grace, whose god is their belly, or who mind earthly things. The end of both is "destruction," whatever be their creed, or their profession.

No. V.

MANLY REALIZATIONS OF INVISIBLE THINGS.

WHEN the Roman army besieged Jerusalem, the temple was, of course, the last place to yield or open. Never was

any place so defended. Mass after mass of the Jews threw themselves between the soldiers and the gates of the temple, daring and defying death. It was literally over hills of carnage that the Roman legions forced their way into the Jewish temple.

When they had thus effected an entrance, nothing, it is said, surprised them so much as the utter absence of all IMAGES. In their own temples at Rome, images of the gods smiled or frowned from every point and pillar ; but, in the temple of Jerusalem, neither without nor within the veil, could they see any sign, symbol, shadow, or trace of the *form* or *person* of the God of Israel. Emblems of his grace and glory emblazoned the whole building, from the Holy of Holies to the court of the Gentiles ; but, no graven nor sculptured *image* of Jehovah was to be seen.

Now, if Judaism was thus singular from its entire want of all visible images of the true God, Christianity is still more singular : for it has no visible emblem even of the glory of God, nor any miraculous symbol of his grace.

All the chief objects of Christian faith are absolutely unseen. The Father of the Christian church is invisible : her Redeemer is invisible : her Comforter invisible ; her ministering spirits invisible : her throne of grace invisible : her departed members invisible : even her future heaven is invisible.

This prevailing and permanent invisibility of all the supreme objects of our faith and hope is a *surprising* fact in itself, however custom may have rendered us familiar with it. Accordingly, when it is pointed out to us, we do wonder that a religion which promises so much should *show* so little.

There must be some wise and weighty reason for thus concealing from the eye entirely what is so openly revealed to the understanding. God could easily appear annually on the circle of the heavens, or open occasionally the heaven of heavens to our view. He has done *greater* things for our world than this. It is not, therefore, from

any want of love or solicitude for our souls, that he keeps himself and heaven invisible. It must be because we could not sustain the "great sight" in the present state of our faculties. And those who remember how Moses quaked on Sinai, and how John fell as dead in Patmos, will not doubt this.

We may, however, inquire with perfect freedom—what is it that "*makes up*" to us for this strict and standing, and even studied invisibility of all the chief objects of faith and hope? Now, it is the ETERNITY of their duration that makes up for the invisibility of their character. If they are all "*unseen*"—they are all "ETERNAL." This is the compensation; and it is an ample, a noble compensation, when duly considered.

Let us prepare to consider it duly, by marking the contrast between visible and invisible objects.

All things which are but temporal are visible. The very beasts are allowed to see the whole range of temporal things. It is not thought worth while to veil evanescent and temporary objects. They are all good enough to be worth showing; but none of them good enough to be worth concealing under the veil of mystery or of futurity. Thus temporal things, being no part of the soul's portion, are all thrown open to our bodily senses. None of them being everlasting, all of them are for ever seen.

All things which are visible are but temporal. Nothing earthly is eternal. Were there, however, any visible things eternal also, even they would be but temporal to us, because we ourselves are mortal. Were all earthly things everlasting in themselves, they would be only temporary to us: for we cannot last, even if they could endure. But none of them will endure for ever. They are all destined to perish. The earth will be burnt up, and the very heavens pass away with a great noise. All that is now seen, even of the works of creation, will be seen no more for ever, when the Angel swears that time shall be no more. And if the material works of God shall not outlast time,

nor outlive man, of course the works of man will perish too.

Thus there is nothing visible that is deemed worthy of preservation through eternity : nothing fit to be transferred from earth to heaven. No building, however sublime ; no book, however wise ; no science, however profound ; no art, however noble ; no ornament, however splendid ; no amusement, however pleasant, will be spared from "the wreck of matter and crash of worlds."

Palaces and temples will perish in common with huts ; cabinets and treasuries along with trifles ; and libraries with the flowers of the field ; for when God burns the book of nature, he will not save the volumes of learning or genius.

What a wreck is coming on temporal things ! Wreck ! The coming conflagration will not leave even

"A wreck behind."

You have listened to me on this subject. Now listen to an APOSTLE : "Seeing all these things shall be burnt up, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness !" 2 Peter iii. 11.

Do you regret the utter and entire annihilation of any of these things ? Is there any gem of art, or of science, or of genius, that you would wish spared, and transferred to heaven ? If you do, I share not this feeling with you. I rejoice in the utterness and eternity of the destruction, because it will destroy all the associations of vain and unholy thoughts and feelings, which are now connected with temporal things : for, when for ever out of being, they will be for ever out of mind.

Besides, heaven needs none of these things to perfect its bliss or glory. The very sun itself is not wanted there ; for the LAMB is the light thereof. The universality and eternity of the final ruin tell, therefore, what heaven is. It is a place that can do for ever without them all ; a state, for which none of them are fit.

Thus happiness, real happiness, must be a very different thing from what we naturally suppose, seeing heaven and eternity fling such scorn upon all earthly good, that they will admit no particle of it amongst invisible things.

The things of time and sense cannot deserve so much of our heart and care, seeing they are all to be flung into the furnace of annihilation.

It is surely of less consequence than we make it, whether to be *rich* or *poor*, seeing we can carry nothing out of the world, and that nothing in it can be brought to heaven or hell. What, I ask again, what must HEAVEN be, seeing it rejects all earthly joys as useless and worthless to its happiness? This single thought, simple as it is, would bear pondering for months!

And there is another hint that deserves consideration. What must hell be, where there are none of the joys of either heaven or earth to mitigate its miseries? The covetous and the worldly cannot take their gold even into hell with them; nor the intemperate their cups; nor the jovial their jests or songs. Under the solemn and salutary impression of these hints, let us now observe how *the eternity of unseen things makes up for their present invisibility*.

It proves, to demonstration, their infinite superiority to all earthly things. For, were the things which are seen better than what they are; were they even as safe and satisfying as they were before sin cursed and corrupted them; still, as they are only temporal, they are unworthy and unfit to be a portion for immortal souls.

Our immortal spirits require eternal things, if they are to have any suitable portion; so that if unseen things were even fewer and less glorious than they are, the single fact of their being eternal throws into shade and insignificance, so far as the soul is concerned, all temporal things. For, if we are to be as truly happy as we are certainly immortal, we must have immortal sources of happiness. We need everlasting peace, everlasting comforts, everlasting joys;

and these the world cannot furnish, even if the joy it gives were perfect.

Were there, therefore, nothing unsatisfying, yea, nothing sinful, yea, nothing dangerous, in an earthly portion, I would denounce it, and renounce it, on the single ground of its *short* duration.

“*It is not* ETERNAL!” ought to repel and prevent our souls from seeking their happiness in this world.

“*It is* ETERNAL!” ought to attract and determine us to seek first the kingdom of heaven, even if that kingdom were *inferior* to this earth.

The eternity of unseen things proves their intrinsic excellence. They derive their eternity from an excellence which *deserves* to be eternal. The glories of heaven are full and perfect, not because they are everlasting, but they are everlasting because they are perfect. Its crowns are unfading, because they deserve to flourish for ever; its mansions unfalling, because they deserve to stand for ever; its thrones immoveable, because they deserve to endure for ever; its society undying, because it deserves to live for ever; its peace imperishable, because it deserves to reign for ever; its holiness unchangeable, because it deserves to last for ever. For, as all earthly things are temporal, just because they are imperfect, so all heavenly things are eternal, just because they are infinitely perfect. This is the *moral* foundation of future happiness. It rests upon the intrinsic and essential moral worth of all its sources; and, therefore, cannot end nor alter, because holiness is its conservative principle.

The eternity of unseen things proves the amplitude and perfection of the work of Christ in heaven. When about to ascend there, he said, “*I go to prepare a place for you.*” And ample and glorious that preparation must be, seeing that nothing in all the prepared place will ever require to be *altered*. What the Saviour made heaven when he sat down on the throne, that heaven will remain throughout eternity. Yes; all the unseen things which he has laid

up for them that love him are eternal things. No crown of glory shall ever dim ; no palm of victory ever wither ; no harp of gold ever break ; no fruit of the tree of life ever fail ; no fountain of the water of life ever dry ; no element or item of celestial bliss ever pass away ; but all things continue, like Christ himself, the same for ever.

What a work, therefore, was his in heaven ! We judge of his atoning work on earth, by the many sons it will bring to glory, and fit for glory ; and thus learn to admire and adore the merits of that death which obtained for them eternal redemption. And thus we should judge ; thus we should learn. But let us judge also, and equally well, from the number and eternity of the glories of heaven, the value of that life which he lived there, whilst preparing the place which he opened by his blood.

The eternity of unseen things proves the perfection of the sanctifying and ennobling work of the Holy Spirit upon the heirs of heaven. The redeemed will be fully prepared by the Spirit to enjoy all that the Saviour has prepared for them. There will be nothing in all the eternal weight of glory too high for their minds, or too holy for their taste, or too extensive for their powers. The eternal light of heaven will not be too dazzling for their eyes ; nor its eternal worship too constant for their strength ; nor its eternal fellowship too wide or too warm for their inclination ; but they will be mentally and morally fit for all the bliss and business of heaven, and for an ETERNITY of it all.

This shows us, in sun-light, what the work of the Holy Spirit is. It will bring up the mind, and the body too, to the lofty height of heaven's highest, purest, and eternal enjoyments. It will run out all the powers and affections of the soul in grand parallel with the whole range of heavenly things. It will harmonize all its tastes and desires, with all the sources of divine happiness ; and knit, in everlasting bonds of love, the hearts of all saints to each other, and of all saints and angels together.

Oh ! *quench* not, *grieve* not the Holy Spirit, if he has

begun this good work in you ; for this is the length to which it must be carried on—the length to which he will carry it on, in all the heirs of salvation. We must be made as meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, as it is meet for them.

And with equal solicitude and solemnity, I beseech and adjure you, if you are stifling and evading your convictions of guilt and danger, to stop.—“ Resist not the Holy Spirit.” What would you think of my conduct, if, when my soul is called into eternity, I were to resist the angels who came to bear it into heaven ; to resist the beckoning smiles of my children and friends, who wait to welcome me ; to resist the attraction of heaven’s glories as they shine and sound through its open gates ? Neglecter of the great salvation ! You are resisting more than all this, whilst banishing and evading the strivings of conscience, and the force of truth. You are resisting the love of God—the blood of the Lamb—the drawings of the Spirit. Oh stop—yield ; and from this moment stand out no more against the claims of your soul and eternity.

The eternity of unseen things proves how fully the happiness of heaven will arise from fellowship with the Godhead, and conformity to the divine image. I would not venture to give utterance to my sentiments on this subject, did I not suspect that what I had hinted on the eternity of unseen things, may suggest the question, Will there, then, be nothing *new* added as eternal ages roll on ? Will the scene be for ever the same ?

I meet this thought, not in a speculative spirit, but to throw your mind on the sublime fact, that eternal bliss will flow infinitely more from the presence and image of God, than from the glories of heaven, as a *place*. As a place, it will be to saints and angels, what it is to God and the Lamb, not the *cause* of their eternal happiness, nor the chief source of it ; but the chief *seat* of it. The real source of felicity will be the company and communion enjoyed with the Godhead, and that would make a heaven

even on earth ; or, indeed, any where. As a place, however, heaven is altogether becoming and worthy of the majesty and glory of Jehovah ; and as it suits *his* infinite mind, and will please him for ever, it cannot fail to satisfy for ever all his redeemed family. They will no more want nor wish for a new heaven, than for a new Father, a new Redeemer, or a new Comforter.

Besides, eternal things are perfect ; and pure spirits can never tire of perfection ; because, as it admits of no change for the better, so they can never wish a change for the worse. There is, therefore, no more reason to regret the unchangeableness of heaven itself, than that God will be the same for ever ; for it will be for ever as unnecessary and impossible to wish a change of scene, society, or service, as to wish the love of God to cool, or the power of God to decay, or the wisdom of God to fail, or the glory of God to diminish.

In thus maintaining that heaven will never be altered, because it cannot be altered for the better, nothing is, however, further from my design than to convey the idea, that there will be no *new* sources of enjoyment, as eternity goes on. There may—there most likely will be many ; but, whatever they be, they will not displace the old. New eternal things, if such be created,

“ Whilst immortality endures,”

will all like the old, make and keep God himself the chief source of happiness to all the armies of heaven.

“ Whom have I in heaven but thee ?”

will be the everlasting and universal language of the church, even when all heaven is in her possession. I want you to see and feel that eternal happiness *will* and *must* come from God himself. All the value, and sweetness, and glory of every thing in heaven, will arise from every thing leading and lifting the soul to God, as its centre and portion ;

and thus making Him all and all, even amidst all the splendours of the heaven of heavens. You, are, therefore, duping and deceiving yourself, if you imagine that you may reach heaven, without seeking your chief happiness in God here. Those who take no pleasure in him here, will get none in him there. Those who dislike to think of God, to pray to him, or commune with him, never can dwell with him.

The unseen things of heaven are not, however, the only eternal things which we ought to look at in the light of revelation. Whatever any one may think of the utter invisibility of all the eternal things of heaven, no one can doubt the wisdom or the kindness of keeping the eternal things of hell "unseen." Any unlocking of the bottomless pit but by the key of revelation, any uncovering of Tophet but by the hand of revelation; any illumination of the blackness of darkness, except by the lamps and suns of Scripture, would be overwhelming and intolerable. A visible hell would embitter life, and even embarrass godliness. In mercy, therefore, it is kept invisible!

But if the fire of hell be unseen, it is eternal. If the worm of hell be unseen, it is eternal. If the chains of darkness be unseen, they are eternal. If the gnashing of teeth is unseen, it is eternal. If the company of devils is unseen, it is eternal. If the curse of God is unseen, it is eternal. If the wrath of the Lamb is unseen, it is eternal. If the impassable gulf be unseen, it is eternal.

Shall I stop? Will you stop and turn fully from the way that goeth down to the chambers of hell?

You cannot bear me to *uncover* destruction in this way. I cannot bear to see you *risking* it.

You think me harsh for dwelling thus on eternal horrors. I think you frantic in neglecting the only Saviour from the wrath to come.

But, I forget! This is not a matter between *you* and *me*. What I think of you, or you of me, is not worth a thought at this moment.

The God who prepared this hell for Satan and his angels, and who gave his Son to save man from it, thinks you infatuated in neglecting this great salvation ; and asks, in melting amazement, " Why will ye die ?"

The Saviour who died to deliver from the wrath to come, thinks you ungrateful and irrational in keeping away from him, and asks, " How often would I have gathered you under my wings !"

Angels are amazed, and cry down from their thrones, " Who would not fear and glorify God ?" for the great day of his wrath is coming.

Well all these may ! for, hark ! the very hypocrites in Zion cry, " Who can dwell with everlasting burnings ?"

So far, however, these hints and appeals create rather a *whirl* of thought and feeling, than give any definite character or direction to either. Indeed, if you would think to any purpose on this subject, you must think for yourself ; and, like the highpriest, when he entered the Holy of Holies, go " alone" within the veil. And this, though solemn, should not be difficult : for the invisible will soon be all as visible to you as it is eternal. Your spirit must soon pass within the veil. It is not, it cannot, therefore, be impossible to enter in thought now. Your spirit has all the powers now which it will have then. Then, indeed, its powers will be more powerful, and its emotions more prompt ; but still it will be a reflecting spirit, a feeling spirit, a realizing spirit, even when disembodied, and breaking away on the wings of the wind amongst the realities of eternity. These will all be new to it, of course ; but it will not have one new faculty of discernment or taste. Eternity will burst upon the faculties you possess, and affect your spirit according to the moral state of your spirit, when it exchanges worlds. Then all the new scenes will act upon your old powers of mind and conscience. You will not be quite another being when you enter another world. You will be substantially, when you pass the boundary, whatever you are, intellectually and morally, when you touch the boundary between

time and eternity. The transition will not transform an element nor an atom of your character. It will bring out all that is within you; but it will implant no new mental power or moral taste. It will complete and confirm your good or evil; but it will not alter your principles. You will be and do, think and feel, amidst the realities of eternity, exactly as you are affected by the revelations of them; and be as much *yourself* after death as before it.

It is, therefore, possible to tell, and therefore proper to try, how your spirit is likely to feel in the world of spirits. It can only feel in one of two ways; as a *saved* or as a *lost* spirit; and the natural emotions of either state are too strong to be doubtful or "hard to be understood." They reveal what they will be, the moment we suppose ourselves lost or saved. They break out at once in their true characters, whenever we realize ourselves awaking in heaven or hell.

Did you ever allow yourself to suppose the *worst*? I mean for the sole purpose of escaping it. It is, I know, too painful to dwell on long. Indeed, the spirit requires *dragging*, in order to bring it to the brink of hell; and *chaining*, in order to keep it there, until it is willing to "*flee* from the wrath to come." It is soon willing to get away from the vision of that wrath, and to forget the revelation of it. One look into the bottomless pit, however hasty, makes the soul cry out, "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" But the glance which extorts this shriek, does not endear Him who "delivereth from the wrath to come." The soul can rush away from the sight of it, without fleeing to Christ for refuge. Most souls, alas! flee to bustle or amusement, to forget all they saw and felt whilst looking at uncovered destruction.

You have done so again and again. Even now, you are not willing to be drawn into a position which would compel you to realize the wrath to come. You could ask—Is it necessary to do so in order to be religious? You are inclined, perhaps, to argue, that working on your fears is not winning your heart. Well; I am quite ready to grant this.

Love, not fear, is the principle of all true piety. But—if you do not love God or the Saviour, holiness or devotion—you have cause for fear, and need for having your fears wrought upon. Besides, (for it is useless to conceal the fact,) you have other fears, and dislikes too, than the *direct* terrors of this subject. You see, and dislike the sight, that you could not keep your eye on hell, and keep out of your closet so much. You are eagle-eyed in discerning how the fear of wrath would involve more devotion and self-denial than you think pleasant or convenient. It is not, therefore, either your horror or hatred of hell that is the chief cause of your aversion to this subject. You are quite as much influenced by your dislike to certain duties which arise out of it, and by your distaste for that frame of spirit which the pursuit of heaven implies and enforces. In a word, you know very well, that were you in love with the way of salvation and holiness, you would have nothing to fear from any contemplation of the wrath to come. You fear to look at it, because you hate some of the things involved in fleeing from it.

You know this to be true. You can neither deny nor palliate it. You dislike to *think* freely upon this point, because you dislike to *act* as it enjoins. Now, there are only two ways of overcoming this reluctance. Heaven must charm it away, or hell check it. The love of eternal happiness, or the dread of eternal misery, must bring it down. It will not go away, nor give way of itself. And, although grace alone can subdue it, and that only at the cross, neither grace nor the cross will act effectually upon it, apart from eternal things. Both originated and still reign for eternity; and, therefore, both work by eternity, and wield alternately around the soul its glories and terrors, to subdue the soul. If, therefore, all that you know or hope of heaven do not win you to faith and holiness by free choice, it is your duty, yea, your interest, to let the revelation of hell try all its power to disarm your prejudices against duty and devotion. That revelation of the wrath to come has both

more power, and another kind of power, than you imagine. Its power to terrify is not its chief power. It can teach—melt—win—as well as awe and alarm.

Try! you will be more than agitated; you will be both instructed and stimulated, by allowing yourself to realize your natural and inevitable emotion, on the supposition of your spirit awakening amongst *lost* spirits. What! can you not bear the thought? And yet—you risk the reality! Strange, sad infatuation! Afraid to think of hell, and yet not afraid to be afar off from the only refuge from it? Not safe, and yet set against taking such a look of your danger as would lead to safety! Come; this must not be. Do not yield to this temper. You must awake amongst lost spirits in reality, and dwell with them everlastingly, unless you allow yourself to look at them, until you *love* the way of escaping from their doom and company. It is only for this purpose that I entangle your spirit amongst the scenes and sensations of their spirits. I am “a man of like passions” with yourself. It is as unnatural and awful to me as it can be to you—to go down by the sides of the bottomless pit, or to sit at the gates of hell, marking my own emotions, as spirit after spirit passes in, covered with shame, convulsed with horror, and cursing its infatuated folly for neglecting the great salvation: but there they are; thus they are; and thousands of them! The old miser and the young spendthrift; the worldly and the wanton; the prayerless and the creedless; the hypocrite and the formalist; the sceptic and the speculator; the intemperate and the intriguing; the mere philosopher and the merely sentimental. And, what else can you see there? What else could be the effect of living even as the *best* of them did? There might have been no eternity, no salvation, no God, for any thing that the generality cared about religion. It was the last and the least thing in their estimation. Unless, therefore, it were a lie, nothing can be more true than that it flashes out with confounding majesty the moment they see it in the light of eternity.

Look at them again. In vain you try to palliate any man's neglect of salvation by the claims of his business, or the cares of his lot, or the strength of his passions. This nonsense may be talked at the gates of the market or the mansion, but not at the gates of hell. There—the soul alone appears valuable ; salvation alone worthy of its love ; piety alone seems common sense. You cannot doubt this, whilst you judge there. That place was not “ prepared ” for men, it was “ prepared for the devil and his angels.” And if they deserved it for one act of open rebellion against God, what else or less do men deserve, who lived a *life* of rebellion and neglect ? Besides, what else are they *fit* for, who cared nothing about God ; thought nothing about the Saviour ; and minded not the things of the Spirit ? Not for heaven ; for the Lamb is the glory of it, and they neglected him entirely : salvation is the theme of it, and they shut their eyes to the value and the necessity of its blessings ; holiness is the beauty and the basis of heaven, and they hated it. Thus they lived and died, alienated and averse to all that constitutes the bliss of heaven, and made themselves fit only for hell.

You do not see this as I see it—and, what is worse, not as God shows it—if you can retire from the awful sight without trembling for yourself. The pleasures which betrayed the lost, tempt you ; the gains which ensnared them, tempt you ; the follies which infatuated them, tempt you ; the sins which ruined them, tempt you ; and you must sink as they sank, if you act as they did. They acted only for time, and eternity left them to the consequences of their foolish and criminal choice.

You now want to get away from this painful scene ; and you shall. I have no wish to detain you at this

“ dreadful post ”

of observation. If you have been long enough there in idea to be determined never to come there in reality, my

purpose is answered, and your spirit is prepared to look in at the gates of heaven ; for I want you to realize them before you reach them, and to anticipate the glory you desire.

How readily the spirit springs up from the gates of hell to the gates of heaven! This, however, is no proof of heavenly-mindedness. It is a proof that our spirits are capable of immortal happiness, and that, in some sense, they long for a glorious immortality, when a gloomy one has been vividly before them. But the real question is, what relish have our spirits for the heaven of the Bible, as the throne of God and the Lamb, and as the seat of holiness ? We may love, indeed we cannot dislike, an eternity of joy and peace. An atheist could not hate that, nor a profligate despise it. God has taken care that no man can think lightly of the glory he has prepared for them that love him, by making it too great and good to be unattractive. He has, however, made it all as holy as it is beautiful ; and thus thrown us upon holy principles, as well as upon lofty prospects of happiness. We must love him if we would live with him. We must be like him if we would see him as he is. We must serve him here if we would enjoy him there. This, even all this, however, should not appear any hardship to you. It is both the bliss and glory of all who are in heaven. By pursuing this, they reached the gates of the New Jerusalem ; and there imperfection fell off from their spirit, and they entered into the city, to go no more out.

My aim, in this essay, has not been to realize for you ; but to place you in positions where you may imagine and judge for yourself. Besides, I have been excluded from doing more by the essays which I addressed to the **THOUGHTFUL**, in my little work on "*Eternity Realized*."

No. VI.

ON MANLY REALIZATIONS OF GLORY IN THE CHURCH.

MANY who see much glory in Christ, seem utterly blind to the glory of the church of Christ. The advantage and honour, as well as the necessity, of belonging to Him, they admit and feel ; but they attach very little importance to union with his church, except for sacramental purposes. Many would not give "themselves to the church" at all, if they could reconcile the neglect of the sacrament with the duty of giving themselves fully "unto the Lord." Could they get over the point and pathos of his dying command, or obey that command out of the church, they would be quite content to have neither a name nor a place amongst the "living in Jerusalem." They would even prefer to have none, if they could persuade themselves that they ran no risk in disobeying the last injunction of the Saviour. Thus they see neither sin nor danger in not giving themselves unto the church ; feel neither loss nor shame for not belonging to it ; but just so far as the neglect of the sacrament involves something of both. If you think or feel so, you have never studied this subject. You may have glanced at it, and disputed about it ; but you have not weighed it. No mind, capable of weighing it in the golden balances of the sanctuary, ever did so without feeling itself thrown, as it were, into a *new* world, with new ideas and emotions. The moment church fellowship is understood, it is appreciated. It is not fully understood by any man, who does not feel, through all his soul, that the act of joining the church on earth is next in sublimity and solemnity to the act of joining "the general assembly of the church of the first-born in heaven." Nothing is so like union with the church triumphant, as union with the church militant.

You do not understand either church, if this assertion

seem doubtful or extravagant to you. And if you can *smile* at it, as official vapouring, or as ministerial complacency, pluming itself upon office, you do no credit to your own taste or discernment. For, what other society on earth bears *any* resemblance to the church in heaven? If the church on earth be not like it, all other assemblies are unlike it. The theatre, the ball-room, the banqueting-house, even the lecture room of science and literature, bear none of the image, and breathe none of the spirit of the general assembly. Thus, if the church has but little of the celestial aspect, the world has none of it.

I do not forget that there are other religious societies, besides the churches of Christ. These, however, although "in the world," are not "of the world." Whatever likeness they bear to heaven, they derive from their connexion with the churches. They, are, in fact, the children of the church of Christ: and thus living and lovely proofs that there is more glory in the church than superficial observers inquire, or comprehend.

Your difficulty in discerning the real and full glory of the church arises, perhaps, from the state of the churches which fall immediately under your notice, and directly claim your company. You may see much poverty in one, and little piety in another. You may suspect, that in one communion you could have no friends, and in another too many acquaintances; in one place no distinction, and in another more distinction than would be either agreeable or convenient. Thus, between the extremes of no brotherhood on one side, and more brotherhood than you wish on the other side, you may have overlooked the true merits of church fellowship, hitherto: and, if this be the case, you cannot see them, until you cease to judge from the specimens before you. Indeed, you could not judge aright, even from the best specimen, if your own personal comfort or advantage be your chief object. The church exists for the *world*, and not chiefly for the solace or the safety of her individual members; except so far as they identify them-

selves with her grand object. Those who are long *in* the church without doing so, have as little enjoyment as those who keep *out* of it.

I am very anxious to interest you in this subject. It deserves your attention, however commonplace it may seem from these introductory hints : for all heaven is occupied and absorbed with the interests of the church on earth. She is the Father's family, the Son's inheritance, and the Spirit's temple. For her, the wheels of nature roll steadfastly, and the wheels of Providence wisely. To her, all the innumerable company of angels are ministering spirits ; and all the events of time, purifying discipline or efficient help. In her, principalities and powers, although inhabiting heavenly places, learn "the manifold wisdom of God." Time cannot outlive the church, nor eternity displace or eclipse her in the divine favour. Her completion will be the signal for the end of time on earth, and for the jubilee of eternity throughout the universe. She is now "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world ;" and she will be for ever the wonder of all worlds. She alone, of all the intelligent creation, is "*the Bride, the Lamb's wife.*"

You forget all this, whilst you confine your attention to the little personal question—"What good would I get from joining any church in my neighbourhood?" Indeed, you do not *see* these things, whilst you look either at a select handful, or at the promiscuous crowd of communicants. A church, in that light, may present few attractions to you, and make no impression on you, except so far as her attention to the sacrament reproves your neglect. You may even try in vain to associate the "glorious things spoken of Zion" with the little or the great hills of Zion around you, whilst you think only of those churches you can see. Any of them may seem, when tried by your standard of profit or pleasure, to promise but very little when they say, "Come with us, and we will do thee good." Perhaps, you have almost smiled at this invitation, and said to yourself, "What good could they do to me, beyond welcoming me to the

sacrament, or visiting me if I were sick?" You ought to know better, than to argue thus. The poorest church of Christ can do you more real good than the wealthiest or the wisest society of philosophers. It can introduce you to the fellowship of the universal church of Christ; which neither the patent of kings nor the diploma of colleges could do. It can make you a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God; which you cannot make yourself, nor be made by any other society on earth. None but a church can give you a name and a place in the catholic church of God.

And is it no "*good*" to be introduced, with fervent prayer and cordial welcomes, into

"The sacramental host of God?"

As you now stand, you are an "alien from the commonwealth" of his Israel, even if you be not a "stranger to the covenant of promise." Now, although this may not seem a great loss, nor a deep shame, so far as relates to the church which invites you, it is both in relation to the universal church. Not to be within her sacred pale, is awful and ignominious, even if it were not unsafe. Look at your position! It is repulsive, as well as perilous; shameful, as well as sinful; especially if you have given yourself to the Lord. In that case, your conduct is shocking. What! rely on his blood, and withhold yourself from the church he purchased with his own blood? What! own him as "head," and refuse to be a member of that "body" of which he is head? What! revere him as the King of Zion, and yet keep out of Zion? Oh, had he cared as little for the church, as you have done, there would have been no salvation for you. Had He taken no more interest in her than you feel, she would have been unable to preserve or present to you the gospel of life and immortality. And were all who have given themselves to the Lord, to follow your example, there would soon be no church; and then, what would become of the world?

Again, I remind you, that it is not the claims of the church which directly appeals to you, that you have chiefly to consider. That individual church may labour under many disadvantages. It may be small, or poor, or despised by the world, or not very intelligent or harmonious in itself. Thus it may have little attraction for you, and even expose you to some inconvenience. The question is, however, are there in it prayerful and holy men, confederated around the cross, and consecrated to the glory of God? If so, it is a church of Christ, warranted and qualified to introduce you to the fellowship of the universal church. It is, therefore, that "goodly fellowship" you are neglecting, whilst you stand aloof from the fellowship of its accredited agent, the church in your neighbourhood.

You may not have intended nor seen this hitherto. You may have thought only of the *local* fellowship, and thus have overlooked the claims of the "goodly fellowship" of prophets and apostles; of the noble army of martyrs; of the innumerable company of angels; of the spirits of the just men made perfect in heaven; but,

"The church on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make."

It is, therefore, this vast, holy, and glorious communion that you have kept out of, whilst keeping out of the local fellowship of the saints. And, is this no loss?

Say not that it is rather an imaginary than a real loss. I know that neither prophets nor apostles, saints nor martyrs, can descend from their thrones or mansions to hold any real intercourse with your spirit. Even the spirits you love best, of all that sing around the throne of glory—the ancestral, parental, or filial spirits you delight to realize as remembering and loving you, they cannot visit nor unveil themselves to you, except in your slumbers. But is it an imaginary advantage to have relative and kindred spirits in heaven? Would it be no *real* loss to have no such golden

links between your heart and heaven? You will not say so. You do not think so. You derive positive good and exquisite pleasure from the sweet consciousness that you are related to some glorified spirits. This is a powerful motive to follow their faith and patience. And is not brotherhood with "the whole family in heaven and on earth" a soothing consciousness, and a sublime motive? Would it not confirm your faith, and promote your holiness, and inspire your hopes to think that you were a joint heir with all the "great cloud of witnesses," and sure of the right hand of fellowship from all the hosts of heaven? Again, I say, it is from this communion of saints you stand apart, whilst you stand "without" the sacred pale of the Christian church.

It will not mend this matter to say that you can realize the church in heaven, without giving yourself to the church on earth. If you can, that is an imaginary, not a real enjoyment. It is a mere sentimentalism. I mean that any pleasure you feel in thinking of their joys, is rather visionary than solid. It must be so whilst you have no strong sympathy with their *chief* joy; that is, the prosperity and enlargement of the church of Christ. They rejoice chiefly in this, because this is His joy and glory; and thus you have not glorified him. You, therefore, cannot identify yourself with the objects of their complacency; no, not even if angels have rejoiced over your repentance. If they have, it was in the fond hope that you would give yourself to the church, as well as unto the Lord; for, until you do so, the joy of angels over you is not perfect, and you have no part in the chief joy of the saints.

It should not, however, be necessary to "ascend into heaven," to bring down, from the church of the first-born, reasons for uniting with the church on earth. The earthly fellowship itself is "a goodly fellowship." It has, indeed, many defects, and some deformities; but it surpasses in beauty and power all the other social unions in the world. It wields a wider sceptre than monarchs ever lifted, and

obtains an allegiance which crowns could not command. The church is the heir of the world; and although much of it is not yet in her possession, the whole of it is destined to fall into her hands. The kingdoms of this world must all become, eventually, the kingdom of God and his Christ. The *Alleluia* of this consummation will as surely ring through the universe, as the prayer for it now rises to the throne. The will of God is sure to be done on earth as it is in heaven, whoever may doubt or oppose. Even now, all things give signs of the grand consummation. The winter of the moral world is past. The rain and hail of persecution are over and gone. The flowers of promise and proof appear on the earth. Even the time of the singing of the birds of the millennial paradise is come.

But look at facts. They are more eloquent than figures, and more abundant too. There is not, at this moment, an idolatry under heaven; that is not trembling for its own existence, as well as tottering on its foundations. China itself feels that it is beleaguered, and can no longer *wall out* the church of God. Her oracles have thrown a spell upon the spirit of the empire, which, though not understood, fascinates and fixes its attention upon Britain and America, as the arbiters of its fate. Already the Bible is the school-book of India; and there, Buddhism despairs, and Hindooism is desperate. And yet, but a few years ago, China had no misgivings of heart, and no curiosity of hope or fear. Indian idolatry reckoned on British connexion as its best safeguard from Mohammedan rivalry and Popish influence. What has wrought this change, and made China and India feverish or feeble through all their moral frame? Not commercial companies, nor literary societies. Neither the factories of trade, nor the vice-regal thrones of power, gave the impulse to the native mind. The spirit of inquiry sprung from the labours of missionaries in the East. So it did in the South. Navigators discovered the islands of the Pacific, and commerce visited them; and both vitiated them. It was missionaries who civilized them, by Chris-

tianizing them. One vessel, the *DUFF*, did more for Polynesia than all the ships which the Admiralty ever sent out, or all that Lloyds ever reported.

No emblems, perhaps, illustrate so fully or so justly, the influence of the church upon the world, as those which Christ employed when he founded his church. Whilst his "little flock" sat at his feet on the mount, surrounded by the thousands of Israel, he pointed and appealed to his disciples, saying, "Ye are the *salt* of the earth, ye are the *light* of the world." This was language which Jews could not misunderstand. They heard Christ ascribe to his disciples a moral influence so mighty, that, like salt, it would preserve the earth from destruction, and like light fill it with glory. And this was no empty boast, nor extravagant compliment whatever it may have appeared at the time, to either his friends or enemies. Neither, perhaps, believed it at the time; but many years did not elapse before these bold words were proved to be "the words of truth and soberness." From the day of Pentecost, until the expulsion of the apostles from Jerusalem, Jerusalem saw, from the illumination of thousands of her own children, how the church of Christ would become the light of the world. It eclipsed, for a time, all the luminaries of the temple. It might have been "the cloud of glory" returned again to the mercy-seat, and absorbing all attention to itself; so completely did the new church outshine the old temple in gifts and graces. Multitudes, even of the priests as well as the people, believed. "A great company of priests were obedient to the faith." Acts vi. 7. Thus it was soon shown how the church was to be the light of the world: for, even in Jerusalem, the combined power of the altar and the throne could not extinguish nor eclipse her radiance. And that she was, emphatically, the salt of the earth, was signally proved on the same spot. The moment that the Christian church was withdrawn from Jerusalem, the city fell, "and great was the fall thereof." Whilst the Christians remained in it they were the salt of it. The

Roman eagles could not tear the prey until the Christian doves flew to the mountains. Whilst they remained, their presence was a preserving salt to "the carcass" of the city and the nation.

Now, the real church of Christ has always been the salt of the earth and the light of the world. She has never so "lost her savour" as not to be both the preserving and purifying salt of the earth ; nor ever lost her golden candlestick, as not to be the only true light of the world.

Look well at this matter. I want you to see, with your own eyes, the conservative and sanctifying agency, which is the strength and hope of the world. Sciolists, and men who have not time to think, mystify this subject by "great swelling words" about patriotism, philosophy, commerce, the march of intellect, and the progress of society : as if these things explained, or had produced, or now upheld the present state of the world. These things themselves require to be *accounted* for. They have been, and are, the causes of much good ; but the question is, *what caused them ?* They are only the *effects* of superior causes. Neither their origin nor their efficiency is from themselves. All that is good or wise in national principles and character, has been taught, or sublimated, or sustained by the Christian church. She was the salt that preserved whatever was noble, humane, or enterprising in the nations she Christianized ; and the light that led them on to whatever moral grandeur they may have reached. Without *her*, Britain and America could have done nothing of what is greatest and best in their character ; just as, without Christ, her head, she could have done nothing for them or for the world.

But, how few think of this ! How many, when this assertion is made, would say in the spirit of Nicodemus, "How can these things be ?" They are so accustomed to look at good kings, or wise cabinets, or wholesome laws, or glorious revolutions, as the real causes of national improvement, that they rarely notice the influence of the church. So little do the generality understand her char-

acter or place, that they would ask with a sneer, What church is either the salt of the earth or the light of the world? Having started this question, they would follow it up by affirming, that the Popish church has retarded the progress of society; that the Protestant establishments have not taken the lead in the march of civil or religious liberty; that the Voluntary churches are too poor or too much divided to put forth any great influence upon the world or the nation. When they have said all this, they imagine that the matter is settled, and turn with complacency to the politics, the literature, and the commercial spirit of the age, as the grand agencies and elements of the moral world.

This is sheer trifling with both facts and principles! The real and only church of Christ in the nation, is the whole body of spiritual Christians. His British church is, and ever has been "the faithful in the land." And they are and they have been both its salt and its lights. But for them, the word of God would never have been translated into our own tongue, nor diffused throughout the nation. But for them, the worship of God would not have found sanctuaries, nor collected assemblies. It was the place which truth and devotion held in their hearts, that won for truth and devotion whatever place they have in the land. Had they loved the Bible or the sanctuary less, the Bible would not have given law to legislation, nor the sanctuary order to society. But they "held forth the word of life" so openly and steadfastly, so solemnly and devoutly, that kings were compelled to do it homage upon their thrones, and statesmen to adjust their policy to its principles.

A signal and sublime illustration of this has just occurred in the abolition of slavery. It will explain what I mean, and be itself best explained by the principle now before us. The commemorative medal of emancipation bears this motto, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." What less could any one say, who knows the history of either slavery or emancipation? No wonder if

the champions of abolition should thus lay all the glory of the achievement at the feet of God and the Lamb! In vain would they try to find an explanation of the event in the spirit of a Reformed Parliament, or in the zeal of any Voluntary or State church. No denomination of Christians, as a denomination, did or attempted any thing that can account for such a consummation. Even missionary societies, as such, must join issue with the Anti-slavery Society, and exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes:" for, as societies, (I say not this in blame,) they all imposed silence upon their missionaries and schoolmasters, on the subject of slavery; and some of them did any thing, for years, but weaken the hands of slaveholders. Slavery never would have fallen before the ark of any society or church, which has a *human* name on the earth! It fell before the ark of the church of Christ, when its tabernacles were set on fire. The Society of Friends had much to do with emancipation, as a question of equity and humanity at home; but with the moral and spiritual preparation of the slave-mind for freedom, they had nothing to do. That was all "the Lord's doing." Their pity did not preach the gospel to slaves, nor their zeal plant education in the colonies. The Methodists also had much to do with the preparation of the slave-mind for freedom: nobody did more or better in paving the way of the Lord abroad; but, until their chapels were demolished, and their missionaries imprisoned, they had nothing to do with the progress of public opinion at home, on the abstract questions of right and policy. Even the Baptists threw no great weight into the scale at home, until oppression extorted their testimony. Like the Methodists, they bent all their energy on saving souls from the chains of darkness, and rather watched than urged on the progress of public opinion against colonial chains. Even the noble rally of the London Missionary Society around their "faithful martyr," Smith, bore far more upon the question of religious liberty than against African slavery. It asserted the rights of

missionaries, and thus enabled them to maintain their post ; but it left the rights of slaves to freedom undefended and undefined, except by implication. In like manner, the Churches of England and Scotland, as churches, had very little hand in the event. Both furnished some of the best champions of the holy war against slavery. The first and best, WILBERFORCE! was a churchman. Thus all the British churches can honourably claim some place and part in the grand consummation ; but none of them may wear, because none of them won, its laurels. It is "the Lord's doing."

The Lord, however, does every thing of the kind by the instrumentality of his church. She was the salt by which He preserved British humanity from decay, and African passions from desperation. She was the light by which He led on British philanthropy to compensation, and African patience to prudence. Her *devotional* voice at the throne of God, raised the public voice which roused the senate, and swayed the British throne. God, in answer to her prayers, and in blessing on her evangelizing enterprises, turned the hearts of men, like rivers of waters, into the channels of equity ; and that spring-tide of national spirit carried every thing before it. The king could not hesitate, nor the legislature halt, until they sunk slavery like lead in the mighty waters, to rise no more for ever.

Look more closely and deeply into this matter. This splendid event is only a specimen of the way in which God works. I mean, that there is nothing in it but an illustrious exemplification of the revealed fact, that His kingdom, or church, is the leaven by which He leavens the mass of society, whenever any great and good principle acquires the ascendancy. It is the force of that principle, burning like "holy fire" at the heart of spiritual men, that inflames the men who desire to be spiritual ; and through them warms into momentary vitality the half-hearted in religion ; and, through the temporary spasm of their zeal, forces formalists into action, and hypocrites into assent ; and thus

neither neutrals nor despisers can resist. The impulse is thus propagated, though with diminished strength, from circle to circle, until it sway the community : but it came, like the circles in a lake, from the point where the moving cause cleft the surface, and sunk to the bottom.

It is, therefore, only the sober fact, that the eloquence of the senate, and the liberality of parliament, and the zeal of the press, and the spirit of the age, were merely the *fermentation* of the leaven which God first infused, and then rendered efficient. The men who first espoused and advocated African freedom, were not candidates seeking popularity, nor senatorial patriots seeking the glory of their country. It was not a political question, nor a case of mere humanity. It was born in the hearts of *spiritual* men ; cradled in the closet of secret devotion ; and consecrated at the altar of public worship. It was taken up for God, in the fear of God, and with an express view to the glory of God and the Lamb. As might be expected, therefore, it won for a time only those who do and endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Philosophers did not think, nor senates speak for it, until the wrestling Jacobs of the land had filed so many petitions for it before the eternal throne, that they could not be silent when senators were chosen, nor when philosophers wrote. Then, but not until then, African freedom began to be a popular theme amongst political and worldly men.

Thus, the original impulse came from heaven to the church, and through her was transmitted to the world. Real Christians moved nominal Christians ; and they moved the senate and the press ; and they moved society. Go up, therefore to the fountain head of the influence which emancipated Africa, and you find it issuing like the river of life, from the throne of God and the Lamb. Wilberforce, and a few of his illustrious compeers, engraved the names of the African tribes upon their breastplates, and never appeared before God in Zion, or the closet, without interceding for them ; nor before man, without stating their case.

The prayerful of the land saw this solemn and resolute intercession, and joined it fervently, though gradually. The pulpit took it up openly, and the vestry breathed it, and the family altar whispered it, and the closet echoed its unutterable groanings. Thus, the whole church of God bound the cause of Africa to their hearts. She found herself "bound in spirit," whilst colonial bondage continued; and "*being in an agony she prayed more earnestly!*" And her effectual fervent prayer availed much. Its importunate "Amen" shook the golden censer in the hand of the great High-priest before the throne; and when that censer was *filled* with "the prayers of all saints," he waved it once before the throne, and immediately voices were heard in heaven, and saying, "British slavery is fallen—is fallen to rise no more for ever!"

Now, it fell, that the kingdom of God might rise. Its fall is merely one of those overturnings which make way for His coming, "whose right it is to reign." The great work of the church, therefore, only *begins* where emancipation ends. The nation may pause now in its enterprise, or employ itself in immortalizing an unparalleled abolition, by medals and monuments of fame; but the church must neither pause nor play. She must go in and possess the land which the Lord her God hath given her. To her the political victory is only the signal for spiritual warfare. The abolition is merely the means of an infinitely nobler end—"the glorious liberty of the children of God!" Until this complete and crown the column of civil freedom, it is no pillar in the temple of God, and nothing on the scale of eternity. Until the Son make Africans free, they are not "free indeed."

This digression is longer than I intended. It will, however, associate the principle of the essay with an event which is imperishably enshrined in your memory. And now, observe how the history of the primitive church illustrates and confirms the principle. I want you to revere the church of God somewhat as you venerate the word of

God. You would be ashamed of yourself, if you gave the Bible no place among your books, or an inferior place. You have reason to be so, whilst you are not identified with that church which Christ is not ashamed to plead for and employ.

“*The first works*” of the first Christian churches bore no small resemblance to the finished works of creation. Both were “very good.” Then, the church, like the sun, was the light of the world: like the sea, she flowed into all the channels of the earth, to cover them with the knowledge of the Lord: like the tree of life, she yielded her sanative leaves, for the healing of the nations, as freely as her ripe fruits for the nourishment of her children. Her works of faith embraced the *spread* of the truth she believed, as well as the personal character and spirit which should ever adorn its doctrines; and her labour of love aimed at the good of all men, as well as of the household of faith.

Whilst the Christian church was thus “fair as the sun,” she was “terrible as an army with banners,” to all temples and thrones where “glory to God and good-will to men,” were unknown or contemned principles. The Sanhedrim trembled at her holy aspect; it was at once so calm and heroic. The highpriests of Jupiter and Baal recognised, in the moral and miraculous powers of the church, *levers* that would turn the world upside down, if plied in the same spirit as they had been planted on the vantage ground of Calvary. Philosophers and statesmen doubted very much whether “this work would come to nought.” Even the Cesars suspected the stability of the imperial throne, and girt the purple more closely around them to conceal their fears.

This involuntary homage of fear, thus universally paid to the church of Christ, by Judaism and heathenism, by philosophy and policy, must have been wrung from them by the *evangelizing* spirit of the church. Nothing but her avowed *designs* upon the whole world, could have awakened such jealousy in all “high places;” for it began

whilst her numbers were too few to be formidable, and whilst her resources could not exempt even her apostles from labour or poverty. The temples and thrones of that time, however much they may have hated the purity of faith or practice in the infant churches, could not have feared these churches, but for their public exhibition of the commission of Christ, to "*preach the gospel to every creature.*" That commission, however, as then held, and allowed, and avowed by all Christians, was sufficient cause for political and ecclesiastical alarm, to all Jewish and heathen powers : for no man, prophet nor impostor, had ever dared to challenge the subjection of the whole world to "one faith." No handful of men, without money or influence, had ever set the world at defiance, or publicly pledged themselves to conquer it without carnal weapons. This was a "new thing on the earth ;" and the rulers of the earth recognised its peculiarity at once. It had none of the forms of force or fraud, and nothing of the spirit of any sect or system, with which policy and power had ever grappled. Christianity was confident exactly in proportion to its apparent weakness, and its votaries waxed only more resolute as they were singled out for victims. The martyrdom of an apostle or an evangelist, instead of intimidating the adherents of the churches, rallied them, and determined undecided attendants to "*be baptized for the dead.*" Every champion that fell, fell like a grain of corn into the earth to produce much fruit. What could senates or synagogues, priests or philosophers, make of all this ? It was "not the manner of men ;" and, accordingly, it baffled the sagacity of the master-spirits of the age. They had no rules nor experience which could fathom it. It defied their arms by meekness, and their arts by simplicity.

This was not, however, the only singularity of the primitive churches. They reposed all their hopes of success and safety upon the arm of God. "*If God be for us who can be against us ?*" was a question which silenced all their own fears ; and, as they never looked to any other quarter

for support, and to Him only by *prayer*, it also staggered their enemies. They could give no answer to it. It was a question which defied their gods as well as themselves and thus forced upon them the idea of a God who despised all the divinities of Olympus and the Empyrean. And then, they could not shut their eyes to the fact, that, whoever He was, his worshippers evinced a confidence in him, which was unlike all popular faith, and unallied with any of the ordinary methods of propitiating the divine favour. It was not a confidence acquired nor sustained by attempts to appease his anger with costly sacrifices, or to win his aid by splendid temples. It gathered no strength from rich altars, nor from rigid penances. It simply leaned on the cross, and looked to the mercy-seat, by prayer alone. And, by that, it bore an aspect and breathed a spirit which were never seen around the altars of Greece or Rome, even when they flushed the heavens with the blaze of national holocausts. And then, all this holy confidence had respect chiefly to the *spread* of the gospel. It was not cherished by the first believers, for the mere sake of their own personal comfort or composure. They cultivated faith in God, in order that they might do the *work*, as well as suffer the will of God on earth. The apostolic churches felt themselves pledged, both by the letter and the spirit of the apostolic commission, to take care that the word of the Lord should "sound out" from them: that they should "hold forth the word of life," and thus be fellow-helpers to the truth.

They also lived, avowedly and habitually, for eternity. In its solemn lights and shadows, they looked upon the perishing world at large, and upon the souls of their immediate neighbours. They so realized the judgment-seat of Christ, that they kept, as it were, his commission for ever lying upon it, as one of "THE BOOKS which will be opened," when the saved are confronted with the lost. Thus they seem to have read it with much of the same spirit as they expected to *hear* it, when the Judge should try their stewardship "of the manifold grace of God," by what they

had done to make that grace "*appear unto all men.*" Accordingly, they exerted themselves to be and do all for the world, which the hope or fear of meeting the world at the bar of God inspired.

It is, I am aware, as easy to pay sweeping compliments to primitive times, as to advance sweeping charges against modern times. I do not, however, forget that all this is not true of all the first Christians individually, nor equally true of all the first churches. There were tares amongst the wheat even then. This, however, only renders "the first works" of the churches which did work, the more amazing. The wonder increases, by the decrease of numbers, which is thus forced upon our notice, when we take into account the faults and factions recorded and reproved in the Epistles to the churches. This, like the thinning of Gideon's army, only makes the vigour and victories of the working churches the more signal and surprising.

The historical details of what they did and attempted, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," are not necessary here, in order to justify the general view now given of their character and labours. The well-known actual *results* of primitive zeal and fidelity, prove how much they must have done and attempted for the conversion of the world. The world was soon turned "upside down;" and they did it. Judaism did not fall in Palestine by its own weight, nor by the Roman arms, until Christians had sapped its foundations. Platonism was not displaced in Greece, nor Epicureanism in Rome, without Christian effort and prayer. The olive of Minerva did not wither upon the Hymettus, nor the laurel of Mars upon mount Aventine, from age; but from successive scathings of holy fire, scattered by holy men. The temples of Jupiter were not forsaken, without being summoned and assailed; nor the altars of Venus overthrown without a struggle. The heathenism of the eastern and western empire faded and fell, before the brightness of the eastern and western churches. Their doves gave battle to all the eagles of Baal and Ju-

pter ; and although the doves bled, they so multiplied, that the eagles were blinded and worn out.

Christianity thus fought every step of her way, with the sword of the Spirit, from an upper room in Jerusalem, into the seats of Philosophy, and the palace of Cesar. Alone she did it ! Wherever her children laid her "sure foundation stone" of hope and holiness, they had to roll it up mountains of peril, and through valleys of privation, with their own hands, and at their own expense. God was, indeed, with them ; but they also were with Him. They wrought for him, whilst he wrought by them. All "the increase," he gave by his Spirit, was given to the planting and watering of his word in the field of the world. All that increase was, however, emphatically, not by their might nor by their power, but "by the Spirit of the Lord ;" for whatever might or power they had, He both created and sustained it. It was all the fruit of the Spirit. Their will and power to work for God, as well as the success of their labour, came down from the same source.

This spread of the gospel during the first and second centuries, was so rapid, irresistible, and extensive, that it cannot be at all accounted for by any human means or principles. Nothing explains it rationally, but the work of the Holy Spirit, and the workings of a special providence co-operating effectually with efficient Christian means and efforts. But this process, however supernatural, explains it all as naturally as sun and rain account for seedtime and harvest. It is not, therefore, without cause, that theologians charge infidels with absurdity as well as impiety, for attempting to refer the spread of the gospel to human means and local circumstances. Gibbon merges the historian in the theorist ; Hume, the philosopher, in the fanatic ; and Voltaire and Volney, the man in the monkey—when they attempt this. They could not have evinced more arrant folly or arrogant effrontery, had they set themselves to prove that seed and soil, if well managed, can produce harvest without sun and rain.

It is equally instructive and delightful to trace the early triumphs of Christianity throughout the Roman empire. They at once evince the truth of the gospel, and unveil the secrets of its success, and thus send a glowing impulse to the heart, in favour of fellowship with "the communion of saints." Who would be an "alien" from that commonwealth of Israel, which God has so long sustained and signally honoured? "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; why standest thou without?"

No. VII.

ON MANLY REALIZATIONS OF CHRIST IN THE BIBLE.

WERE you ever struck with John's sublime summary of Revelation, when he says of Christ, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men?" If not, the study of it will make the diamond of Truth blaze with new splendour.

When you consider that God is invisible, and that eternal things are unseen—is it not astonishing that we know so much of both? Both, indeed, surpass all comprehension; but neither infinity, nor their invisibility, prevents us from knowing enough for our satisfaction. We have, in regard to God and eternity, as much light as we can use; and need be at no loss what to think of him or it. Accordingly, we are not, in general; but have, upon the whole, such ideas of God as confirm our sense of obligation, and such views of the future state as impress our minds, whenever we reflect seriously.

Our knowledge of these unseen objects, however limited and superficial, compared to what it might be, yet, compared with the dim and deformed notions of the heathen, is open vision; compared even with the clearest and loftiest discoveries of human philosophy, it is so; for the world

even by wisdom knew not God. Infidel philosophers may boast of sitting at the feet of Plato and Socrates; but if Plato and Socrates were the men they are said to have been, and alive now, they would give their own palm to a well-educated child in a Sunday school. I mean, in matters of religion: for such ideas as, God is love—God is a Father—God is just, and yet a Saviour—never dawned upon their mighty minds, as facts or conjectures. This, however, is the light in which God appears to us; in which we think and speak of him. In some form or other, we are as familiar with the idea of his being a Father, as of his being a Judge. Why is this; to what are we indebted for this superior knowledge of God and eternity? The light of men on these subjects is now perfect day, compared with the brightest periods of the light of nature. What created the difference? You are ready to say, the Bible. Revelation has unveiled the true character of God: life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. All the true light in the world has shone from the oracles of God.

True: but when you have said all this, you surely do not think that you have traced the light of men to its original source. All the natural light we enjoy is from the sun: but he is only the reservoir of it. Light itself was created before the sun, and sprang forth at the command of God. In like manner, the Bible is to divine light what the body of the sun is to natural light: not the original source of it, but that which contains and disperses it. The life is the light of men; and the Bible is full of light, because it is full of Christ—the Author of eternal life.

Perhaps, at first sight, this may seem a distinction without a difference; for unless you have been very much struck with the fact itself, you will hardly anticipate the use I am about to make of it, nor the exact point to which the distinction will lead. It is, however, an important one; and should I succeed in explaining it, the effect will be, not to change your views of the Bible, but to exalt them.

Now, observe: We are indebted to the Bible for all our

light in matters of religion ; to what, then, are we indebted for the Bible itself? All our light comes from it ; from whence, then, came its own light? The Bible is our sun ; but from what source was it filled with the light it diffuses? The common answer to such questions is, The Bible is the word of God ; we are indebted to Him for all it reveals.

True : this answer is correct so far ; but it does not go far enough. In this general form it leaves uncertain, indeed unseen, the motive which led God to reveal his will—the principle which guided that revelation—and the character too, in which God spoke.

I ask, therefore, again, to what feeling or purpose of the Eternal Mind are we indebted for the word of God? In what capacity did he speak to the world? as a Sovereign, or as a Lawgiver, or as a Judge, or as a Father? If you say, He has spoken something in each capacity, then I ask again, which capacity took the lead in revelation? Whether has he said most, as King or as Father? What predominates in his word—love or law?

This matter should not be disposed of by merely saying that a revelation of the divine will was necessary for man as an accountable being, and therefore God gave him one : the question still returns, Why did God give us his word, and in what character did he speak? Now, it is not a direct answer to this inquiry to say, that from a Being infinitely good, a revelation of some kind might naturally be expected. This is the ground usually taken in arguing with Deists. Accordingly, so far as I can recollect the character of the leading books written in defence of the Bible, the probability, propriety, and necessity, of a revelation from God to man, is the basis of all the reasonings. The defenders press Deists with such questions as the following : Would it not be worthy of God to communicate some knowledge of himself to his creatures? Is it likely that the Father of our spirits should leave them in ignorance, or to mere conjecture? If we are accountable and

immortal, is it not reasonable to expect some information in regard to the grounds of our responsibility, and the nature of our prospects? These are solemn and solid points, and both unanswered and unanswerable by any infidel who admits the being and beneficence of God. But while I admire such methods of accounting for the Bible to those who deny its divine origin, I object to the frequent use of them amongst those who receive the Bible as the word of God. They, at least, and especially those who believe with the heart, should be treated in another way than Deists; should be made and kept fully aware, not only of the general principles which secured a revelation to man, but also of the leading principle or cause which produced that revelation we have; for the circumstances which account for one of some kind, will not account for it. The Bible reveals the free gift of eternal life to sinners, through the death of the Son of God; and this is a matter so singular, a plan so sublime, a measure so far removed from both the letter and the spirit of natural religion, that no human reasonings are applicable to it. Our being accountable and immortal does not warrant the expectation of, much less establish a right to, such a gift.

It may be only just that we should know something of the God with whom we have to do; and only fair to have a bible of some kind; but such a bible as we have is infinitely beyond all that could be rationally expected as right or favour.

Hence the necessity of questioning and cross-questioning ourselves, until we are fully sensible of the real source from whence so much light has flowed into the Bible. Now John explains this: "The life was the light of men." The gift of eternal life through Christ led to all that is said or shown in Scripture. To predict that gift, or to explain it, or to commend it, is the grand object of revelation, and the positive cause of it. The Bible is full of light, just because Christ is full of life: the light that is in it is the exhibition of the life that is in Him. Had there been no

life in Christ for man, there would have been no light for man, but the light of nature.

You begin now to perceive what I am aiming at, and, I hope, to perceive that the subject is likely to repay the attention it is sure to require. I cannot simplify it at once, but if you follow me, you will be familiar with it before we close.

Now, John sums up the contents of the Bible thus: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and that life is in his Son." As if the apostle had said, Scripture records nothing but what is, in some way, connected with the gift of eternal light. Men have light, just because they may have life. In this point of view the Bible assumes quite a new aspect, and comes before us, not only as the word of God, but also as "the word of life." Let us, therefore, review the successive revelations given to man as light emanating from the eternal life which is in Christ.

Eternal life was forfeited by the fall. The loss of holiness involved the loss of heaven. Death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, came by sin, and must have continued, had not God provided a Saviour, who died that we might live. This the Son of God did, and thus became a quickening, or a life-giving, Spirit; the right of bestowing eternal life being the reward of his own death. This glorious event did not, however, actually take place until the fulness of time: an interval of four thousand years elapsed before Christ appeared, declaring, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." But during that long interval, frequent intimations of his life-giving death were received from heaven, and these were the light of man in every age, brightening, as it shone, into the perfect day.

The promise of the gift of eternal life through Christ, was the light of our first parents, and of the first families of mankind.

The religious knowledge which cheered and encouraged

them in a world of sin and death, was not the lingering twilight of the sun which set in Eden, but the predicted rising of the Sun of Righteousness ; was not what the first Adam recollected of God and glory, but the revelation of what the last Adam should do. Their light shone, not from the wrecks of the Eden economy, nor from a new system of laws, but from the promise of eternal life by Christ.

Now, this is both a more distinct and scriptural idea, than merely saying, that God revealed his character and will to the world again, after the knowledge of them was lost by sin. This is true ; but for any thing that appears upon the surface of the statement, the new revelation might be nothing more than knowledge, nothing better than the reassertion of the divine authority and government ; whereas, the real fact is, that all the knowledge was the knowledge of salvation ; all the light the promise of eternal life. Whatever laws, ordinances, or councils, were given to the first families of mankind, were grounded upon the promise of a Saviour, sprung out of it, and led to it. As the cherubim and flaming sword upon the gate of Eden, kept the way to the tree of life, so all the new commands and appointments of God were measures for manifesting his gracious purpose of sending his Son to be the life of the world.

This gives quite a new character to the early revelations of divine things. While we think of them merely as knowledge, and compare them with our own light, they seem too few and feeble to have had much interest or effect ; but in supposing this, we forget that they all concerned eternal life through the death of Christ ; an object so dazzling in itself, that it could not be presented so dimly as to be uninteresting. In any shape or degree of manifestation, it must have been a burning and shining light, because it was the only light. If God did not, therefore, speak so plainly nor so fully then, as he has done since, what he did say was all on one subject, and that subject the chief thing which belongs to the eternal peace of man : salvation was the matter, whatever was the manner of revelation.

You see I am anxious to fix your attention on this fact ; but not merely to prevent you from thinking too lightly of the first oracles of God, but to keep you from the common way of thinking about the Bible in general. We are apt to think of the successive revelations it contains, as a series of instances of God's laying down law to his creatures ; of God's asserting his authority over man ; of God fixing the absolute rule of faith and practice ; of God denouncing sin, and enforcing duty. Now, this is neither a full nor a fair view of the matter ; and, accordingly, it has no winning or sweet influence upon the mind. With the Bible before us, in this light, we are both capable and inclined to wish, that its laws were less numerous and strict ; its sanctions less formidable and solemn, its doctrines less mysterious and absolute. This is the natural effect of forgetting, or not understanding, the apostolic principle. All the lights of the Bible shine from the eternal life that is in Christ. Every thing written for our instruction has for its chief and first object, to endear God to us as the God of salvation. If, therefore, he denounce sin, it is because he is intent on saving us from it ; if he demand obedience, it is because he will give grace to produce it ; and if the doctrines of his word are absolute, and admit of no rejection, it is because they are the power of God unto salvation. Life, spiritual life here, and eternal life hereafter, is the source and centre of all we are bound to do or believe. This view of the matter will become more obvious and interesting as we proceed.

The covenants which ratified the promise of eternal life through Christ, were the light of men in the patriarchal age.

When the deafening roar of the deluge was silenced by the subsiding of the waters, God spoke again to man. His voice was heard on Mount Ararat, as it had been in Eden ; and again the life was the light of man. Gospel, not law breathed in the covenant ratified with Noah. The word of God, to him, was not an exposure of the crimes which

brought the flood upon the world; not even a warning against them; the flood itself was left to do all this by the sound of its many waters; and God, as usual confined himself to publishing salvation. The eternal purpose of sending his Son to be the life of the world, had been in nowise shaken by the ungodliness of the world; and that it might appear unshaken amidst the shattered frame of nature, no time was lost in making it dart forth new light upon man. Thus it did; and as the tree of life, that original emblem of the covenant of peace, had been engulfed by the deluge, the rainbow of the heavens was assumed as the symbol in its stead, and every law given to the family of Noah, was a light shed upon the promise of a Saviour. In the same spirit the covenant was ratified with Abraham. The increased light of his period shone from the life treasured up in Christ. And this, as in the case of the first families of mankind, is the cause why so little was said to the patriarchs. Much was not necessary when all related to "the one thing needful:" and, that being the gift of eternal life through Christ, it was hardly possible to state it so slightly as to leave it uninteresting.

Accordingly, we never hear of any of the patriarchs complaining of what, compared with our own, we should call dim discoveries of the way of salvation. Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ afar off: in faith of it, Isaac submitted calmly to be laid on the altar. In a similar spirit Jacob waited for the salvation of God. All this is wonderful, upon the usual supposition of their knowing so little: but the wonder ceases the moment we understand that the life was the light of man in all ages. For, although the plan of salvation did not come before the patriarchs, enshrined in all the light of its fulfilment, neither did it come before them encumbered, as it now is, with the controversies of the world. The only point at issue, then, was, whether Jehovah or Baal was the true God: and those who believe Jehovah to be so, were left by others to the undisputed possession of all they knew or hoped of a Saviour.

Thus the life being their light, very little of it was amply sufficient, in such a state of society as the patriarchs lived in. And this was the object and character of all their knowledge: if they were commanded to build altars and burn sacrifices, these pointed to the Lamb slain: if they were sent out as pilgrims to Canaan, Canaan was the type and pledge of that heaven, which is the seat and consummation of eternal life.

Here, again, I ask you to pause and observe how the revelations vouchsafed by God, were not assertions of his authority as God; not demonstrations of his being or will; but disclosures of the purposes of grace, proofs of his willingness to save, and exhibitions of the plan of salvation. All he said by his word, and all he did by his providence, bore upon this one point. Not a single ray of light shone from the Father of lights, but what led to Christ as the Author of eternal life.

Even the light shed upon men by the Mosaic dispensation, shone from the purpose and promise of life through the death of Christ. Yes, under what Paul calls the ministration of death, "the life was the light of men." These two assertions are not in the least contradictory nor incompatible. Paul himself both makes them and reconciles them, Gal. iii. 17: that promise was the gift of eternal life through Christ, which, instead of being set aside by the law, was made sure by it. Accordingly, Paul argues, verse 5, Who was that seed in whom the promise was to be fulfilled? xvi. 5. Agreeably to this view of the matter, the law itself is expressly said to be a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, and a witness in common with the prophets to the righteousness which is by faith in Christ. Rom. iii. 21, 22. Thus the law itself witnessed in favour of the principle of justification without the law; and was, therefore, itself, light from the life treasured up in Christ. There is solid and harmonious sense in this view of the matter: whereas it is the mere jargon of a human system, to call the law a covenant of works, made with the Jews. They,

indeed, considered it as such, and turned it against grace ; but that abuse of it did not alter its own nature.

The direct light which beamed from the law, not only showed the necessity of the promised Saviour ; but, from its connexion with the covenant and the sacrifices, actually pointed to him as the only refuge of the guilty.

Distinguish, therefore, and understand : when the Scriptures contrast the law and the gospel, it is not the law as given by God in connexion with the promise of eternal life ; but the law as turned by men into the condition of life, or as taken up and adhered to in opposition unto or in partnership with Christ.

Against this the New Testament bends all the force of its reasoning and all the fire of its remonstrances, until the law of God almost seems the chief enemy of the gospel of God : but it requires only a moment's consideration to be convinced, that man makes it this enemy and not God. God never would have introduced and established a system subversive of the gospel, or at variance with the covenant of grace. It is absurd to imagine such a thing.

Accordingly, the law, as he gave it, and keeps it, and intends it, is itself light from the gift of life ; for, had not God purposed to bestow eternal life through his Son, he would never have given law to sinners ; indeed, it would have been useless to do so : for, what could sinners have made of it ? Absolutely nothing. But now, by the law, is the knowledge of sin : and as, without that knowledge, men neither know the value nor feel the need of a Saviour, the law may well be considered as a light leading to Christ. Its heaviest curse and hardest rules, are, therefore, direct methods of endearing that Saviour, who, that he might give life, died to satisfy both.

I have condensed into a small compass the pith of this vast subject ; and though it amply deserves more illustration, I must leave it, by again asking you to observe, how, in the most terrific period of revelation, it was not in the mere character of a Sovereign, that God spoke : even while

giving law in thunder upon Mount Sinai, "the life was still the light of men." God was only taking necessary and effectual measures for maintaining the knowledge, and explaining the nature, of his eternal purposes of grace and salvation.

If I have succeeded in proving this to your satisfaction, it will now be almost needless to show how all the light diffused by prophecy originated from the life treasured up in Christ. This must be a self-evident proposition, when you remember that to him all the prophets gave witness. I therefore pass it, and proceed to show how the settled purpose and plan of giving eternal life through the death of Christ, led to the giving of all the light which revelation has shed upon the world.

The plan of salvation is the manifold wisdom of God, and embodies in itself both all the love and all the glory of the Deity. Now if the defenders of revelation argue from the infinite perfection of God, that a Bible of some kind might be expected, and would be a gift worthy of such a Being, then I argue that such a Bible as ours was sure, since that Being had resolved to bestow eternal life through his Son.

1. Because such a resolution deserved to be made known. Nothing so glorious as salvation had ever emanated from God: nothing equally glorious ever can emanate from him; because the death of his Son will never be repeated, whatever moral changes may take place in the universe during the lapses of eternity: for, now Christ ever liveth. Such being the real state of the case, it was not likely that God would conceal the purposes and plans of such grace: they had occupied the Eternal Mind so long and deeply, engaged the eternal sympathies and feelings so entirely, and were so intimately connected both with the glory and government of God, that he was as sure to reveal his generous purposes, as to form them. He owed it to himself, to exhibit the magnificent results of his everlasting counsels and infinite love; and as his own happiness could not be increased by

suppressing, nor diminished by disclosing, the knowledge of them; the very character of God secured to man light concerning that life he had decreed to give. Besides, no good end could have been answered, by hiding the purpose: indeed, the only effect of such a measure would have been the surprise of those who were taken to heaven without knowing why or how, or what it was: a state of mind equally unworthy of God, and unfit for glory. There will be enough of surprise as it is.

2. The plan of salvation required to be made known. It is no affectation when I preface this remark by declaring, that I know not what to say first; so many cogent reasons throng in, claiming precedence of each other, that I am at a loss which to choose. However, I cannot choose wrong. Well, the plan required to be made known; for otherwise it would not be executed. It embraced the ministering angels; and that involved the disclosure of it in heaven, that they might know what they had to do for the Saviour and the heirs of salvation. It embraced the system of animal sacrifice for ages to illustrate its grand principle, that without shedding of blood there is no remission; and that could only be introduced by publicly assigning the reasons for such a measure. It embraced the incarnation of the Son of God; and that could only be accomplished honourably by being foretold openly, and the object of it explained clearly. It embraced the humiliation of the Son of God; and that could not be effected but by sending him into the world. It embraced his sufferings and death; and those could not have been brought about so that men could have known them to be an atonement, without knowing beforehand how he was to suffer and die. Thus the historical parts of the plan of salvation involved the necessity of revelation: the life had to give light, in order to lead naturally to the death of Christ. But this is too general. One chief part of eternal life is, we are assured, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; and this secured a revelation of their character as the means of

knowing them. Another chief ingredient of eternal life is holiness ; and as true holiness is the holiness of the truth, or conformity to the will of God, this secured a revelation of his will. And heaven being the consummation of eternal life, and no purpose to be answered by concealing it from those who were to inherit it, the gospel of life naturally brought immortality to light.

Since, then, all scriptural light has sprung from the gift of eternal life in Christ, how shameful and sinful is it to trifle with the light of the gospel. This is a crime of far greater magnitude and malignity than appears by saying, of the careless, they do not read their Bibles, nor reflect upon the word of God. This, would, indeed, be bad enough whatever the Bible contained. This is nothing, compared with their neglect. They are trifling, not so much with eternal *law*, as with eternal *life* ; not so directly with divine *authority*, as with infinite *love*. You may imagine that they are only evading duties not convenient at present ; only postponing things not agreeable. Deluded judges ! They are pouring contempt upon the most glorious salvation which the united Godhead could devise ; risking souls which all heaven rushed to save ; trifling with eternal life. What a horrid spectacle is a *careless* man in this point of view ! The Father beseeching ; the Son bleeding ; the Spirit striving ; and yet the sinner resisting, and smiling at the ease with which he can take the matter. Heaven open in all its glory ; hell uncovered in all its gloom ; and yet the sinner standing as unmoved as if he were an idiot, or expected to be annihilated at death ! What shall I say ? I could speak daggers to the unconcerned, if I could forget that I myself was once equally thoughtless. But I cannot forget the wormwood and gall of that state : my soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled within me. Oh ! view not the great salvation in a wrong light ! It is your *life* ; your *eternal all* is involved in it, and every act of neglect is an outrage upon boundless, beseeching, bleeding, dying love ! Have pity, have pity upon

your own immortal soul. All heaven cares for it ; and will you care nothing ? By the mercies of the Lord, by the terrors of the Lord, I implore you to pause and weigh the matter !

Since, then, all scriptural light has sprung from eternal life, with what lively attention and adoring wonder we ought to study the word of God. Regarding it merely as a lesson or lecture about religion, or even as the standard of truth and holiness, is a poor, tame, soulless feeling, when eternal life is the substance of the Bible. Why, revelation is mercy rolling back the curtains of the eternal throne, to unveil the God of love ; is mercy moving forward that throne, to render the Lamb slain visible in the midst of it ; is mercy disclosing the river of life, flowing full and free from it ; is mercy pointing to crowns and mansions of glory ; is mercy exhibiting myriads of redeemed spirits, once guilty and vile as we are ; is mercy leading forward Eternity, glowing with the immortal splendour of all that God has done or will do, laden with the weight of glory, resounding with the alleluias of the universe, and teeming with the future wonders which through everlasting ages shall bless as they blaze, the general assembly of saints and angels ! Man ! immortal ! awake to the grandeur and grace of the Bible ! It is the telescope by which two eternities are rendered visible ; each thronged with stars which shine to guide, to cheer, to exalt, and which will shine for ever and ever ! The past eternity, like the milky-way of the material heavens, is seen crowded with the redeeming purposes, and plans, and covenant of grace : the coming eternity, rich and radiant with the scenes and felicities of glory.

No. VIII.

MANLY REALIZATIONS OF FUTURE PROBABILITIES.

STRONG and prying as human curiosity is, it is somewhat cowardly too. It would hardly venture to break the seals of a book which really foretold all the events and vicissitudes of future life ; unless it had some reason to hope that there was more good than evil contained in the predictions ; and, even in that case, both the hand and heart would tremble not a little, lest the evil should be of that kind which we dread most. Accordingly, we are very curious only about the good which may happen to us. Any wish we feel to know the *worst*, is not strong enough to make the knowledge at all tempting to us, even if we could obtain it.

This was the real character of human curiosity about the future, even when oracles and omens, divination and astrology, were at the very height of their popularity. There was, indeed, then, a *rage* for prying into the book of fate, and for extorting the secrets of the stars and the grave, at any expense or peril. It was not, however, for the sake of knowing the worst, that these experiments were tried. A desperate king, or a daring usurper, when phrensied by the crisis of his affairs, courted the knowledge of the worst recklessly, because nothing could be worse than a *crisis* in his fortune. It was, therefore, no great hardihood to hazard the most fatal response of an oracle, when death or defeat was inevitable from the pressure of circumstances. And in regard to others, their passion for prying into secret things was the hope of finding them better than past or present things. No man ever wished to know how much evil awaited him, until his affairs were absolutely desperate.

The age of oracles and incantations is happily gone by for ever : but curiosity about the future remains still. We

are no longer superstitious ; but we continue to be imaginative, and to allow both hope and fear to push forward their conjectures amongst the secrets of futurity. We look to the visions, and listen to the voices, of our own *wishes*, quite as much as the ancient heathen did to their divinations ; and are as much led by them too. For, who has not studied his own *prospects* in life, and laid his *plans* accordingly ? Thus we are our own oracles now. Delphos and Dedona are in our hearts. We despise the witch of Endor ; but we listen as attentively to the whispers of our own hopes, as Saul did to the necromantic visions. We conjecture as much as the ancients conjectured.

This natural solicitude about our success in life, may be turned to a good account, by wise management. We cannot shake it off altogether ; but we may regulate it. It may even be indulged so as to prove very useful.

Now, in regard to future life, you have, of course, more *hopes* than fears. You hope the best in your own case. I mean, you take for granted that you will have more joy than sorrow in the world. You see no reason, and feel no inclination, to fear the worst. You are not unwilling to do well, in order to succeed well ; and, therefore, hope that things will not turn out ill.

Well : suppose the *best*. Take for granted, if you will, the success of your business—the permanency of your health—the weight of your public character—the worth of your private friends—and the completion of that

“ Home, which plighted love endears.”

Now, seat yourself at the fire side you thus wish for yourself. Place opposite to you, in light and loveliness, “The desire of your eyes.” Look around upon a select library, and a still more select group of pictures, and out upon a sweet garden. Let your cabinet too, be rich in real curiosities, and the shelf by your easy chair piled with all

the best periodicals. Let music also breathe its charms over the whole scene of this home: Call in, too, the occasional presence of your bosom-friend, and of your most intelligent associates. Look at the image of your happiness, as it is reflected in their enjoyment.

Is not all this enough? You see, at a glance, how willingly you would go out to business in the morning, and how cheerfully you would go through it all the day, in order to keep up such a home. You feel, at *your* heart, how readily you would return at night to the quiet and refreshing joys of domestic life. Now, this is the utmost, the best, that can be realized: for I will not suppose, that you would reckon revelry or cards any addition to this pleasure. Its tranquillity and rationality form its chief charm.

Would, then, this please you? Well, suppose it all your own, and your own for life, what is it all without piety? No prelude of heaven. There is music, but not that which eternity will prolong. There is reading, but not that which maketh wise unto salvation. There is taste, but not for objects or subjects which prepare for a death-bed. There is love, but not that love which is a pledge of reunion and fellowship in the mansions of immortality. Thus the fair body of happiness has no *deathless* spirit in it. It is altogether "of the earth, earthy." Could you be satisfied with such a home? Why, without piety, it could only embitter hell.

But why should it be without piety? you ask. Nay, it is for you to answer that question. What place or provision does your plan make for that piety which saves the soul, and makes meet for heaven? When building and beautifying this fabric of happiness, did you even *think* of founding it on "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?" Did you even select the books for your anticipated library, with any express reference to becoming wise unto salvation? When you realized music, had it any reference to family worship? Did you propose

to yourself, in furnishing your future home, that the table of your sitting-room should be a family altar for the morning and evening sacrifice ; and that one chair in your study should be a sacred footstool, at which you would kneel before God in secret? When you laid out your garden in thought, did you at all intend to be found in its bower, or beneath its shady trees, like Nathanael "under the fig-tree;" or like Isaac in "the fields at eventide," musing and praying over eternal things? If not, look again at this "house made with hands;" it has no connexion with that house "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is every thing that human hands can make it; but no divine hand is upon it, in blessing or guardianship. It even defies God, by excluding God: for the house that "is not for him is against him."

Perhaps you take for granted, that such a tabernacle as you anticipate and desire, would be sure to make room for religion. I, therefore, refer you at once to the tabernacles from which you model your own. How many of them echo "the voice of rejoicing and salvation?" In most of them, all the music is without praise; all the reading without prayer; and all the social intercourse, neither sanctified nor sweetened by any hope of glory. Their whole routine terminates upon this world. How, then, is it sure, that your house, would be an exception to the general run of such houses?

Having thus supposed the best, and seen that it is no security for piety, let us now suppose the *worst*, and see how you are prepared to meet it. I do not say, *suspect* the worst, such foreboding is forbidden. All I want is, that you look at the instances around you, in which health has broken down; in which property has been lost; in which business is nothing but embarrassment; marriage, misery; and a sickly family, a source of perpetual and wasting anxiety. There are such scenes on your right hand and on your left; and those who suffer in them had as little expectation of such suffering as you can have. But, there

they are. Out of it they cannot get. They must bear up, and struggle on, as they can. This may be your lot: for it is not always the effect of *misconduct*. There is ill health, where there have not been bad habits; and embarrassment, where there has not been imprudence in business; and family affliction, where domestic love is not wanting. Now, place yourself in realizing thought, for a moment, in one of these scenes of care and privation. Think of dragging a frail body and an uneasy mind, day after day, to an unproductive and precarious business; of returning, night after night, to a charmless and cheerless home; of having no prospect of bettering your condition, and no great security against its becoming worse. Are you at all prepared for this, should this be prepared for you? It is prepared for many who now hope, as you do, for better things. It is now endured by many who, at your time of life, had as little reason to fear it as you can have. It is, therefore, not impossible in your case. Have you, then, any one principle of endurance or resignation that could stand the tear and wear of such trials? Have you any such hold upon the hope of eternal life, as would be likely to sustain you in a life of toil and trouble? Is the salvation of your soul so precious to you, that it invests even this sad prospect with *reasons* for faith and holiness? Or, do you feel that, in such a lot, you could not be pious? Perhaps, you feel something *worse* than this rising within you.

Remember, however, that there are also those, who have to do and suffer all that I have just depicted; and yet they manage to possess their souls in patience, and to bear up with manly fortitude and meekness.

But it is not necessary to suppose the worst, and, therefore, not altogether fair or wise, to try your principles by that test. The *worst* is not a proper test of piety, until God actually apply it by his providence. Let us, therefore, suppose an ordinary *medium* between the best and the worst. Take *Agur's* prayer as your maxim, "Grant me neither

poverty nor riches." This is the average lot in your circle. Would, then, this medium please you? It is, upon the whole, the most favourable to piety; but it does not produce piety. You know many who are neither rich nor poor, just as ungodly as the richest or the poorest in the land.

THE END.

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