

0 THE  
C O N T R A S T

BETWEEN

Good and Bad Men,

ILLUSTRATED BY THE BIOGRAPHY AND TRUTHS  
OF THE BIBLE.

BY

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## CHAPTER I.

### The Three Powers.

THERE are powers of great malignity in this lost world, and there are antagonistic powers of great *excellence*. Both are striving for the mastery. Each is a *system* by itself, and has an empire of its own ; each has a three-fold division of its forces, aiming at its own end.

“The world, the flesh, and the devil,” are the three great powers in subjection to which such multitudes of the human family are traveling down to death. The *world*, with its busy cares, its pride of life, its dazzling splendor, its false maxims, and its love of gold, is the mighty vortex where God is forgotten, sober reflection is strangled at its birth, and the soul is lost. The *flesh*, with its strife and envyings, its deception and hatred, its idolatry of self, and its enmity to God, its brutal passions and its madness, gilds the current and gives impetus to the stream that empties itself in the deep abyss. And the *devil*, that

apostate spirit and leader of apostates, whose "name is legion," and who goes "to and fro on the earth," by his deception and lies, his dogged malevolence and cruelty, and his invisible influence over the thoughts, the imaginations, the lips, and the conduct of men, is, as he ever has been, the great tempter to deeds of wickedness and the abodes of despair. Opposed to these, there are *three greater powers*, of divine appointment, on which the God of heaven relies, and on which his church reposes for effective resistance to these powers of darkness. They are very inadequate agencies in view of the world that lieth in wickedness, but they are "the wisdom of God and the power of God." They are the *power of truth*, the *power of the Holy Spirit*, and the *power of prayer*.

When we speak of THE POWER OF TRUTH, we mean God's truth, as it is revealed in the sacred scriptures. Man was first decoyed from his allegiance to his Maker by believing the devil's lie; he is restored to that allegiance by believing God's truth. It was by confiding in the father of lies that he incurred the penalty of death; it is by confiding in the God of truth that he lays hold on eternal life.

Every where throughout the Bible, personal holiness and eternal life are inseparably connected with "the belief of the truth." "*Mercy and truth* meet together," in all the divine arrangements,

for the salvation of men. When we read such declarations as these: "Ye shall know the *truth*, and the truth shall make you free;" "for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the *truth*; sanctify them through thy *truth*, thy word is truth;" "he hath chosen you to salvation through belief of the *truth*;" we rest in the conclusion that there is no true religion among men, nor in the universe, but that which consists in the conformity of the mind and heart and character to the truth of God.

The *power* of truth consists in its intrinsic fitness to produce rectified views and right affections. It presents the thoughts and affections of the infinite mind to the contemplation, the belief, of the finite. It is purely a *moral* power, and possesses a fitness to act upon the minds of men by considerations suited to their intellectual, moral and sensitive nature. It is the store-house where are deposited the rich and varied motives by which all virtuous minds are influenced, and contains the armor for the conflict between the powers of light and darkness. Right views and affections cannot be produced *without it*.

Truth is not romance; it is not conjecture; it is not a collection of opinions. The misery as well as the wickedness of man's natural state is, that it is a state of darkness; it is "the region and shadow of death." He grasps at shadows;

he "loves darkness rather than light;" error is one of the elements of his character. This darkness is chased away, not by confused and vague impressions. Mystic paths, dark labyrinths are not what he needs; but rather paths of light and openings to the light. God's truth makes these discoveries; and when it is believed, men perceive the great realities which act upon their character in some measure as they are. And they are realities that solicit inspection and challenge scrutiny. They have no weak side; make no pretensions. It is *truth*; unalterable truth; truth that will for ever stand in full force and authority, and which possesses a weight and reality that requires great hardihood to resist. There is a richness in it that belongs to nothing else. It is not *one* great principle of religion and morals which it reveals, but scores and thousands. Thinking men become interested in it, if it were for nothing else than its almost endlessly varied teachings. It emanated from the mind whence emanated the intelligence of the created universe, and "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It has a more comprehensive grasp and a wider range than has ever been taken by the most diligent student the world has seen. "Wondrous things" are they which it speaks of. Those who have surveyed and inspected them most minutely and studied them most intensely,



have come from the inspection only to say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" Every great truth of God's word is indeed a world by itself; yet it forms but one in the vast constellation of worlds, all bound together by mutual attractions. There are doctrinal truths, perceptive truths, prohibitory truths, promissory truths, denunciatory truths, convincing and terrible truths. There are truths that crowd the conscience and that are unwelcome to the proud heart of man; yet have they their place in regenerating and reforming the world. Truth is honest; it practices no stratagem or duplicity; it has no crooked policy, no part to play off; but goes at once and directly to its object, aiming its every arrow at the conscience and the heart. Whatever the truth be which God has revealed, it has the same benignant end. Some truths are applicable to one man, and some to another; some are applicable to one state of mind, and some to another; some coöperate with this dispensation of providence, and some with that. Every truth has its appropriateness, and so rich is the variety that nothing can escape its power. Nor are they cold and dry speculations which it reveals; they are thoughts of divine solicitude and love. It marks the footsteps of the Creator as he passes through the low earth seeking out his infatuated and wandering creatures. It is the

voice of their Father who is in heaven calling after his long-lost children, and in accents of beseeching tenderness. It would impart the illumined intellect, and the quickened conscience; but it would also give *filial heart*. Gigantic as are its powers of thought, it has *more heart* than intellect. Its great aim is to carry the heart of man for God and holiness. Hence its utterances are the utterances not of thought merely, but of high and heavenly emotion, of those loving thoughts which dwell in the bosom of the adorable Godhead, and of those resistless, bursting compassions which have so often wept over the lost and perishing. "God is *love*; and he that dwelleth in *love* dwelleth in God and God in him." Such is his truth, and it would fain paint itself, and burn its own daguerreotype likeness on this dark and chaotic world. It does not wrap itself in gloom; its message is light and joyous. The sum and substance of it is contained in the announcement, "God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It does not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" rather is it the comforter in sorrow, the cheerer in solitude, the burnisher of hope. It turns from none; is indifferent to none; it revolts not from the most abject and vile. It is the love of God to man claiming the love of

man to God. This is the great claim of truth, and in this consists its earnestness, its urgency and power. Here lies the secret of its successes in every age of the world. It holds out no bodings of wrath except to the incorrigible. It sounds no alarm on the conscience it has once pacified, makes no furrow on the brow, and leaves no arrow rankling in the reconciled heart.

It is a delightful state of mind that thus yields to and enjoys the truth of God. It is a buoyant and inspiring atmosphere when she breathes this balmy air; a spiritual life when she lives upon this bread that came down from heaven. When the first messengers of the Incarnate One "came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring the testimony of God," and in opposition to all that was fastidious in the taste and haughty in the learning of Greek and Jew, told the simple story of redeeming love, and "determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified;" the wisdom of this world could not stand before "this preaching of the cross." "The foolish things of this world confounded the wise; and base things of this world, and things that are despised, yea and things that are not, brought to naught the things that are." And so it is now, and ever will be. This is truth's mission, and this its tendency. The agitated and trembling heart finds repose in submit-

ting to its simple guidance. It may wake up the soul and alarm its fears by storm and tempest; but it "calms its surges" by a more tranquil process, and by "the still, small voice." The most subduing truth is the simplest and the sweetest truth; it "drops as the rain, and distills as the dew." It comes gushing upon the soul in all its freshness, and is "as the showers upon the grass."

But though the word of God is thus quick and powerful, and, in the order of nature and of time, the first great agency in reforming the world, there is another power that is alike indispensable; the POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. *Truth alone* is powerless. It falls short of its object, not for want of fitness, weight, tenderness or urgency; but from a radical and guilty defect in the state of mind and moral disposition of those to whom it is addressed. We know quite well that if the instructions and appeals of truth were made to wise and right-hearted men, they would be received with implicit confidence and joy. But what if they were presented to a race where "there is none righteous, no not one;" where there is none "that understandeth, and none that seeketh after God;" where every truth is rejected for its truthfulness, every rightful claim resisted because it is right, and every authoritative obligation, and terrific threatening, and tender appeal of heaven's love and mercy, are regarded with

the same unyielding indifference with which the deaf adder regards the voice of the charmer? Is it not obvious that there must then be a power superadded to the truth in order to bring them to whom it is addressed to their right minds? Yet, humbling as it is, this is the true character of our fallen race, and this is the true reason for the revealed office and work of the Holy Spirit in the moral renovation of men. Truth and motives act upon the mind only as the mind itself sympathizes with them. They have power only as the state of the mind itself gives them power, and is disposed to fall in with them. *They* do not act upon the mind; they are not the *cause* of the mind's action, but its *object*; the *mind* acts in view of the truth and the motives; their whole power of influencing it depends upon the state of its own views and feelings. You cannot, for example, bribe a perfectly honest man, because there is nothing in his own character that responds to so base a motive. Nor, on the other hand, can you set any truth or motive before a man who is destitute of holiness to become holy, because there is nothing in his character that responds to such an appeal. Before truth can exert any saving effect upon the mind thus vitiated, there must be a power that shall act upon the *mind itself*, imparting to it a nature, a disposition, a state of feeling that sympathizes with the claims

of truth and gives them a cordial reception. And *this is just what the Holy Spirit does.* He impels the mind toward the truth ; by truth he illumines its darkness, and excites it to the love of the truth itself. He makes use of the truth in order to prepare for it a lodgment in the heart, and give it the welcome of the warm affections. When the mind is thus rightly constituted, it "receives the word with joy." The Spirit of God counteracts opposing powers and influences, and gives the truth the throne. The conflict is a short one when he puts on the armor ; he is stronger than the strong man armed ; more powerful than the world, the flesh, and the devil, and carries the heart for God and holiness.

These views are abundantly maintained in the scriptures. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. A new heart also 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 will give you a heart of flesh. Of his own will begat he us. By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God." There is no more practical and encouraging truth than that which these declarations express. The power of the Spirit is the hope of the world ; without it the most potent and prolific truths fall

upon the adamantine heart like good seed upon the barren rock. And more especially is it found by experience to be the only hope and last resort of those who, in his name and by his authority, *proclaim his truth* to their fellow-men.

Nor let it be deemed a trite remark when we say, that the true value of this last resort is learned *only by experience*. Worms and sinners as we are, we are yet slow to learn that "all our sufficiency is of God." An ambassador of Christ who has the spirit of his office, is deeply solicitous for the souls of men, and he is not satisfied without some visible fruits of his ministry. He counts not only on feeding the sheep and lambs of Christ's flock, but on gathering into his fold those that are "scattered upon the mountains in the cloudy and dark day." Nor, to those who are acquainted with the proud self-sufficiency of the human heart, would it be any marvel, if, after painful and faithful study, he should sometimes come to the people of his charge flushed with the expectation that even though he draw his bow at a venture, his arrows can not fail to do execution. Yet how many lessons of dependence and self-abasement has he to learn, before he ascertains that "old Adam is too hard for young Melancthon," and that for all that *he* can utter, those whom he addresses will remain as unmoved as the bones the prophet surveyed in the valley of

vision ! Sometimes his complaint is unsubmissive and bitter : "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught and in vain." At others, he is depressed and discouraged ; nor has he heart to renew his strength, and go on his way rejoicing, until he has learned the *preciousness and encouragement* of that great principle of the gospel, that "he that planteth is *nothing*, and he that watereth is *nothing*, and that God giveth the increase." Ministers and churches need one sad experiment after another before they truly learn that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but *of God* that showeth mercy." God instructs them by facts and experience. It is rarely, except when the most hopeful expedients have been tried, that they are brought to lie prostrate in the dust, and to say with the prophet, "Who am I, O Lord God, that I should go against this great multitude !" The God of Zion means to bring *himself* into view as the One "mighty to save." When truth has done its utmost, there is a work undone. When those who preach it have exhausted the force of his commands, and men trample on his authority ; when they have expended the force of his threatenings, and men despise his justice ; when they have become well-nigh weary with their reiteration of the Saviour's love and sufferings, and men still "turn away their faces from him ;" when provi-



dence has smiled and frowned, and men refuse its calls; when conscience sleeps, and the divine patience and long-suffering seem to have reached the limit beyond which they can not be extended; *then it is*, when human obduracy stands abreast with the means to subdue it, and the obstacles to the conversion of men rise higher by all human efforts to surmount them, that the last resort is in "that exceeding great and mighty *power* of God, according to that which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

We know it is a very easy thing for men of corrupt minds to abuse this truth; this perversion is looked for from such men. It is one of the dark signs of the times that good men not a few have so philosophized upon it as to explain it away; and have so lost sight of it, that they have unconsciously let go their hold upon omnipotent grace. We should be cautious how we legislate upon the prerogative of the Holy Ghost. "God's name is in him;" he is a fellow-laborer and partner in the great work of grace with his eternal equals, the Father and the Son. Like them, "the love of the Spirit" pities the degraded and lost. If it does not lead him to take upon himself our nature and become incarnate, it constrains him to leave the abodes where he was crowned with glory and honor, for this forbidding and unwelcome world, and here to travel the wearisome

journey of this low earth through all the ages of time. If it does not lead him to endure the shame and spitting, the scourge and the thorns, the savage cruelty and the agonizing sufferings of the cross, it leads him to a humiliation on which the sufferer of Calvary did not enter, and which he left to be begun and carried on by the Spirit of truth and grace. "Comforter" as he is, his office is to contend with the rude violence of this revolted world; to bear its malice and scorn; to be grieved for its hardness, and to subdue its obduracy. The heart of man, that foul and filthy tabernacle, that "cage of unclean birds," is his dwelling-place, cleansed and purged by his presence, and made meet to be "the habitation of God through the Spirit." Ever since the departure of the Great Sufferer, he has been commissioned to take his place in this vale of tears, as "the other Comforter" who shall abide with his church for ever. This is his province, and this the theater of his power, "quickenings whom he will," sustaining, establishing, sealing, changing them from glory into glory, himself the earnest of the heavenly inheritance.

This is power; it is God's power. It is "the excellency of power." It differs from the power which keeps the ocean within its appointed bed and moves the planets in their orbits, in the agent who exerts it, in the sphere of its influence,

and in the excellency of its results. It is not the world of matter it acts upon, but the world of mind, subduing it to the obedience of faith. No where are found such splendid exemplifications of power as in thus transforming, controlling, elevating, purifying the minds of men. It is then that "the Lord sends the rod of his strength out of Zion, and rules in the midst of his enemies." The "Most Mighty" girds "his sword upon his thigh, with his glory and his majesty, and in his majesty rides prosperously because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, and his right hand teaches him terrible things." They are scenes of terror then; but they are succeeded by days of peace. The "Breaker of Israel" is on his way, and "his hand, his right hand, is plucked out of his bosom." The power is the greater for liberating the mind so long incarcerated. The light is the brighter for all the former darkness; hope the sweeter for all the despair. His people are "made willing in the day of his power." And it is a great and glorious day—glorious to feel and enjoy—glorious to behold, and, in seasons of darkness and despondency, glorious to hope for. When that hope is realized, it will be the jubilee of the world; the ingathering of the great harvest-year will have come, when "the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the moun-

tains drop down sweet wine and all the hills do melt."

"O blessed power! O glorious day!  
What a large victory shall ensue;  
And converts who thy grace obey,  
Exceed the drops of morning dew!"

Will these bright days ever dawn, and these blessed hopes ever be realized? In view of these inquiries,

There is a **THIRD POWER** we are permitted to contemplate, and that is **THE POWER OF PRAYER**. This is as truly one of the motive-powers of the world as the truth and spirit of God; the one as truly belongs to the method of the divine procedure as the other. Mighty agencies as the truth and spirit of God are, they are set in motion by prayer. This sinking world is to be lifted up from its degradation and woe by prayer. If the question be asked, Whence does prayer derive this power?—we reply,

It derives it from the *divine nature*. The great God is essentially, and in his own nature, the hearer of prayer. His goodness, his compassion, his tenderness, his universal presence, and the interest he takes in the creatures he has made, render it certain that he listens to the cry of want and distress. If there were no restrictions laid upon his compassion by his rectitude, his

justice, and his truth, he would not close his ear against the cry, let it come from whom it may. This conclusion derives support even from the teachings of reason and nature. The Great Author of their being has so constituted men, that, whatever their character may be, in the seasons of their extremity, and as their last resort, they *always* cry to him as their helper. This sense of dependence is one of those natural instincts, implanted in the human bosom, which finds its warrant and counterpart only in the divine sufficiency and clemency. He even "hears the ravens when they cry;" and the "young lions when they wander for lack of meat, cry unto God." The sacred Psalmist tells us of the wanderer in the wilderness, the prisoner and the slave, the distracted mariner in the tempest, the famishing population of lands smitten with barrenness, and "fools who, because of their transgression, and because of their wickedness, are afflicted," who "cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." Much more is this attribute of the divine nature brought into view in the dispensations of grace toward his own people, where, by the work of Jesus Christ, the divine clemency is no longer under the restrictions of justice and truth. Here the language, "O thou that hearest prayer" has emphasis; his people look to him with confidence, because they know that he is as

truly a prayer-hearing God as he is holy, just, and good. The cry may come from the throne of princes, or from the dungeon; it may come from the sanctuary or the closet; it may come from the tranquil scenes of prosperity, or the habitations of sorrow and languishing. But come whence it may, it enters into his ears. He is well pleased to listen to their requests when they crave temporal blessings; but when they seek spiritual above temporal good, because they value it more highly; when they deplore the absence of his Holy Spirit as the severest of judgments, and his presence as the selectest and richest blessing, which the divine munificence can bestow; he can no more turn a deaf ear to the cry than an earthly parent can refuse bread to a hungry child. "If they being evil know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall their Father, who is in heaven, give *his Holy Spirit* to them that ask him."

Prayer derives its power also from the *divine purpose*. The infidel objection, that if God is immutable, and that if his purposes are all immutable and eternal, prayer cannot influence him, is founded in sheer ignorance. We believe most firmly that God "has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass;" and, because we believe this, we believe that among the things which come to pass are the order, and method, and means, and en-

tire and minutest arrangement by which they come to pass. These are as truly comprised in the "whatsoever" as the final results; nor is there any purpose at all on the records of eternity that stands separate and apart from all or any of the agencies by which it is brought about. If God has a purpose to add the testimony of his spirit to his truth, *in answer to the prayers of his people*, his truth and spirit exert their power in *no other way*. If "he will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do this for them," then has he invested prayer with this amazing power. He is just as immutably influenced by "the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man" as he is by his purpose to save. Prayer is as truly the object of his pre-determining counsel and foreknowledge as the blessings bestowed in answer to it. Whenever he is about largely to bestow spiritual blessings on this guilty world he first pours out "the spirit of grace and supplications." The spirit of prayer poured upon his church is the forerunner of blessings upon the world, and is the index that the day of its deliverance is drawing nigh. That weeping and supplicating prophet in Babylon was the surest indication that God was about to appear in behalf of his captive people. That solitary Christian in the woods, all night pleading for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon a desolate church, was the first sound of the approaching rain

of righteousness. The power to which this agency allies itself is concealed from the eye of sense; a vail of secrecy is drawn around the suppliant as he enters into "his closet and shuts his door about him;" if ever conspicuous, it becomes so only when the blessing is bestowed. Yet, unnoticed though it be, it has unearthly energy; and, exerted though it be, by creatures of yesterday and miserable sinners, it is "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." The suppliant takes hold of the divine strength. His prayer is God's appointed means to his own appointed end. The chain is unbroken. The first link is fastened to the eternal throne in the heavens, and the last is bound to the mercy-seat on the earth; so that the man of prayer who finds himself chained to the mercy-seat here below, touches the wires that respond to the eternal purpose above, and the receiver is identified with the suppliant. The fact that God has given him the spirit of prayer indicates his ulterior purpose to bestow the solicited blessing, or some greater good in its place. And this is one of the elements of power which belong to prayer; it is the execution of his purpose who has "never said to the seed of Israel, seek ye me in vain."

Nor is this all; prayer derives its power *from the divine promises*. Nothing can be more full and explicit than such declarations as the follow-



ing: "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify me. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him; he will also hear them cry and will save them. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him. And it shall come to pass that before they call I will answer, and while they are speaking I will hear. Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." If the divine faithfulness is the source of the strongest hopes and the brightest prospects of the church of God, then may she be assured that prayer has power. It is no longer a matter of *sovereignty* whether or not God will hear the prayers of his people; he has condescended to bind himself by *promise*; it is a matter of *rectitude*. The fulfillment is as infallible as the immutable rectitude of him with whom "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He has no motive to fail in his faithfulness. "Who, O Lord, is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee!" God always has fulfilled these promises; he has never failed in a single instance, nor will he fail. "Thy faithful-

ness is unto all generations." His truthfulness as the hearer of prayer is one of the *accumulating* proofs in favor of the inspiration of the scriptures, and is every day and hour confirming its claims to our confidence. There are few greater indications of human stupidity than that men look with so much indifference on the practical demonstrations which the history of the church and the biography of millions of individual Christians furnish of the faithfulness of God to his promises as a prayer-hearing God. Some of the examples of the power of prayer, which are recorded in the Scriptures, as well as not a few which are found in the records of Christian experience in later days, sometimes seem almost too remarkable to be believed. When we read Abraham's prayer for Sodom, and Jacob's for preservation against the fury of Esau; when we hear Moses pleading for Israel, and see Joshua arresting the sun and the moon that God's people might have time to triumph over their enemies; when we think of Elijah at Mount Carmel, of Hezekiah in the presence of the army of Sennacherib, of the disciples praying for Peter when he was in prison, and of that little company in the upper chamber at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost; our weak faith almost staggers at the promise, and we are sometimes unbelieving enough to ask if these scenes have not received an un-

natural coloring from the painters' pencil. But there is no historic fact and no doctrinal truth more worthy of confidence than these simple and affecting narratives. And they illustrate God's faithfulness. "Where the word of the king is, there is power."

Advert now to the *source and origin of the spirit of prayer itself*. There are some spiritual exercises which give special honors to the *Sacred Trinity*, and which practically recognize *each person* in the glorious Godhead. This is eminently true of prayer. "Through *Christ*," says the Apostle, "we both have access *by one Spirit*, unto the *Father*." The Father, who in the order of nature is the Head of the adorable Godhead, is the appropriate *object* of supplication;—"The Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good gift, and every perfect gift." He is "a jealous God" and concerned for his honor and glory as the great Giver. He would have men pay a devout and grateful regard to him as the greatest Giver in the universe, and would be honored as the hearer of prayer. "Open thy mouth wide," says he, "and I will fill it." There is an ocean-fullness of blessing with him, and prayer honors him as its great dispenser. It also honors *the Son* as the appointed and accepted Mediator; as the "new and living way" of access into the holiest of all by his own blood," as well as the only medium and

channel through which the streams of God's overflowing goodness and mercy are conveyed to the children of men. The power of prayer depends in no small degree upon the actings of a vigorous faith on this great High Priest of the Christian profession. We have "boldness and access" to God "by the faith of him;" his everlasting priesthood is our warrant to come boldly, that "we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." And not less does prayer honor the *Holy Spirit*. Though the more retired person in the Godhead, he shares equally in the work of blessing this lost world with his Sacred Fellows. There is little said of him in the Bible compared with the more abundant revelations there made of the Father and the Son, and the assigned reason for this comparative silence is, that *he* is the author of these revelations, and "shall not speak of himself." His appropriate work and glory are found in a different sphere, and are to be made manifest in the progressive ages of time. Prayer takes hold of this remarkable peculiarity in the divine procedure, and is moreover an emphatic expression of the Spirit's agency, because he is that Spirit of grace, by whom, and through whose immediate influences every true suppliant draws nigh. While therefore we say that prayer derives its power from the divine nature, the divine purposes, and the divine promises; may we not the more con-

fidently affirm that its *great power lies in the fact that it is dictated by the Holy Spirit?* True prayer is not merely the language of the suppliant; it is the tongue of the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Spirit who prays, and gives utterance to *his own desires* through the stammering petitions of the suppliant. The suppliant's heart and lips are the channel through which the Spirit speaks; the prayer passes from the Spirit through these imperfect utterances. They are the thoughts of God uttered by lips of clay. And this is the high doctrine of prayer as taught by Paul. "Likewise *the Spirit* also helpeth our infirmities; for *we know not what we should pray for as we ought.* But *the Spirit itself* maketh intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth *what is the mind of the Spirit*, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." This pregnant passage bears us out in what we have just affirmed. True prayer is the Spirit of God interceding in the hearts and through the hearts of the saints. His dwelling is the heart of his people. "Know ye not that ye are the *temple* of the Holy Ghost, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Every right thought, and affection, and desire is from him. Never was a prayer offered according to the will of God, but the Holy Spirit indited it. We "know not what

we should pray for as we ought ;” nor can men, or bishops, or councils teach us ; nor can any “ Book of Common Prayer ” teach us. The Spirit of God is the only counsellor ; “ none teacheth like him.” When we truly pray, he bears the burden with us, and helps our infirmities. And what high import does this thought give to the nature of prayer, and what amazing and profound impressions of its importance and power ? It is not “ the worm Jacob ” who prays ; it is the Holy Spirit pleading with the gracious Father ; it is omnipotence interceding with omnipotence ; it is infinite love on earth interceding with infinite love in heaven for promised blessings. And what marvel that *prayer has power*, and that “ the worm Jacob should thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff ! ”

Nor may we overlook *the reflex influence of prayer upon the suppliant*. Its great power is, as we have seen, in its objective influence ; it exerts also a subjective influence of the most delightful kind. There are some strong and beautiful peculiarities in this exercise of prayer. It is the most complete and entire expression of all the Christian graces ; the sweetest and most lovely assemblage of them ever witnessed by the eye of infinite purity. *Love* is there in the tenderness and ardor of its attachment, and in all its filial and childlike breathings. *Penitence* is there in its

self-aborrence and tears, looking on the pierced One, and "mourning for him as one is in bitterness for a first-born." *Humility* is there in its lowliness, and faith in its vigor and confidence; the one "staggering not at the promise, giving glory to God," the other ingenuously confessing, "I am less than the least of all the mercies and all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant." *Submission* is there in its preferences of a wisdom and a will more trustworthy than its own, and with no rebel heart even at the bitterest cup. *Hope* is there in all the vividness of its anticipations, and all the sweetness of its repose. The *strength of Christian affection* is there in all its intensity, pleading, imploring, and filling its mouth with arguments. *Perseverance* is there, "faint yet pursuing;" tried, resisted, yet resistless; wearied in wrestling all night with the angel of the covenant, but "as the day breaketh," grasping the promises, and though "halting upon its thigh," resolving, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me!* It "has power with God and with man, and prevails." And *gratitude and praise* are there, ascribing "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory to him that is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever!" This reaction of prayer upon the suppliant is one of the expressions of its power. It makes him the better, and more useful, and more happy man, and fits him

the more for earth and for heaven. It prepares him to receive, to rejoice in, and wisely to employ the blessings which God bestows in answer to his supplications. God does not curse such blessings, nor when he grants such requests, does he "send leanness into the soul."

Such is the *power of truth*, the *power of the Spirit*, and the *power of prayer*. A most wonderful spiritual machinery is this, which is thus arranged in the counsels of infinite wisdom and love for the renovation of this fallen race. *Power* is a fearful attribute when not wisely and benevolently directed; here it is divine excellency. Facts show, the experience of the Church of God in every age and every land shows, that these are the three high-born and heaven-directed powers by which true religion has been most successfully advanced in the world; and that in so far forth as these have been lost sight of, vital godliness has every where declined. God has, with singular uniformity, not only made use of, but distinguished these great agencies. What he has done is in perfect accordance with what he has said on this important subject. There is something delightfully instructive in the fact that these are the agencies to which his providence directs us as affording the promise of success. The instance is not on record in which churches and their ministers have honestly and practically placed their con-



fidence in these agencies, whose graces have not been resplendent, and whose usefulness has not been acknowledged. Every step in the opposite direction has been a wrong step; and every step in any other direction has been the index of decay. Zion's Great Leader has marked out this as the way to the saints' everlasting rest. We doubt much if it may be improved upon. We should be afraid to tamper with it, as behind the spirit and progress of the age. Churches that have turned aside from this beaten track, removed these ancient land-marks, and forsaken "this good old way" for untried novelties and "new measures," have not turned out flourishing churches. We have never seen any ultimate good come of venturing on experiments and devising methods of progress in piety which repudiate past experience, and flatter only by their boldness and originality. They bode no good to Zion. The spirit that originates them is revolutionary and not progressive. God's truth, God's spirit, and the prayers of his people, are his own appointed agencies; and there is abundant reason for confidence in this wise and effective arrangement. It is a legacy the Saviour has given to his Church not as the world giveth. Other arrangements there are in plenty which distinguish the age in which we live; nor has our confidence in them been at all increased, but rather diminished, by their all-ab-

sorbing and uncharitable claims. All these combinations for social reform, either secret or open, however philanthropic and benevolent, aim not so much to strike a blow at the root of wickedness, as to lop off some corrupt and morbid branch; they are but isolated crusades against some particular vice, instead of an exterminating war against all that is vicious. They are spasmodic efforts; they are reckless, criminating, and bitter toward all who question them. They have none of the excellency of power which belongs to God's method of reform, and are apt to disparage, if not crowd out and displace, the agencies of God's devising. Philanthropy is sometimes misguided, and good men may err not only from good motives, but on the right side. We have sometimes thought that if the same amount of intellectual vigor and pecuniary means which are being expended in reforming the vices of the world, were expended in the appointed means of regenerating it, and making it holy; this one thing we should learn, that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." A single discourse of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, effected more for the world's reformation than all the remedial measures of the preceding four thousand years. Yet there was nothing so conspicuous in Jerusalem on that memorable day as the *power of truth*, the *power of the Spirit*, and the *power of prayer*.

“God never made his work for man to mend.” These three combined powers form the simplest as well as the most potent agency to which the human mind can be subjected. It is perfect in all its parts, and never acts separately, nor in collision. The truth effects nothing without the Spirit; the Spirit effects nothing without the truth; nor do the Spirit and the truth effect any thing without prayer. The power is one; it moves harmoniously and moves altogether. It is a mighty burden which it has to bear; but it is able to bear it. Like a mighty lever resting on the Rock of Ages, its destiny is to elevate the world.

Nor let it be said that the views we have expressed furnish little *encouragement to Christian and ministerial effort and faithfulness*. It is one of the advantages of God’s method of securing the glorious results spoken of in his Word, that it makes good men fellow-laborers with one another, and unites them to be co-workers with him. It has no place for idlers. “The harvest is great, and the laborers are few.” Every man has a service to render. His life should be one of self-denial and effort, and “always abounding in the work of the Lord.” If you ask what he has to do?—we answer, he is called to study and understand, to exemplify and disseminate the truth of God. He is neither an earnest, nor an honest lover of it, until he does this. So far as in him

lies, he will become the teacher of the ignorant, and especially of those of his own household; so that the young may remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and there may be a seed to serve God when the living and active generation sleeps among the dead. He is, moreover, to be a *disseminator* of truth through the press and through the pulpit, and withhold neither his efforts nor his means to raise up and send forth well-qualified laborers into the boundless harvest. He will make the wilderness glad, and the desert blossom. His influence will be felt amid the degraded and deluded millions of pagan and anti-Christian lands of every name, until the "villages which Kedar doth inhabit lift up their voice"—until "the inhabitants of the rock sing," and they shout "from the top of the mountains." He will also be the *advocate* of truth in all its purity, protecting its boundaries, guarding its foundations, asserting its authoritative claims, watching over it as an inviolable deposit, and magnifying it as the appointed instrumentality of the world's conversion.

And he will be a man of *prayer*. He can not give the Spirit, but he can *procure* the Spirit. This is the province of God's people, and the one divinely assigned to them. They should better understand that it is at the throne of grace that the battle against the powers of darkness is won. Prayer is the stimulus to effort, and effort is the

stimulus to prayer. It is no trivial matter to hold communion with the High and Holy One upon the advancement of his kingdom in the world. It is a transaction which, more than any thing else, calls for unimpeachable transparency of soul, lest we be found dealing treacherously with God, and grieving him whose favor we implore. O what a scene is that when iniquity abounds, and God is dishonored, and all her beauty is departed from the daughter of Zion, and when, in sackcloth and ashes, she goes to his throne, beseeching him that in the midst of wrath he would remember mercy; and when his people, not indefinitely, but with a special aim, and on this defined errand, plead with him, not once, nor twice only, but often and continuously; not with weariness, but with unwearied earnestness and importunity; not unitedly only, and not only apart and alone, but apart and unitedly, until the windows of heaven are opened! This is the *power* which the God of Zion has condescended to put into our hands. Say, Christian, has not the time come when we ought to "stir up ourselves, and take hold on God?" Who are we, and what have we done, that, in this distress of nations, and while in other lands "the battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," this land should be left in peace, and these churches should thus enjoy their Sabbaths?

It is high time that we awake out of sleep, unless we provoke the "sword that is bathed in heaven." Why, when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, should we be so slow to learn righteousness, and so reluctant to prove the power of prayer? Rise up, ye worldly Christians, and ye careless daughters that are at ease. Ye that make mention of the name of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest. "O thou, whose ear is not heavy that it can not hear, and whose arm is not shortened that it can not save!" where is "thy hand, even thy right hand; pluck it out of thy bosom!" Good men may die, and the times look dark; but there is no place for despondency so long as God gives us his truth, offers us his Spirit, and is himself the hearer of prayer.

## CHAPTER II.

### Different Classes of Men Distinguished by their Different Treatment of the Gospel.

THE believing and unbelieving Corinthians were distinguished by the great leading trait of character which distinguishes good men and bad all the world over. Corinth was one of the most corrupt and infamous cities of the pagan world, not less celebrated for its voluptuousness than for its magnificence and wealth. Nor was it less distinguished for its learning and accomplishments. Profane historians speak of it as the light and ornament of all Greece. Its inhabitants held the gospel in contempt. It did not come to them "with the excellency of speech or of wisdom;" it had none of the refinements of Grecian philosophy or Grecian rhetoric to recommend it; it presented only those plain and weighty truths which appeared as "foolishness" to the literary Greeks. The Apostle Paul well knew the ground he occupied and the men he

had to deal with. For more than a year and a half he preached the gospel in that renowned city, and there established a church composed chiefly of those idolatrous Gentiles who had been reclaimed from their abjectness by the power of the gospel, and whose subsequent life and character, though not always blameless, stood forth before the world as proofs of the superiority of those truths which men called "foolishness," to the boasted teachings of the Grecian schools. It is in this train of thought that we find the declaration, "For the preaching of the cross is to them *that perish* foolishness; but unto us *who are saved* it is the power of God."

Two classes of men, and only two, are here spoken of, and they comprise the whole family of man: those *who perish* and those *who are saved*. There is no middle or third class. Travel through the ages of time, and then search the cycles of eternity; pass from star to star, and from one abyss to another, and there is this line of demarcation between the unnumbered inhabitants of this universe.

There is *unutterable wisdom* in that system of truth and grace of which the cross of Christ is the foundation, and which is revealed by his Spirit. There is intellectual and moral beauty in it which so far surpass the conceptions of men that the brightest minds the world has seen, and



those, too, which were divinely inspired, have been constrained to exclaim, when contemplating it, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" It contains things which angels "desire to look into," and which, though they have been searching into them for ages, yet remain beyond the reach of their inquiry. Its wondrous disclosures on all the great subjects which pertain to "life and godliness," are so far beyond those made by the works of creation and providence, that compared with them these dim and flickering lights of reason and nature are little more than a taper when compared with the sun. Those which pertain to the preaching of the cross are disclosures which far transcend the earlier revelations of the divine nature made by the utterances of that legal economy which came by Moses. These latter, while they proclaim the stainless purity and inflexible justice of the divine nature, are silent on the subject of man's redemption. They say nothing of the way in which sin is atoned for, and of the combined glories of uncompromising rectitude and infinite mercy made more illustrious in the recovery than the perdition of the fallen. "The ministration of death," glorious as it was, "had no glory in this respect by reason of the glory that excelleth."

Yet this wondrous arrangement of divine wisdom, so costly and yet so free—comprising, pro-

tecting, and even adorning, all the principles of the divine government—extending itself so widely that “all things that are in heaven and on earth” are made subservient to it, and destined, in its progressive development, to uncover the mysteries which “were hid in God,” and make manifest his great glory, “is to them that perish *foolishness*.” It is “a stumbling-block” to them, and they cavil at it. Though supported by a weight of external testimony and internal evidence which, in simplicity, variety, and force, support no other moral truth; and though enforced by considerations addressed to reason, to conscience, to honor, to interest, to time, to eternity, and drawn from the authority of God, from the tenderness of his love, and from the severity of his displeasure for their unbelief, they do *not believe it*.

In ages and in lands where wickedness is triumphant, and where the popular sentiment is not scandalized by the avowal, their unbelief assumes the form of open *Infidelity*. Volume upon volume is exhausted in searching for imperfections in the Sacred Book which contains it, in picking grains of sand from this mountain of gold, and in caricaturing that gospel in which “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Where Christianity is the popular religion; where its bland influences are recog-

nized in the social relations, and its public institutions and ordinances are honored, the disbelief of it is infidelity *covered up in the heart*. It complains of the doctrines of the gospel as dark and mysterious; it calls in question its reasonableness; it doubts whether or not they be of God, and whether the faith of its professors is not pretension, and the urgency of its ministers misplaced and ill-timed. Or if it revolts from this, it fritters away its great and essential truths, lowers its standard of Christian character to the maxims of a world that lieth in wickedness, and makes it "another gospel." It rejects this "great salvation;" and whatever the form, or the more immediate cause of this rejection, it is at heart but some more or less subtil form of infidelity. In more forms than one, men treat the gospel as a cunningly-devised fable;" they "make light of it;" it does not present itself to their minds as a *reality*, an unchanging and everlasting *reality*. They have never brought it before their thoughts as a matter in which they have a deep and everlasting interest. When it has been urged upon them, they have turned to it a deaf ear: they have driven it from their memory, and viewed it as something with which they had little or no concern. Things unseen and eternal seemed to them rather as themes of imaginative painting and eloquent discourse, than things which possess weight and authority

which could no longer be resisted. In this state of mind they live, and in this state of mind they *die and perish*. And when from one stage of their future existence to another, they look back upon the eminence of privilege from which they have fallen, they will see how it is that "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish *foolishness*."

And *how is it*, and what is *the operation of their own minds* under these teachings of heavenly wisdom, that they should appear so foolish as not to interest them, and be believed and loved? We can not answer this question better than by the following observations :

The scriptures teach us that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." Such a mind is armed against the gospel by inveterate prejudice, by reluctance to submit to its claims, by its resistance to the divine authority, by the sophistry of carnal reasoning, and by its own pride and rebellion. This is a state of the affections which always arrays itself against the truth. Toward some of the specific truths of the gospel its hostility is rancorous, bitter, and determined. Dark and sullen suspicions gather over the mind. It is a night of alienation and distrust. The Sun of righteousness is eclipsed by the dense and murky shadows.

The Saviour instructs us that "the light of the body is the eye," and that, "if the eye be single, the whole body is full of light." The moral dispositions are the guiding and master faculties. The *heart* is the eye of the soul; it is the avenue to the intellect. Where the heart is right and single, its perceptions of religious truth, though imperfect, are clear and just. It sees the things which God has revealed by his Spirit as they are. But where the heart is wrong, it sees them as distant, or from a false position, or through a false medium. The gospel exhibits great wisdom, but to such a mind it is foolishness, because the heart, the master-power of the soul, is wrong. "The light that is in it is *darkness*; and how great is that darkness?" When the gospel unfolds its excellence, its loveliness, to this class of men, they are blind to its glories. They are *criminally* blind. It shows forth the "glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ;" but they have no delight, no gratified complacency, in such glories. Such glories have no charms for them, because "their heart is not right with him;" they do not love him; they have no desires to glorify him, to see him glorified, or to see him as he is. The bright glories of his nature are eclipsed by the state of their own minds, and they look at him only through the mist, and clouds, and darkness, which shroud and envelop their own

wicked thoughts. They themselves are sinners, lost and ruined by their iniquity. They have broken the law of God, trampled upon his authority, and destroyed their own souls. They are obnoxious to the penalty of his holy law ; they have done things which are worthy of death. The gospel implies these charges and justifies these threatenings. Its whole system of grace is built upon these humbling facts which the proud heart of those who perish cannot bear to acknowledge, and to which they will not submit. They are not convinced that they are either so bad or so helpless as the gospel represents them ; they have a character to maintain which they cannot consent should be rudely swept away by any system of mercy, and a righteousness and confidences of their own on which they depend. It appears foolishness to them, that all they have done and can perform must be renounced, and that the grace of God in the gospel of his Son, his mere grace, is their only refuge. They have no desire to perish, yet they cannot bear to be so entirely *beholden to another* for their salvation. They have never learned to stoop so low as to hide themselves in the dust and give all glory to the Lamb that was slain. The *cross* is foolishness. They can neither glory in it nor take it up and follow the crucified One, nor yield to his demands when he requires the sacrifice of all their idols. If

they tread in his steps they know not where he will conduct them, nor what trials they may be called to encounter, nor what self-abasement, and crosses, and opposition from the world. And then the happiness which the gospel proposes—what is it? It is the favor of God; it is the pleasure in religious duties; it is the enjoyment of doing his will and finishing his work. It is a spiritual happiness; a divine happiness; a future happiness. And then skepticism comes in to aid their hostility to these humbling truths. Who knows, say they, if this blessedness will ever be enjoyed, or will ever exist? There is too much uncertainty about it. Sense is a wiser counsellor than faith. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." And if it does exist, it is not suited to their taste. It is all absurdity and foolishness. Reason is a better guide than the gospel; nature a safer refuge than grace; this world a surer portion than the spiritualism of the world to come.

Thus those reason who *perish*. And they *reason* thus because they *feel* thus. And they *perish* because they thus feel and reason. Well is it written, "If our gospel be *hid*, it is hid to them that are *lost*." Such persons are wicked men. They prove themselves such by their treatment of the gospel.

But there is a reverse of this melancholy picture—there are those who *are saved*. Everlast-

ing thanks to God, they are "a great multitude, which no man can number," from every nation, and kindred, and tribe, under heaven. But whoever they are, and whencesoever they come, they are all saved in the same way. All, all are brought home to that paradise above by the cross of Christ being made to them "the wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation." These words, *lost* and *saved*, are the key to character and *destiny*.

The gospel is *from* God. It is not the device of men; it is God's gospel, and was revealed from heaven as his own method of instructing a benighted, and reclaiming a revolted world. It is "the wisdom of God," and not the "wisdom of this world." "For it is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Human wisdom had done its best to enlighten and reform; but its efforts were powerless. It left no traces of reform; men were made worse by it rather than better. Human reason had been employed in endless disputations, and those who followed it not only "did not like to retain God in their knowledge," but added to their atheism and idolatry the grossest excesses of immorality and wickedness. The



experiment had been tried for centuries during the brightest ages of Chaldean, Persian, Grecian and Roman learning ; and had proved an utter failure. And when, "after that, in the wisdom of God," it had been so clearly demonstrated, "that the worldly wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." It is no slander for the men of the world to call the gospel foolishness ; it is an honor to it that this indignity comes from such a quarter. Men may decry it if they will ; it is enough that it has *power*, and power to accomplish what human wisdom attempts in vain. "For the *foolishness* of God is wiser than men, and the *weakness* of God is stronger than men." The lights of human wisdom were all eclipsed and put out by the blaze of Christian truth. The simple narratives of the poor fisherman of Galilee accomplished more in overturning the temples of heathen idolatry and leading their vile worshipers to the knowledge of God, than all the learning and eloquence of the heathen world, because "the preaching of the cross is the *power of God*."

The gospel also invests the Deity with *power to save*. He could not save without it, because he had no *right* to save, and could not act in opposition to the claims of eternal rectitude. His justice required, not that men be saved, but that they perish. There was a moral impossibility in

his saving men without the gospel, after he had threatened them with eternal death for their disobedience; because his nature and his government have inseparably connected sin with punishment. His supremacy gave him the throne; in the exercise of that supremacy he had given law to the world; and when that law was violated he *had power* only to punish. His prerogative as Sovereign was merged in his claims as Lawgiver, and these left him only the power to preach. *This power* he had without the gospel; and a tremendous power it was. It was the power to arraign, to judge, and to condemn the transgressor "to all the miseries of this life and to the pains of hell for ever." It was a righteous power as well as a tremendous one, and as glorious as it was fearful. It was "the ministration of righteousness," and as such indicated and maintained his inflexible authority, demonstrated his utter abhorrence of sin, and was proof to the universe that such was the purity of his nature, and such the jealousy with which he protected the integrity of his throne; that rather than connive at wickedness, he would pour upon the transgressor the fury his holy indignation. This *the law gave him power to do*, and only this. Forgiveness, salvation could not come by this legal dispensation; for, "if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the

law." Salvation, eternal life comes in another way. The gospel alone invests the righteous Lawgiver with the *power to save*, because it reveals redemption through the blood of Jesus, and forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. The evil of sin was too deep, and the demands of justice too absolute, to be reached by any other remedy than that great sacrifice of which all other sacrifices were the emblem, and the cross of Calvary the reality. Hope is but mockery that rests not on that great sufferer.

It is the gospel also that exerts a *transforming influence upon those who are thus saved*. They are not naturally better than other men; but are made meet for the heavenly inheritance by gospel truth. Of itself, the gospel has no more power over their minds than over the minds of those who perish. God gives it power, not by acting upon the truths of the gospel, but by acting upon their own minds, and making them willing to receive and love them. His word is represented as "the sword of the Spirit;" it remains useless in its scabbard, or powerless to save when ever so skilfully wielded by other hands. It is only when the omnipotent Spirit of God takes it and pierces the resisting and adamant heart that its "enmity is slain thereby." The gospel then effects in men a great work, begun it may be in a day of small things, but progressive and perfected in re-

sults which are to "the praise of the glory of his grace who hath made them accepted in the Beloved."

*How does it affect them?* To this we answer: While those who perish do not believe the glorious truths of the gospel, those "who are saved" *believe* them. The days of skepticism and unbelief are gone by, and they "believe the testimony which God has given concerning his Son." While "to those who perish" these truths appear unimportant and uninteresting; to "those who are saved" they are of the highest interest and consequence. They are brought near to their minds as great and everlasting realities. They can no longer look away from them, nor help realizing that they have an interest in them deep as eternity. That great Being, who is able to govern and control every mind in the universe, holds their eyes waking and their minds thoughtful upon those shining truths which have weight and importance enough to make angels wonder and devils tremble. *God himself* comes near to them, unfolding his infinite greatness and goodness; bringing home to their consciences the purity, spirituality, obligations, and sanctions of his holy law; showing them the plague of their own hearts, and their fearful criminality and ill-desert; setting before them the solemnities of the judgment and the retributions of an unalterable eter-

nity ; while, at the same time, he tells them of pardon and peace through atoning blood, and points them to *Him* who is "an hiding-place from the storm," and a covert from the coming wrath. And, while showing them these things, this "power of God" leads them to *understand and feel them*. They are truths which, though often heard and often thought of, now appear in a new light, and they perceive the meaning of them as they never did before. The clouds which once enveloped their minds pass away ; perplexities vanish, and they no longer resist the light and truth of the glorious gospel. They have a discernment of them which is pleasant to themselves, and it is the dawn "of the light of the knowledge of God's glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ." The gospel, which is the power of God, attracts their hearts to him as the supreme good ; turns their wills to his as the supreme Governor ; prostrates their souls at the footstool of sovereign grace ; abuses their pride and self-righteousness, and leads them to look to Christ, and trust in Christ alone ; and pacifies their consciences by a sense of pardoning mercy. They are reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; and as condemned, humbled, self-abased rebels have received "a pardon written in his atoning blood." The gospel is no longer *foolishness* to them. No ; no. The *gospel* ! the *gospel* ! There is nothing like

the *gospel* to them now. "Christ and his cross are all their theme." They have no desire for mercy out of Christ, nor for any other name under heaven whereby they may be saved. Freely, joyfully, do they cast the burden of their guilt and fears on him, and find rest to their souls. They look to him, and trust in him for every want, and in all their spiritual progress, more and yet more, realize his fullness. The precious gospel stimulates them in duty, and strengthens and comforts them in trials; its glorious truths and motives, and its rich promises, all so delightfully savoring of the love of Christ, cheer and refresh them. It girds them for their conflicts, by furnishing them with the whole armor of God; so that in the great battle with the world without them, and the sin that dwelleth in them, "they endure hardness," and at last obtain the victory over every foe. They are preserved from apostasy, because "he that began a good work in them carries it on to the day of Jesus Christ." Satan is bruised under their feet; death, "the last enemy," is destroyed; the grave is vanquished; "mortality is swallowed up of life," and they have "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heaven." And this is the character of good men as well as bad, proved by their treatment of the "glorious gospel of the blessed God."

How great, then, is *the responsibility which is*

*thrown upon those who preach the gospel.* We who preach may never lose sight of the fact that to some who hear us "we are a savor of life unto life," and to others "a savor of death unto death." This it is which makes the preacher's work so solemn a business. God has committed this trust to us, and holds us responsible to him as the Judge of the living and the dead. And "woe be unto us if we preach not the gospel," not "as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts." We are the servants of *men*, but we are so only "for Jesus' sake." In an emphatically paramount sense, we are the servants of *God*. He is our Master; his will is our law; his approbation we seek, and the laurels we crave from his all-gracious hand are the immortal beings turned unto righteousness, and saved from perdition by our instrumentality. They "are our glory and joy." If the gospel we preach is perverted; and, after all the instructions and motives we set before men, hard hearts are made harder, and blind eyes blinder; "our witness is in heaven, and our record is on high." We cannot help it if "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." Other preaching the Bible knows not; Jesus knows not; God does not allow. Other preaching would indeed charge the blessed gospel with "foolishness," with falsehood, and ruin immortal souls. Paul knew what "the

preaching of the cross" was; and while his instructions and the rest of the Bible are in the preacher's hands, let him, on penalty of drawing the divine wrath upon him, be faithless in declaring "the whole counsel of God." We do not expect otherwise than that the faithful and urgent presentation of gospel truth will often excite forbidding emotions in the bosoms of those who hear us. How will they otherwise ever be "pricked in the heart," aroused to a sense of their lost condition, and flee to Christ for safety? We are charged by God with a commission of infinite and eternal magnitude; and if we aim to crowd the conscience, our only apology is, that we may not trifle either with God or with men.

How solemn also is *the responsibility of those who HEAR the gospel!* It is not on the preacher that all the responsibility rests. If he "knows nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified;" if, as his ambassador and in his name, "he prays them to become reconciled to God;" if he delivers to them the message of heavenly truth and grace; if he faithfully admonishes them of the coming wrath, and does what in him lies to guide, assist, and cheer them in the way to immortal life and glory; there is a weight of responsibility resting upon *them* which eternity alone can measure. Their character and destiny will be decided by the fact that "the preaching of the



cross is foolishness" to them, or the "power of God." It need only be known how you treat "the preaching of the cross," and how you continue to treat it, and the momentous question is decided for eternity. God has important purposes to answer in giving you the gospel, because he intends to call you to an account for it. You must meet that account; and the only way of meeting it uncondemned is to go to his throne with a "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience" with the blood of his Son. He will be at peace with you, and you will be at peace with yourselves in no other way. Joy and peace in believing are joy and peace in believing *in him*. You can have no enjoyment in God unless you rejoice in the gospel of his Son. God will not be reconciled to you, unless you are first reconciled to his Son. The great and glorious truths, and the great and glorious way of salvation he reveals, will not change. Its author will not change. The change must be in *you*, else must you be among those "who perish." We entreat you to look at this way of salvation with right views and affections; and if you refuse to do so, you are without excuse. There is no pretext for indifference, hostility, or unbelief toward the gospel. Whatever that pretext or excuse may be, it can give your own consciences no relief. There is nothing in the gospel itself to excuse you; there

is nothing in God to excuse you ; there is nothing in your circumstances to excuse you ; there is nothing within you or without you that you can plead at the last tribunal, as a solid and good reason for turning a deaf ear to the "preaching of the cross." If you stand there condemned, it will be to "the sorer punishment" of which those are worthy who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and put him to an open shame. Beloved reader, are you not afraid of an angry God ? Are you not afraid of the hell that is prepared for gospel despisers ? No longer, I pray you, harden your heart against the love of God as expressed in the cross of Christ—the greatest Saviour, the greatest love, the gladdest tidings ever announced by angels, or heard by men.

## CHAPTER III.

### *Agèd Simreu.*

**B**EAUTIFUL as it is in childhood, in youth, and in riper years, true religion is unspeakably beautiful in old age. Its light never shines so pure, so calmly, and in such unclouded luster as when it has swept the full circuit of the heavens, and is going down under a cloudless sky. An enlightened understanding, a rectified conscience, and a sanctified heart never appear to greater advantage, nor do greater honors to redeeming grace, than when the conflict with the world, the flesh, and the Devil is almost over, and the struggles are fewer and yet onward. Even though the outward man decay, the spiritual man, so long familiar with great truths, ennobling objects, and intercourse with things not seen, has so long been accustomed to the influence of lofty views and heavenly motives, that it seems cast in another mold, and moves in a higher than the ordinary sphere of Christian thought.

Something like this was the character of the VENERABLE SIMEON, whose highest encomium is written in the simple narrative of the evangelist. The object of the present chapter, therefore, is to speak of the *character of aged Christians as illustrated by his*; to advert to the *spiritual manifestations they often enjoy, as exemplified by him*; and to the *effects of these manifestations* upon their minds as disclosed in his happy experience.

Let us, in the first place, speak of *the character of aged Christians as illustrated by his*.

“There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was *Simeon*, and the same was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” He was a believing Jew in an unbelieving age; a just man, in an age when injustice and wrong were triumphant; a devout man, in an age of irreligion, pretension, and hypocrisy; waiting for the consolation of Israel in an age when the visible Israel was looking to an arm of flesh, and the true Israel had no comforter. And the Holy Ghost was upon him, when that heavenly Dove scarcely found a place for the soles of her feet in a land almost universally deluged with wickedness.

He was a *just* man. The Bible does not overlook the influence of true religion upon the daily intercourse of man with man. It gives that pretended piety a very low place, which is not in-

dorsed by truth, by uprightness, by honesty in its dealings, and strong integrity. He who has made himself poor by his vices, or rich by fraud and dishonesty, lacks the essential elements of godliness. There are circumstances in which the Christian is placed, and there are sanctioned usages, and severe pressure, which, if they move him not from his uprightness, are as searching tests of his piety as the gibbet or the stake. We honor the man, be he old or young, who, instead of exclusively cultivating those graces of the spirit which subdue the obduracy and give elevation and sweetness to his character, cultivates, with unsleeping care, those moral virtues which give symmetry, attractiveness and influence to Christian character. There is no greater moral deformity than the Christian name blotted and spoiled by those inconsistencies in moral conduct which would be a reproach to the men of the world. Simeon was "a just man;" he steadily regulated his intercourse with the world by the law of God. He was a man of pure and blameless life, distinguished for his rectitude, and without reproach in his conduct toward his fellow-men. There were doubtless other men in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, but they were not known and honored as he was known and honored. He was "Simeon the just;" not less venerable for his integrity than his years.

He was also a *devout* man. He was devout in his piety, as well as upright in his deportment; just to God as well as man; fearing God, loving him, honoring his law, and having a scrupulous regard to his will. The natural sensibilities and affections of men in old age become torpid and obtuse; but it is otherwise with their religious affections. There is a less infusion of animal excitement, less of the fervor of sympathy; but there is more simplicity and purity. An old man's prayers in his closet and in his family may be less verbose, and have less enlargement, than he enjoyed at early periods of his religious experience; his memory may fail him, and his thoughts may not possess that rigid connection and coherence which constitute no small part of the beauty of prayer; yet the whole atmosphere which envelops him, and the spirit which he breathes, is more heavenly. He has more implicit confidence in God; sweeter views and sweeter trust in the *divine faithfulness*; a stronger footing at the throne of the heavenly grace, and greater intimacy with the Father of mercies. He perceives more of the reality and substance of the things not seen and eternal. He has more of the spirit of "a stranger and pilgrim on the earth," having here "no continuing city," but "seeking a better country, that is an heavenly." His heart, his thoughts, his affections are more in heaven than

on the earth. Heaven is his home. Many a burden and incumbrance which have retarded his progress he has already dropped by the way. He is "posted up" and ready to depart. He stands with his loins girt about him, waiting for the message that shall bid him "come away."

From the short narrative given of aged Simeon, we should conclude that this was the character of his piety. He was one of the few scattered stars sprinkled over the moral horizon in one of the darkest nights of Jewish history. The God of Abraham had bestowed special culture on the character of this holy man, and he himself had bestowed special culture on his own spiritual graces. We are told that "he was led by the Spirit to the temple." The temple is the place for old Christians as well as young Christians, and it is the Spirit of God who leads them there. He prized God's word and ordinances, and was the tried friend of the sanctuary. It is written of such men, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. Those that he planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

There was still another trait in the character of

this venerable man which is deeply interesting to aged Christians. "*He waited for the consolation of Israel.*" The "Consolation of Israel" was the promised Messiah himself. This holy man was waiting and looking for him, who was so early predicted as the seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head. Israel was cast down, and he sympathized with her depression. He had lost his interest in the world, but he had not lost his interest in the welfare of Zion. No good man ever loses this interest. Other interests naturally become of diminished importance in his estimation; his relations toward them, and his responsibilities, have been gradually withdrawn. Those with whom he has been wont to coöperate in promoting them have no longer a place on the earth, but sleep with the generations that are forgotten. The lights of earth wane, and its splendor is vanished. Another king has arisen "who knows not Joseph;" they are the descendants of his former companions with whom he is now surrounded, and who rule the destinies of the world. He feels alone, and as though he had little to care for, and less to do, amid those busy scenes in which peradventure he once bore no unimportant part. Yet are there scenes and objects, and a cause, in which he still feels a deep and tender interest; to which his cold heart warms up, and to every want and call of which it responds with throbbing so-



licitude. "If I forget thee, *O Jerusalem*, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember *thee*, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

"For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend;  
To her my toils and cares be given  
Till toils and cares shall end!"

It is one of the great principles of the divine procedure with men, and one of the more beautiful laws of his government, that those active emotions that are the most pure and self-sacrificing, and that go out of self in order to concentrate themselves in nobler objects, should be the least subject to decay, the most permanent, and the most gratified to the last. Old age does not weaken them; nor are they disappointed when the years draw nigh in which men have no pleasure. Even when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the daughters of music are brought low, and the almond-tree flourishes, and the grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails; love to Christ and his church, solicitude for his and her honor, the advancement and triumphs of truth and righteousness in the earth, and the salvation and ingathering of lost men into his kingdom, are as vivid, as vigor-

ous, as hopeful and as confident as in the days of youth. That aged saint can not be unhappy nor useless, so long as he lives to pray for Zion. Those precious words, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, stir up thyself and come and save us; turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved," never find a more emphatic or delightful utterance than from lips withered by a wintry old age. An old man who is a man of prayer because the interests of Zion lie near his heart; an old man, waiting in the temple for the consolation of Israel, with all his thoughts and desires absorbed in her desolations and her hopes; an old man, exclaiming in the bitterness of his soul, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people;" and then, dashing his tears away, uttering the shout, "When the Lord shall build up Zion he shall appear in *his glory*; this shall be known for the generations to come, and the people that shall be created *shall praise the Lord*;" is one whose devout affections honor the God of heaven, make the hearts of his people glad, and breathe their blessings upon a lost world.

Such was Simeon. He waited for the "consolation of Israel" in prayer and faith. He had more just conceptions of the Saviour's character

and work, than the mass even of the believing Jews, and was looking not for a mere temporal deliverer, but for the great Deliverer from sin and death. The Holy Ghost was upon him, and was his teacher. He was a spiritual man, and one with whom the God of Israel had intercourse. He was a remarkable instance of the "faith and patience of the saints" in a day of great and almost universal degeneracy, and he did not lose his reward.

With this view of the character of aged Christians, as exemplified by him, we proceed to consider THE SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS THEY ENJOY, AS ILLUSTRATED BY HIS HAPPY EXPERIENCE.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." There is a peace and joy which his Spirit imparts which belong to none but his own people. He will show them how great things he has provided for them that love him. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them," saith the Saviour, "he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and WILL MANIFEST myself to him."

The modern doctrine of *spiritual manifestations* we have neither time nor patience to explode. Its advocates are foolish and ignorant, if not wicked and vainly puffed up in their own fleshly minds. Spiritual manifestations that are

true and genuine consist in *those strong and realizing views of God's revealed truth that are made to the mind by the immediate power of the Holy Spirit*. They are views of *God's truth* ; they are views already revealed in the Holy Scriptures. All others are fancies and dreams. They are new views of old truths ; they are strong views of truths which never before made any deep impression. They are near views of truths which hitherto appeared far distant. They are realizing views of truths which have been the theme of cold speculation, or not seriously contemplated at all. And they are joyous and transporting views of truths and realities which have so often been contemplated with indifference, or lukewarm emotions, or a doubting and joyless faith. These are spiritual manifestations and imparted by the great Spiritual Teacher.

There is no department of religious experience where even good men, and most certainly those who are bad, are more exposed to delusion than this. The true use of human reason in matters of religion consists in determining the sources of religious knowledge on which we may depend, and in drawing from those sources the truths they contain. Yet reason is dark, and not only needs the illumination of revealed truth, but the illumination of the Divine Spirit, in order to present that truth in its beauty and loveliness. There is

an intellectual acquaintance with it, where there is no corresponding emotion, and no answerable frame of heart. Those manifestations of the precious truths and glorious realities revealed in the Bible, with which the disciples of Christ are often favored, are disclosures which enter the heart through the understanding, and of which the Spirit of God is the author. They produce a heartfelt sense of their excellence, a satisfied state of mind, and that happy preparation for heaven which consists in withdrawing the affections from things on the earth and setting them on things that are above. This is not the privilege of any one class of Christians, although it is ordinarily the privilege of those whom God is about to call to peculiar conflicts or peculiar and important services for his name. It is often the happy preparative for the final conflict, and like the clustered grapes of Eschol, an earnest of the fruits that grow in the heavenly land. And for this reason, and to strengthen and comfort them as they are going into the dark valley, it is the privilege of aged Christians.

This was the privilege of Simeon. God had already intimated to him, that, advanced in years as he was, his life should be prolonged until the advent of the promised Messiah. Others there were who "received these promises, having seen them afar off;" who hoped for them and died in

that hope ; who believed them and went down to the grave in peace. But his was a higher privilege. The evening of his days was cheered by a view of the infant Saviour himself, when Joseph and Mary first brought him to the temple. It was a joyous sight to this aged saint, and the crown of all his earthly hopes, when he thus "saw the Lord's Christ," and took the child up in his arms. He was led by the Spirit into the temple, and, instead of indulging his curiosity and admiration at what he beheld, the great truth that was impressed upon his mind was, that he *saw the salvation of God*. For four thousand years that salvation had been predicted, and now it had come. It was no creature of a false religion ; no dream of the imagination ; no theory of pagan philosophy ; it was a reality. The old man held the promised Saviour in his arms. It was no "hope deferred" that "maketh the heart sick ;" it was earth's brightest hope realized. Scribe and priest were ignorant of it ; the disputers and princes of this world did not know what it was. But the whole weight of that amazing truth was revealed to his mind, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." In beholding the Saviour he beheld the salvation he brought. It was wondrous light which the Spirit

of God shed in that dark age upon the mind of this holy man, disclosing those views of the nature, extent and effects of the gospel which were scarcely better understood even by those who lived during the apostolic age.

His views were not bounded by the limits of Judea or Palestine; they were not limited to the Jews scattered throughout the pagan nations. He beheld him who came "to seek and save that which was lost;" who was "the light of the world," and from whose offered mercy none were excluded who were "sinners." Jewish prejudice and bigotry, long after his day, shut out the Gentile world; but this heaven-taught man understood the gospel better. "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou has prepared before the face of *all people*, a light to enlighten *the Gentiles*, and the glory of thy people Israel." He was *man's* Saviour, because the Saviour of *sinners*. They were enlightened and definite views of this salvation which the revealing Spirit imparted. Simeon saw a suffering Saviour, and beheld, not obscurely, the garden and the cross. In one short parenthesis he utters the whole truth in relation to the Saviour's propitiatory sacrifice. "This child," says he, "is for a sign that shall be spoken against." He foresaw his bloody death, and its cruel authors. He shall be "despised and rejected of men;" they shall hate him, and he

shall be the object of their scorn. Then, turning to his unsuspecting and joyful mother, he says, "Yea, a *sword* shall pierce through thine own soul also." She should yet see her Son nailed to the tree, the fury of man enraged against him, and heaven's justice smiting him who is "the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts," because he stood in the sinner's place. It was a mournful scene when she stood by the cross; and, though more than thirty years of suffering obedience and obedient suffering were to pass away before she would witness the sad spectacle, she herself would be found among those "daughters of Jerusalem who followed him weeping to the place of skulls.

It deserves to be remarked also that this aged man of God had a clear view of the effects of this salvation in eliciting and forming the characters of men, and deciding their eternal state. He was no Universalist; nor was it the universal redemption of our race that was revealed to him. Even in that hour of joy and ecstasy, the searching truth was not withheld from him, "Behold, this child is set for the *fall* and *rising* again of many in Israel." All men will not profit by this salvation. Men are to be saved by Christ only, "through *faith* in his blood." Here his salvation stops. It has no designs of mercy beyond this; beyond this it has no power to save. It does every thing to bestow eternal life upon those who



repent and believe the gospel, but does nothing to bestow it upon those who remain in incorrigible impenitence and unbelief. Simeon foresaw that some would believe, and others disbelieve it—that some would love, and others hate and reject it; and that thus it would draw out and form the characters of men, and that by it “the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed.” Men show what is in their hearts by their treatment of the gospel of the Son of God; and while to some he is the corner-stone and rock of salvation, to others he is a stone of stumbling and rock of offense. There would be pride that it would humble, and passion that it would subdue, and wickedness that it would transform, and souls that it would save. And there would be hard hearts that it makes harder, and blind eyes blinder, and immortal beings that it plunges into a deeper perdition than Sodom’s, because they reject to the last, and to the last despise this great salvation. The character of nations and men is decided by this gospel. As they fall in with it, or fall out with it, they are saved or lost, and become the favored heirs of glory, or the doomed tenants of the pit.

Nor may the thought be omitted that this aged man saw *this salvation as his own*. He had long sought it, long prayed and waited for it, long expected it; and now, in the calm and bright even-

ing of his days, his request was given him and it was found and enjoyed. HE TOOK THE CHILD JESUS UP IN HIS ARMS, and pressed him to his bosom. The Spirit of God gave him a lodgment there, as his *own Saviour*. He had a divine warrant for receiving him for his own soul, in all his grace and fullness. Next to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, Simeon is the first recorded instance in the New Testament of that appropriating and assured faith in the Incarnate Saviour which all the people of God are warranted in exercising. He "had found the Messias of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write;" and he held him fast, as Israel's consolation and his own, the fountain of his hopes, the anchor of his immortality, "all his salvation and all his desire." Such and so precious were the enlarged and joyous communications made to this aged believer in Jesus. And not essentially different from these are those spiritual manifestations which aged believers often enjoy in every period of the world.

Our last topic therefore to be illustrated is, the happy effects of these divine communications, *in their triumphs as exemplified by his*.

The soul of man has capacities for high enjoyment. Even in old age, when the senses almost cease to be inlets of pleasure, and mere animal enjoyment is numbered among the joys that are

past, there is a thinking and immortal spirit which is the seat of so many gracious and vivid affections that it is not unfrequently glowing with joy. The perceptions of aged Simeon, as he met the infant Saviour in the temple, seemed to have been absorbed and lost sight of in heavenly thoughts, cut loose from earth and soaring on unearthly wings. The bond which unites the material with the immaterial is the most intimate known to earth ; but it is not so intimate but the soul may be rapt to the third heavens even amid all the debility and decrepitude of age. The brightest views of many a Christian mind have been found to exist in the most fragile frame, and its most spiritual thoughts, like beams of light from the setting sun, dart upward the most vividly from the evening sky. The soul is then comparatively free ; thought takes its widest range, explores the largest fields, and makes its sublimest discoveries. It becomes familiar with things that are congenial to its renewed and spiritual nature ; finds employment for its matured faculties, and that gratification of its best and purest desires which constitutes its joy. From what is revealed to us concerning the character of Simeon, there is no reason to conclude that he was a visionary enthusiast. Yet the effect upon his own mind of what he had seen in the temple, was peculiar. Other men did not recognize in Mary's child what

he so distinctly saw ; nor were their thoughts so filled with heavenly light ; nor could they rejoice, as he rejoiced. He was filled with peace and joy. His state of mind presents a beautiful exemplification of that intimate access which the Holy Ghost has to the soul when it produces within it its most sacred and joyous emotions. He had pursued his earthly pilgrimage through a long and dark night, and guided only by the lights of hope ; but now the Sun burst forth in all his brightness. His heart was not only filled with joy, but his lips with praise. When he took the Saviour up in his arms, *he blessed God*. It was God's work, and he saw it wondrously accomplished. The God of heaven never appeared to him so worthy of praise as at that moment. He could not suppress his bursting praise, nor refrain from reiterating the angelic song, "Glory to God in the highest" that there is "peace on earth and good will to men." It was a grateful and happy hour ; and, though among the last he enjoyed on earth, it conducted him to mountain views of the plain below, and Pisgah glimpses of the promised land. The views he had of the babe of Bethlehem not only reconciled him to the thought of leaving the world, but made him desirous rather to depart and enter upon his heavenly rest. As an old man, he regarded the time of his departure as near at hand ; and though death was still the king of terrors, and

though he still reluctantly from the "pains and groans and dying strife," and though his farewell to earth, and all its sweet charities was scarcely less tender and affecting because he was advanced in years; yet such were his views that the only remaining request he had to offer was, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!" He had earnestly desired and prayed that he might live to see the Consolation of Israel; and now that his eyes had seen him, he was satisfied; there was nothing to detain him beyond that happy hour. He had seen the accomplishment of the divine promises; his work was done, and why should he wait any longer? He had weathered the storm, and was now sheltered under the Rock of ages. He had beheld the Saviour in the early days of his infant tranquillity; and why should he wait to be the witness of those dark and tumultuous scenes which were to be so soon disclosed, and of which he had already given intimation to his anxious mother? The storm was even then gathering, and he would fain be landed where not a breath of the tempest could reach him. He foresaw that this child of Mary would be a fugitive from his cradle, hated by the Jews, and nailed to the cross; and it was time that he should die. Better things were in reserve for him than that he should be the witness of the future course of that "man of sorrows." No; he chose rather to

die at the altar, and with the Saviour in his arms; and wait to greet him on his return to the glory he had with his Father before the world was, when his work on earth should be finished. "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word!"

This is a beautiful view of the last days of an aged believer, and such are the effects of those divine manifestations which he is often permitted to enjoy. We should be happy to remain in this world as long as God sees fit to retain us; and we should cheerfully await and welcome the hour when he calls us away. There is something unspeakably pleasant in the tranquil and joyous death of those whose privilege it has been to fulfill life's full career of toil and duty. Earth is no place of rest for them then. It is kind in God to allow them to "depart in peace." He only is able wisely to decide the place, the manner of our departure. Nor will he do it until our work is done. Our anxiety should be to know, not when we shall *die*, but how we shall *live*. Simeon did not live in vain up to a good old age, were it but for this record which is left us of his just and devout character, and the joyous anticipations with which he beheld the Lord's Christ.

It is a great blessing to be permitted to live to old age. It is one of the threatenings to a class of wicked men, that "they shall not live out half

their days ;” and it is one of the promises to the righteous, “ With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.” There are old men who are wicked, but they are comparatively few ; the mass of aged persons are those of whom it may be said, “ The hoary head is a crown of glory when found in the way of righteousness.” An old man, who is hardened in sin, presents a most pitiable spectacle ; it is not probable that his irreligious character will ever be altered. “ Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ?” The man who, for three-score years and ten, has enjoyed the instructions of a Christian land, and passed through the varied scenes of a disciplinary providence, not only without any spiritual benefit, but merely to augment his blindness and obduracy, may well tremble. I do not say he should despair of the divine mercy, because God’s ways are above our ways, and his thoughts and mercies above ours as far as the heavens are above the earth. I say he should *tremble*. He is an enemy of God’s truth, a murmurer against his providence, and a neglecter of the great salvation. He grieves and resists the Holy Spirit, while all the ingenuity and intellectual vigor that are left him are employed in casting about for defenses against the assaults of conscience, and the urgency of long-neglected and still lingering mercy. Wickedness in such a man

appears in its own intrinsic turpitude. Not only has it become matured by time, but it can no longer put on specious forms nor deck itself in false colors. It shows its true deformity and ugliness; the native stock stands bleak and bare. No flowers of youth adorn it, nor fruits of age; nor is it the less thorny and rugged for all the suns and storms that have beat upon it. There are no bland and heavenly graces to soften the asperity of age, or alleviate its sorrows, or throw their luster on his declining path. He is not happy himself, nor does he make others happy. His usefulness is gone; his cheerfulness forsakes him; nor does he look back upon the past, nor survey the present, nor anticipate the future, but with melancholy and sad emotions. I would not live to be an old man to verify the sentence, "God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalps of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses." You may not hope to die peacefully, my aged friends, without a trusting confidence in Simeon's Saviour. O seek this; take hold of this Saviour, and you may die with joy; and you may say, with him, Mine eyes have seen thy salvation; now let thy servant depart in peace!



## CHAPTER IV.

### Mary, the Sister of Lazarus.

CHRISTIAN character is sometimes disclosed by a single act. We inspect it, and intuitively become acquainted with the heart where it originated. There is so much of nature in it that we cannot question its truth and sincerity; so much of grace that we confess to its heavenly origin; and so much of beauty that we admire the picture.

It is a beautiful and instructive picture which we propose to present, of *female piety*, expressed by a single scene in the village of Bethany, at the house of Simon the Canaanite, and in which *Mary*, the sister of Lazarus, is one of the principal personages. As the guests were seated at the table, "there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious; and she break the box and poured it on the head of Jesus." Other evangelists add that "she stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to

wash his feet with tears and to wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." Of its kind, the incidents in this scene are scarcely exceeded in simplicity, beauty and interest by any passage in history, sacred or profane. Long after the deeds of the great and renowned men of this world are forgotten will this conduct of Mary be treasured up in the memory of millions. It is treasured up in ours, and we speak of it, both as a memorial of *her*, and of her *Redeemer's grace*. We select this incident in the life of Mary as a pleasant and agreeable, rather than a powerful illustration of the actings of true holiness in the renewed heart. It is distinguished by the following characteristics :

It was *affectionate* piety

There was no want of *emotion* on Mary's part in that affecting interview. She was the creature of emotion ; nor did she suppress emotions that were so wisely, so divinely directed. The heart is every thing in character ; in true religion it is all that *God* looks upon. If we would see her character as it was, we must look beyond the external drapery that adorns it, and contemplate her as living, woman-like, in her affections, in affections that had found their proper object ; and not in affections that had found their proper object only,

but in affections that were gratified. One had gained them who is worthy of them; who is "fairer than the sons of men;" who is "the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely." Her warm heart was fixed on him whom angels love, and before whom they bow, ascribing "blessing, and honor, and dominion to him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever." He is one whom the Eternal Father loves, and whom he "hath anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." It was he who so loved this lost world that he stooped to the humiliation of the manger and the agonies of the garden and the cross, that he might rescue the guilty from the fires that are never quenched, and from everlasting despair. He was a dweller among men, and they "beheld his glory as the image of the invisible God, and as the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth." Mary had seen this wonderful personage, and had become familiarly acquainted with this exalted and condescending Son of God. He had been her guest. From the noise of Jerusalem, and the toil of teaching in the temple, he had often found a tranquil retreat in Bethany, at the house of Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus. She knew his worthiness who lived to compassionate the miserable, and whose miracles of love and mercy had wiped so many tears away, and had filled Palestine with light and joy. He

had now, perhaps for the first time since he was wont to visit Bethany, passed her door and gone to be the guest of the rich Pharisee. It was no grief of heart to her that he should be thus honored; yet she sought him, and urged her way to Simon's house and into the banqueting hall, until she found him whom, more than the dearest earthly friends her soul loved. There she stood and broke her box of ointment, and poured it on his head and feet.

What is this but *affectionate* piety? what but the sweetest, purest love, shedding its fragrance on the head that was so soon to be crowned with thorns and the feet that were to be so soon perforated with the torturing spikes? There was more in this single act than appeared to the eye of heartless indifference. Men wondered at it; misjudged it, and even cruelly rebuked it; but the Saviour saw and felt its true and precious import. It could not be mistaken. He was on his way to Jerusalem, and her loving heart anticipated his loneliness and his sorrows. She saw him about to hang between two thieves, and his lifeless body taken down and laid in the sepulcher of Joseph. "She hath come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying!" Her object was to testify her affectionate regard to her divine Lord.

There is no test of character like such affection-

ate piety ; no rule and measure by which it may be so safely judged. When the Saviour restored fallen Peter to his favor, the obvious and yet the strongest test of his sincerity was the thrice-repeated question, "Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest thou me ?*" There is a fearful chasm in the heart that has no love to Christ. No knowledge, no gifts, no outward service, no costly ointment can come in the place of love. Without a heart of love to Christ, we are not only destitute of all that is necessary to prepare us for heaven, but of all that is necessary to serve him on the earth. There is no love to the gospel where there is no love to Christ. There is no love of duty where there is no love to Christ. There is no tranquillity in trials, no peace of conscience, no joy in the Holy Ghost, no life of faith and godliness where there is no love to Christ. There is nothing that gives such beauty to human conduct as that it is done in honor of Christ ; or such beauty to the character of man or woman, as that it is radiant with love to Christ. How many false appearances are there in the world and in the church, if the true character of men is to be decided by their hearts ! We read of the "simplicity of the gospel" and the "simplicity that is in Christ." Mary knew what it was, and exemplified it by her affectionate piety. O how little is the heart thought of in religion ! "Except ye

be converted and become as *little children*, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." We hope there is some affectionate piety even where it is covered up and stifled by rites and forms. But we have more fears than hopes for an ostentatious religion. Men glory in splendid temples, gilded altars, ravishing music, gorgeous vestments, costly images, and incense, and holy water; but how little do they think of the heart, and glory in the cross of Christ! Every thing loses its beauty in comparison with a heart of love like Mary's.

Mary's piety was also *humble* piety. She makes no confession of her sins. She utters not a word; yet her whole demeanor, every attitude, and motion, and act, tells the story of her conscious guilt. The peculiar charm of the scene is not so much the box of ointment which she poured upon the Saviour's head and feet, as the sense of unworthiness and ill desert with which she approached her beloved Master. The publican, who went up to the temple to pray, could only stand afar off and say, God be merciful to me a sinner! Mary was speechless. It was a festal day, and the scene and place were festive and joyous; but her own heart was far from being attuned to festivity and joy. She broke her box of ointment; but there was another box that was broken, the perfume of which was still more costly and precious. "She came

behind him weeping." She was a sinner, and could not so much as lift up her eyes to the Holy One of Israel. There was no vain-glorying in her deportment; she felt rather that, in view of her own sinfulness, she could do little else than mourn. She was humbled in the Saviour's presence, and as he reclined at the table, she washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. The deep fountains of her penitence were unsealed; her *heart* was broken, and the fragrance of its grief, more precious than the perfume of the ointment, filled the house. It was an humble office when she thus washed and wiped the Saviour's feet; but it was a delightful office to her humble and adoring mind. No words that she could have uttered could have been so expressive as this silent expression of her humility. How far from her lowly and self-abasing mind are the professions of that inflated, noisy, boasting piety, which indicates nothing more strongly than the pride of a self-righteous and self-complacent heart! "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." That retired, modest, unpresuming conduct of Mary is a standing rebuke to the fashionable, splendid, pompous religion which lives only to be seen of men. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Where the Spirit of God influences the heart, he always produces an humble religion ; its love, and faith, and submission, and even its *joy* are humble. Christianity is the religion of those who are fallen by their iniquity, and redeemed by Christ ; of those who are condemned by law and justice, and saved by grace ; of those who have destroyed themselves, but whose help is in God. And how can it be otherwise than humble ? Just in the measure in which the self and the world retain their power in the soul, it is puffed up with a proud and stormy religion ; while just in the measure in which it is taught of God, and led by his Spirit, is it awed by his majesty and holiness, and lies abased at his footstool.

Mary's conduct was also expressive of *grateful* piety.

She had found mercy, and was constrained to some fitting expression of gratitude to her all-gracious Lord. She well knew that nothing she could perform or give ; no service and no sacrifice on her part, could bear any proportion to what he had done for *her*. Yet the best she had she gave to Christ. Had it been ten-fold more, or more precious, she could not have withheld it. There was an ardor, an enthusiasm in her deportment that disclosed the favor of her gratitude. The best she had was but a meagre expression of the emotions of her grateful heart. It might have



flattered her vanity to have made other uses of this vase of costly perfume; but her grateful heart was not gratified without pouring it upon the head and feet of Jesus. That Saviour, whom angels worship, *had thought of her*. That Saviour who made the world, and governs them by his power, *for her* had been brought down to the manger and the cross. He had looked after her when she was wandering in the paths of the destroyer. He had called her by his Spirit, and brought her into his fold. He had cheered her with his forgiving love, and given her the privilege of being one of his followers. We know not when she was called into his family, nor how long she had enjoyed the favor of his fellowship. It could not have been long; it was as yet the love of her espousals, and the bright morning of her hopes was cloudless and unobscured. Her state of mind was not unlike that of many a young convert, who, on first being brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, feels that he can never forget the grace of his deliverance, nor cease to show forth the praises of his Deliverer. It was not every guest in the house of Simon who thought of Christ, and felt toward him as she thought and felt. His distinguished host honored him; but he was a stranger to the heart of this grateful woman. Jesus turned to her, and said unto Simon, "Seest thou this woman? I

entered into thy house ; thou gavest me no water for my feet ; but she hath washed my feet with her *tears*, and wiped them with the *hair of her head*. Thou gavest no kiss ; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are *many*, are forgiven ; for she loved much." Is it not a welcome lesson, that those should love much to whom much is forgiven ? And are there no others to whom it is addressed beside Mary, and none rebuked by it except Simon ? What is there that we do not owe to Christ ? and what is it that he requires which we should not relinquish with the greatest cheerfulness ? Is it our heart that he asks for ; our language should be—Lord, here is my heart. Is it our persons ? We should consecrate ourselves a living sacrifice to him, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service. Are they our prayers ? We should pray without ceasing. Is it our property, our influence, our example, our sufferings, our life, our death ? All should be his. Whether we live, we should live unto the Lord ; or, whether we die, we should die unto the Lord. That whether living or dying, we may be the Lord's. This was Mary's spirit. She kept back nothing from her beloved and adored Saviour. Her grief was that she had

no more to give. She was Christ's debtor, and never could pay the debt. It was not an humbling, but a gratifying and delightful thought to her to be an everlasting debtor to Christ.

Nor may we overlook the fact, that Mary's conduct was an expression of piety that *received the approbation of her divine Lord*.

It was not appreciated by all who witnessed it. The cold world condemned it ; some, even among Christ's friends, wondered at it, and questioned the propriety of it. The hand of an unfriendly and coarse painter might have pourtrayed that scene to her disadvantage. It is not every Christian woman that would have acted thus. Infidels, and scoffers, and hasty judges, may still condemn it. But there was One who appreciated it—who knew the spiritual texture of her affectionate and grateful mind, and honored its susceptibility and tenderness. He perceived the workings of that delicate and inventive piety ; he perceived its beauty ; he estimated it very differently from the men of the world. It was an expression of her love to him. Costly as the box of ointment was, it was no such magnificent gift as might have been bestowed by the wealthy Pharisee ; yet the Saviour approved it, commended it. He says of her, "She hath done what she could." The smallest favor bestowed on him, and in affectionate sincerity, is never forgotten. "Whosoever,"

says he, "shall give a cup of cold water to drink in my name, shall not lose his reward." He treats even his most diffident and imperfect followers very differently from the manner in which they are treated by men. He comforts when others would discourage. Hopes that are the very image of weakness and frailty, and that are shaken by every rude wind, he encourages and supports. He cheers that depressing sense of unworthiness and vileness. Many a one that weeps at his feet he sends away in peace, and clothed in smiles. Where there is but little light and love and life, he fans the flame and keeps it from expiring, and where there is little else but secret groans and sighs, he binds up the broken heart. It is not *He* who refuses light to those who walk in darkness, and who sinks the sinner to despair. He welcomes the incense that arises from the altar of a broken heart. Nothing is lost; not a deed, not an emotion, not a thought that is devoted to him. Mary's faith, and love, and humility have enriched the world; the perfume of her heavenly spirit has refreshed millions. It is the cry of the sordid avarice that exclaims, "To what purpose is this waste?" But nothing is wasted that is given to Christ. It is the glory of the universe that it was made for him. The rays of yonder sun are most beauteous, because they shine for him; the dew that besprinkles the earth is beauti-

ful in his eyes, because it accomplishes the purposes of his love. Earth, air, ocean—all are regarded with complacency by him, because they minister to his designs. And piety like Mary's, whether found in rich or poor, old or young, bond or free, is sure to receive the tokens of his approbation. It embalms his name, and its incense ascends to heaven, like Noah's offering, as a sweet-smelling savor. Christ remembers it; he records it in his book. Human historians would have passed by her conduct; Christ directed the evangelists to give it a prominent place in the narrative of human life, and to hand it down from generation to generation. Like the charity of the poor widow who cast her two mites into the treasury; like the songs of the children in the temple; like the favored Cyrenian who bore the sufferer's cross; and like Joseph of Arimathea, who laid him in his own new sepulcher, "wherever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." To the present hour it forms an integral part of the gospel history; wherever Christ is known she also is known. The humblest deed of piety shall be had in everlasting remembrance before God. O when shall the great principles of human conduct become so lofty and pure that men and women shall be satisfied with nothing short of the

divine approbation, aim at the crown of righteousness, and be happy only in anticipating the sentence, "*Well done*, good and faithful servant!"

Such was Mary. The incident we have endeavored to illustrate, is expressive of affectionate piety, humble piety, grateful piety, and piety that received significant tokens of the divine approbation. And does it not commend to our affectionate confidence the all-gracious and condescending Saviour of men? The principal Personage in this moral exhibition, after all, is Jesus himself. The striking feature throughout the whole, is his tenderness and love. His conduct toward Mary when she was rebuked by others, and his address to Simon, how instructive and tender! Most true is it that we have "a merciful and High Priest in things pertaining to God." The rich Pharisee he honored by becoming his guest, and he would fain have instilled into his mind one of the sweetest and most weighty truths of his gospel, by teaching him that the most constraining obligation to holy love is the munificence of his pardoning mercy. But his kindest look was fixed upon this humble and weeping woman. One of the Evangelists represents her as "a woman in the city who was a sinner." When the Pharisee saw her, he spake within himself, saying, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that

toucheth him ; for she is a sinner." But Jesus had no rebuke even for this sinning woman. He is the sinner's friend. The vilest have access to him ; previous character is no bar to his immeasurable mercy. Where his mercy-seat is erected there is no place for clouds and gloom. We have but to go to it with Mary's spirit, and the words which we shall listen to will be those of hope, and peace, and joy. The pardon is full and free. He is ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon him. Far as the east is from the west will he remove our transgressions from us. The troubled conscience knows his voice. These terrible apprehensions of guilt and of the coming wrath pass away at the first believing view of Christ. O whence these doubts of Christ's ability and willingness to save? Why hesitate to receive him? Why not put off these rags of beggary and shame, and put on and become adorned with the garments of his salvation, clean and white? The law entered that sin might abound ; but where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. Let great sinners then be emboldened to hope. Let the chief of sinners no longer stand at a distance from Christ, and plead their unworthiness.

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

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It is no humility, no modesty, no honor to him to set your sins above his illimitable mercy.

Mary's conduct should also encourage lost sinners to go to Christ *without asking others*. She never would have gone to him if she had been deterred by the opinions, or wishes of the world. It does not appear that she was one of the invited guests at the house of Simon. She was treated by him rather as an intruder. She had to incur frowns and not a little censoriousness and biting sarcasm. It was intimated to her that she might have been less officious and more retiring. She was exposed to insult from her sex and character. But she could not be diverted from her purpose of seeking her divine Lord, and paying him that beautiful tribute of her affectionate and broken heart. Her impulses were too strong and tender to allow her to inquire what construction might be put upon her conduct. She sought him, she found him, and had her reward.

Alas that there should be so many who regard the reproach of the world more than the friendship of Christ, and who are influenced in their spiritual and immortal interests more by the ridicule of enemies and the wishes of ungodly friends, than by the demands of duty and the invitations of Jesus' love! Mary's language to all such faint-hearted seekers is, Seek the Saviour at every sacrifice. Though men despise you, go to him with-



out asking leave of others. Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for Christ's sake and the gospel, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this present time, and in the world to come eternal life. You may feel afraid to go to him, because you are such a sinner: when this is the reason why you ought to go. You may feel that you are not penitent and humble enough to go; but you will not become the more penitent and humble by staying away. Others may object to your going, and if you listen to them you will never go. You will find obstacles enough in the way, if you seek for them. You have but one course to pursue, and that is to go to Jesus. Ask leave of nobody, and go to Jesus. He gives you leave to come; he invites you, and this is all you want. He will welcome you, for he says he will cast out none who come to him; and what more do you ask for? It is not He who is throwing difficulties in the way of your salvation; he came into the world and died on purpose to remove them; and you have as good a right as any child of Adam to take him for your Saviour. This glorious truth you ought to believe; and not believing it will render you speechless at the Last Day. We do not know what it is that keeps you away from Christ unless it be this rude and cruel unbelief. Why should

you wait when all things on Christ's part are ready? Tell, if you can, what is it that you are waiting for? It is not *he* that is waiting, except it be that he may be gracious. O go to that ever-gracious Saviour. Go, wash his feet with your tears, and wipe them with the hair of your head. He waits only to greet you as his friend, and say, Thy sins are forgiven thee ; go in peace.

## CHAPTER V.

### Judas.

THE subject of our present remarks is *Judas—Judas Iscariot*—a name covered with infamy. There is not much recorded in the Scriptures respecting this vile man ; nor was there need of much, after the record that is given us of one foul deed. The Evangelists seldom mention his name until the great and final scene which closed the Saviour's ministry on the earth. In many, and in most of the incidents of that ministry he is passed by in silence. From the time when he was called to be a disciple, to the time when he proposed to betray his Master to the Chief Priests no notice is taken of him, except on a single occasion. Nothing is known, so far as we have been able to ascertain, either from sacred or profane history, respecting his birth-place, early education, or lineage, but the single remark that he was "the son of Simon." There are several persons in the New Testament history who bore the

name of Simon ; but whether he was the son of Simon the Cyrenian, or Simon the sorcerer, or Simon the Canaanite, or Simon the Pharisee, or Simon the leper, or Simon the tanner of Joppa, is of little consequence to determine. What we are most concerned to know is the following particulars in regard to his character and end.

He was distinguished by his *profession of the Christian faith*. In an age of the world when Christianity was to the Jew a stumbling block, and to the Greek foolishness, he openly professed the name of Jesus. The men of power and learning were the Saviour's avowed enemies ; *he* was his avowed friend. There was much in his profession ; it implied a cordial belief in the great truths of the gospel, a true and affectionate reception of Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and a solemn engagement on his own part to walk worthy of this high vocation. At every cost, he numbered himself with those who were the attached friends of Jesus Christ, to follow his Divine Leader wherever he led the way, through evil report and good report, through toil and trial and unto death. Nor did he do this ignorantly. He was no stranger to the discussions of that disputatious age respecting the character and claims of the Son of God ; he was no stranger to the doctrines and preaching of Christ himself ; he was no stranger to his benevolent spirit and

blameless life ; he was no stranger to his miracles, nor to the predictions which he uttered ; nor was he a stranger to the various and sophistical objections of the Scribes and Pharisees, nor to the hostility of the Jewish rulers against his adorable Master. Yet in full view of all these, he professed himself a Christian. The vows of God were upon him. He was recognized as a professed Christian by the world ; he was honored as such by the infant and struggling church of God, and as such he bore the obloquy of her enemies. Nor, until his final renunciation of his faith, and his melancholy retirement from Christ's family, do we any where read that his external conduct was inconsistent with his profession.

He was not only a professed Christian, but a *minister of the gospel*. He was one of the twelve men who belonged to Christ's immediate family, were admitted to the habits of daily intimacy with the Saviour, enjoyed his counsels and instructions, wrought miracles in his name and by his authority, and delivered the messages of his grace to dying men. It seems strange to us that such a man should ever have lifted his voice in prayer, and that those lips which betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss, ever dared to proclaim the gospel of truth. Why his treacherous tongue did not fail him in the unhallowed office, and his hardy spirit refuse to support him, is a problem

not easily solved, unless it be by the weakness of his conscience and the obduracy of his heart. The sacred narratives give us no reason to believe that he did not perform all the duties of the apostleship. For three years he sustained this sacred fellowship with the apostolic family, and was the eye and ear witness of those wonders which both he and his fellow apostles testified to the world. If not an anomalous, it was a most embarrassing condition, and one that required consummate art and firmness to maintain.

He was outwardly conformed to the habits and manners of the hallowed circle to which he had been admitted, and to the requirements of their divine Master. Secret immorality and vice were not his snare ; they would have been inconsistent with his besetting sin and ruling passion. He could wear a formal countenance, and be sanctimonious in his speech. He could listen with feigned interest to the teachings and warnings of the Son of Man, and wonder at his miracles. And thus he lived with a company of men who were chosen to be the attendants of the divine Saviour ; who were his faithful friends and followers ; who rested upon his bosom, and found their sweetest consolation in his love. Thus he lived, a wretch and a liar amid the tranquil and the true ; a traitor amid a circle of God's ministers ; every where thrown in contact with all that was repugnant to

his nature, every where summoned to duties which he abhorred, and surrounded by privileges which he despised.

This leads us to remark he was *a gross deceiver and hypocrite*. All this while, he was at heart an infidel and an enemy of Christ. There is something to the last degree fearful, something inexplicable and almost mysterious in this feature of his character. How could he maintain it under the omniscient eye of his divine Master? He was not merely a deceiver, but of the worst kind. He must have had the firm conviction in his own soul that he was the child of another Spirit, the servant of another Master, the subject of another power. The best construction which we can put upon his conduct is, that from the miraculous power of Christ, he was disposed to believe he would eventually attain great worldly power, and that he himself would partake largely in the honors and profits of the kingdom he was about to establish. The worst is that he originally entered into Christ's family for the secret purpose of watching the conduct of this remarkable Personage, and plotting his overthrow, and that to this effect there was a secret understanding between him and the Jewish rulers. The most charitable is, that he was fascinated by the power of working miracles, and that, as a lover of money and eager for distinction, he threw himself upon this

novel enterprise, believing that the chances were in his favor, and with heart vile enough for anything that should secure his advancement, and at the same time gratify his hatred of the truth. His character in this respect is almost mysterious. Madness was in his heart. Where was his reason? where his conscience? How could he, in the constant presence of him whose eye ever beamed with tenderness and love, and whose tongue ever dropped with such counsels of wisdom, work up his mind to such cool deception and treachery? Notwithstanding the more charitable supposition to which we have referred, we have little doubt that he entered upon the Apostleship with fiend-like propensities and purposes. "Have I not chosen you twelve," says the Saviour, "and one of you is a devil?" Miserable man! where were his *fears*, when these lips of love kindled to such a rebuke as this? Why was he not thenceforward ever on the alert in looking for the mountains to fall on him, and the hills to cover him? What wonder was it that he wished to abjure a fellowship in which he felt that he was an outcast, and go where his soul might cast off its burden, and to an atmosphere where he might breathe freely? Wickedness is impetuous; the most unsleeping vigilance and the severest discipline can not always control it. When the sea is tempestuous, and the wind is high, and the lee shore is covered



with clouds, the most cautious often make shipwreck of their religious professions. Unexpected and crowding incidents were presenting themselves, and the deceiver himself was to become the most fatally deceived. Hypocrite as he was, it was not possible for him always to wear the mask.

He became at last *a traitor to his Master by delivering him into the hands of his murderers.* The chief ingredient in his character was a sordid and besotted love of money, combined with that dogged duplicity which is far removed from intelligence and shrewdness. He was entrusted with the office in the Apostleship which required a man of inviolable integrity ; but which, at the same time was adapted to his sordid and worldly character. He was the treasurer and steward of that little community, and all the receipts and disbursements of the household passed through his hands. The first distinct notice of him, as well as the first outbreak of his avaricious spirit was when Jesus was sitting at meat with his disciples, and Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, brings a pound of very precious and expensive ointment, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Judas looks on impatiently ; he can scarcely refrain from interrupting this affecting office, this tribute of pious love. When it is completed, and the house

is filled with the odor of the ointment, he can no longer contain himself. "*Why*," he exclaims, "was not this ointment sold and given to the poor?" And then, for the first time, and in a single sentence, the Scriptures give us a complete and striking description of his character. "This he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the bag, and bore that which was therein." The time had come for his character to appear. He was just fitted for any deed of atrocity, when time, and opportunity, and strong inducements assailed his ruling passion. The severity with which his Master publicly rebuked him for his treatment of Mary so stung his heart that he probably saw that his true character was known. There was no time for delay. Once suspected, he had no defenses. As he probably joined the disciples under the impression that Christ's kingdom was a temporal kingdom, no sooner was he undeceived and found that it promised him nothing that was congenial to his character, nothing to gratify his sordid avarice, than he resolved to forsake a community where he had always been a stranger, and make the best bargain he could with the world. His decision is formed, and to do a deed which should for ever make his peace with this world, and with the prince of this world. After this rebuke of the Saviour, he immediately goes out—from

whom? from the family of Christ. And where? to his chamber? to his former associates in the world? To wander in solitude? No; he goes to the chief priests and elders of the Jews, whose minds were infuriate with rage against his Master, and who were watching the first safe opportunity to put him to death. They express no surprise at his sudden appearance among them. Perhaps they had known him before, and were prepared to welcome him. And what his errand before the assembled bench of chief priests and elders? Listen, and you will hear it. "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests and said unto them, *what will ye give me*, and I will deliver him unto you?" Here was the traitor's heart. What will ye *give*? What will ye *give*? not for Barabbas the murderer—not for some fugitive from justice, who has carried fire and sword to their peaceful dwellings, but for the spotless, harmless One; for him who "went about doing good;" for the "Son of Man who came to seek and to save that which is lost." "And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him."

He has made his bargain with the priests. But a severe trial still awaits him. The hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to keep the last Passover with his disciples, and to bid them fare-

well in view of his approaching crucifixion. He felt that he had no place, nor business, nor interest in that scene, none at least but such as the devil had. He knew that the Saviour's eye would read all the black secrets of his heart, and probably feared that he might curse and smite him with some terrible judgment, or perhaps require his soul of him, as he did the rich man's in the parable, to which he had listened from the Saviour's lips. He had not taken this into account when he made his bargain with the world. He was also now a rich man—rich with the price of blood that was priceless. And what would the wages of his treachery profit him, if his career of subtilty and avarice should now close? Already the pit seems to yawn beneath his feet, and he recoils. But it is no time for hesitation now; it is too late; he has received the price of blood. He must summon all his courage, and all his bold and unrelenting hypocrisy, and enter that upper chamber where Jesus is sitting with his disciples, and take his seat at the table. And there he has the shameless effrontery to present himself. No bolt from heaven strikes him, no ministering angel turns the intruder from this banquet of peace. There is not a frown upon the Saviour's brow, nor a word of anger upon his lips. "As they sat and did eat, Jesus said, verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me." They were agitating

words. It was scarcely credible that the agent in this fearful tragedy would be one who was nurtured in the bosom of his own family. Nor is it wonderful that, one after another, and with introverted thoughts they should exclaim, *Lord, is it I?* At length, and last, the lion lifts up his traitorous head, and with bold and impudent tongue asks, MASTER, IS IT I? Human impiety and daring could go no further. In the scene that followed, a bolder, mightier spirit is needed; and "after he had received the sop, *Satan* entered into him." He left the table; for, after this, how could he remain? He seems to have left it abruptly and in displeasure. "Jesus said unto him, that thou doest, do *quickly*;" he "went immediately out and it was *night*."

It was a dark night. The Garden of Gethsemane was his ordinary resort, and Judas had ascertained that he would resort to it on that very evening after this last Passover. It was the place where the Son of Man so wrestled with his Father, and in such agony, that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Thither Judas repairs at the head of armed soldiers, and he "gives them a sign, saying, *Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; HOLD HIM FAST!*" He was eager lest his victim should escape him. It was not enough that he betrays his Master; he stimulates the mob to

seize and hold him. Well might he utter these words. He had often seen him pass unharmed from amid his enemies. *His thirty pieces of silver were in danger.* He had seen him walk upon the waves; and well might say, *hold him fast!* He had seen evil spirits flee at his rebuke. He had heard him speak of legions of angels—therefore *hold him fast*; make sure of him! And that cry is reëchoed in the world of darkness. The Old Serpent, swelling with venom, remembers his bruised head, and cries, Hold him fast! The King of Terrors brandishes his deadly spear, and cries, Hold him fast! The monster, sin, gorged with the blood of millions, cries, Hold him fast!

It is with sadness that we behold the traitor approach his Master in the garden. We know the ransom must be paid; yet are they mournful words which the sufferer utters, when at the close of his agony he says, “Behold he is at hand that doth betray me.” And forthwith “Judas came to Jesus, and said, *Hail Master, and kissed him!*” The deed was done. That treacherous *kiss* delivered the Son of Man to be crucified. Judas was a *traitor*. He stands forth upon a height of bold iniquity, which no other son of Adam has ever attained; he towers aloft a stern and gloomy monument of the malignity of sin.

We may then advert to some of the recorded *aggravations of this fearful deed.* Everything

connected with it, every accessory feature, every attendant circumstance, is calculated to deepen the impression which it makes upon the mind to lend darker hues to the gloomy picture and clothe it with a double horror. The fact that Judas was the *professed friend* of Christ and a member of his sacred household rendered it not only a perfidious but most cruel deed. It had been sufficiently vile if it had been the work of an enemy. But it was not an enemy that did this, it was one who had been nourished in the Saviour's bosom. "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Nothing could be more mild and calm, but nothing more withering than these simple words, "*Friend*, wherefore art *thou* come?" Jesus well knew the purpose of his coming into the garden; he had known it long, and need not inquire what it was. But he meant that the rebuke should be felt. It was a touching scene in the Senate House of Rome, when Cæsar fell under the dagger of Brutus, and casting his eyes upon his old companion and friend, exclaimed, *Et tu Brute!* It was as though the Saviour had said, I know that the Scriptures must be fulfilled, and that the Son of Man must be delivered up; but wherefore *thou*—thou who hast followed me—thou who hast broken bread with me—wherefore art *thou* come to betray me?

Nor was it a deed performed *in ignorance of Christ's character*. The princes of this world did not know whom they were crucifying ; " for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Saul of Tarsus persecuted him " ignorantly and in unbelief," and therefore he " obtained mercy." Judas had no such palliation of his wickedness, " and therefore had the greater sin." He had watched the character and conduct of Christ with the eye of a basilisk, but, like Pilate, could find no fault in this man. He knew his unblotted excellence ; every remembrance of the past was proof of it ; and all those scenes of hallowed intercourse and miracles of mercy rose up to his view in clear and solemn convictions of his villany.

Nor is the circumstance to be overlooked that this atrocious deed was *not one performed under sudden and strong temptations and impulse, but with great deliberation and coolness*. It was pre-arranged and deliberate. He had time to think of it, to repent of it, to change his course. He had once and again been premonished and forewarned of the fact itself, that Christ would be betrayed—that he should be betrayed by one of his apostles—that he himself would be traitor, and he had heard the woe that had gone out against the man by whom the Son of Man would be betrayed. Yet he persisted ; nor could anything deter



him from the deed, or induce the least relenting. The *thought* of such a treason was enough to fill him with horrors; to cherish it, to allow it to ripen into a deliberate and determined purpose, stamps it with consummate wickedness. Still, from the cool thought, and the deliberate and determined purpose, to the act, there was as yet a mighty chasm. And when he made the adventurous plunge, he showed that he was but a devil.

The *time and the place*, too, where the deed was executed, stamped him with unutterable baseness. They were such that one would have supposed that the Great Deceiver himself would scarcely have the effrontery or the heart to intrude upon them. It was just after he had been sitting with Christ and his disciples at the feast of the passover, and probably at the first communion table. And it was in *that garden*—the garden consecrated by an angel's presence, and by the prayers, and tears, and agony, of his betrayed Master.

The *manner*, too;—was there nothing in the manner in which he betrays his Master that shows his baseness? In the execution of his perfidious design it might have been expected that he would endeavor to keep in the back ground, and, as far as was consistent with his purpose, to avoid the presence of him whom he came to betray. One would think that he would stand at a distance,

and, pointing to Jesus, say, "Behold the man!" or that he would hide himself amid the crowd, and, as they advanced, whisper to one and another, "That is he!" But no; what he does he will do boldly, with an unblushing cheek and a brow of brass. He is no halting, half-way servant of his new master. As though he were marching to some glorious achievement, he approaches Jesus and greets him with respect and reverence. If he had paused here, and at once given him over to the people, the scene would have wanted one of its most revolting features. It was not enough for him to say, "Hail Master;" he *kissed* him. There is something about this act which is difficult for us to describe. Had he *smitten* that cheek instead of having *kissed* it, we should have felt less horror at the deed. When a parent silently testifies his love to his child, it is with a kiss that he testifies it. It is a vivid expression of brotherly and sisterly affection. It speaks more than words, when friend parts from friend, and when they meet. It is a symbol of peace, a pledge of friendship, a sweet and silent testimonial of love, and was never meant to be an exponent of hatred, treachery, and guilt. When Esau was reconciled to his brother Jacob he fell upon his neck and kissed him. When Joseph was reconciled to his brethren he kissed them. When Aaron met Moses in the Mount of

Gud he kissed him. But when Judas said, "Hail Master! and *kissed* him," what was this token, then? A scorpion's sting; a wound from the old serpent. It was that *kiss* that damned the traitor. We cannot speak of it. Language cannot tell how deeply-dyed those lips were in the serpent's venom.

And last of all, the *motive* consummated the guilt. What was it? It was avarice. It was the love of gold. It was all comprised in that one question, *What will ye give me?* For the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver, he delivers the Lord of life, the sinner's friend, into the hands of men to be stretched on the accursed tree! There was disappointment; there was previous detection of his character; there was deep mortification and hatred; but, more than all, there was the love of gold. We do not learn that there was any other tempter, except that "the devil entered into him." No human being solicited him to this work of blood; he went unsolicited. The Jewish rulers did not seek him; *he sought them*. The proposal was his own: "What will ye give me?" It was gold for blood that was priceless, and that bought a world. O this was the phrenzy of wickedness, and the paroxysm of its phrenzy. His wild heart caught at the golden cup, and his parched lips drank its wickedness to the dregs. It was a deed born in the world of darkness. Ex-

ulting fiends looked on in triumph. It was hell's jubilee when the treacherous salutation was heard, "Hail, Master!"

If we would see what depths of evil were found in that vile traitor's soul, we must *mark his end*. The fearful deed was done. The arrow had left the string, and the hand of the archer could no longer guide it. Jesus is condemned, and the soldiers had already taken him to Jerusalem. Judas did not follow them; nor could he consent ever again to meet the eye of his betrayed Lord. He had abandoned the family of Christ, and surrendered all his hopes. He had received his reward from the *Jewish priests*, and was left with the stipulated recompense in his hands. Was he compensated? Does he derive the slightest advantage from his thirty pieces of silver? Does he traffic with them? Does he hoard them? Does he put them out to usury? Does he make merry with his friends, and enjoy the good things of this world? Unhappy Judas! From the moment he received them, they seemed utterly to have lost their value. Something has touched them as with a magic wand, and they have become dross; they weigh with a mountain weight upon his breast. No sooner has his part of the contract been performed, than he begins to feel that he has been the loser. Remorse follows close upon the deed, leaving him not an hour's truce, not an

moment's respite. The black infamy of his deed starts up against him. He cannot banish it; at all hours, at every moment it startles him with new terrors, torments him with keen pangs, and fills his soul with the bitterness of death. Look where he will, a night encompasses him deeper than that of the grave. He tries to throw off the burden, by returning his ill-gotten gains; but his anguish is not lessened. That hand had received the sop; that tongue had cried, Hail, Master; those lips had betrayed him with a kiss. O they were burning thoughts that streamed through his mind like flames of fire. He would have given worlds if the earth would but have opened and swallowed him up. His work was not yet accomplished. It was a short and rude work; nor, black as it was, equals not the blackness of the deed he had just performed. "When he saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood!" He *repented himself*, just as the murderer repents when he comes in sight of the gallows; not with ingenuous grief for the crime, but with horror at its hideousness and its consequences. It was the bitterness of regret, "the sorrow of the world which worketh death." It was such repentance as the devils have, and the violated law executes, when the never-dying

worm begins its gnawings. It was all-absorbing, and relaxed even his grasp of gold. "He threw down the silver in the temple," and rushed upon his doom. The universe frowned upon him, the *phrenzy* of remorse seized him, and a scorpion conscience drove him to despair. He could not endure the conflict. With all his obduracy, it embittered his existence, and rendered it a burden. Maddened, overwhelmed with a sense of unutterable woe, and goaded by despair, he became the avenger of his own crime, cast his burden from him, and "departed, and went and hanged himself." The deed was done alone. He had not even the sympathies of the vile. He slept alone, and in the field of blood. What a memorable spot was that "Potter's field!" And what a lasting memorial of that unequalled sin; and what a tale does it tell! The sin of Judas will be the last ever erased from the records of human wickedness. The "Potter's field" proclaims it to all generations. We know not who buried him, nor what the stone upon his ignominious sepulcher. Nor do we care to linger at the traitor's grave. If there were an inscription there, there was none so fitting as the words, "IT HAD BEEN GOOD FOR THAT MAN IF HE HAD NEVER BEEN BORN!"

Nor was this the end of that miserable man. We add, in the sixth place, *Judas was finally, and*

*for ever lost.* It is a sad hour when men die, whose life and death furnish no evidence of their reconciliation to God. Their bed of death is a most painful scene, and we retire from the house of mourning and from the grave that covers them, in sadness. Yet, notwithstanding all our fears, it belongs not to us to lift the vail which hides their destiny. We dare not say, they are lost; and only know, that if they died in impenitence and unbelief, they are beyond the reach of mercy. How few are they of whom and for whom surviving friends may not have some faint and lingering hope, that they have found mercy at the eleventh hour? It is not so with Judas. We have no faint and lingering hope for the betrayer of his Lord. He is an inhabitant of that world where "the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." God has told us that "he went to *his own place*." It is his own place, because he was fitted for it; because he procured it by his wickedness; because he deserved it; because it was prepared for him by eternal justice; and because he had no other, and no other world could receive him. Earth disowned him, and he could not remain upon it; he was an out-cast, and his only place was *hell*. God has told us also, that "it had been good for him, if he had never been born." There would be no truth in this declaration, if Judas were a pardoned

sinner, and an inheritor of the kingdom of God ; nor if, in the revolution of ages, he were ever *hereafter* to become a reformed and pardoned man, and an heir of God and heaven. Jesus Christ also speaks of him as “the son of perdition”—begotten of Perdition and claimed by her as her own and inalienable offspring—of all the children of wrath, preëminently *her son*. God has no mercy that will ever reach Judas. Christ has no atoning blood that will ever cover that son of perdition from the burning wrath of punitive justice. What an overthrow was this, from being once an apostle, to become the son of perdition ! What an account has this wretched man rendered of the deeds done in the body ; and what a summing up of his dreadful life ! We do not ask what preëminence this prodigy of wickedness endures in suffering ; it is measured by his guilt. Burn as deep and as long as they will, never will those everlasting fires have purified and burnt out that stain of guilt.



## CHAPTER VI.

### Moral Lessons from the Character of Judas.

SUCH was the character and doom of Judas. They are too memorable in themselves ever to be forgotten ; while the moral lessons impressed by them, are scarcely less memorable and deserve our serious consideration.

At the head of these, we place the great doctrinal truth, that *there is perfect consistency between the eternal purposes of God and the freedom and accountableness of men.* We are well aware that this is a disputed point. It is often said that if God has predetermined the moral conduct of men, it is impossible for them to be free and accountable agents. Yet the conduct of Judas in betraying the Son of Man, it must be confessed, was predetermined. It was predicted long before he was born ; it was just as truly a part of the divine arrangement that Jesus Christ should be betrayed by Judas, as that he should come into the world to seek and save that which is lost.

God foreordained the great redemption, and he foreordained the treachery of Judas as the means of accomplishing that great and glorious end. If this fact is disputed, we need not now advert to any other part of it, than the declaration of Peter to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, "Him, being delivered by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge* of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain," and the declaration of Christ himself, "One of you SHALL BETRAY ME."

If this fact is conceded, the next point to be established is, that Judas did wrong and wickedly in betraying his Lord. No man doubts this. It is the unanimous conviction of the universe that the act was most base and vile. Judas himself never doubted it. The agonizing confession is extorted from his own lips, "*I have sinned*, in that I have betrayed innocent blood!" This confession of Judas places his wickedness, so far as it relates to any alteration of it from the predetermining purpose of God, in a very strong light, because he was one of those to whom this purpose was actually *revealed*, and who might be supposed to have made it one of the motives of his conduct. Yet, though the Saviour informed him that such was God's purpose, Judas does not take refuge in this divine decree as in any degree palliating his wickedness. Whether he acted wickedly, or

not, depends upon what *he himself did*, and not in any measure upon what God had previously determined. This question carries us back to first principles; it might lead to inquire into the essential and immutable difference between right and wrong, and to show wherein that difference consists. If sin is a transgression of God's law; if it is that to which the transgressor is impelled by a bad spirit and bad motives; if it is that which an enlightened conscience condemns and reprobates; the conduct of Judas was sinful notwithstanding the divine purpose. The divine purpose does not constitute one of the moral properties of human conduct; whether it is right or wrong depends exclusively upon its nature, and upon what it is in itself. Such is the teaching of the Bible; such is the intuitive decision of conscience; such are the deductions of human reason; and such are conclusions of common sense all over the world. The sin of Judas was an entirely distinct thing from the acts of the divine mind which purposed it. The purpose was God's; it was wise; it was benevolent, and redounds now, and will ever redound to the glory of his holy name. The sin was the act of Judas; it was unwise, selfish, and malignant, and though God overrules it to good ends, this was no part of Judas' design; he "did not mean so, neither in his heart did he think so." The sin was just

as distinct, and as different from the purpose as was the heart of the betrayer from the heart of the betrayed.

If these two facts be conceded, that the conduct of Judas was predetermined, and also wicked; the only remaining inquiry is, *was he free to betray his Lord, or not to betray him?* It might be sufficient here to say that he must have been free, if, as we have just seen, he acted wickedly. If he betrayed Christ from *compulsion* there was no wickedness in the deed; it was in opposition to his own state of mind, in opposition to his desires, and wishes, and will, and efforts; and therefore he was guiltless. But if it was a wicked act, it must have been done from choice, and in view of those corrupt motives by which it is perfectly obvious that he was influenced and controlled. This is moral freedom; there is no other; nor can we conceive of any higher liberty than to act as we chose to act in view of the motives that are set before us. There is no evidence in the world that Judas did not act freely and from choice throughout his whole course to the final catastrophe. Who compelled him to become one of Christ's family? Who compelled him to make his bargain with the priests? Who compelled him to receive the silver? Who compelled him to seek a convenient opportunity to betray his Master? Who compelled him to go

into the garden, and there execute his purpose? In what one of these acts was his moral freedom impaired by the purpose of God? The truth is worthy of being remembered, therefore, that the decrees of God are perfectly consistent with human liberty. That man is blinded by the deceitfulness of sin, and by philosophy, falsely so called, who makes the divine supremacy an excuse for sin, and endeavors to reason away his own freedom and wickedness by an appeal to the divine decrees.

In the next place the character of Judas is a solemn admonition against *the sin and danger of false pretensions in religion*. We do not now speak of those *mistakes* in the judgment men form of their own character, which, however needless, and unjustifiable, and deplorable, are honestly made. There are unwarrantable and unscriptural hopes, where there is no intentional self-deception; much less a design to play the hypocrite, practice deception upon others, and feign to be what one knows he is not. The fact that there was *one* base dissembler among the twelve apostles was designed to teach the world that men may assume the cloak of piety without being pious; that they may be the professed followers of Christ, without being his real followers; and that no visible union with the church of God, no Baptism, no place at the Communion Table, and no outward rites and privileges whatever can

cover the sin of a dishonest heart. This is dissembling, not merely with men, but with God. It is deception, it is fraud, it is falsehood, in their most aggravated forms. The motive with Judas was a base and sinister motive ; nor can such palpable dishonesty ever be practised, without some base and sinister motive at heart.

And it is a motive which will be very apt to disclose itself. It is very difficult for one who is at heart a deceiver, always to conceal his hypocrisy. The probability is that, in some unguarded hour, he will overreach himself, and hang out his true colors. The hearts of men are in God's hands ; and if they deal not openly and honestly with *him*, sooner or later he will expose their pretensions to the light of the sun. Most surely their sin will find them out. The searcher of hearts tries his professed people as silver is tried. " His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor ; and he will gather the wheat into his garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Judas made high professions, but was among the most infamous men. He held a high office in the church of God, yet after having preached to others was himself a cast-away. Profession is not principle, neither will " a holy calling save an unholy man." Let us therefore be honest with ourselves, honest with our fellow men, and honest with God.

The character of Judas, also, sets in affecting light *the sin of avarice*. This, combined with the love of distinction, was the ruin of this wretched man. He did not attempt to reconcile the claims of God and Mammon. Mammon was his God. He sold his Master and lost his soul. His name stands out before the world as the mark of God's reprobation upon the idolatrous love of money.

The scriptures tell us that "money answereth all things." It has great power for good. It is God's gift to men to be enjoyed in subordination to his will, and to be devoted to good ends. Where it is thus devoted and enjoyed it answers its great object. Men may seek to attain it if they do not love it more than God. It is this supreme love of money which the same scriptures tell us "is the root of all evil." It is this which so blinds the mind, hardens the conscience, and shuts up the heart in cold, calculating, impenetrable selfishness. Look abroad into the world and see what it has done. When to those flagrant violations of law to which it gives rise, and which are prolific in wrong and wretchedness, we add the many *inventions* in wickedness which are originated by this passion, of which human laws take no cognizance, who does not see that it has great powers for evil? The falsehood—the breaches of trust—the acts of trespass and embezzlement—the games of chance—the false swearing—

the corrupt counsel—the artful knavery—the cajoling and overreaching of the unsuspecting and unwary, which are of such ordinary occurrence in a mercantile community, are the legitimate offspring of this inordinate love of money. Let a man consent to be governed by this passion, and there is scarcely any act of wickedness he is not prepared to perpetrate when opportunity offers and he can save himself harmless. The great question which determines the habitual, if not the uniform, conduct of the great mass of men, is not what is right, what will God and conscience approve; but *will it be for my interest?* It is Judas' question, What shall I gain by it? *what will ye give?* This question goes round the world. Rectitude, truth, and honor, are put up for sale to the highest bidder. From the slave-market on the land, and the freebooter on the ocean—from the theatre and the gaming-table—from the licentious press and the grog-shop—from the office of the swindler and from corrupt tribunals of justice—from the Corporation Hall, the altar of the hypocrite, and the pulpit of the sycophant preacher—the sign is hung out, CONSCIENCES SOLD HERE; WHAT WILL YE GIVE? And how often is the question answered by the loss of the soul?

When Achan coveted the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment, he and his were burnt



with fire. When Gehazi lied to the prophet for the sake of a few talents of silver and a few changes of raiment, the leprosy of Naaman cleaved to him to the day of his death. When Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost, in order to gratify their avarice, they fell down dead at the apostle's feet. The object of such visitations was to check the evil of a false and covetous spirit. They bid men take heed lest they sacrifice their immortal hopes to money. All are exposed to this deadly sin. There are great intricacies in the avaricious heart and deep subtilty in its self-deception. Avarice is a sin which makes insidious advances, and grows with age. It may sometimes find a residence in the bosoms of the young, and if any of my young friends are conscious of being exposed to it, they may well fear that they will be its victims when they are old. The strong fortress of this sin is the heart of old men. My respected friends in the more advanced periods of life will allow me to counsel them against its encroachments. Well may we all set a watch upon our own hearts, and daily give utterance to the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation!" I pray God that none of you, either old or young, may ever know the strength of this absorbing passion. It is the master passion of the world. It leaves the thoughts, the hopes, the affections, the joys, and all the sweet charities of the soul

less free, and in more absolute bondage than any governing principle of human conduct. No man is more miserable than the slave of avarice. It is a terrible state of mind when the conscience is torn and distracted between the conflicting claims of interest and duty, truth and gold, rectitude and gain. And when conscience is vanquished, and human life and all its enjoyments are measured by its gains, it is still more terrible. The "gold that perisheth" is not worth such sacrifices. It makes life joyless when thus pursued; it makes death hard; it seals its victim as the son of perdition. What a moment is that when such a man bids farewell to his treasures. I tremble for those who have lived, and still live, to amass wealth for selfish ends. There is no gold in the world where they are going. It is the world of penury and want, of craving desire and no supply. To an avaricious man it is the mad-house of poverty and despair.

The character and doom of Judas likewise furnish us a *mournful and strong exemplification of the malignity and ruinous tendencies of sin*. "As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death." The natural tendency of sin is to move only in one direction, and that is downward. Judas little thought of being driven to hang himself, when he first united with the family of Christ. The more and longer

a man sins the faster and the stronger does he sin. When his history is published at the Last Day, it will be seen that he has never taken a step backward. He does not stop in his progress, until he leaps the precipice, and is plunged in despair. Let him alone, and he is lost. His habits of sinning become fixed, his moral sensibilities hardened, and he is fitted only for perdition. He cuts himself off from all the sources of happiness, because he is the enemy of God. The state of his own mind indicates that he is going to a miserable existence, as fast as time can carry him. Let him dwell in whatever part of the universe he may, he has the elements of misery in his own bosom. "He eats the fruit of his own way, and is filled with his own devices."

No one disturbed Judas after he had betrayed his divine Lord. He had received his thirty pieces of silver ; and why was he not happy ? Why did he so soon leap the gulf and go to his own place, but that conscience lashed him beyond endurance ? And now that he is there who does not see that he was the author of his own destruction ? When he made the confession to the Jewish rulers, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood ;" their stinging reply was, "What is that to us ? see thou to that !" There was an utter want of sympathy in his state which, it may be, has not disappeared even now

that he has been so long the prisoner of justice. We may feel sympathy with others; but if there is a being in hell for whom the human mind has no sympathy, that being is Judas Iscariot. Sympathy still turns her back upon his moans, with the words, "What is that to us; see thou to that!" Even those who seek to limit God's justice, and take the sinner's part against his judge, must utter the same sentence of condemnation over him, or share and abet his treason. And what a fearful aggravation is it to the woes of every lost sinner that he "has procured this unto himself?" How deep that gloom and how insupportable that despair, when, as he gives utterance to his bitter lamentations, eternal mercy turns away her face and says, "See thou to that!"

Let all learn then from the character of Judas, *to look to that Saviour whom he betrayed, as the only salvation for perishing men.* Wonderful truth! that treacherous kiss is a link in the golden chain which binds lost sinners to the throne of God. It was a fearful deed. Heaven mourned over it. Angels wept. Ignorant as yet of God's inscrutable decrees, they unstrung their harps and hung them by the celestial waters. It was a wound from the Old Serpent on the heel of him who, God be praised, was destined to trample upon its head. In contemplating it *we* ourselves are led for the moment to lose sight of the im-

ment of the gain and glory that result from it—*gain* to a bankrupt and ruined world, ruined beyond other hope—*glory* to the Prince of Peace, the Everlasting God. As we see the coming tempest we would fain avert the blow from that sacred head, and with uplifted hands cry, Father of mercy, spare! It is not improbable that such was the prayer of his disciples in that sad hour. Such, we know, was his own request in the garden where Judas betrayed him. And it was in *refusing* to listen to it that God revealed himself the God of mercy. It was in that “he spared *not* his own Son, but gave him up for us all,” that he gave the brightest manifestation of his love and mercy the universe ever beheld. It was God’s determinate counsel that his Son should be taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain; but it was for a great and gracious purpose. The sin which opened to the *perpetrator* the gates of despair was designed by infinite wisdom and mercy to open to men the gates of life. That holy and harmless One whom he betrayed to his murderers, was thus betrayed that he might become the Saviour of sinners. No sin was ever committed greater than his; and no blessing ever enjoyed is so great as that which God has brought out of it. That blessing is yours. It is a crucified Saviour; an offered Saviour. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal

life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here is your refuge from the doom of Judas. If we have uttered some terrific truths it is that they may drive you to the arms of infinite love and mercy, as the man-slayer under the law was driven to the city of refuge, as the alarmed child is driven to its mother's bosom. Millions have found hope and heaven through him whom Judas betrayed; without him, not one. If you come not to him that you might have life, you will have no refuge from death, and no cloak for your sin. The awful fate of Judas shows the evil of rejecting the gospel as no apostle ever preached it. No voice more loudly calls upon you to flee from the wrath to come, or more emphatically announces the way of life.

## CHAPTER VII.

### Peter.

FOR his personal character, for the office he held in the church of God, for the great variety of incidents in his history, and for his extensive usefulness, the *Apostle Peter* is perhaps the most fitting contrast to the *apostate Judas*.

He was a native of Bethsaida, one of the two towns in Judea which were called by this name. It was a spot not a little distinguished in the early history of Christianity, in the vicinity of which the Saviour was often and much employed in his personal ministry, and where many of his mighty works were done. Andrew, the brother of Peter, appears to have been one of the converts during that remarkable out-pouring of the Spirit under the preaching of John, the forerunner of Christ, when there was such a pressure into the kingdom of heaven, that "it suffered violence, and the violent took it by force." He was present at that memorable scene on the banks of the Jor-

dan, and heard John, as he saw Jesus walking, exclaim, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Having himself found Christ, his desire was to lead others to him, and especially those whom he most loved. "He first findeth his own *brother Simon*, and saith unto him, we *have found the Christ*; and he brought him to Jesus." It is worthy of remark, that at this first interview, the Saviour gave to Simon the additional name of *Peter*. "And when Jesus beheld him he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called *Chephas*"—a Syriac word, signifying a *stone*—in Greek, *Petros*—in English, *Peter*.

There were some *peculiarities in his education and character*. He was not, like Paul, a learned man, nor educated in the higher classes of society. Yet was he a man of strong intellect, and superior natural qualifications. He was remarkably fitted for the work to which he was called, and for the age of the world in which he was destined to bear so important a part. He had not been nursed amid the delicacies of exalted rank, nor become effeminate by indulgence and indolence. From the habits of his life on the stormy sea of Tiberius, he was accustomed to toil, self-denial and danger, and was physically fitted for scenes before which a less hardy temperament would have withered. He possessed intellectual and moral



elements, which, under the Saviour's instruction and discipline, would make him one of the most fearless friends, and one of the boldest and most successful advocates of Christianity. They were indeed traits of character by which he was frequently ensnared ; but, without which, he would never have risen to the eminence and usefulness which he attained. He was not the most prudent man among the apostles. On the contrary, he was of quick and hasty temperament, extravagant in his feelings, and exposed to the extremes of opposite and contending passions. His perceptions, his sensibilities, were keen ; and there was a rashness and romance inwoven in his nature which rendered him the object of no small solicitude to his divine Master.

There was nothing in his *call to the apostleship*, by which he was distinguished from the other apostles. Like the rest of his countrymen, he was a bigoted Jew, and knew nothing of Jesus as the Messiah of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the Saviour of sinners. He had been introduced to him by Andrew, and under circumstances that gave interest to the interview. Jesus had taken notice of him ; he had given him another name ; and, in so doing, had indicated that he had an insight into his true character, as destined to be the *hero-apostle*. It could scarcely have been otherwise, than that Peter should have

reflected upon this strange occurrence; nor is it unreasonable to suppose, that, in addition to the declaration of John that Jesus was the Lamb of God, and the expressed conviction of his brother Andrew to the same purport, it disarmed his mind of prejudice against Christ, and prepared him to listen to claims so soon made on his services as an apostle.

It was but a few days after this, that "Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, *Simon*, called *Peter*, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" This was an intelligible vocation. Nor did Peter regard it as of dubious meaning. The *duty* which Christ here required him to perform involves the sum and substance of Christian piety. "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross and *follow* me, he can not be my disciple." Jesus had already entered upon his personal ministry; and now he called upon this intelligent and uncouth fisherman to acknowledge him as his divine Master, and to make an open avowal of his allegiance to him as the promised Messiah. The call was emphatic; it was a call to the apostleship. Peter was to become one of the first preachers of the gospel. He was to follow Christ for the purpose of learning his doctrine, acquainting himself with his

subsequent history, and becoming one of his chosen witnesses to the world. "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!*" Christ allowed him *no time to hesitate* and halt between two opinions. He must follow him forthwith. No matter what his employment, or what his associates, or engagements, or what arrangements of business were uncompleted; he must forsake all, and follow Christ.

It is a delightful view of Peter's character, that *he promptly obeyed this call to the apostolic office*. There were difficulties in the way of his so doing which may not at first view be appreciated; and there were excuses which he might have offered that are of ordinary occurrence even at the present age of the world. It was the first call, and how natural would it have been for him to have requested time for deliberation before he unalterably committed himself? He was a poor man, dependant on his toil, and was actually occupied in his secular employment; and how could he relinquish it to follow this new religious Leader? He must also become a despised and rejected man; reproach and contumely would be heaped upon him for attaching himself to the ignominious Nazarene. His new Master had not where to lay his head; his name was cast out as evil; and if Peter followed him, he must literally forsake *all*. Yet this noble fisherman, with all his characteristic

ardor and decision, and without hesitation, or delay, "straightway left his net and followed Jesus." From that hour, he became and continued his devoted follower. He followed him through evil report and good report, through obloquy and suffering, through enemies and persecution, and to the grave. When Christ uttered the words, "Follow me," there was authority and force in them that carried his conscience and his heart. Had the difficulties and sacrifices been ten-fold greater than they were, that heavy and potent command would have outweighed them all. He did not wait a second call to bind him to his adorable Master. He not only understood it, but it was a most welcome call. Whom could he follow, if not Christ? To whom could he look for guidance, and strength according to his day; and grace to help him in the time of need; and light, and a presence that could inspire and sustain him; if not to this Lamb of God, this Captain of his salvation, with whom he was now to be thus intimately associated, who would go with him wherever he went, and whose favor would be his continual joy? Trials might indeed await him; yet he had no despondency, no irresoluteness, no relenting. He knew not where he was to go, nor to what scenes and conflicts; but the incidents and results of his career he was willing to leave in his Master's hand. It was enough for the

disciple that he be with, and as his Lord. He knew he would be cared for, and could cheerfully leave it with his divine Master to decide where and what he should do and suffer, and when and where and how he should die. This was the first great expression of his true and exalted character.

There are *some minor incidents in his history also in which the great peculiarities of his character were strongly expressed.* As we read his biography, we perceive that on very many occasions he acted as no other of the apostles, and few other men would have done. When the disciples were overtaken by a storm on the lake, and in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea, and they cried out for fear, because they thought it was a spirit, Peter exclaimed, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." None of the other disciples would have done this. Peter rather sought such scenes of excitement. There is just such a class of minds in the world; there is a spirit of self-confidence and vaunting bravado about them, which glories rather in the prospect of danger than maintains its equanimity when the danger reaches them. Jesus told him to come; but the wind was boisterous, and he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, "Lord, save me!" There was presumption in this conduct, because it was a trial of his faith that was not called for in

the ordinary dispensations of Providence ; and it resulted in calling forth the rebuke, “ O thou of *little* faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?”

Look now at the same man under different circumstances. With all his popularity as a preacher, there were seasons when Christ was to the last degree unpopular. On the occasion to which we refer, so searching and pungent was his preaching, that many of those who professed to be his disciples “ went back and walked no more with him.” He had been preaching that instructive discourse which is contained in the sixth chapter of John, in which he rebukes the Jews for following him from selfish motives—in which he exhibits and urges the duty of faith in his gospel, as the first and great work which God requires—in which he frowns upon the expectations that were anticipating from him a temporal, in opposition to a spiritual, kingdom. It was the discourse in which he so clearly and forcibly asserts the doctrine of God’s electing grace, and the final perseverance of all who come to him—the doctrine of man’s inability unless drawn by the power of God—the doctrine of his own self-existence and of a future retribution—and the doctrine of the inner and spiritual life in opposition to dead and worthless forms and ceremonies. These holy and humbling truths were offensive to his nominal followers. They could not endure them. Jesus

felt that he stood alone; and when he saw so many forsaking him, he said unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Peter was the first to answer. These were no "diverse and strange doctrines" to him. He believed them, loved them, had felt the power and importance of them. There was no hesitation and no doubt in his reply. His heart was upon his lips, and he uttered those words which have been the source of so much consolation and joy in every age, and which have furnished the text for so many thousand discourses from Christ's ministers, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are *sure* that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Not unlike this was that memorable avowal, when Jesus came to the coast of Cæsarea Philippi, and asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" His disciples answered him, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." *This* inquiry was not one of special interest, and the *disciples* answered it indiscriminately. But when the great question came, to which this was but the preliminary, "But whom say *ye* that I am?" Simon Peter alone furnished the answer, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!*" Flesh and blood did not reveal this great truth to him. There is not a nobler

avowal recorded in the Scriptures, and well did the Saviour say, "On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

When the Saviour stood upon the lake, and called to the disciples at a distance, in the boat, Peter could not wait, as the other disciples did, until they rowed to land, in order to salute him; but perceiving that it was the Lord, cast himself into the sea and swam to the shore, that he might the sooner greet his beloved Master.

On the Mount of Transfiguration how perfectly in keeping with Peter's romantic spirit to say, "Lord, it is good to be here; let us build here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias!" So, when Peter and John went together to the sepulcher, while John only stooped down and looked into it, it was just like Peter to go boldly in and search it. We need not multiply examples; there is scarcely an incident in his history, previous to his denial of his Master, that does not indicate the same impetuous character.

There was one melancholy scene in the life of this apostle which we should be glad to leave behind the curtain, but which the revealing Spirit has disclosed in no soft coloring—we mean *the grievous fall of this apostle in denying his Master.*

The circumstances of this sad event are crowd-



ed into a very narrow compass of time, every one of which is fraught with that exciting interest fitted to affect deeply the mind of such a man as Peter. On the evening before the Saviour's crucifixion, and while they were seated at the table of the last passover, Jesus intimated that one of their number should betray him. Peter was all solicitude to know *who it was* ; he whispered to John to ask the Saviour which one of them could be the traitor ? After this there was a dispute among them who should be the greatest ; and, in order to rebuke this spirit, Jesus took a towel and girded himself and began to wash his disciples' feet. When he came to Peter, with the impetuosity that had always distinguished him, he indignantly exclaimed, "Lord, thou shalt *never* wash *my* feet !" And when his Master replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me ;" just like himself this disciple rushes to the opposite extreme, and exclaims, "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head !" Very soon after this Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, *Satan* hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." It was an intimation of danger, and must have awakened no small *uneasiness* in this restive disciple. Immediately after this, Jesus uttered those admonitory words, "*All* ye shall be offended because of me *this night* !" The rest of

the disciples bowed their heads in silence ; they were filled with surprise and sadness ; they knew not what was to come upon them. But Peter's rash and self-confident spirit was at once awakened, and he could not suppress the presumptive declaration, " Although *all* shall be offended, yet *will not I*." It was a bold declaration, more especially after the explicit prediction of his Master ; and Jesus replied, " Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even *this night*, before the cock crow twice, THOU shalt deny me thrice !" Peter became intensely excited ; he almost contended with his Master : " he spake the more *vehemently*, if I should *die* with thee, *I will not* in any wise deny thee !" This was the beginning of his mournful fall ; this overweening *self-confidence*, that whatever others might do, *he* would remain steadfast ; those fatal words, I WILL NOT, well nigh proved his overthrow. Our Lord made no reply to these rash declarations ; but quietly rose and went into the garden of Gethsemane. True to his word, Peter followed him, and was the witness of his agony. Yet, strange to say, while the Son of Man prayed, and wept, and agonized, Peter fell *asleep* ! It was a touching rebuke, when, as Jesus awoke him, he said, " Coudest thou not watch with me *one hour* ?" JUDAS, with his armed force had now entered the garden, and Peter, to make amends for his forgetfulness, at once drew

his sword. Jesus forbade this violence, and without resistance allowed himself to be betrayed and conducted to the palace of the high priest. And then was the prediction fulfilled: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." Save *one*, for whom it remained to prove himself still more base, "they all forsook him and fled." *Peter* remembered his boastful pledge, and "followed him afar off" into the house of Caiaphas. His heart trembled, and he feared boldly to avow himself Christ's disciple. He began to waver; and where *such* a man begins to hesitate, what human foresight can predict the issue? As he mixed with the servants in the priest's palace, in the hall in which the trial of Jesus was being held, one of the maids recognized him and made the remark, "*This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.*" Quick as his own rash thoughts, he answered, "*No : I was not with him !*" Another challenged him, and again he *denied ever being one of Christ's disciples*. A third time, a man who was a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off in the garden, said, "*Did I not see thee in the garden with him ?*" Thus embarrassed, filled with terror, and committed by the falsehoods he had already uttered, *again he denied it*. And as though he would for ever scatter all suspicion that he was ever one of the Saviour's followers, he consented to make himself vile: the early habits of the fisherman of

the lake came back upon him, and he "began to curse and to swear, saying, *I know no such man as Jesus!*" He even turned with excited passion upon his accusers, and profanely called God to witness that he had no knowledge and no part with the Saviour of men. Poor Peter! It was a melancholy event in his history. He was fallen. It was a foul blot upon his fair name; a stigma deeply imprinted, and never forgotten where the records of the New Testament are known. And immediately the cock crew.

And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. There is no arraignment, no accusation. He spoke not a word. But what a look! It was but a look—a look of pity, of remembrance, of rebuke, of unutterable tenderness. Peter answers not; but he could not endure that *look*. He rushed out of the judgment hall and wept. We hear nothing more of him until the morning of Christ's resurrection. While his divine Lord was being tried, and condemned, and crucified, and while he lay in the grave, it is not improbable that Peter was in some solitary spot in tears. Where penitence like his breaks up the depths of the heart, they are bitter waters that flow out, and flow silently and long. It was not the repentance of Judas, driving him to despair. It was the gush of an impetuous, but of an overflowing, contrite spirit. His Master's silent reproof melted,

humbled him. Jesus looked on Peter, and Peter thought of the words of Jesus, and "went out and wept *bitterly*."

It is God's prerogative to make the wrath of man praise him. He saw that Peter needed this severe discipline to fit him for his work after his risen Master should have left the world. It was a new era in his history; and from which was dated a new, and chastened, and laborious series of efforts in the life of this great apostle. His fall purified him. He came forth refined from the terrible process of his own sin. Christ's favor was restored to him. After that short and searching scrutiny and those memorable words, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou *knowest* that I love thee," he was again commissioned to feed Christ's sheep and lambs.

As a closing thought in this narrative, it is incumbent on us to say that Peter was *justly regarded as the first and chief of the apostles*. In the ardor of their controversy with Rome, Protestants have not always given to Peter the honor which belongs to him, as a man and an apostle. The Papists claim for him the preëminence in office above the other apostles; the Primacy in the Christian Church; the all-controlling and infallible Headship in the kingdom of God on the earth, and to whom all the successive Popes of Rome trace their origin and their power. They

found this doctrine upon the fact that Jesus Christ gave to him the name of Peter; upon the fact that he committed to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and upon the assertion that he was the *rock* on which he would build his church. But the claim has no such warrant from the word of God. We have already shown that Christ gave him the additional name of *Peter* as a private individual, on his first introduction to him, and *before* he was called to the apostolic office. He was Peter; he was the iron fisherman, while he was only the humble visitor of the lake; so that the mere circumstance of Christ's then giving him the *name*, has nothing to do with the office as an apostle. After he was called to the apostleship Christ gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and clothed him with this ecclesiastical authority; but in this he had no supremacy; his fellow apostles were invested with the same power. When some of them sought preëminence in his kingdom the Saviour rebuked them; when they disputed among themselves who should be the greatest, he frowned upon this ambitious spirit by condescending to wash their feet; and when they still indulged it, he told them, "One is your Master, even *Christ*, and ALL YE are brethren. Nor does the celebrated passage, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church," critically examined, give the least semblance to

his official supremacy. For the church was not built upon Peter; it existed before he was born, and was "built upon the foundations of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." It is important also here to remark, that the grammatical construction of the passage itself absolutely forbids the inference which is deduced from it by Papists. The Saviour had first inquired of his disciples, "Whom do men say that I am;" and Peter had replied, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.*" Christ then says to him, "Thou art Peter, and upon *this rock* will I build my church." We can not set this passage in its true light, without reference to the original Greek. Christ says to Simon, thou art Πέτρος; the word is in the *masculine* gender. He then proceeds to say, "and upon this very rock will I build my church;" changing the *article* and the *noun* from the masculine to the *feminine*, and thus most significantly teaching that it was not Πέτρος, Peter on which his church was built, but the πέτρα—the unchanging verity—the great confession of Peter, that *Jesus is the Son of God*. Besides, it would hardly be in keeping with the position that Peter himself is the rock on which the church is built for Christ immediately after to say to him, as he did say, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offense unto me." Peter certainly was not infallible. Nor is this the only proof

that he was quite as fallible as the rest of the apostles. Paul, much the younger man, and less experienced in the apostleship, rebuked him, and he silently submitted to the rebuke. The Church of Corinth did not allow him preëminence; for some of them said, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollas," and "I of Cephas." The early churches did not acknowledge his preëminence; for though they respected his judgment, there is no recorded instance in which it is appealed to as final. Nor did he himself ever claim preëminence; for in writing to the presbyters of Pontus, he speaks of himself simply as their "fellow presbyter."

Yet, was there a preëminence to which he was entitled. He was older than Jesus of Nazareth, and the oldest of the apostles. In intellect and natural qualifications, he was their superior. He was one of the three disciples who were most favored of their Master. Jesus lived with him in his house at Capernaum. During his whole ministry, Peter was his more constant associate than any of his disciples. He was with him at the resurrection of the daughter of Jarius. He was with him on the mount of Transfiguration, and in the Gethsemane. He was the first called to the apostleship, and the last of their number with whom the Saviour had an interview before he ascended to his Father. The other apostles deferred to his judgment; they rarely, if ever, spake



until his views were expressed ; and always looked up to him to take the lead in public assemblies, and to assume the most important posts of responsibility. He was the first to propose an accession to the apostleship on the defection of Judas. He was the first to stand forth as a preacher of the gospel on the day of Pentecost. He was the first to appear before the Sanhedrim as the vindicator of his risen Master in the miracle wrought in the temple, and there, in the presence of the men of Israel, proclaim the way of salvation. He was the first captive and prisoner of the Jewish rulers, and the first to tell them to their faces that he would obey God rather than men. He was the first to inflict the miraculous judgments of heaven upon the early deceivers, who lied to the Holy Ghost. Apostle to the circumcision as he was, he was the first to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. He was the first to open his lips at the first general synod of the apostles and presbyters and brethren at Jerusalem. He was the first who was sent by the apostles to Samaria, that, through his hands, and those of John, his associate, the converts there might receive the Holy Ghost. Until the conversion of Paul, he was the great light of the apostolic age. He was the Chrysostom, the Luther, and the Whitfield of his time, as truly as Paul was the Augustin, the Calvin, and the Edwards. In the

earliest period of the Christian church, his name occurs more frequently than that of any of the apostles, and almost always stands first. This was the supremacy of Peter, and his only supremacy. It consisted in his age and experience; in his burning zeal and his bold, vigorous, and persevering actions; in his commanding talents, and those peculiar qualifications which fitted him to be the leader of the great enterprize of which his crucified and ascended Lord was the Founder and Head.

Of the close of this remarkable man's apostleship and life, little is authentically known. Paul overshadowed him. He gradually retires, and in the possession of those humble graces, and in all the adornment of that inobtrusive, and meek, and quiet spirit which he had learned by such bitter experience, and which is expressed in those two beautiful epistles, addressed to the dispersed and persecuted people of God. They were written toward the close of his life, during a period of severe trial to the church, and under the strong conviction that days of darkness were coming upon her. They are full of great and heavy thoughts—thoughts that live and burn—precious and delightful thoughts. And they are uttered with a sweet and heavenly spirit, and an earnest desire that those to whom they were addressed should walk worthy of their high vocation, and

shine as lights in this dark world. The time and place, and manner of his death, are not facts on which early history sheds any such lights as altogether satisfy us. The evidence preponderates in favor of the conclusion that he was the victim of Nero, and was crucified; and, if tradition may be accredited, was, at his own request, crucified with his head downwards, because he thought it too great an honor to be crucified after the manner of his Master.

There are several important truths, as well as lessons of practical instruction, to be deduced from the character of this apostle.

In the first place, we cannot but perceive *the wisdom of Christ in the selection of those who were the first preachers of Christianity*. It required great judgment to select the men to whose varied and combined instrumentality this great and important enterprise should be committed. They were to go everywhere—to torrid and to frozen climes—to healthful mountains and sickly plains. They were to go among all classes and all sorts of persons—to the inhabitants of cities and to the sparse population of the interiors—to the exalted and the debased—to the learned and the ignorant—to the polished and the rude—to those arrayed in royalty, and to those clothed in rags—to the laboring-classes and to men of ease and leisure—to Jew and Gentile,

master and slave. They were to be employed in different departments of the same missionary service. Some of them were to be "sons of thunder," and some "sons of consolation;" some didactic, and some controversial, and some historians of the great facts in the life and death of their divine Master. All were to be the founders of churches, and some to leave them written instructions for their government, manners, and spiritual edification and usefulness. If they had all been high-bred and delicately nurtured men, they would not have been fitted for the toil and suffering of their great mission, nor have been able to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." If they had all been young men, or if all had been old, the enterprise would probably have broken down in its infancy. If they had all been of a bold and fiery spirit, or, on the other hand, all sweetness and love, the phalanx would not have been complete and entire. If all of them had been as suspicious and sceptical as Thomas—or as retiring as Andrew—or as denunciatory as Jude—or as mild and gentle as John—or as confident and presumptuous as Peter—who does not see that this college of apostles would have failed in the beautiful symmetry and combination of character for which it was distinguished? There were characteristic failings in them all, resulting, not so much from their moral imperfection as their

natural and constitutional temperament. Yet, under their Master's training, and subjected sometimes to his subduing, and sometimes to his inspiring influence, they formed a *corps* of missionaries such as the world has never seen, each fitted for his own sphere, and mutually supporting the whole. It is perfectly obvious that this noble body of men would not have been fitted for its vocation without the intelligence, the sprightliness, the experience of Peter. His ardor and promptness—his bold and impetuous spirit—his decision and confidence—his open-mouthed frankness and simplicity—his sanguine temperament, and the tenderness of his affections—nay, even his very rashness were necessary to make up the rare union of qualities that shine forth so illustriously in that unexampled association of men.

In the second place, the character of Peter furnishes strong, though indirect testimony, *to the truth of the facts in the Christian history*. Christianity is either a romance or a true history—a finished specimen of imposition and imposture, or a simple and unvarnished statement of facts. Every observant reader of the New Testament must be convinced that if the facts and incidents which are there narrated concerning Simon the son of Jonas are true, it is very difficult to set aside the other important facts on which the truth of the entire Christian history rests. The religi-

ous life of this apostle, from its commencement to its close, is filled with so many interesting incidents, and is so inseparably inwoven with the history of the other apostles—with the life, and death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the history of the first Christian churches—that if the narrative of the life of Peter is received as a true narrative, the entire Christian history is a true history.

Is then the life of Peter, as presented in the evangelists, true or false ; and was it got up by some artful impostor, or written by good men and true ? Our appeal is to the narrative itself, and not now to any historical argument drawn from cotemporaneous or subsequent writers. Peter holds so prominent a place in this history that an impostor would have described his character and conduct with the utmost caution and adroitness. Unless he had some great object to attain by representing him as clothed with a more than ordinary measure of human infirmity, most certainly he would have kept his imperfections out of sight. What romancer would have set the man on whom his chief dependance was placed for the dissemination of such a system as Christianity, to lying, and cursing, and swearing, as Peter did in the palace of the high priest, or to the miserable tergiversation which he practised upon the Jewish and Gentile converts, for which he was so severely

reprimanded by Paul? Yet these and other imperfections are not only narrated with perfect impartiality, but brought to light by the evangelical history itself, and but for this history would never have been known. The record of them might have been suppressed; nor was it called for except by a stringent regard to *truth*. The most detailed accounts of Peter's denial of his Master is given by the Evangelist *Mark*, who wrote that gospel under Peter's direction, and was Peter's interpreter and amanuensis.\* Would this narrative have been in existence if it were not true?

Besides, the character of Peter as exhibited in the Evangelists, is not a character which any impostor would ever have drawn. It is not described by *words*, but by *actions*, and with such perfect nature and simplicity, that it is Peter throughout. You see the man in all the peculiarities of his temper and feelings. The marks are strong and indelible, and appear in those minute circumstances which no impostor could have fabricated. There is the same ardor, the same decision, and the same defects, perpetually appearing, and disclosing his individuality. Who but *Peter* would have drawn his sword and cut off the ear of one of the high priest's servants in the Garden? Who but *Peter* would have thrown

\* Campbell on the "Gospels," and Lardner's "Credibility of the Gospel History."

himself into the sea to swim to his beloved Master, while the rest of the disciples wait till the boat reached the shore? Who but *Peter* would have exclaimed, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet;" and on being told that if Christ washed them not, he had no part in him, would have exclaimed, "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head!" Who but *Peter* would have declared, "though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee?" Who but *Peter*, when he saw Jesus walking on the sea, would have said, "Lord bid me come to thee on the water?" Such things are not fabrications; they are touches of nature; they are facts; and give the narrative the seal of truth. The narrator is not painting a fancied portrait; nor is his subject *acting a part*; it is a real personage of which he speaks, and that personage peculiar, natural, and harmonious.

This outline of Peter shows us, in the third place, the *urgent necessity of Christian watchfulness*. There is more wickedness in the human heart than we think. One of the most convincing and painful proofs of the entire and total sinfulness of men, and the strong tendency of the heart to evil, is the power of sin in good men. This is what the Apostle Paul calls "the sin that dwelleth in him," and the law in his members "warring against the law of his mind." Who would have thought that there was wickedness enough in such a man as



Peter, to incite him to deny his Master with oaths and curses? Surely "man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity." Good men, at the best, are but men. And what is man, but either a bundle of sins, or a "bundle of contradictions?" In what tones does the admonition fall upon our ear, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!" Peter was not more liable, nor more exposed to fall, than thousands; yet from the high eminence of his profession, and of his piety, he fell into the abyss of sin and shame. Who can promise himself he will not falter and stumble after this? His snare was the excitability and impetuosity of his natural temperament, and his exulting self-confidence. He was exalted by his apostleship; that exaltation increased his self-confidence; and thus made way for his fall. This was the germ of that bitter deed. Good men are always most exposed, when most confident and most excited. Nothing, so certainly as bitter experience, teaches them to avoid exciting scenes and causes of excitement. Fools rush where angels fear to tread. "A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself." Nothing, so certainly as bitter experience, teaches good men to distrust themselves. "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool." There is nothing we have so much reason to be afraid of, and to watch over with a jealous and suspicious eye, as our

*own heart.* "Thou knowest, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps!" Distrust of self and trust in God is the only refuge from evil, the best preparative for duty and trial, and the only peaceful state of mind. If we would not offend and dishonor God, we must be afraid of offending and dishonoring him; if we would not bring reproach upon his cause, grieve his people, become a stumbling-block to those that are without, and give occasion to ourselves to "weep bitterly;" we shall daily utter the prayer, "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil;" "hold thou me up and I shall be safe!"

The character of Peter, in the fourth place, *shows us the difference between the righteous and the wicked, even where the character of the righteous is obscured by great sins.* It is a mortifying thing to the church of God to be obliged to confess that there ever have been, and still are, great sins in the character of good men. It must also be confessed that some good men have committed sins, which very wicked men have never committed; and which, if they had committed, would cover them with shame and confusion. It must moreover even be acknowledged that some of the greatest sins in the world have been committed by those whom the Scriptures recognize as good men. Witness the incest of Lot, the delib-

erate adultery and murder of David, and the lying and profane tongue of Peter. We say, these are humbling and mortifying facts; and the demand comes home to us, with stringent and keen rebuke. If saints may do as Peter did, where is the difference between saints and sinners?

We should look at such a problem as this with an impartial desire to come at the truth. One fact is obvious, that if we define a good man to be one who is *without sin*, there neither are, nor ever have been, any truly good men in the world. Is the objector prepared honestly to adopt this conclusion? When we advert to the character of Noah, and Moses, and Samuel, and Daniel, and Paul, and even David and Peter, are we not constrained to believe they were good men? When we look around us in the age in which we dwell, do we see none to whom we give our confidence as good men? If then there may be wickedness in men that are good, how much wickedness may there be, and they be good men still? In answering so unprofitable a question as this, we must fall back upon first principles, and inquire of the divine oracles wherein the radical distinction consists between the righteous and the wicked? The Scriptures alone solve this question; and they teach us that *there is* a radical and essential difference of character between them, which, unless the wicked become righteous in the

present world, separates them one from another as long as they exist. They teach us, also, that the righteous have *some* conformity to God, to his law, and to the gospel of his son, and that the wicked have *none*. This is the great peculiarity of the righteous, in distinction from all those in whom there dwelleth no good thing, and whose carnal mind is enmity against God. There are various degrees of moral excellence in their character; some are babes, some are full grown men; and some possess a delightful maturity for the heavenly world. The lowest, or, if you please, the worst of these characters is born of God, adopted into his family, and entitled to exceeding great and precious promises. Nor may we forget that where there is some degree of true holiness, imperfect as it is, it *exerts a controlling influence over the heart and the life*. It may be like a grain of mustard seed; but it is of prolific power, and grows and branches out in every form of excellence and beauty. It is as controlling as that love that forsakes all and follows Christ; as that faith which overcometh the world; as that repentance which rushes from the hall of wickedness and weeps bitterly; as that new creature with whom old things are done away and all things are become new; and as that obedience that does the will of God from the heart.

These are the principles on which the Scrip-

tures rest the distinctions between the righteous and the wicked; and not on the fact that the righteous do not sin, or never commit great sins. When good men sin, or commit great sins, it is not in a constant and uninterrupted course of disobedience to the divine commands as the wicked do; but in diverging from their habitual course of obedience. This was the character of Peter; or rather this was the *conduct* of Peter and not his *habitual and well-formed character*. If we would form a just estimate of *the man*, we must look at what he was before his fall and after it. It was not in the high priest's palace that his *true character* was developed; it was in his habitual, self-denying and persevering life of love to Jesus, and obedience to his will. His denial of his Master was allied in enormity to the sin of Judas in betraying him. Yet who does not see that there was none of the spirit of Judas in Peter, and that they were radically different men? Who questions Peter's love to Christ? Who doubts that he denied himself and took up his cross and followed Christ, and lived and died to promote his cause and interest in the world? When, therefore, the problem is proposed to us, if good men may do as Peter did, where is the difference between good men and bad; we resolve it by saying, let wicked men give the same *positive* evidence of being the friends of Christ which Peter gave; and even

though they have sinned like him, we will not question their piety.

We may not bring these thoughts to a close, without remarking, in the fifth place, that the forgiveness and restoration of Peter *show the great mercy of God toward his repenting people*. Who can doubt Christ's love to Peter?—that free and full forgiveness of that enormous sin. What a comment is it, not only upon the genuineness of Peter's repentance, but upon God's forgiving mercy! I say enormous sin; for few are more enormous. The fact that it was not premeditated like the sin of Judas, and was not unrepented of like his, alone saves it from the category of being like his unpardoned. Yet was it, to a fearful degree, enormous and vile. It was such injustice to his Master—such unkindness toward him in that hour of darkness—such a violation of the vows into which he had just entered at the sacred supper—such a disregard of his own solemn and repeated protestations of attachment in defiance of every danger—such a blot upon the Christian character, and such a stain upon the apostleship; such a discouragement and grief to his fellow disciples;—such a triumph to Christ's enemies, and such a blow to Christianity, that we stand amazed that this coward follower of his betrayed Lord did not redeem the pledge, and rather die with him, than thus deny him

thrice. Yet, how much was it like Christ to forgive and restore that fallen, weeping disciple! How full of love and tenderness, that charge to the two Mary's, after he was risen from the dead, "Go tell my disciples *and Peter*, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him!" Poor Peter, crushed with a sense of his sin, and expecting nothing but banishment from Christ's family and insupportable frowns, must not be forgotten. Christ felt for Peter as no other felt. He would not break that bruised reed. And though he probed him to the core by that thrice-repeated question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" he could not have given sweeter evidence that he was restored to his favor and confidence, than these repeated words, "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep!" He was the sinner's friend; and he is the sinner's friend still. Imperative and welcome is the command, "My little children, I write unto you that ye sin not;" and precious is the truth, "but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." And *such* an Advocate! What sympathy with the fallen! What an ocean of tenderness! He restoreth our souls, and leadeth us in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. There is forgiveness with him such as earth knows not, and eternity alone can measure or disclose.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Paul before his Conversion.

NOWHERE is the difference between good men and bad more clearly discerned than in the same individual in different periods of his history. In none of the delineations to which our attention has been hitherto directed, is the *radical change* of character which the Scriptures speak of as essential to true piety, so distinctly brought into view as in the character of the Apostle Paul. There are many important objects attained by the narrative of his conversion; nor is it the least that it so obviously delineates the nature of true religion. It is not every instance that is so strongly marked, either by the character of its subject, or by the circumstances of the event itself. Saul was born for distinction; he could not remain an ordinary man; if evil, he would be very evil; if good, preëminent in goodness. He was both. There was a period of his life when none were more matured in wickedness, or less



dismayed in the commission of it; and there was a longer period when no man was more deliberate and determined in the great battle for Christian principle, and none more willing to do and suffer, that he might win the crown. There was a wondrous transformation in his character; and, while it excited the amazement and indignation of the enemies of Christianity, also produced grateful surprise and admiration in the bosom of its friends. We devote the present chapter exclusively to a view of HIS CHARACTER BEFORE HIS CONVERSION.

His moral disposition, by nature, was not essentially different from that of all other men; he was a "child of wrath, even as others." He was an apostate creature, idolizing self and the world, alienated from the life of God, and "dead in trespasses and sins." In a single sentence, he himself endorses the whole teaching of the Scriptures on the subject of human sinfulness, when he says, "*I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.*" This was his starting point in religion and morals, and it presents a sufficiently discouraging view.

Yet is there many a fair exterior in front of this deep and melancholy back-ground. Strange to say, he himself made high religious professions, and was in high esteem for his religion. He was the son of Jewish parents, a member of the Jewish church, and strongly attached to its external

rites and ceremonies. In addition to the ordinary religious instruction of Hebrew youth, he had sat at the feet of the most distinguished of the Jewish Rabbis, and, after the most rigid sect of his countrymen, was educated a Pharisee. Like the class of religionists to which he belonged, he was remarkable for his pride and hypocrisy, affecting uncommon sanctity, abounding in superstitious observances, ostentatious in his devotions, and arrogant in his religious claims. He gloried in all that could inflate the vanity and gratify the self-exultation of a Jew ; “ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, touching the law a Pharisee, touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.”

Moral virtues are not Christian graces. Though the sect to which he belonged were the slaves of lust and avarice, we have no evidence that he was outwardly a vicious, or immoral man. The probability is, that there were few who, according to the received notions of the age in which he lived, were more entitled to the praise of men ; or who, from confidence in his own righteousness, had stronger hopes of acceptance with God. There is no more instructive example of a self-righteous and self-deceived man ; history does not furnish a more melancholy instance of hopes built on the sand, and which demonstrate nothing more certainly than their own delusion.

His true character did not manifest itself all at once. Wickedness in him, like wickedness in many others lay for a long time comparatively dormant; it was exposed to none of those exciting causes, fitted to his peculiar temperament, and that would ignite the flame within. Not only was it restrained by his education, his position in society, and his pride of character; it was quiescent and satisfied self-complacency. It is not often that so bad a man at heart is held in check by such considerations as these; nor did they long exert this power over Saul. Nothing but a fitting opportunity and inducements were wanting, in order to invigorate and bring into action all the evil passions and tendencies of his corrupt heart. He was the creature of strong impulses; there was strength in his thoughts, strength in his emotions, and great strength in his wickedness. He possessed strong powers of reasoning; and whichever side of the great controversy, then just begun in the world, enlisted him, had enlisted its most powerful advocate. It was a controversy well fitted to draw out his true character. Events had taken place in the age in which he lived that constituted the most important revolution in human affairs, and that did not allow his vigorous mind to remain any longer inactive. *Jesus of Nazareth* had just made his appearance as the Messiah promised in the Jewish Scriptures. He had just been cruci-

fied ; had risen from the dead on the third day ; had ascended into heaven ; and had sent forth his Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Jerusalem was in an uproar, and all Judea, Samaria, and Galilee had begun to institute the inquiry, whether the new religion were not indeed from God. Converts to Christianity were multiplied by thousands ; and its disciples, urging its claims to the overthrow of Judaism and every system of Pagan philosophy, alarmed the Jewish elders, roused and embittered the indignation of the proud Pharisees, and maddened the ardent and malignant spirit of Saul.

The event but too plainly indicated the man. He threw off the mask, became the subtle and powerful advocate of error and the malignant foe of Christianity. He was the great leader in the first persecution of the Christian faith, and the master-spirit in that scene of tumult and terror, that bloody tragedy in Jerusalem, where the youthful Stephen laid down his life for the testimony of Jesus. Some of Saul's kindred according to the flesh had become Christians ; his sister's son and other domestic relatives had embraced the gospel ; and strange to say this made the flame rage more fiercely.\* He was a ringleader of the cruel, and himself a lapper of blood. It was a crusade against the cross, and the chival-

\* Vide Acts, 23 : 16—22, and Rom. 16 : 7, 14 and 21.

rous spirit of Saul made him the chosen and ignoble champion. His cruel spirit became infectious; his influence as a Pharisee and his popular talents gave him ascendancy over the minds of his bigoted countrymen; while his taste and elegance threw meretricious charms even around the character of a persecutor. He was a young man, and his youth gave him adornment; he was a bold man, and his boldness gave him followers; and more than all, he was a man whose theological opinions were at such a remove from the loose errors of the more infidel Jews, and of such uncommon sanctity, that he had the confidence of men as the great defender of the Jewish faith.

More than this, he was a *conscientious man*; for he himself assures us, and at a period of his history subsequent to his conversion, that "he verily thought he *ought* to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Though perhaps the most enlightened young man of his age, his mind was blinded by his ferocity; and though conscientious in his views, his conscience goaded him to madness. This was the most hopeless feature in his character. He presents one of those strange anomalies in which a man *does wrong from conscience*, and because he himself is persuaded that he ought to do so. We read of those whose "mind and conscience is *defiled*." The love of power, or the love of money, or the love

of sect, or long cherished malignity and revenge hold them in bondage. Saul was blinded—not by the mercenary love of gain, perhaps not by the love of power. He was blinded by what? by his *bitter malignity against the Christians*. He honestly confesses this in his after life, when he says, that “being *exceedingly mad* against them, he persecuted even to strange cities.” Look at this, and then hear him talk of conscience! It was the conscience of a madman. Was he, think you, in a fit state of mind to decide whether or not he *ought* to persecute them, so long as he was *exceedingly mad against them*? Was it necessary for him to have occupied his thoughts long, in order to know if he was doing God service by being *exceedingly mad against them*? Such was his phrenzied conscience; and when he consulted it it was under the influence of this *mad spirit*. It was not his understanding that guided him; nor his judgment; nor his reason; it was his spirit of madness. He would not look at the evidence in favor of Christianity; he was too great a madman to inquire after it or to appreciate it if sought. His maddened spirit, in defiance of all opposing testimony, persuaded him that Christ was an impostor; that his followers were impostors; and that Christianity ought to be persecuted and put down. This was the terrible impulse of his bloody career; the more terri-

ble and bloody because sanctified by the banners of a dark and unrelenting conscience. It was a fearful day in the church of God when *conscience* thus first drew the sword to shed Christian blood, and put that sword into the hands of Saul of Tarsus. The streets of Jerusalem echoed with the groans and triumphs of his victims; and as they fled before him and were "scattered throughout Judea and Samaria," Saul's maniac spirit pursued them, "making havoc" of the church; and disregarding alike the sanctity of domestic retirement and the distinction of sex, "he entered into every house, apprehending men and women, and committing them to prison." It was then but a step between the prison and the scaffold; and young as he was, this enraged persecutor was stimulated by the hope of thus exterminating the Christian faith by violence and blood.

To all this sanguinary vehemence, he added also the fury of a *blasphemous* tongue. He himself acknowledges that he was a "*blasphemer* as well a persecutor and injurious." Not satisfied with invading the rights, and imprisoning the persons of the Christians, he tarnished their good name, brought false accusations against them, and so loaded them with contumely, that they became the reproach and off-scouring of the world.

Unhallowed excitement is the bane of moral virtue. The great enemy of souls seeks no fitter

instrument to evil than an infuriated state of mind; it leads to all sin. This treatment of Christ's followers, added to the self-wrought persuasion that Christ himself was an impostor, prepared Saul to speak evil even of the ever-blessed and adorable Saviour, offering the foulest indignity to his character, contemptuously charging him with being in league with the devil, and thus erecting the most effective barrier which malignity could erect against the spread of the gospel, and the conversion of men. Few men in our world have so closely approximated the unpardonable sin, "the sin unto death," as this enraged persecutor. Nothing saved him from that condemnation but his ignorance that the Son of Man was the true Messiah. He was guilty of *blasphemy*, but, "he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief;" but for this he had put himself beyond the reach of pardoning mercy. His spirit was the spirit of bitter enmity against God and his Christ. Wherever he went, his presence was like the whirlwind. He "persecuted the church of God BEYOND MEASURE, and LAID IT WASTE." What was this state of mind if not settled enmity against the spirit and truth of Christianity? Contemplate this spirit in a man of such intelligence, attainments, accomplishments and influence, thus stimulating him to array himself against Christ and his church! It was the



same spirit which had incited the Jewish priests and rulers, a few years before, to utter the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" He was doing the devil's work; nor could the great accuser have found a more effective agent for accomplishing his purposes, than this renowned champion of Judaism. The church at Jerusalem was well nigh broken up by the virulence of his hostility; its dispersed ministers and members feared nothing so much as his fury. Not more truly were Nero, Domitian, and Severus the terror of the Christians in Rome; nor the bloody Mary to the Christians of England, than the ferocious Saul was the terror of the Christians in Syria and the Holy Land. With all his professions of godliness, and all his sanctity, this young man was the perverter of truth, the enemy of all righteousness, and a child of the devil.

Such was Paul before his conversion; nor is it any marvel that in looking back upon his past history, and upon the grace that brought him to the knowledge of Christ, he should speak of himself as "the chief of sinners," as "the least of all saints," and as "the least of the apostles, who was not meet to be called an apostle, because he persecuted the church of God."

We may, perhaps, profitably pause at this period of his history, and specify some of those practical lessons which it inculcates.

It furnishes, in the first place, a *striking illustration of the unsoundness of a self-righteous piety*. Self-righteous and self-confident religionists form a class of men, multitudes of whom exist in every age of the world. The leading feature and the radical error of their character is the self-complacent persuasion of their own goodness, and a reliance upon it as the ground of pardon and acceptance with God. That Pharisee was an exemplification of self-righteousness who "stood and prayed thus with himself—God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." That bitter persecutor was an exemplification of it, who gloried in his observance of all the rites and ceremonies, the feasts and fasts, the Sabbaths and new moons, the ablutions and sacrifices of the Levitical law. There is a severity of moral discipline both in forming and sustaining such a religious character which not only gratifies that pride of the human heart which desires that its religion should be seen of men, but which soothes a scrupulous conscience, puts on the appearance of genuine piety, and gives birth to strong, though delusive hopes. We say delusive hopes, because the best man in the world, no more than the worst, has any scriptural warrant for believing that God will save him on account of any-

thing he has done or can perform. Saul of Tarsus "went about to establish a righteousness of his own by the deeds of law;" and we see what a proud, unhumbled, and furious man he was. He had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but had not been taught in the school of Calvary. He had not learned to "abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes," nor to "smite upon his breast and say, God be merciful to me a sinner!" Self-righteous hopes and expectations must die and give way to a self-condemning, self-despairing spirit, before a sinner repairs to the sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ, as his refuge. *Self-despair*, and not self-confidence, is the universal element and preparative for hope in God. A self-righteous religion has nothing in common with the gratuitous justification of the sinner through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "It is not by works of righteousness which we have done." Just in the proportion in which men trust in themselves do they reject the Lord Jesus, and decline to come as perishing sinners, to the foot of the cross. There is but this ark of safety:

"In my hands no price I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Never do sinful and guilty men more certainly stand in their own light than when, instead of coming as ill-deserving and justly condemned by

the law of God, and casting themselves on the all-sufficient resources of infinite love and power, and taking hold of Jesus Christ as "all their salvation and all their desire," they stand, Pharisee-like, seeking and striving to make themselves better, and buffeting the storm of their own corruptions by a shield of rags daubed over with the serpent's slime. What is this but throwing obstacles in the only way in which they can be saved? You who are thus seeking the salvation of the gospel, are only going farther and still farther from the salvation you are thus striving to obtain. You are indebted to divine justice ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay. Difficult as it is to become weaned and divorced from these self-righteous efforts and spirit, this stronghold of human pride must be abandoned; the idol, self, must be torn from your bosom; your stout heart must stoop to an humble and self-emptying spirit, else will you still reject the counsel of heavenly mercy against your own soul, and die without God and without hope.

In the second place, this character and conduct of Saul *indicate the delusion and danger of being ensnared by a blinded and defiled conscience.* "There is a way that *seemeth* right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." How, it may be asked, could this furious man have acted otherwise than persecute the church

of God, if "he verily thought" he ought to do so, and if sincere and honest in so doing? We may not blink this question; for the more closely it is inspected the more absurd will the position appear which it so gratuitously assumes. Conscience is a safe guide, only as it is itself instructed and guided by the Word of God. Where the Bible directs men to one course of conduct, and conscience directs them to a different and opposite course, the Bible is to be followed, and not conscience. And the reason is obvious: it is because conscience may err, and the Bible is unerring. Conscience has high claims upon the moral conduct of men, and high prerogatives in judging of that conduct where it is duly enlightened by God's truth. This is her province, and this her responsibility; and when, from caprice, or passion, or voluntary ignorance, or deep-rooted malice and wickedness, or any selfish consideration, she *refuses* to admit the light of evidence, and obstinately *perseveres* in rejecting that light, she loses sight of her obligations, and forfeits her control. Mirabeau has said, that "the obligation to *enlighten* conscience is anterior to the obligation to *follow* conscience." If an infidel could say this, how obvious is this great truth to a Christian mind! No man may say with impunity that he verily thinks he ought to be a blasphemer, a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, or a liar. If

his conscience thus instructs him, she is no longer his judge and master. There is no room for reasoning on so plain a point. Saul's conduct in pronouncing Jesus an impostor, in blaspheming his holy name, and in persecuting his followers, was not right, even though he acted agreeably to the dictates of his conscience. It was wrong in itself; God's truth forbade it; nor was it at all altered in its nature because he himself thought Christ and his followers impostors, and, as such, ought to be put to death. He ought to have thought differently; he had every opportunity of coming at the truth if he had been sincerely disposed to seek after it; and, in submitting himself, as he did, to a misguided conscience, he was without excuse. It is a fearful condition to be in when a man sins for conscience' sake. Sins of the greatest enormity are sometimes committed under cover of conscience. There is no impulse to evil-doing more to be dreaded than the impetuosity of a blind and obstinate conscience. Conscience is trifled with not only by refusing to listen to her dictates when they are right, but by blinding and bribing her into a wrong judgment. In few things, if any, do men exhibit more criminal and foolish hypocrisy and wickedness than when they are conscientious in doing wrong. Such a conscience will not always sleep; and when it wakes it will be only to be revenged on the guilty perpetrator seven-fold.

In the third place, the character of Paul before his conversion *shows the necessity of every man's being born again in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* We think of that *self-righteous Pharisee*, and are constrained to confess that there must be a radical change in his views and affections before he can fall in with the humbling doctrines of Christianity, receive the grace of God as freely offered in the gospel, and, renouncing every other hope, glory only in the cross of Christ. We think of that *bitter blasphemer* of his divine Lord, that blinded and bigoted *persecutor* of his saints, and are constrained to confess that his views and feelings toward Christ and his people must be wholly changed before he can employ, or desire to employ, his eternity in loving, adoring, praising and serving the Lamb that was slain, or in the sweet and holy fellowship of his redeemed.

But is this a truth which is applicable only to Saul of Tarsus? What man in our lost and guilty world is fitted for that heaven where God dwells, and where "there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth;" that heaven where there is no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; that heaven where is an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; that heaven where all

are employed in serving God day and night in his temple, and where his love and service are their highest joy ; without a different character from that which he naturally possesses, a different heart from that which "is fully set in him to do evil," a different state of moral feeling from that "carnal mind" which "is enmity against God?" Are you who delight only in the things and employments and joys that are seen and temporal ; you, whose thoughts are away from God and heaven, and who, if you could have your heart's desire, would choose your eternal home amid the wealth, and splendor, the fascinating pleasures and social joys of earth, fitted for that holy and blessed world ? Do you feel any interest in it now, or perceive any thing that is attractive there to your own hearts ? No ; no. "Marvel not that I say unto you ye must be born again." Saul of Tarsus, as we shall hereafter see, experienced this radical change of character, and is now clothed with white robes near his Redeemer's throne and sings the song of Moses and the Lamb. And *you* must experience it if you enjoy his companionship and blessedness. There is no piety without it, and no good hope through grace. Heaven shall be yours when you are one with Paul, and are one with his once persecuted and now glorified Lord.

We may not suppress a fourth observation in view of the character and efforts of this incited



Pharisee, which is that *the hope of the church, in times of peril, is in the mighty power of her great Head*. Scarcely had the divine Redeemer ascended on high, and his apostles gone forth to preach his gospel and extend the boundaries of his kingdom, than the spirit of persecution threatened to paralyze their efforts and crush the hopes of the infant church in the bud. What a greeting was it to the dawn of Christianity, when that young man, with a mind fitted to sway the opinions of the world, instead of employing it in nurturing and cherishing this new-born child of heaven, employed all his vigor and malignity to strangle it in its cradle! To the eye of sense, it seemed as though the light of heaven just appeared only to be enveloped in darkness and quenched in blood. But "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" The time had come for him to interpose, not only for the safety of his church, but for her abundant enlargement and triumph. Human laws afforded her no protection; civil and ecclesiastical establishments, with all their talent, power, combinations, and philosophy had "taken counsel together against the Lord and against his Christ!" It was an age that demanded of the followers of Christ enlightened views of God and his government, and agency in the affairs of men; supreme and ardent love to him; submission to his will, and implicit confidence in his power and grace to

maintain and extend his kingdom on the earth. He who formed the purpose of redeeming mercy before the world was, did not stand by an uninterested or an idle spectator of the machinations of Saul of Tarsus. He could have smitten him as he did Herod ; or he could have destroyed him as he did the army of Senacherib, and " dashed him in pieces as a potter's vessel." Or, he could allow him to extend and prolong his persecutions, and so overrule them as to make " the wrath of man praise the Lord," and advance the cause they were intended to overthrow. And there is another thing which he could do still more expressive of " the excellence of his power." He himself governs and controls the *counsels and hearts* of men themselves, and turns them as he will " even as the rivers of water are turned." In this blessed prerogative lie the effective and omnipotent power of his government. He could illumine the understanding, and touch the conscience, and even change the heart of the persecutor, and from a bitter enemy of Christianity transform him to its most ardent friend. The trembling disciples did not look for this ; they did not expect it ; and nothing more surprised them than when they learned that " he who persecuted them in times past" had himself become a preacher " of the faith which once he destroyed." They knew that " God was their refuge and strength in trouble ;" but

little did they hope that he would thus interpose, and by a renovating and reforming power over the persecutor give them this unlooked-for encouragement, and this new pledge of his faithful love. What may not his trembling church hope and pray for after this? Who shall limit his mighty power, when the glory of his great name requires that he should pluck his right hand out of his bosom? With what ease did he arrest that torrent of persecution, merely by touching the heart of Saul! "Trust ye in the Lord Jehovah; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength!" When the "Enemy cometh in like a flood, THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD lifteth up a standard against him."

## CHAPTER IX.

### Paul after Conversion.

**A**LTHOUGH there was little probability that such a man as Saul of Tarsus would ever become a Christian, yet was "he a chosen vessel" to declare the name of his persecuted Lord to the Gentiles. God had permitted him to occupy his early life in wickedness, and to employ all his talents and influence in corrupting himself, in oppressing the infant church of Christ, and in obstructing the progress of true religion. But it pleased him who "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," to pluck this virulent and wretched persecutor as a "brand is plucked out of the fire," not because he was better than other men, for he was worse; not because he deserved it, for he deserved to be abandoned to his madness and perish; but "for the great love of God toward him," and that "in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace toward him through Christ Je-

sus." The time had come when this wondrous purpose of sovereign mercy toward him was carried into effect, and when he "who separated him from his mother's womb called him by his grace."

We have the narrative of his conversion from his own pen. Although it varies in incident from the conversion of other men, as his circumstances and natural character varied, and as it was the purpose of infinite wisdom to give it notoriety, it does not differ essentially from the conversion of other men. That account is substantially as follows :— At the distance of about one hundred and twenty miles north-east of Jerusalem is the city of Damascus, the capital of ancient Syria, and the oldest city in the world. For fertility of soil, beauty of scenery, and salubriousness of climate, it is said to be unsurpassed by any spot on the globe. It was an attractive city to the persecuted Christians of Jerusalem ; and there Saul had learned that many of them had taken refuge from the fury of the storm. After having scoured the regions of Judea and Samaria, in the hight of his phrenzy he resolved to penetrate the walls of Damascus, in order to bring these Christians in chains to Jerusalem to share the fate of their murdered brethren. Nothing could cool his persecuting spirit ; but still "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," and resolved that no effort should be wanting to erase every vestige of the Christian name, he obtained a

commission from the high priest to wreak his vengeance on these terrified refugees at Damascus. And with this malignant purpose brooding in his bosom, unassuaged by all his opportunity for reflection, and unwearied by the length of the way, he, with his armed soldiery, was drawing near the city.

But there was a power above him that had measured the length of his chain, and that had resolved to arrest him in his mad career. It was mid-day, when a Syrian sun shone brightly, and not a cloud was to be seen in the heavens, that a *light*, far exceeding "the sun's brightness," shone round about him and them that were with him." What was it? and whence? and for what purposes? That it was no imaginary vision is obvious from its effects as well as from the hour when it appeared. Nor was Saul himself, nor the men that were with him likely to be carried away, or intimidated by any optical illusion. Yet so overpowering was that intense brightness, that blazing light, that "they *all* fall to the earth" and lie with their faces to the ground. They were all exasperated men; but there was *one* signal persecutor among them who heard a voice calling him by name in the Hebrew tongue, "SAUL! SAUL! WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?" They were strange words; and as they fell upon his ear, the persecutor trembled. Did they come from the bowels

of the earth ; or from the deeper abyss below ; or from the frowning, yet pitying heavens above ; or did they sigh on the plaintive breeze ? Who, or what it was that spake he did not know ; but there was a meaning, a weight, an emphasis in every word : SAUL ! SAUL ! WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME ?

Yes, the persecutor trembled ; he was confounded ; and the only words he could utter were, *Who art thou Lord ?* Conscience had begun to do its office. He was thus publicly, and by a supernatural voice, branded as a *persecutor*. Nor were there wanting within his own guilty bosom some lurking suspicions of the voice that spake to him. He had lived in the land where Jesus of Nazareth had exercised his ministry. His character, his miracles, his preaching, his death, his resurrection were events that had taken place if not under his own observation, within the sphere of his own knowledge and conviction. Some of his own relatives, as we have already seen, had become Christians ; and he must have known it. The blood of the martyred Stephen was on his hands, and the blood of hundreds cried unto God against him from the streets of Jerusalem. And when to the question, *Who art thou Lord ?* the voice replied, "I am Jesus of Nazareth *whom thou persecutest*," those mingled tones of rebuke and tenderness were like a thunderbolt on the culprit's ear. He

had *beheld* the Saviour he was persecuting; as "one born out of due time," he had beheld his ineffable glory and heard his voice. He was agitated; new light broke in upon his benighted mind; and for the first time, the lips of Saul of Tarsus uttered the inquiry to his persecuted and aggrieved Master, "LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?"

Whether his proud spirit was broken at that moment, and amid these scenes of terror, or whether he became a converted man at *some* period of *the three subsequent days* during which he remained at Damascus, are questions which may not be hastily decided. To his inquiry, "What wilt thou have me to do?" the Saviour replied, "*Arise and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.*" And what a scene is this which is now presented to us! The vision had so overwhelmed him, so dazzled his senses, that "he could not see for the glory and brightness of that light," and, like a little child, he was led by the hand into the city. He himself was the captive now, trembling and in darkness, yet the captive of omnipotent grace. These three days of darkness were instructive and memorable days to Saul. It could not be otherwise than that they should have been days and nights of deep conviction and godly sorrow for his sins. His self-righteous hopes for-



sook him, and the "law which was ordained to life he found to be unto death." It was there he learned the unutterable love of his injured Saviour; that this persecuted One opened to him the fountain of ablution and grace, and sent to him the message to "arise and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus." That divine Saviour brought the persecutor to his knees, and humbled him to his footstool. "Behold, he prayeth!" This man of blood prayeth. This blasphemer prayeth. Saul of Tarsus prayeth. The place where he purposed to satiate his spirit of "threatening and slaughter" is turned into the house of prayer. There God sent Ananias to comfort him, and to greet him as a Christian brother. And there this heaven-commissioned messenger found him a suppliant at God's mercy-seat. And what an interview was that, when, entering into the house, and putting his hand upon him, he said, "BROTHER SAUL! *the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me unto thee that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost!*"

Such was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. It was something more than his outward turning from Judaism to Christianity—something more than his baptism into the Christian faith—something more than the mere reformation of his out-

ward conduct—something more than his transition from the tenets of the Pharisees to the office of a gospel minister—something more than powerful religious impressions, made by the exciting scenes by which he was agitated. It consisted in that radical change of character, effected by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, in which the love of God assumed its rightful authority and throne. It was not the semblance of religion, but its reality. It was the conversion of his soul to God, and the acquisition of that new and inner life, which is supported by new agencies, lives by new means, acquires a new and progressive development, and has new relations and tastes, preferences and pleasures, pursuits and ends. He became “a new man”—a new man in his affections, because the love of God elevated and sanctified them—a new man in Christ Jesus, because the Spirit of God had regenerated him—a new man in his hopes, because they were those of a pilgrim to the heavenly city—a new man in his purposes and aims, because they were to glorify him who “brought him out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

But did his conversion make him a different man? and did his subsequent life show that there was a radical change in his character? After all the accuracy in the statement of those religious truths and principles that are involved in the na-

ture of conversion, and all the just discriminations that are made, in order to distinguish the genuine from the spurious, this is the great question in every instance of professed conversion to God : What are its practical results, and does it turn out well in the subsequent life and conversation ?

*What, then, were the effects of Paul's remarkable conversion ?* We are at no loss in speaking of these, except from their variety and richness. He had experienced a great and remarkable change, and this change was followed by as great and remarkable effects. We specify only some of these, and comprising little more than the prominent traits of his renewed character, and range them under the five following particulars.

In the first place, his conversion transformed him from a proud and imperious man *to one of great amiableness of character*. Naturalists tell us that the hard granite-rock will crumble down into soil, and cover itself with verdure and fruitage. So, when the dews and rain of heavenly mercy fall on the granite heart of man, impenetrable and wild as it is, it "puts on the summer's blossoming," and bears these ripe fruits. Natural temperament, the force of education, a sense of decorum, the laws of delicacy and good breeding, may result in the show of amiableness ; but the region where it dwells, and the great incen-

tive to it in this conflicting world, is a heart renewed by the Spirit of God. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Those gentle virtues, which hold in check, and progressively eradicate man's hard and haughty spirit, and rough and turbulent passions, find their model only in the character of *Him* who was "meek and lowly of heart," and their source only in that gospel which "casteth down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

If it is an enchanting spectacle to see ordinary minds adorned with this beauty of holiness, how much more when these unearthly graces adorn the bright and splendid mind of such a man as Paul! His character before his conversion was deformed by sinful passions, inflated by pride and self-complacency, restless and ambitious, headstrong and daring in evil, reckless and cruel, and untempered by any thing like the sweet gentleness and serene magnanimity of the gospel. After his conversion, he was not only divested of this self-exultation and vain-glorying, and of those intemperate and malignant passions which hurried him on his mad career, but eminently clothed with "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Never, probably, was there a man of his strong

natural temperament more distinguished for that charity which "suffereth long and is kind, which envyyeth not, which vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly? is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

Do you ask for expressions of this spirit? his life and writings are full of them. We see "how holily, and justly, and unblamably he behaved himself among them that believe;" how, in matters of indifference, "he became all things to all men that he might gain some;" how in the midst of his highest spiritual exultation, he "forbears lest any man should think of him above that which he seeth him to be, or that he heareth of him;" and how, in his most triumphant successes, as a preacher of the gospel, he disclaims all but the humblest instrumentality, and says, "I have planted, Apollas watered, but God gave the increase." If we read his counsels, to the young or to the old, to enemies or to friends, to ministers or churches, to rulers or ruled, we read of "beseeching men by the mercies of God;" of "love that is without dissimulation;" of "prefering one another in honor;" of "minding not high things, but condescending to men of low estate;" of "recompensing to no man evil for evil, but overcoming evil with good;" of "giving with diligence, ruling with simplicity, and showing mercy with cheerfulness;" of the "love that worketh no

ill to his neighbor ;” of “ the strong bearing the infirmities of the weak,” “ gentleness unto all men,” and the meekness that instructs opposers. If we advert to the kindness and courtesy of his deportment in the social relations, we hear him say to his afflicted brethren, “ Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees.” We read his parting address to the elders of Ephesus, and when he had “ kneeled down and prayed with them all,” how “ they all wept sore, and fell on his neck and kissed him.” We listen to the oft-repeated words, “ Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ ;” and we read the sweet salutations of his Christian love to those brethren and sisters in the church “ who had labored in the Lord, and been the succorers of many ;” to his “ helpers in Jesus ;” to his “ fellow-prisoners ;” and to the “ household” who had cherished him. It was just like Paul, with his own characteristic gratitude, fullness and delicacy, to say, “ Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and *his mother and mine.*”

All this from the once bitter and inflexible Saul of Tarsus. If the tranquillity and joys of men were embittered by discord, his was not the voice that embittered them. The proud Pharisee had become the humble Christian ; the stubborn rebel, the meek child of Jesus ; the relentless persecutor employed not only in triumphantly contending

with his own fiery passions, but in patiently quenching the unhallowed flame in the bosoms of others. No man was more conciliating. He was man's brother, and he would have them brethren. We admire his character for his greatness; but there is not the less reason to love and imitate it for its amiable gentleness. There are so many beautiful instances of modest reserve in his recorded deportment; so many touches of Christian sweetness in his writings, and so much of the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," which, "in the sight of God," is of great price, that we have sometimes marveled that in the many delineations of his character, his milder and more amiable virtues have been so often overshadowed by those which are more splendid. The gentle graces and virtues were obviously suited to his pen, only because his heart was so delightfully attuned to the sweet spirit of Christianity. All daring and indomitable in the service of his divine Master he was; but he was "gentle as a nurse cherisheth her children," full of sympathy with human frailty and human woe, and presenting a picture of piety as winning as it is dignified and sublime.

In the second place, Paul's conversion made him a *most disinterested man*.

By this we mean, not that he had no interests of his own that he consulted, but that he had higher interests, and was governed by higher

aims. We have often adverted to this characteristic in the delineations we have already given of the characters of good men as presented in the Scriptures; nor can we fix upon any one of them where it does not stand out in bold relief. It is impossible to draw the character of a man pre-eminent in goodness without bringing out in strong and deep lines a self-denying and disinterested spirit, and setting it in the brilliant foreground. In this prominent feature Paul stands abreast with Abraham, and Moses, and Daniel. From his conversion to his translation to heaven, it was not self that he lived for, nor self that he died for; "Whether we live," says he, "we live *unto the Lord*, or whether we die, we die *unto the Lord*."

When he first entered upon the work to which the Saviour called him, there were obstacles which a supremely selfish mind could never have overcome. From wealth and dignity and power he was about to plunge into poverty, contempt and oppression. He was to attach himself to a despised and execrated Leader, and to ignorant and despised associates; to be "made the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things." As he began, so he went forward, amid "hunger and thirst; naked and buffeted; having no certain dwelling-place; laboring, working with his own hands," and never once stopping to "confer with



flesh and blood." He could say to those to whom he had preached the gospel, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel;" and to those to whom he was still preaching, "I seek not yours, but you." Sometimes he seems to apologize for the deep interest he takes in the conversion of his countrymen; and when he does so, his language is, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." When he expresses his solicitude and zeal for those whom he had been instrumental in converting, he begs them to bear with him, because his only desire is that "they might be blameless and harmless, the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they shine as lights in the world." When they entreat him with tears to spare himself and not tempt his fate by running into danger for their sakes, his reply is, "What mean ye to weep and break my heart; for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;" while to others less known to him, he writes, "Yea, if I be offered upon the service and sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."

His spirit was one which the world did not understand. Felix thought him "beside himself," and others accused him of madness; but there was an impulse in his bosom that accounted for it all; what was madness to other men was with

him "soberness and truth." He was living for something above the ordinary vision of men, and was urged by considerations not less impulsive to him because to them they were strangers. "For whether we be beside ourselves," says he, "*it is to God* ; or whether we be sober, it is *for your cause*." It was not self, nor the love of self ; it was "the love of Christ that constrained him." This noble spirit was in keeping with his doctrines ; it was a flame from the altar of heavenly truth ; it was the result of his doctrines engrafted upon a warm and loving heart. It was a flame that burned with ardor in the kindlings of youth, and glowed steadily in the bosom of "such an one as Paul the aged." He loved the truth for its own sake, and the holy because it is holy. Station did not allure, power did not intimidate him. He was bound alike to the emperor and the slave, "a debtor both to the Jews and to the Gentiles." We do not ask for riper fruits of the Spirit than this self-denying and disinterested mind.

His conversion made him, in the next place, an *eminently useful man*.

This entire change of heart produced an entire change of life ; "old things passed away, and all things became new." No sooner had he renounced his false principles than he abandoned his sinful practices ; and, with unexampled industry, perseverance and success, devoted his life to un-

doing what he had done against Christ, and repairing the injury he had done to the souls of men.

He was called to the apostleship just as Christianity was being introduced to the notice of mankind. It was at a period of the world when false religions had proved their own weakness, and when men might be supposed to listen to the convincing and persuasive power of truth. Yet it was a period when Jewish prejudice, and Grecian intellect, and Roman supremacy, were all combined to oppose the progress of the Christian faith. It was no ordinary work that was committed to him, thus to become the propagator of Christianity in the face of these associated powers of darkness. But God had fitted him for this service. His intellectual preëminence, and his powers of persuasion—his Jewish origin—his attachment to the Jewish nation—his acquaintance with the Jewish Scriptures—his familiarity with the bigoted spirit and the Pharisaic subtleties of degenerate and worn-out Judaism, were remarkable qualifications for the work to which he was called. His acquisitions in Grecian literature, educated as he was at Tarsus, one of the most renowned seats of Greek learning, qualified him to confront the disciples of the Greek philosophy, and to become the apostle to the Gentiles. His privileges as a Roman citizen secured for his person the protec-

tion of Rome—gave him free course throughout all her dependencies, and indicated him as the man of his age to carry the gospel to the great commercial cities of the world, and publish it to all nations.

With these qualifications, and with a spirituality and devotement of mind never surpassed, he went forth as a “preacher of the faith which once he destroyed.” And where, on the records of time, is the man to be found who accomplished so much for truth and godliness, and for the moral and intellectual elevation of his race. Never was heart kindled with holier rapture—never were lips more glowing or pen more radiant or life more luminous with truth than his—and never has there been greater success or riper fruits of holiness in the church of God and her ministers than this one man has been instrumental in producing. It is not for us now to rehearse his services. The principal churches in the world were founded by his personal ministry, while the principal disputes of Christendom were discussed and determined by his pen. The interval between his conversion and his death was employed in labors such as none but his unwearied spirit ever performed. He was young when he was brought into the kingdom of Christ, and, to the church’s joy and glorying, he lived till he was old. During this whole period his light remained unobscured—the great

light of the age in which he lived—sending forth its beams in one intermitted and swelling stream until it was struck from the moral firmament and quenched in blood.

We need not search for evidences of his conversion in the midst of such things as these: they force themselves upon us as the light of an unclouded sun. How wide the difference between the persecutor and the preacher—between the dungeon and the wheel and the torture of Jewish Inquisition, and the liberty and love which he proclaimed and imparted—between the fear and horror and death which his presence once foreboded, and the peace and hope and joy and triumph which it secured! Since the crucifixion of his Divine Master, the church never had cause for deeper mourning than in view of that dark providence which closed this apostle's career of usefulness. He was the most illustrious of her sons among the living—of all the dead he remains the most illustrious. Most of the partners of his toil fell with him, victims of the oppressor's fury; while the few who survived him lived to enter into his labors, and reap his reward. No urn contains his ashes; no marble records his virtues; his dust is consecrated by the sweetest remembrances of millions; his name lives in the best affections of all who love his crucified and ascended Lord. We remark,

In the fourth place, his conversion made him *eminently happy*.

"There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked." Talent, learning, place, power, wealth, were no antidote to the poison which once rankled in Paul's bosom. His energy in wickedness only made him the more miserable; nothing could soothe its phrenzy; it was a wretched and bloody crusade against the Son of God in which he was employed and urged on by the Spirit of Darkness.

Nor was it until he became another man that his wild heart became tranquil. It is indeed cheering to hear that humbled persecutor say, "We have *peace* with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The conflict was over; the enmity of his carnal mind was slain; Christ had triumphed; Saul of Tarsus was at peace with God, with truth, with goodness. He was no favorite with the world, but he was the friend of God.

No man is truly happy till he becomes a Christian. His defection from God is defection from happiness; away from the source, the pure "fountain of living waters," his disappointed and febrile heart finds nothing to quench its thirst. It must be so, because sin is poison to the soul; and because its desires are too vast to be filled by the things of time. Sweet is that voice which first whispers to the agitated and troubled heart,

“Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy ladened, and I will give you rest.” Sweet was it to Saul, when, in his perturbations and blindness in the house of Ananias, he first received the Holy Ghost, and arose and washed away his sins in the blood of the Lamb. Rich were those drops of mercy that were then shed upon him, and when peace and hope and joy first sprung up in his bosom like the flowers of the new-born year. And what time that new-born year became ripe and brighter, these flowers of joy became rich fruits of Paradise. Look at him when and where you will, and there is a buoyancy of joy about him which makes you forget his injuries, his trials, his bitter reproaches. Though of all the hated and persecuted he was the most hated and persecuted of men, you can not read his writings without feeling that he was a most happy man. There is no depression to excite your sympathy; and though there may be touching thoughts and paragraphs over which many a Christian has wept, we much doubt if they were any thing more than tears of triumph in the gospel and in the man. His spirit was too lofty to dictate a pensive sentence. They are weighty truths which he utters, but they are joyous truths, transporting truths, and full of heaven. He was afflicted in body, poor in this world’s goods, exhausted with toil, scourged, chained, and in jeopardy every hour; yet he was happy. He

could sing in the prison, preach in the storm, and cheer his fellow-prisoners in their shipwreck. His defence when in chains before King Agrippa shows not the fearlessness only, but the perfect tranquillity and joy of his heart. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Then Agrippa said unto Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." And Paul said, "I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am *except these bonds!*" I have never read, either in sacred or profane history, of so happy a man under such endurance. They were not a few bright spots in the wilderness which he descried; to him the wilderness itself was all bright. He saw the sun through every cloud, heard music in the tempest, and beheld verdure and beauty where to other eyes all was barrenness. With perfect nature and with the most perfect simplicity, he could say, "*joyful* in all our habitation." It was his own history, "Sorrowful, yet *always rejoicing*."

He had become a converted man, and he had religion enough to make him happy. No voluptuary ever enjoyed the pleasures of sense, no miser ever rioted in his gold, no aspirant for power and fame ever so delighted himself in the hope of preferment, as he enjoyed the "unsearchable riches of Christ." And this was the spirit



which he carried to his grave; it was the same bright smile, the same perpetual gladness. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. The time of my departure is at hand; and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day." He was then a prisoner at Rome; a bitter persecution was going against the Christians; he was in continual expectation of being summoned before the emperor, and had no reason to doubt the issue of his trial. Yet to him it matters little where, or how, or how soon he should die. Nero's lions might lick his blood, or the ax of his executioner leave his body a headless trunk without the walls of the city; but it was not for *him* to be sad. He knew not how to be otherwise than joyful. Other Christians, other ministers *will be* happy; they will be happy in heaven. What they *will be*, Paul *was*—lost and swallowed up in Christ—a clear planet, ever revolving near the sun, and drinking light, and love, and joy from his beams. We may add,

In the fifth and last place, his conversion *improved and exalted his whole character.*

Religious truth has power in elevating the human mind which can be attributed to no other causes. Intellect may well pay its homage at

God's altars if it be only for the advancement of its worshiper. The late celebrated Robert Hall, in his sermon on Modern Infidelity, remarks that the irreligious system is "barren of those great and sublime virtues, which, by their rarity and splendor, draw the admiration, and have rendered illustrious the character of men. It leaves no room for their production. The exclusion of a supreme Being robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence, even in idea. There is no one virtue which Christians have not carried to a higher perfection than any of which the patrons of infidelity can boast. The disproportion in importance between man and the meanest insect is not so great as that which subsists between man considered as *mortal* and *immortal*; man as he is represented by the system of skepticism, and that of divine revelation."\* There is no finer illustration of these thoughts than is furnished by the conversion of Paul. His character before and after this event presents very different pictures of human greatness. He would have been no common man if he had never been converted; yet he would have been a man of narrow and bigoted mind. He would have been "great in little things," and preëminent only in those matters which were never designed to exert a permanent influence on the human character.

\* See Hall's Sermon—*Passim*.

He would have been a Jewish hierarchist—a keen disputer in rabbinical and cabalistic theology—the stern advocate for the literal observances of the law—the idol of the temple, and the adornment of the Sanhedrim. But, with all his learning and ambition, he would never have risen above the minions of Rome. Never would he have been the lofty man he was, but for his conversion. That bright and well-furnished mind needed Christianity to give it enlargement and impulse; nor is it too much to say that his liberal imbuing with the great truths of the gospel made him such a prodigy of intellectual power. It was not possible to obscure the light which shone upon his fair fame. No tongue has ever reviled him but the tongue of blasphemy; nor has any pen traduced him save those that have traduced his Master. Look at him when and where you will, and you will see the same indications of greatness. Think of him in Arabia, in Jerusalem, in Tarsus, in Antioch, in Philippi, in Thessalonica, in Ephesus, in Corinth, in Rome. Think of him as he stands before Felix, and with admirable courtesy and adroitness confronts the most subtle orator at his age. Think of him as he stands in the presence of the great patrons of learning and law at Athens, urging upon them the claims of their “unknown God.” Think of him in all the marts of learning and commerce, pouring forth a flood

of thoughts, compared with which the words of his opposers were but the streams of the desert. He grappled with truths which, while they gave enlargement to a heart already swelling with the love of God, gave force to his understanding; and he grappled with them with a vigor and enthusiasm that were ever reacting upon himself, and producing higher and still higher nobleness of character. He drank freely at these inexhaustible fountains; and when, as he often did, he lingered long at this boundless ocean, he could only exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" Tell us, ye who are ashamed of Christ and his cross, where are the triumphs of reason and philosophy that can be compared with such triumphs of Christian truth? The Spirit that converted Saul of Tarsus has given to many a man intellectual and moral preëminence; his dark and sluggish mind would have remained dark and sluggish but for the convincing light and mighty impulses imparted to it by him who is "full of grace and truth." That man does himself great injury who refuses to become a Christian. He may not depreciate this dignity of character. He can not afford to forfeit the distinction which piety imparts. The most exalted and distinguished may well deem themselves ennobled by the humblest place in the school of the Nazarene.

We deduce from this view of the character of Paul after his conversion, the three following remarks:

In the first place, it furnishes us with *one of the proofs of the truth of Christianity*. We say nothing of the *facts* recognized in his conversion, and which lie at the foundation of the Christian system, and of Paul's unprejudiced and honest conviction of them. This branch of the argument has been presented by Lord Lyttleton, in a work which infidelity will not soon undertake to answer. Our remark is more obvious, and requires less research and reasoning. It is the *moral argument* that error and falsehood never formed such a character as Paul's. Bring this character vividly before your minds, and ask, Whence was it? Recall the circumstances attending his conversion; investigate the principles developed in his subsequent history; search for its results; and then say whether it be of God or men. Truth asks to be tried by its results. "The tree is known by its fruit." If Christianity were error, fable, deception, mysticism, extravagance, it could not produce such fruit as this. No man—no set of men—no halls of science—no palmy ages of Chaldean, Grecian, or Roman advancement ever performed such a work as this. Yet is it just such a work as we should naturally conclude Christianity would perform if it is from God. If God is holy, and if

he has given a religion to the world, the character it forms must resemble his own. Christianity, moreover, professes to do this, and she does it, and for doing it demands our confidence and love. It was not by believing *a lie* that the proud Pharisee sat at the feet of Jesus, and that the pagan idolater turned from his dumb idols to serve the Living God. Such a character as Paul's is too true, too beautiful, too heaven-like to be traced to any other than a divine source. We read his history, and see there divine reality. There is no priestcraft, no deception, no fanaticism. There stands this noble man as a proof to the world of what Christianity can accomplish. Compare him with the heroes and philosophers of earth, and are they not vanity compared with this living, this permanent, this ever-glowing reality produced by Christianity?

In the second place, these effects of Paul's conversion *may well stimulate all Christians to higher degrees of excellence*. Paul's maxim was, "Forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward to those that are before." This one thing he did. When we look at this exalted man, we may well feel that "we have not already attained." In divine knowledge, in holiness, in usefulness, in Christian enjoyment, compared with him we are but babes. Our knowledge is limited and indistinct—our holy affections greatly fail in con-

stancy, enlargement and vigor—our usefulness is withered, and we feel scarcely fitted for important services either in the church or in the world—and our Christian enjoyment, instead of increasing in ever-growing sweetness, scarcely rises above the joys of earth, and, perhaps, never equals the joys of the happy hour when we first saw the king in his beauty, and first beheld the land that is afar off. These defects and imperfections should stimulate us to constant and earnest and prayerful efforts to advance more sensibly in the divine life. If Paul felt that he was far from the prize of his high calling, at what a remote distance are we who must be ever gazing upward to catch a glimpse at his eagle flight. How many things have we to add to our faith, and our virtue, and our knowledge, before we reach his exalted stature? O, for more of the blessedness and glory of that spirit which led him to say, “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ!” One such man as Paul would give the church an impulse such as she has not felt since his head rolled on the Amphitheater at Rome. We have Christians, we have ministers; but we have no Christians, no ministers of renown. It is an evil day, and the world hangs

like a cloud over the church, still deepening and extending its shadow. We fear she will never see another Paul. Yet why should we fear? Days of growth and glory are promised, and there will be leaders in that noble host whose light shall shine like Paul's. Exalted rank, high talent, and devoted piety, will adorn his triumphs before whom every knee shall bow. Kings will come down from their thrones to greet him; wealth will burst its coffers to pay to him its tribute; academic halls will glory in his cross, and their brightest sons will seek no higher honor than to serve at his altar. And the church will put on her beautiful garments, decked with jewels that are radiant with the pure light of heaven, herself once more the perfection of beauty and the joy of the whole earth.

In the third place, Paul's conversion *forbids despair even in the chief of sinners*. Who shall despair when there was mercy for this enraged blasphemer and unrelenting persecutor? He himself teaches us that one reason why *he* was selected from that phrenzied company of Christ's enemies was, that he was their leader, and the vilest of them all. He would have sinners of every age, and name, and degree understand that he stands forth as the rescued victim from the bondage of sin and the curse, that in him Jesus Christ might emphatically show forth his long-suffering



grace, and that he himself might be regarded as its highest expression and pattern. Had it pleased God to have converted Nero, or Domitian, or any of the cruel emperors of Rome in the midst of the barbarities they were inflicting upon the early Christians, and while they were binding them with chains, and subjecting them to torture, and consigning them to the scaffold and the flames; it would not have been more marvelous, nor a more affecting expression of his wondrous, sovereign, immeasurable grace. O ye apostate sons and daughters of men! there is an ocean of mercy in that heart of infinite love. It is grace, mere grace, the riches of grace, that encouraged that chief of sinners to seek and find forgiveness in the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Nor is there a sinner within the compass of Christian lands, be he ever so guilty, vile, and rebellious, to whom it is not now as freely offered, and who shall not as certainly find it by applying to that atoning Saviour. He does not seek for the innocent; he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The dreams of self-righteousness have no place among the glorious realities of the gospel of the grace of God. Nor have the multitude and hideousness and malignity of sin; but to be blotted out as a cloud, and as a thick cloud. God's method of pardon has nothing to do with men either because their sins are few and small, or because

they are many and great. One sin cuts them off from hope by the deeds of law ; ten thousand do no more. IT IS CHRIST THAT DIED : this is the reason, the all-sufficient reason of pardon ; and no guilt of man can transcend the value of his atoning blood, or the munificence of his incomprehensible grace.

Would that these precious truths were clearly understood and duly valued, especially by unrepenting men of every name and class ! Is it a *great sinner*, a self-righteous sinner, a self-deceived sinner, a self-hardened sinner that contemplates them ; *whose* character and condition were more hopeless from the greatness of his sins, from his overweening self-righteousness, from his cherished self-deception, and from his maddened obduracy, than Paul's ? That same grace that was a refuge for *him*, is a refuge for *you*. Is it an *infidel* who reads of Paul's conversion : let him remember that Paul, too, was once an infidel. Is there a *blasphemer* who reads it : Paul also was once a blasphemer. Is there a man of malignant spirit and passion who reads it ; one who delights in opposing, and perplexing, and slandering the people of God, and wants nothing but opportunity to become their persecutor : Paul, too, was once all this. He bore all the visible marks of a reprobate, and seemed destined to be a cast-away. But "behold he prayeth !" He has seen the Lord Je-

sus, and in hopeless agony exclaims, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And though his sins were as scarlet, they are white as snow; and though they were red like crimson, they have become as wool. He is washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Who, then, shall despair; who shall doubt that almighty grace can do any thing, or that Paul's Saviour is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him?

## CHAPTER X.

### The Conversion of Lydia.

THE dividing line between those who “are dead in trespasses and sins” and those who “are quickened together with Christ,” is *their conversion*. We can not possess just views of the difference between good and bad men without just views of this great Scriptural doctrine. We propose, in the present chapter, not so much to discuss the doctrine as to submit some general observations concerning it, to which we are naturally led by the short narrative given us of the *conversion of Lydia* to the Christian faith.

In all their efforts to reform the world, human philosophy and the gospel have a different starting point, and proceed upon different principles. Reason adopts the notion that man is born uncorrupt and sinless; and that, notwithstanding the imperfections and vices that are subsequently discoverable in his conduct, he has naturally within him a principle of virtue—a good soil, where, if

the seed is properly and carefully cultivated, it will bear fruit. Christianity adopts the principle that man is naturally and radically corrupt; insists, at the outset, on an internal transformation of character. The strength of its exhortations is exhausted, not in calling upon men to cultivate and cherish the germ of spiritual life, but to awake from the death of trespasses and sins; to "repent and be converted," to become *renewed* in the spirit of their minds, and "put on the *new man* which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This is the change of which every man is the subject who is a true and sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. It is not a mere modification of a naturally corrupt state of mind; it is not human sinfulness made better, and exhibited in less disgusting and more attractive forms; it is a radical change of character, in which new and high-born views of God and his truth, and new and high-born principles and affections exert, though not a constant and perfect, an habitual and controlling sway.

There are changes in the character of men which have the semblance of conversion, but which, at the same time, have no spiritual character. There are, for example, changes that are produced by the mere influence of *time and circumstance*. The buoyancy of youth, the sober calculation of manhood, the pensiveness of old

age, personal suffering, the solitude of bereavement, present the character of the same individuals under very different phases. There is a change in their tastes and habits; they themselves are different from what they once were. But these are changes which are obviously the effect of mere natural causes. Not unfrequently, also, there is a *change in the outward conduct* which has the appearance of conversion. Sin is so often its own punisher in the present life, that outward reformation may proceed from motives of expediency and self-interest, and not from a sense of duty, or love to God. However effectual such considerations may be as far as they go, they do not reach the root of the evil, nor strike at its source; they only make clean the outside. Reason and philosophy may thus reform the outward conduct of men; Christianity alone changes and renovates his inward nature.

There are also *awakenings of conscience which bear the semblance of conversion*. Apprehensions of the wrath to come make men solemn and serious; they induce many a despiser of the Bible and the sanctuary to respect the divine institutions; and they drive him to his closet. But if love to God come not in the place of slavish fear, and peace with God through Jesus Christ banish not these terrible apprehensions, and the spirit of adoption do not succeed this spirit of bond-

age, he is under the law still, and not under grace.

*A mere disrelish of the world and its pleasures* is also sometimes mistaken for conversion. It is true that the first dart that wounds the soul is often that which sickens it of all created good. But disgust with the world is not necessarily attachment to God and heaven. There are those who have sounded these broken cisterns, and have found that the deeper they have gone the more polluted and muddy they are; who, at the same time, have not repaired to the fountain of living waters. They are the children of disappointment and sorrow, but not the children of God.

*An amiable and lovely natural temperament* is also sometimes confounded with conversion. There are those who are naturally so far removed from the rougher and unamiable passions—so kind, so meek and gentle, that they appear scarcely to need any change of character in order to be fitted for heaven. Yet these natural instincts are not the graces of the spirit; they may exist without love to God, and irrespective of all moral principle. I have seen them in an *infidel*. I have seen them in persons whom you might treat with ingratitude and injustice, and to ingratitude and injustice might add insult and outrage; nor could they be moved from their imperturbable tranquillity except by the truth of God. Under the

strong and steady light of God's truth these amiable instincts melt away, and the hostility of the heart shows itself. They are mere amiable impulses, and not attributable to converting grace.

There is a *dreamy sentimentalism* also that is often substituted for conversion. Where the imagination is the dominant faculty, and where the understanding and conscience have less to do in the formation of character than a refined and delicate sensibility, and more especially where these qualities are esteemed, and this state of feeling is assiduously cultivated, this excessive sensitiveness is not only apt to be substituted for true religion, but is often regarded as the refinement of holiness. Yet is it no proof of piety; multitudes possess it who are at heart God's enemies. We may be enraptured at the scenery of the visible creation; we may tremble at a clap of thunder, or weep over the wilted rose; we may be thrown into transports of ecstasy by an interesting group on the canvas, or turn with instinctive agony from the groans of the dying; while our bosoms, so sensitive on other themes, are strangers to every right emotion toward the amiable and lovely character of the ever-blessed God, and walk proudly and scornfully by that cross where his own Son is suspended—the sacrifice for our sins. Nay, we may weep at his cross, while the tears we so freely shed flow not “because we look on



him whom we have pierced, and mourn ;” they are the tears of a mere natural sensitiveness, without one emotion of godly sorrow, or one sigh of a broken and contrite heart. Such emotions are romance, but not religion ; poetry, but not piety.

A mere *change in the governing purpose of a man's life* is also often regarded as true conversion. It is right that men who have lived to themselves and the world should form the purpose of living to God. But to form this purpose sincerely, a man must first be a true lover of God, and have respect to all his commandments. Yet is it no unusual thing for men to *make the resolution* to turn from sin unto God, and to persuade themselves that this resolution itself constitutes the substance of religion. There is a class of religious teachers who, when any of their hearers are brought thus to change the governing purpose of their life, look upon them as born again, and count them as converts. But there is error in such teaching, and delusion in such conversions. Such a resolution is the mere determination of a mind that is dead in sin. It is not love ; it is not repentance ; it is not faith ; it is not obedience ; it is not conversion. It is not a holy purpose ; it does not spring from holy motives ; and while it may, it does not necessarily exert a holy influence. The truly converted man not only resolves to *become* a Christian ; he *is* one ; his pur-

pose is an executed purpose; he has not only made up his mind to love and serve God, but he loves and serves him.

True conversion, then, is quite a different matter from any or all of these things. What is it? We answer, it is an internal change, a *moral change in the character of the soul, and one which affects the inner before it affects the outer man*. The Scriptures speak of it as a "new creation." It is a new heart and a new spirit. It takes hold of the great seat of spiritual life. Wherever it takes place the *heart* receives a new nature, and a new impulse, comes under a new and spiritual control. Its views and affections are transformed from evil to good, from sin to holiness, from self and the world to God, to duty, and to heaven. The love of God has regained its long-lost throne, and has become the dominant power.

We say, that in conversion the *love of God* has regained its long-lost throne: we may dwell a moment on this thought. *Before man fell*, he possessed the same natural instincts and affections which he now possesses. If you form in your own minds a graduated scale of the principles and affections which controlled him before his apostasy, they will stand in something like the following order. The first great affection of his soul was *love to God*; this was supreme and governed all the rest. Below this was the *love of self*;

then the *love of kindred and kind*; then the *love of the world*; and then all the *natural instincts and passions*. This was his character in his primitive rectitude, because he was human, and had a human heart. These secondary and lower influences did not countervail his rectitude, because all these were in their proper place, and subordinate to his higher love of God. He did not need conversion, because his love of God was supreme, and held every other principle and affection in subjection. *After he fell*, he lost this controlling influence of his love to God, and needed to become a regenerated man. And now, when he becomes a regenerated man, it is by restoring to his disorganized and ruined mind its former love to God. This is what regeneration does in every instance; and this is its nature. It restores the love of God to its throne in the human heart. It does not take away the love of self and other things; nor does it destroy any of the natural instincts and passions; but it holds them in check, sanctifies them, directs them, and subjects them all to the supreme love of God. This is conversion. Introduce into the bosom of the wickedest man in the world the love of God, and give it the governing power and throne, and you at once change his whole moral character. He becomes another man, and a new creature. The change is radical, absolute, instantaneous; new principles and motives

govern him ; and so superior are they to all others, that he thinks, and feels, and acts, as he never thought, nor felt, nor acted before. It is difficult to conceive of a greater change, unless it be from the total depravity of earth to the sinless perfection of heaven. Such a man has entered upon a new life. There is no other starting-point, and from no other is there any progress in holiness. To love God ; to love nothing so much as him ; to love every thing in him and for him, and in subserviency to him, is the sum and substance of true religion ; and in beginning to do this, the soul is born from above, passes from death unto life, and is translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. She lives in a world of light because it is a world of love. The whole soul is affected by the change, and all its faculties are under a new direction. The love of God enters into the details of human life, and progressively subdues the entire man to holy obedience. It does not make him sinless, but it makes him a dutiful child of God. "The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost." It is the regenerated sinner who loves ; it is the Spirit of God who produces that love. "We love him because he first loved us." To change the heart ; to give existence by his own efficient energy to new and holy principles and affections ; to triumph over the power of a depraved

will, is what no man, left to himself, ever did, or ever can perform, and that of which the best have learned to say, "He that hath wrought us, for this self-same thing is God." God effects the change in his own wise and appointed way. "Of his own will begat he us with the *word of truth*." God's truth is the great instrumentality. The views which the Scriptures reveal of God; of his pure and holy law; of the sinner's wicked heart and of his exposure to the curse; of his helplessness from self and creatures, and his entire dependence on sovereign and omnipotent grace; of the crucified One, and of his all-sufficiency and love; these are the means by which his dark mind is enlightened, his conscience convinced, his fears and his prayers excited, his despondency relieved, his bosom filled with radiations of hope, and his heart melted into love. He is brought out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Love, grace, pardon, Jesus, duty, heaven—these are the thoughts now most in his heart, and oftenest upon his lips. He is conscious that the work of salvation within him is begun, and that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

A pleasant illustration of these remarks is furnished by the conversion of the favored woman whose name we have already mentioned.

In their early visitation to the churches, it was the great object of the apostles to confirm them

in the common faith. Soon after the council at Jerusalem had passed the sentence by which the proselyted Gentiles were freed from observing the law of Moses as a term of salvation, Paul and Silas took a tour through Cilicia and Lycaonia, to publish the decision and to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. In Lycaonia they visited most of the cities where they had formerly preached, and, through their exertions, "the churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily." From Lycaonia, they passed through Phrygia and Galatia; but being forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach in the province of Asia, they came to Mysia, and designed to go to Bithynia. Not suffered, however, by the Spirit to do this, they passed by the Lesser Mysia, and came to the city of Troas; a noted seaport, where travelers from the upper coasts of Asia commonly took passage for Europe. While at Troas, Paul had a vision in the night: "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us." Of this vision Paul gave an account to his companions, who, gathering from it assuredly that the Lord had called them to preach in Macedonia, willingly obeyed the heavenly admonition, loosed from Troas, passed into Europe, and, landing at Neapolis, went immediately to Philippi, because it was the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and

a Roman colony, and contained a Jewish synagogue. Philippi was not originally a part of Macedonia, but, in a war with the Thracians, Philip, the father of Alexander, annexed a part of Thrace to Macedonia, and named it *Philippi*, in honor of himself, and where Julius Cæsar subsequently planted a colony of Romans, afterward augmented by Augustus, who sent the adherents of Anthony to this and other cities of Macedonia. Philippi, from being a small town, became a great city, and enjoyed all the privileges of a Roman colony. In their visit to this metropolis, it was natural for Paul and his companions to indulge somewhat enlarged expectations as to the success of their labors. Nor were these hopes defeated. They remained at Philippi "many days," during which they laid the foundations of a numerous church, gathered both from among the Jews and the Gentiles, and which, after the apostle's departure, and at the time he wrote his Epistle to them, had increased so greatly that it required several ministers to supply them with the privileges of the gospel.

It is interesting to see how and where this wonderful work of grace commenced. It was not in the Capitol—nor in the synagogue—nor with individuals of influence and distinction—nor yet with some ceremonious and rigid Jew—nor yet with many individuals of any character—but

it was at a distance from the crowd, on the banks of the river which washed the walls of the city, amid the sacred stillness of a Sabbath morning, and in the heart of a poor heathen woman! "On the Sabbath we went out of the city by the river-side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." This was the first conversion to the Christian faith of which we have any account, in ancient Greece—the first drop from the bosom of that cloud of mercy which so plentifully watered the fields of Europe.

The heart of man was the same, and the work of grace the same, under the ministrations of the apostles, as they are found to exist in the present age of the world, and under the ministrations of ordinary men. We need little to convince us that it is naturally closed to the salutary influence of divine truth. The heart of Lydia, and the hearts of those who were assembled with her at the wonted place of prayer, on the bank of the river, until God began to influence them, were all closed against the gospel. The natural man "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them,



because they are spiritually discerned." Men are awake to every other concern rather than that which affects their immortality. To such a mind the gospel presents no allurements, because it presents so many truths which aim a deadly blow at the idolatry of self-love, and are for ever at war with a world that lieth in wickedness. If ministers should preach "another gospel;" if the Scriptures would make some compromise with flesh and blood, the heart of man would not prove so desperately hostile to their claims. But when the whole gospel is brought into view; when all its truths are disclosed, and all its duties enforced, and there is a full and faithful development of all that is adapted to humble and abase the pride of man, the heart recoils. It repels every attack. The claims of the gospel may be shown to be reasonable, and its principles demonstrated to be true; and the duty of accepting them acknowledged to be important; but all this is of no avail. The understanding may perceive, the conscience may feel, but the heart is fast closed in slumber, locked in spiritual death. Having eyes to see, they see not; and ears to hear, they hear not. There is a spirit of opposition to the gospel, and "men will not have Christ to reign over them," nor "come unto him that they might have life."

The world has had experience enough of this

sad truth in every age. From the generation before the flood to the generation now upon the earth, every succession of men have closed their hearts against the gospel, and treated it with uniform neglect and contempt. They have either altogether "made light of it," or gone from it "to their farms and their merchandise," or "with one consent have made excuse;" and in the vanity of their enjoyments, the pressure of their business, and the deceitfulness of their subterfuges, have proved that the radical cause of their delay and their rejection has been "an evil heart of unbelief." What minister has not found it so with his people? What parent has not wept over it in his child? What individual, in his serious and honest hours, has not been constrained to admit it in himself? How small a portion of those who have had the opportunity of accepting the gospel have laid open their hearts to its influence? Where the gospel is enjoyed in its purity, and its great designs and glorious truths are exhibited in the plainest and strongest and most amiable light; though some believe, yet the great majority reject and oppose. What gives weight to this representation is, that men will shut their hearts against the gospel, even when they feel their perishing need of it. They may become acquainted with their sinfulness, be sensible of their exposure to everlasting perdition, feel that they are in the

gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, and acknowledge that the gospel is the sufficient and the only remedy ; and yet persist in rejecting this great salvation. No persuasives can prevail with them to accept it ; no motives drawn from the glory of God, the excellency of Christ, the joys of heaven, or the miseries of hell, can break or open their hearts.

How, then, and by whom is it opened ? Just as Lydia's was, when " the Lord opened it." When man or woman receives the gospel, it is from the *heart*. It is not an unwelcome service ; but one which is performed freely and with the whole soul. It is not a duty to which they are urged at the expense of their inclination ; but one which they discharge voluntarily and from choice. " With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness." Now thus to affect the obdurate mind of man, thus to open the heart to the benign influence of gospel truth, to cause it to love that which it once sincerely hated, and choose that which it once heartily rejected, is the prerogative of God.

It was owing to a divine influence that the heart of Lydia " was opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul." It was not the preacher that so much interested her, as the *things* that were spoken by him. It was not the man, but the truth. It was not the eloquence of his manner ; it

was the matter of his discourse. There was at that little assembly, no doubt, a divine influence upon the preacher as well as the hearers. The Spirit of God moved Paul to utter the messages of grace with a clearness and simplicity and animation which were calculated to impress what he uttered upon the minds of his hearers. But this was not all. This was nothing without the interposition of divine power to impart a saving effect to the ministrations of the word. Such are the teachings of the Bible, and such the teachings of sound experience. Who that has observed the highest efforts of human reason, the most affecting and the most powerful expostulations, the most ardent zeal and most earnest solicitude prove unavailing, has not been convinced that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy?" Who that has witnessed the triumphs of omnipotence over human obduracy—that has felt his adamant heart give way to the milder influence of a heart of flesh, has not been led involuntarily to exclaim, "Behold, what hath God wrought!" Would you recall some of the instances in which God has opened the hearts of multitudes, and poured out his Spirit in larger effusions? Go to the rivers of Babylon. There see a people pining away in their wickedness, and giving vent to their complaints against the just judgments of the Most High. But be-

hold them suddenly abased for their vileness, hanging their harps upon the willows, and weeping over the woes and jealous for the honor of Zion. Think of three thousand of the descendants of that same people on the day of Pentecost, with one heart, submitting to the scepter of the despised Nazarene. And in their subsequent history, behold sometimes two hundred and sometimes five hundred—now at Samaria, and then at Antioch, and then at Philippi—sometimes on the river's bank, and sometimes in the school-room of Tyrannus, and sometimes in the Synagogue, joyfully renouncing their sins and accepting the Lord Jesus; and in these see the evidence that it is God's prerogative to open the heart to the influence of the gospel.

There is one who is able to give success to his truth, and make it the "power of God to salvation," whenever, wherever, and to whoever he pleases. He can rouse the thoughtless from their stupidity, and fix their attention as he did Lydia's, upon the things that are spoken by his ministers. He can make them understand the great truths which so deeply interest them, as sinners and expectants of eternity. He can affect their consciences and make them bow under the weight of their obligations. He can cause them to see and tremble at their danger and feel their need of mercy. And to complete his sovereignty, he ex-

ercises a control over their hearts and can open them and impart sensibility for unconcern, love for hatred, joy for sorrow, hope for fear, and in all respects work in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure :—so that, from opposing him, they shall become entirely reconciled to his character ; from being indifferent to his honor and glory, they shall be grieved that they have opposed and dishonored him ; from excusing and defending their disobedience, they shall abhor themselves for their ingratitude and rebellion ; and from excluding the Saviour, glory in his cross.

*The Spirit of God has no uniform procedure in the conversion of men.* He commands means and resources that are boundless ; in his operations upon the minds of men there is great variety, while the nature of the work he accomplishes is in every instance essentially the same. Not a few truly converted persons are perplexed with questions concerning their conversion, which have no necessary and indispensable connection with the genuineness of their conversion itself. There is a difference in the degree of conviction of sin. With some it is sudden, with others it is gradual ; with some it is deep and powerful, with others it is less distressing ; with some it is long continued, and drives the subject to despair, with others it is more gentle and soon followed by the sweet consciousness of reconciliation to God and hope in

his mercy. With some the change itself is more strongly marked, obvious and joyful ; with others it is more serene and tranquil, and discerned not so much by the full glory of the Sun of righteousness bursting upon the soul, as by his fainter rays and progressive dawning. With some it is attended by strong animal excitement ; with others there may be scarcely an excited emotion. The hopes of some on their first introduction to the kingdom of God may be strong and full of confidence, while the hopes of others may be more like the bruised reed and smoking flax. Yet the change in all is substantially the same ; it is God's work, and bears his image and superscription. There are diversities of operations, but the same Spirit, the same "God that worketh all in all." Few Christians are able to give an account of their conversion with the clearness and distinctness with which the apostle Paul, for example, narrates his own. They may not be able to specify even the *time* when they were converted. This is no uncommon thing. So far as their own consciousness and recollection are concerned, the change was effected so imperceptibly to themselves that they have taken knowledge of it rather by its results than by any satisfied persuasion of its date. Men may not write bitter things against themselves because in any of these incidents their own experience does not accord with the experi-

ence of others. The soul is not less truly drawn to God by the gentle whispers of his Spirit and by cords of love, because this still small voice was neither preceded nor attended by the earthquake and the fire. Sinai may be girt with flame and speak in thunder; while, from the midst of the terror and excitement, men now, like Israel of old, may return to their idols. The wind bloweth where and as it listeth. It is not always wise for us to inquire eagerly into the manner and time and place and circumstances of our conversion, so long as we discern in ourselves those spiritual affections and that obedience that are characteristic of true holiness. We may not know by what means, or by whose instrumentality we were brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light; it is enough if we can say, "This one thing I know, that whereas I was once blind, I now see."

*This change of character, be it also remarked, is a perfectly reasonable thing.* It is reasonable as a doctrine, and reasonable as a duty. When the Saviour taught the doctrine to Nicodemus, he exclaimed, "How can these things be?" The *word* conversion is a fearful word to some minds; the doctrine seems a forbidding doctrine, and to some minds is clothed in mystery. But the *thing itself*, how simple, how beautiful is it! To turn from the evil to the good, this is the whole of it.



Paul's conversion was a remarkable instance of this moral transformation, because he was a very wicked man before he was converted, and a pre-eminently godly man after it, and also because the means of his conversion were miraculous. But he did not reach this eminence of piety without beginning where the meanest and the most exalted, the best sinner and the worst sinner begin; in being born again, born from above, born of the Spirit, and in beginning to turn and actually "turning from the error of his ways to the wisdom of the just." And what mystery was there in this? What mystery is there in it now? Well did the Saviour say to that master in Israel, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again!" Is it an unintelligible doctrine, or an unreasonable duty, that the love of God should be restored to its throne in the heart of man? Or is there any truth in the Bible, or any duty in morals, which demonstrates that it is more reasonable for men to *remain the haters of God*? Which is the more reasonable, the carnal mind which is enmity, or the new heart which is love? "Repent, then, and be converted." "Turn yourselves from all your iniquity." "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." This is conversion. You must be this,

and do this, or you must perish. If you can not do it in your own strength and by the force of your own will, do it seeking and leaning upon Almighty grace. Here lies all your hope. Let not this dependence on the Holy Spirit be a stumbling-block to you, or make you linger. Without it you can do nothing. Refuse it not, and you will become willing in the day of his power. Resist not the Holy Ghost, and he will enter in and occupy your heart and rule it for ever. Turn as Saul of Tarsus turned. Jesus calls you, and Jesus will smile upon and help you. Meet his offered grace with an affectionate welcome. Take hold of his strength that you may make peace with him, and you shall make peace with him.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *The Thessalonians and Bereans ;*

OR, PROTESTANTISM AND ROME TRIED BY A SINGLE TEST.

WE present, in the present chapter, a contrast between *two classes of men*, as their characters are expressed toward a single truth. We need not occupy your time by any historical notices of the inhabitants of ancient Berea and Thessalonica. They were the great scriptural antitypes of PROTESTANTISM and ROME. The difference between them was, that "those of Thessalonica," through their indifference, neglect and hostility to the *Word of God*, rejected the gospel and banished the apostles, while the Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily" in order to ascertain and judge for themselves whether or not the teaching of the apostles was true.

It would be injustice to Rome to affirm that she has always and uniformly been opposed to the circulation and reading of the Scriptures. However discreditable the fact may be to her doctrine of infallibility, she formerly occupied very

different ground on this subject from that which she now occupies. The time was when she did not refuse the Scriptures to the common people ; but it was before her deep apostasy. She *does refuse them this privilege now* ; and this is one of her great characteristics, and one of the great proofs of her corruption.

This is a severe allegation to bring against a community professing to be the church of the living God. Nor are we surprised that the truth of it has been and is still denied. The Romanists of our day have denied it ; mitered heads have denied it with unblushing effrontery. There are not wanting those among the priesthood who have themselves refused the Bible to those under their own immediate charge, who, with lying tongue, declare that it is no part of the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church to exclude the laity from the reading of the Scriptures. We must therefore employ a few moments, and but a few, in establishing this mournful fact.

It was not the work of a day that brought the Christian church to the degradation of the Papacy. The Church of Rome, as founded by Paul, had free access to the Scriptures. So had all the churches in the earlier ages of Christianity down to the times when the corruptions of the Papacy, in polity, in doctrine and in morals, became so arrogant, false, and gross, that the men of God

who were found in her, with great boldness and success, made their appeal to *the Bible*, in opposition to her manifold abominations. The alternative was a very obvious one. Either this Book of God must be discredited or denied to the common people, or the pretensions and corruptions of Rome must submit to rebukes which they could not survive. Rome had power. Yet she could not endure the test of scriptural truth; and, after discrediting and corrupting it, she gradually withdrew it from the common people, confined it to monasteries, and well-nigh denied it to the world. These were her centuries of darkness. Sacred learning was neglected by her priesthood; the superior clergy themselves were sunk in the grossest ignorance; and, instead of explaining the Scriptures, or even reading them to the people, were employed in selling letters of indulgence and saying masses for the souls of the departed. There was nothing they feared so much as the Bible, more especially the New Testament. And, in accordance with these fears, in the year 1229, during Edward I., and under Pope Gregory IX., the Scriptures were forbidden to the laity.

When the minds of wise and good men, in different lands, were turned toward the duty of effecting a *Reformation* in the church, nothing impressed them more deeply than that the first

step in this great effort must be to restore the influence of the Holy Scriptures. It was a well-known maxim of the Roman Church that "ignorance is the mother of devotion." And it is a fact of some interest, in its bearing upon the point before us, that ecclesiastical historians agree in the statement that the discovery of the art of printing and the revival of letters held a most important place in preparing the way for the resuscitation of the church from the spiritual death of the Dark Ages. The human mind was thus waked up to thought. If men might learn to read, they might, peradventure, meet with a copy of the Scriptures; and, if they might learn to think, they might direct their thoughts to the true meaning and import of God's Word.

This was what Rome feared, and determined, if possible, to prevent. When the light, therefore, first began to dawn in England, the efforts and the men that were most obnoxious to her, and which, with such relentless cruelty she endeavored to crush, were those which would fain have given the Bible to the people. When that noble man, John Wickliffe, resolved to put the people in possession of the Word of God, and patiently prosecuted the work of translating it into the English language, and his great task was finished, and the labor of the copyists began, and the Scriptures were being widely circulated, the

complaint of the Romanists was, that "the gospel pearl is every where cast out, and trodden under foot of swine." It was "heresy to speak of Holy Scripture in English." A motion was made in the Upper House "to seize all the copies of the Bible," to which the Duke of Lancaster replied, "Are we, then, the very dregs of humanity, that we cannot possess the laws of our religion in our own tongue?" The Archbishop of Canterbury became Wickliffe's enemy—the University of Oxford became his enemy—a Papal Brief summoned him to Rome—and nothing but the war between Pope Urban and Clement saved him from the dungeon or the stake. He died in peace; but Rome branded his memory with ignominy, and the Council of Constance decreed that his bones should be dug up from the consecrated ground of the church, and contemptuously thrown on a dunghill.

Not long after this the Papal clergy drew up what was called the "Constitutions of Arundel," so named from *Arundel*, the Archbishop of York, which forbade the reading of the Bible. The consequence of this intolerant procedure was, that the Lollard's Tower was filled with those who ventured to read the word of God. Men in the most exalted, as well as the more lowly stations, were bound in chains and cruelly burnt to death because they appealed to God's word from the laws of Rome.

When the New Testament in Greek with a new Latin translation by Erasmus first crossed the channel, and found its way to London, Oxford, and Cambridge, and men of learning read it with eagerness, the cry of the priests and bishops was, "Here are horrible heresies; here are frightful antichrists; if this book be tolerated, it will be the death of the Papacy!" The celebrated Edward Lee, the Archbishop of York, remarked concerning the work of Erasmus, "If we do not stop this leak, it will sink the ship." It was at Oxford that William Tyndale found the New Testament, and for so doing was so persecuted that he was obliged to flee to Cambridge. There he associated himself with two young men of a kindred spirit, whose avowed attachment to the word of God produced so deep an impression, that Rome took the alarm and entered afresh upon her career of persecution. She seized the readers of the Bible, condemned them and burnt them alive, and among them six heads of families, and one widowed mother, for the crime of teaching their children the Lord's prayer, the Apostles' creed, and the Ten Commandments *in English*. No book was so much dreaded as the Bible. "If you do not close your kingdom against it," said the Bishop of Asaph to the queen, "it is all over with the religion of Christ among us." When the priests of Rome said to William Tyndale, "Even *we*



do not understand your word of God, how then can the *vulgar* understand it," he replied, "You read it without Christ; that is why it is an obscure book to you." "No," exclaimed one of them, "nothing is obscure to us; it is we who give the Scriptures, and we who explain them to you." "Far from it," rejoined Tyndale, "it is you who have hidden the Scriptures from us; it is you who burn those who teach them, and if you could you would burn the Scriptures themselves." This same William Tyndale, who translated the New Testament into English, for this work of love was first strangled and then burnt. Such was the hostility to Tyndale in England that he was obliged to print his translation on the continent; and when his adversaries ascertained that copies of it were on their way to England, they wrote to Henry VIII., to Cardinal Woolsey, and to the Bishop of Rochester, as follows:—"Two Englishmen wish to send the New Testament in English to your people. Give orders at every seaport to prevent the introduction of this most baneful merchandize." The book notwithstanding found its way to London, Oxford and Cambridge; and orders were promptly given that these places should be searched, and the distributors and their books destroyed. Some of them were overtaken in flight; others were detected in secret chambers; others were dragged from

their beds to march in procession and throw their books into a great fire at the public market ; and others, after having suffered nauseous imprisonment, were burnt at the stake. The Holy Scriptures were publicly proclaimed to "contain an infectious poison ;" the Bishop of London "enjoined on his archdeacons to seize all translations of the New Testament in English ;" and the Archbishop of Canterbury "issued a mandate against *all* books which should contain any particle of the New Testament."

Among the books to be condemned specified by the archbishop to the Convocation of November, 1529, were not only the works of the Continental and English Reformers, but more especially the Bible. "It is impossible to translate the Scripture into English," said one of the prelates. "It is not lawful for the laity to read it in their mother tongue," said another. "If you tolerate the Bible," said a third, "you will make us all heretics." "My diocese," said the archbishop, "is *accumbered* with such as read the Bible. If this continues any time, they will undo us all. We must have greater authority to punish than we have."

When Latimer requested Henry that "the Bible might be permitted to circulate freely in English," the king replied that "the teaching of the priests was sufficient for the people." "Shun these books," cried the priests from the pulpit ; "detest

them; keep them not in your hands; deliver them up to your superiors." Tonstall, the Bishop of London, who had kept under lock and key the seized books, had them carried to St. Paul's church-yard, where they were publicly burnt. A poor minister at Kent, who had purchased some New Testaments at Antwerp, as he was returning, was arrested, put to the torture and burnt. A cargo of New Testaments was, soon after this, landed at Colchester; but they fell into the hands of Sir Thomas More, and were suppressed.

The same hostility to the Bible was expressed by the enemies of the Reformation on the continent. Luther, though religiously educated in the Church of Rome, had never seen a Bible until he was nearly twenty years of age; and then he found it accidentally in the library at Erfurth. Nothing excited the vengeance of Rome, or the apprehensions of the priesthood more than the publication of the Scriptures in Germany and France, in the vernacular tongue. The Council of Trent, the great and acknowledged embodiment of the Roman Catholic Church, from the year 1545 to the present hour, then published to the world, and still maintain, the following language in relation to the Bible:—"Translations of the Old Testament may be allowed, *but only to learned and pious men*, at the discretion of the bishop. But translations of the *New Testament*, made by au-

thors of the first class of this index, *are allowed to no one*, since little advantage, but much danger, generally arises from reading them. Inasmuch as it is manifest from experience that if the holy Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it, it is on this point referred to the judgment of the bishop, or inquisitors, who may, by the advice of the priest, or confessor, permit the reading of the Bible translated into the vulgar tongue by Catholic authors, to those persons whose faith and piety they apprehend, will be augmented, and not injured by it; and this permission they must have in writing. But if any one shall have the presumption to read, or possess it without such written permission, he shall not receive absolution until he have first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary."

When Romanists affirm that the papal church is *not* opposed to giving the Bible to the common people, we presume they point us to this article in the decisions of the Council of Trent. And what is the extent of this indulgence? In the first place, it forbids the Scriptures utterly and to all, unless they are translated by Catholic authors. And in the next place it forbids *their own Bible*, with all its false translations, and all its appended notes which sanction the peculiarities of Rome, to

all persons, except by the *written* permission of the bishop, or inquisitor, and by the advice of the priest, or confessor. We make no comment on these two facts. This is the spirit and the law of Rome; it is in perfect keeping with her principles and her practice. *It is in accordance with her principles*, because she holds that the Scriptures are neither a sufficient nor an authoritative rule; that they derive their claims to our regard merely from the declaration of their church, and that the only true and infallible rule of faith is the traditional belief preserved from age to age by the uninterrupted succession of their priesthood. The great question with Romanists is not, What saith the Scripture? but, What saith the church? *It is in perfect accordance with their principles*, because no man in their communion is permitted to think for himself, but must without question, or scruple, yield his judgment to established opinions. *It is perfectly accordant with their principles*, because they can not, they dare not appeal to the Bible as the ultimate reason of their faith, or as sanctioning the great peculiarities of their system. It would be destructive of their whole system if they allowed and encouraged the common people in the free use of the holy Scriptures. And it is in perfect keeping with their practice, because there is no community in the world, calling itself Christian, where the teachers of religion

know so little of God's word, and where the common people are so ignorant of it and merged in such impenetrable darkness.

If it be said that the preceding facts and observations are more applicable to past ages than to the present age, we can with strong truth and propriety assert that there is no foundation for this reply. Would to God it were true. There would then be some light dawning on Papal lands and some hope for Rome. Never was she more ignorant, nor more intolerant of the Bible than now. Let the public prohibitions of her Popes within the last half century, and their edicts against the unfettered circulation of the word of God, and their repeated denunciations of all Bible Societies, be our proof of this melancholy fact. Let the recent alarm excited in some of the States of the Pope by the dissemination of the Scriptures be proof of it. Let the severe penalties inflicted on men, and even *women*, within the last five years, for venturing to possess a copy of the word of God and reading it, be our proof. And let the wanton destruction of the Bible in our own land, by Roman priests and influence, be our proof that, throughout the length and breadth of Papal lands, God's word is still a prohibited book.

If it be said that *it is the Protestant translation* of the Scriptures only that is prohibited, and that

there is no objection on the part of Rome that *her own* translation should be freely circulated and read, we reply, the assertion is false to history and false to existing facts. The versions of the Scriptures, both ancient and modern, in the Latin language and in the vernacular languages of the countries in which Christianity has been propagated, whether made by persons in communion with the Church of Rome, or by Protestants, are alike comprised in the prohibitory edicts of the Council of Trent. The language of that Council is, "Translations of the Old Testament may be allowed, but *only to learned and pious men*, at the discretion of the *Bishop*. But translations of the New Testament are allowed to no one." It is a remarkable fact too, that, notwithstanding the extent of the Papal church in lands speaking the English language, there is no *English version* of the Bible in the Romish church. It is true there is a version of the *New Testament* in English, just published by the English College of *Rheims* in France. It is also true that, some years after the publication of the Rheimish Testament, the English Jesuits at Rheims removed their monastery to *Douay*, in Ireland, where they published a version of the *Old Testament* in English, usually called the *Douay Bible*. In 1816, the Rheimish New Testament and the Douay Old were combined in one and published in Dublin under the sanction of the

Romish hierarchy and priesthood in Ireland. Yet of so little consequence did the Romanists regard this book, that those who were instrumental in publishing it disclaimed and disavowed it as of no authority. Its comments and its notes are so impious, and so fitted to incite the spirit of persecution, that several of the Irish Romish prelates in Ireland were called before the English Parliament to give an account of their own work. And these prelates and professors of Maynooth College solemnly declared on their oaths, that no version of the Bible existed in the English language. They did not deny the facts, but they disavowed the version as the word of God, because it had never been ratified by the Pope, nor received by the church.

We say nothing of this dishonesty and tergiversation ; we only affirm that, according to her own showing, Rome has no English Bible, and withholds the Scriptures from all who read the English language. And we ask that this fact may have its due influence in determining the question, whether or not Rome withholds the Scriptures from the common people. If she replies that she allows them the Douay Bible, we reply, she does this under such restrictions as effectually interdict it to the common people. And in those instances in which by special permission her followers are allowed to read it, it is so intermingled with the



poisonous and soul-destroying errors of Popery, that it is not God's Bible.

Permit me here to recite a few passages from this Roman Catholic Bible in the English tongue. Open it at the beginning, and in their note from the words "We have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him," the annotators say, this passage "warranteth the faithful in the like kind of external worship done to holy persons, places, and things." To the passage which speaks of Herod's destroying the children of Bethlehem, they add, "By this example we learn how great credit we owe to the church in canonizing saints and celebrating their holy days." The various places in which the Scriptures say *Repent*, they translate *Do penance*—for so they say "is the Latin, word for word, and so readeth all antiquity." From John's fasting forty days, they enjoin the observance of *Lent*. From the passage, "First be reconciled to their brother," they infer the duty of "being reconciled to the Catholic Church, which is the whole brotherhood of Christian men." On the passage, "No man can serve *two masters*," they add, "God and Baal, Christ and Calvin, Mass and Communion, the Catholic Church and Heretical Conventions." On the passage, "Have we not done many wonderful works," they say, "Catholics also work true miracles in the name of our Lord." On the passage, "Go show

thyself to the priest," they say, "The priests of the new law have power to purge in very deed the filth of the soul." On the passage where the Jews accused Christ of blasphemy because he forgave sin, they say, "The Jews charged him with blasphemy, as heretics now charge his priests for that they remit sins." On the passage, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be whole," they say, "This woman, returning home, set up an image of Christ, for memory of this benefit, and the hem of the same image did also miracles." On the passage, "Ye shall be brought before kings for my sake," they say, "When emperors and kings were themselves become Christians, they used their power for the church against infidels and heretics." On the passage, "Whosoever shall deny me before men," they say, this "is not only to deny any one little article of the Catholic faith, but also to allow or consent to heresy by any means." From the words, "Shall not be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come," they deduce the doctrine of purgatory. From the passage which speaks of "plucking up the tares," they deduce the doctrine, that "heretics ought, by public authority, to be chastised or executed." From the words, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," they deduce the compulsion, "By penal laws, which Catholic princes do justly use against

heretics." These are but few of thousands of passages with which this book is filled, advocating and enforcing all the abominations of Rome. If we charge these upon them, they reply, "This is not the Catholic Bible, because it has never received the sanction of the church." To this we only say, "If it is the Catholic Bible, it is vain for them to deny that their religion requires them to be persecutors; if it is not the Catholic Bible, then must they bear the reproach of withholding God's Word from all who speak only the English tongue."

This Douay Bible also furnishes additional confirmation of our main position. In giving God's Word a version in the English language the translators were not a little embarrassed by their own principles. The Council of Trent had already expressed their views as adverse to the use of all translations of the New Testament in the vulgar tongue, and therefore the translators, in their preface to this version, say, This "translation we do not publish upon erroneous opinion of necessity, that the Holy Scriptures should always be in our mother tongue; or that they ought, or were, ordained of God to be read indifferently of all; or could be easily understood of every one that readeth or heareth them in a known language; or that we generally and absolutely deemed it more convenient in itself and more agreeable to God's

Word and honor, or edification for faith, to have them turned into vulgar tongues, than to be kept and studied only in the ecclesiastical and learned languages. The Holy Church doth not forbid utterly any Catholic translation, though she allow not the *publishing* or *reading* of any absolutely, and without exception or limitation." After referring to "those *better times*, before the art of printing was invented," they say, "The poor plowmen could then sing the hymns and psalms, either in known or *unknown* languages, as they heard them in the Holy Church, though they could neither read nor know the sense, meaning and mysteries of the same." Afterward they say, "And truly there is no cause why men should be more loth to be *ordered* and *moderated* in this point by God's church and their pastors than they are in the use of the holy sacraments. The wise will not regard what some willful people do mutter, that the Scriptures are made for all men. The church would have such mere usurpers quite discharged of *all occupying and possession* of the Holy Testament, which is her old and *only right of inheritance*, and does not belong to heretics at all."

Such is the doctrine of Rome in regard to the distribution and reading of the Scriptures. They are but the scraps of proof of her intolerance of God's Word which we have furnished. But, if

we mistake not, they are abundantly enough to show that her principles and her policy forbid the Bible to the common people, which is all we propose to do in the present chapter.

## CHAPTER XII.

### The Thessalonians and Bereans ;

OR, PROTESTANTISM AND ROME TRIED BY A SINGLE TEST.

OUR last chapter was employed in proving the fact, which some modern Roman Catholics have had the hardihood to deny, that *the principles and policy of Rome forbid the Scriptures to the common people*. On no other question more than this are Protestants more united, or more fairly at issue with the Church of Rome. It is a grave question, whether or not the common people have the privilege and right of searching the Scriptures? Nor is it one the affirmative of which Protestants may take for granted. There is no error, and no erroneous system, which has not some plausible considerations to support it, and much more plausible than a superficial view of it would lead us to suppose. A subtle Romanist has much more to say for himself, even on this question, than the mass of Protestants are willing to give him credit for. It is a question which is to be decided only by solemn argument.

Yet is it a strange question to be seriously discussed in this Protestant country ; and I am sorry to confess it is one which forces itself upon us, and demands our sober consideration. In our judgment, it has great political bearings which can not now be adverted to, and which the writer has less occasion to consider, as he has already adverted to them on another occasion.\* It is a great religious question ; and in this view of it only we submit the following train of thought.

I. In the first place, THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD.

We begin with this simple proposition, because it lies at the basis of our argument. With the exception of the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament, both Protestants and Romanists possess the same Scriptures in the original tongues, and acknowledge the same books to be of canonical authority and divinely inspired.

It is a mistake of the Romanists to assert, as they have so often done, that Protestants are indebted to Rome for the canonical authority of the sacred books ; that authority, though reaffirmed by the Council of Trent, was established long before the Papal apostacy, and well understood at an earlier age.† The early Christians in all coun-

\* See the author's Dissertation on "The Rule of Faith," prepared at the request of the American Bible Society.

† See Jones on the Canon of the New Testament.

tries were remarkably agreed in deciding what books were comprised in the inspired writings. Nor may we overlook the internal evidence which the Bible itself furnishes that it is not the work of man. The book itself asserts its divine origin, and claims for it the confidence due to its divine Author. Infinite intelligence and infinite love alone could have made it what it is. Human weakness, and folly, and sin had no part in it; it shines by its own heavenly light, and is hallowed by its superhuman sanctity. The historical proof apart, there is no credulity in the faith and no weakness in the reason that receives it as the word of God, on its own internal evidence. It speaks as man never spake, and teaches as man never taught. Subject the proofs of its divine origin to what ordeal you will, and it will come forth triumphant. Not more certainly do men make advances in human knowledge, than the result of their researches furnishes new demonstrations of its high-born source. Human research, human subtilty, human pride and wickedness, may do their worst, and they can never invalidate the facts on which it rests, nor infringe that immense variety of testimony by which its divine claims are substantiated. The traditions of Rome add nothing to this testimony; nor, with all their cloudy and undefined pretensions, can they obscure the bright glory by which it is illumined.



This sacred volume has been so marvelously preserved in the world, that amid all the wreck of nations, in the midst of which the great mass of the writings of antiquity have been lost, this book of God retains its genuineness and purity. When the civilized world was overrun by barbarism, and centuries of ignorance passed over it, when amid the universal war upon learning, the arts, and civilization, cities were demolished, libraries were destroyed, and the fairest portions of the world were plundered and made desolate; when not a copy of it was in existence, but was written out by the labor of the pen; this book, more hated than all other books, a book which, wherever it could be found, was committed to the flames, was kept safe from this universal destruction. It has been the peculiar care of Divine Providence. Every sect has guarded it; Jews, Samaritans, and Christians of every name have guarded it with a jealous eye, each alike so alive to every species and degree of corruption, that we now have these writings just as God revealed them.

And now we ask, Were they given to the world, and have they been thus marvelously preserved, that they should be denied, or given to the people? Look at this question with some care. It is a great comfort to know that God has thus spoken to our benighted and lost world; and who is there of all its wandering millions who

knows that he has thus spoken but may rightfully demand, What are the lessons, and what the paternal counsels which he has revealed? The voice of nature struggling with her own ignorance, cries out in solicitude and earnestness, *Give me that book, and let me see what it contains!* The Romanist hesitates; he has scruples about giving God's word to the common people, because this is giving that which is holy to dogs, and casting pearls before swine. But why should he thus demur? Does the book itself declare that it is given to any one class of men in exclusion of others? It makes no such intimation. Does it declare that it was revealed for the priests only, and that the people have a right to it, only as the priests may choose to dispense it? There is not a word of this in the Bible itself. And when this child of want and woe asks for the Bible, and you refuse to give it to him, he stands amazed; it is something he can not comprehend, that God should reveal his will and truth to men, and that he should not be allowed to examine it and see what it contains! He is satisfied that it contains the truth of God, and he asks to read it; he feels that he ought to read it, because it is God's word; nor will all the reasoning in the world make him feel that any human authority may hide from him this sacred treasure.

Let us look at this question more deliberately;

for *whom* did God reveal his word? Here we may fitly direct your attention to the different parts of the Bible, and inquire *to* whom, and *for* whom were they given? When God proclaimed his *Law* amid the awful splendors of Sinai, and required Moses to write it upon his tables of stone, for whom was it but the *millions of Israel*? Let the lawgiver himself give the answer. "Hear, O *Israel*, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may *learn them*. These words which I command you this day shall be in thy heart. Ye shall bind them for a sign upon your hand; that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them to your *children*; speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest in the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up; and thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house." *Every Israelite* was addressed by this law, and to become familiar with it was his duty and privilege. This is the spirit that pervades the whole Jewish economy. At Mount Ebal and at Shechem, we are instructed that "there was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before *all the congregation of Israel*, with the *women* and the *little ones*, and the *strangers* that were conversant among them." The songs, the addresses, and the record of facts made in the Historical Books of the Old Testa-

ment were rehearsed on public occasions, and in the presence of the people. The entire Book of the Psalms was written for the whole body of the people, and made a part of their worship in the Temple and the Synagogues. The prophets, who prophesied both before and during the captivity, and after it, addressed their prophesies to the *Jewish nation* ; sometimes to the surrounding nations ; sometimes to nations that were far off ; and not unfrequently to people and times in the distant future. Sometimes they announced their instructions orally ; sometimes in writing ; sometimes they posted them on the gates of cities. They were the guides, the instructors, and the poets of *the people* ; two of them were priests, but they were sent with their revelations to *the people*. So if we read that important portion of the Old Testament which is called "the Proverbs of Solomon," we can not fail to discover its eminently *popular character*, abounding in maxims for the government and regulation of ordinary life, and applicable to all the individual, domestic, social, and civil relations, and in all their varying circumstances. Its language is, "Wisdom crieth *without* ; she uttereth her voice in *the streets* ; she crieth at the chief place of concourse. Unto you, *O men*, I call, and my voice is to the *sons of men* !" The same is true of the New Testament. The four Evangelists, and the Epistles, with the ex-

ception of John's Epistle to "the Elect Lady," and Paul's "to Philemon," were addressed either to the Hebrew Christians at large, or to the Christians among the Hellenistic Jews, or to the Christian world. And the Apocalypse was addressed not merely to the pastors themselves, but to the seven churches of Asia; and in its own words "to all who have ears to hear."

Uninteresting as this detail may be, we know not how better to illustrate and enforce the truth that God's revelation is addressed specially and emphatically to the great mass of mankind. If the Bible is the word of God, it is his word not to cloisters and an authoritative priesthood, but to *men*. There never was a more arrogant and preposterous claim than that it was given to a privileged order; nor any that is more anti-scriptural, and more at war with the great object and design of the revealing Spirit. The question seems too plain for sober argument; we ask but the conceded fact that *the Bible is the word of God*, in order to justify all men, every where in reading it. If the priests may read it, why may not the people? If the priests desire instruction, comfort, joy, from it, why not the people? If they were the words of *men* that we are speaking of, it would be a different matter; but the *word of God*—can it be that the word of God may not be read? The man who asserts this should have very strong reasons for so

bold an assertion. Can any thing be more irrational, more unworthy of a mind that is really honest, and professes to be in earnest after truth? Of what use is the Bible, and what was it given to men for, if they may not read it? Is it a suspicious book; does it contain any thing which men may well be afraid of reading, and which they ought not to know? Is it so that God's word is not worthy of confidence? Indeed I am ashamed to ask such questions in a Christian land. *May not read the Scriptures!* who says this? Which of the divine lawgivers utters this? which of the prophets? which of the apostles? Where does such a doctrine as this come from? O away with it! The enemy hath done this. May the people read the letters of the pope, and the bulls of the Vatican, and not be allowed to read the word of God? May they read the subtilties of Thomas Aquinas and Denny's Theology, and not be allowed to read the Bible? Again we say, Away with this worse than earth-born teaching! God gave his word for man to *read*. "Whatever things were written aforetime," says the apostle, "were written for our *learning*, that we, through patience and comfort of THE SCRIPTURES, might have hope." "SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES," says the Saviour to the *common people*. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy," saith the Apostle Peter, whom Rome claims as the first pope,

“to which ye do well THAT YE TAKE HEED, as to a light shining in a dark place.” “Seek ye out the book of the law, and *read*,” says the Prophet Isaiah. “Blessed is he,” says the Apostle John, “that *readeth* the words of this prophecy.” God’s word “drops as the rain, and distills like the dew.” It cheers alike the oak of the forest and the shrub of the desert. It waters the high places of the earth, and its humblest valleys; the “inhabitants of the rock sing for it, and they shout from the top of the mountains.”

We remark, in the second place, the Scriptures are themselves an *intelligible revelation*. The professed reason why the Church of Rome forbids the reading of the Scriptures to the common people is, that the common people can not understand them. It expressly teaches that the only safe and competent interpreter of them is the “Holy Mother Church, whose right it is to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of sacred writ.” Their controversial writings and approved systems of theology, and general councils, sanction no interpretation and no inquiry “contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.” It is *heresy* for a layman to form his own judgment of God’s teachings, because they are, and long have been, determined and settled by ecclesiastical authority. On the other hand, Protestants affirm that the Scriptures are an *intelligible revelation*. And

who does not see that they must be so, from their nature and object? So far as they are necessarily unintelligible, they are no *revelation*. If they were *altogether* unintelligible, it had been just as well if they had never been given to the world. They profess to be the only rule given to direct us whereby we may glorify God and enjoy him for ever. Could this great and benevolent object be attained unless they can be understood? There are some truths taught by the lights of reason and nature, but they are few, and do not meet the exigences of men; while some of them are so dimly, and even obscurely revealed, that they are left as matters of conjecture, and, at best, of hope, rather than as ascertained and fixed realities. The Scriptures are designed to supply this deep-felt want of the human mind, to fill this chasm, and to "be a light shining in a dark place." There is no greater injustice, no more foul slander, upon the wisdom and benevolence of its Divine Author, than to admit the thought that his Word is not sufficiently plain and intelligible. The facts and truths which he has revealed lay with perfect clearness in his own mind, and he was both able and disposed to reveal them clearly. His object was, not to conceal the truth, nor so to reveal it as to render it doubtful, but to spread it clearly and distinctly before the world. Its author knew the intellectual faculties of men, and has adapted



it to their capacity. He well knew the power of language, and how to address them in language that they can understand. He knew that the mind of man was depraved and dark, and it was his purpose to reveal his truth so intelligibly that it could not be misunderstood without criminal negligence and willful perversion. If the Bible had been a revelation to angels, it would have been adapted to the intellect of angels—if it had been revealed to the philosophers and learned men of the world only, it would have adapted itself to the schools of learning and philosophy. But it was revealed to man, to children, and to those who are babes in knowledge. The metaphor under which this book is so often represented to us, is one of the most beautiful and emphatic in the world. “Thy Word,” says the Psalmist, “is a *light* unto my feet, and a lamp unto my path;” the “entrance of thy Word giveth *light*.” The “commandments are a lamp,” says Solomon, “and the law is *light*.” God’s truth is said to be “a great light,” springing up to them who were sitting in the shadow of death. It was revealed to “enlighten the Gentiles,” and “as the *light* of the world.” It is not a cloud hanging over the minds of men, nor is it a mist that encircles them and wraps them in its folds, but “the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” All parts of it are not equally intelligible.

It speaks of mysteries, and reveals the "deep things of God." But it reveals them *as mysteries*; nor is it among the less important indications of its intelligibleness that it marks the line beyond which the human mind can not safely penetrate. There are doctrines contained in it which are absolutely mysterious. The doctrine of the divine Omnipresence, of the Trinity, and of the incarnation, are incomprehensible by men. But these doctrines are not *mysteriously revealed*; there is no obscurity in the statement of them. *This* is perfectly intelligible; and this is all we affirm of God's revelation. The explanation of these doctrines is not revealed to us, but only the doctrines themselves. So far as the revelation goes, and was intended to go, it is perfectly intelligible. There are also profound trains of thought in the Bible which are not mysterious, but which, at the same time, require patient and close thinking on the part of the reader to follow and understand. But even in those examples of reasoning by the sacred writers, where the *argument* can not be understood without difficulty, the conclusion, the doctrine itself, is perfectly intelligible to the unlettered mind. They are things which God has *not* revealed, and which the curiosity of men would fain pry into, which perplex them. These "secret things" belong to him; while "those that are revealed belong to us, and even to our children."

We have the word of God in our hands ; and we are bold to make the demand, where is the volume, containing so much matter, which is so easily understood ? Read it from beginning to end, and then say what book can be compared with it for simplicity and plainness ? All its parts are consistent and connected, and its great object is simple and clear as the sun at noon-day. That object is to reveal *the great work of redemption by the Son of God*, and to that object all its history, all its biography, all its laws, all its pre-figurations, all its prophecies, all its miracles, all its doctrines, and all its *mysteries* are directed. Its great and cardinal truths are not only intelligibly revealed, but so intelligibly that they can not well be misunderstood. The ten commandments are not unintelligible. The sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer are not unintelligible. The narrative given by the four evangelists of the birth, miracles, teaching, sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not unintelligible. The promises and threatenings of the Bible are not unintelligible. When the Scriptures speak of the character of God and the character of man, they do not speak unintelligibly. When they speak of sin and holiness, of justice and of mercy, of the Redeemer, of the atonement, of the Sanctifier, of regeneration, of justification, of grace, of true religion in distinction from that which is

false, and of heaven and hell ; are they not intelligible ? The lessons of the Bible are its own, and are conveyed in its own way. They are its *thoughts* and not its *words* which engage our attention ; they are great and noble thoughts, but simple words. It has no jugglery, no false rhetoric, no dogmatic jargon, no subtle sophistry, and no shallow artifice. There is no book, which professes to convey a system of religious truth to the world, which is so free from metaphysical obscurity and philosophical abstraction. Critics, I believe, are agreed that of all the books in the world the Bible stands preëminent for conveying its thoughts in the fewest words, and in the plainest and most impressive language. Its words express its thoughts, and its thoughts flow in the order, beauty, simplicity, majesty, and power of truth. Let a man undertake to alter the language of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and he will find that he might as well attempt to purify the light of heaven, or varnish the colors of the rainbow. And if the Scriptures are thus intelligible in themselves, they are also *intelligible to the common people*. Rome affirms that the common people can not understand them ; and we reply, How can it be expected that they will understand what they may not read ? We have never supposed that they were understood by Romanists ; their whole system shows that they are ignorant of them. They

adhere to the time-worn error that "ignorance is the mother of devotion," and then tell us that the Bible is hard to be understood! It is no marvel that they do so, when the pivot on which their theory rests is that men may not read it. How do they expect it to be understood when it has no place in families; when they banish it from the common schools, and their children and their youth are as ignorant of it as of the Alcoran; and when their old men and matrons are taught to look upon it as an inexplicable and interdicted book? We well know this book is intelligible by the common people, because we have known and still know thousands among them who understand it. The policy of Rome is to leave the common people in ignorance; the policy of Protestants is to educate them, and to educate them for eternity. The writer of the book of Proverbs has taught us "that the soul without knowledge is not good." "Where there is no vision the people perish." "My people," saith God, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge." The religious cultivation and improvement of the *intellect* is a duty which no man may innocently neglect. It has capacities for growth and enlargement; it craves nutriment; its aspirations are for advancement in knowledge. Give it but a glimpse of heavenly light, a taste of God's truth, and it shrinks from intellectual degradation. The best exhibitions

of moral excellence the world has seen are those in which piety was exalted by knowledge, and knowledge was directed and refined by piety. Where the mind is allowed to be a barren, neglected waste, we may not hope on such a soil to see the summer fruits. As the Bible has nothing to fear from being known, so neither have those who read and understand it any thing to fear from their knowledge. The best and richest book in the world for the early and perpetual discipline of the human mind is the Bible. Romanists are not aware to what extent and degree Protestants place their dependence upon it for intellectual discipline and improvement. There is no book which gives such definiteness to thought, or such intellectual expansion and enlargement. Let an ignorant Romanist begin to read the Bible, and he will know something ; he will understand something. He will not know all that it contains ; but he will proceed in his knowledge of God's word just as in other things. The little that he does know will create inquiry ; he will have a passion for learning God's truth, which leads to attainment. He will have mind. "The entrance of thy word, giveth light ;" the knowledge of it makes men of children, ignorance of it makes children of men.

We affirm, therefore, that it is the privilege of the people, as well as of their religious teachers, to

read God's word. Rome gives it to them from the lips of her priesthood, and with their exposition; but how are the people to know whether this exposition accords with the word of God, if they may not read it? Protestants also give the people the instruction of their religious teachers, not less than Rome, and not less extensively and studiously. But they do more; they give them *both* the Bible and the ministry.

When Rome asserts that the Scriptures can not be rightly understood without the teaching of God's Spirit, she utters truth, and important truth. But when she asserts that the infallible guidance of the Spirit is promised exclusively *to her as a church*, she utters grievous error. Yes, it is true that man needs the guidance of God's Spirit in order to understand his word. But *why* does he need this guidance? The great difficulty in understanding God's instructions arises from an inattentive and prejudiced mind and a reluctant, disobedient heart. "If *any man* will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Those who expect to surmount these obstacles without help from God will find them still unsurmounted. But have not the weak and illiterate, and the lowest of the common people the promise, "If *any man* lack wisdom, let him ask of God and it shall be given him?" Are the common people excluded from the encouragement, "The meek will he guide

in judgment: the meek will he teach his way?" Have the laity no interest in the promise, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou *criest after knowledge*, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for as for hidden treasures; then *shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God!*" A plain man, reading the Bible with seriousness and integrity and prayer will rarely fail to comprehend it. It was, as we have already seen, written for plain men, and is addressed to plain men; and it was written, for the most part, *by* plain men. It has a primary reference to plain men; "to the poor the gospel is preached;" the common people heard it gladly. A plain Christian who reads his Bible, seeks the divine guidance, and practices what he knows, knows God's truth more truly than many more learned. The melancholy fact is, that the divisions in the Christian church on the subject of Christian doctrine as well as Christian order and government, have originated, not with plain Christians, but with learned and ambitious ecclesiastics. Plain Christians would never have thought of them; and if plain Christians had controlled these controversies, there would have been far less wrangling in the church



of God. Plain men are not embarrassed by the subtilties of system and literature; they do not stumble at the *obvious meaning* of the Bible, and therefore find the fewest difficulties in understanding it.

In the third place, *the excellence of the Scriptures themselves furnish a reason for giving them to the common people.* This book of God is a most wonderful book. It has peculiarities which belong to no other book, and rightfully occupies a place which no other book occupies. It tells of heavenly things, and it tells of those that are earthly. Every department of human knowledge honors it, and every sphere of human influence recognizes its power. To the learned it has given a baptized and sacred literature; to society its organization, to legislators their laws, and to the nations their freedom. It has given to the world its Sabbath, and to the church its ministry and ordinances. This book alone preserves the knowledge and worship of the true God on the earth, and gives its force and sanction to all those social institutions which render it a fitting dwelling-place for man. It is no stranger to his character or condition, to his wants or his woes. Go where it will, it meets the exigences of every individual and every community; of all classes of men and all states of mind; of all forms of human responsibility, all changes in human affairs, and all

periods of time. It teaches by truths the most searching, by principles of universal application, and by facts of universal interest. It speaks to the understanding, conscience, and heart, as man can not speak. Man addresses man as his fellow, the teacher sustaining the same responsibilities with the taught ; God addresses him as his creature, his subject, his child. Man may address him in the words of God ; but in the Bible God himself addresses him in his own words ; it is the Invisible One himself speaking to the visible ; the Infinite holding immediate correspondence with the finite, and the King eternal and immortal condescending to man who is a worm. Man enforces his teaching by reason, by argument, and by considerations drawn from time, and which terminate in the grave ; God by authority, by infinite love and infinite justice, and by eternal sanctions and recompenses. God teaches with an effectiveness which dullness and obduracy can not resist, nor pride oppose. Ignorance hails his word as the light of the world ; sin recognizes it as its great healer, and sorrow as its sovereign antidote. It awakens the careless ; to the anxious it imparts its counsels of peace ; to the doubting its confidence, and to THE LOST ITS SAVIOUR. No other book can be relied upon to give certainty to moral science, and to prescribe to the conscience its rightful prerogative and its correlative obligations. No other

book can be relied upon for producing substantial unity of principle, aim and character. No other can be relied upon for the fullness and extent of its moral discriminations. It makes no mistakes, connives at no wickedness, countenances no error, and encourages no vain and disappointed expectations.

“There no delusive hope invites despair ;  
No mockery meets you, no delusion there ;  
The spells and charms that blinded you before  
All vanish there, and fascinate no more.”

More is there within these comprehensive pages—more important information to the world—more which it concerns man to inquire into, to read, to believe, to know, to do, to be—more of the great end of his existence—more ~~that~~ comprises the purest character and the holiest joy—more of hope, of immortality, of heaven, than reason and philosophy could acquire by the toil of interminable ages. A superficial glance at it carries us beyond the confines of earth ; while the more carefully we inspect it the more our admiration of it is heightened, and the more we are constrained to exclaim : “O the depth of the wisdom !” Its treasures are unsearchable ; nor can we ever grasp the full measure of its wonders. There are resemblances in all other books, and even in all false religions. Learned men have instructed us that the *Zend-Avesta* of the Persians,

the *Veda* of the Brahmins, the *Koran* of the Turks, the *Edda* of the Scandinavians, the *Philosophy of Confucius* and the *Sanscrit Poems*, have all a common train of thought, and are expressive of the crudest notions of fallen humanity. But the Bible is like no other book in the world. It stands out in the great temple of the universe, luminous with the beauties of truth and holiness, every where reflecting the transparent light of the celestial city, and a single and lone monument of its Divine Architect. The time is coming when the world will gaze upon it with holy admiration. Enlightened men, who never saw it before, will read it with astonishment. The learned Dervish and the philosophical Mandarin will read it; and the wandering Tartar and the brutal Hottentot will read it, and will alike wonder at its truths. And the poor blinded Romanist will read it. The Spaniard will read it in his pride, and the Irishman in his abjectness, and will wonder why he never read it before. And a mighty voice will go up from these degraded lands demanding of a corrupted priesthood, *Why* they have taken away the key of knowledge?

<sup>1</sup> *This is the book which they will not give to the people. Why?* Again the question returns, *Why?* Is it *too bad* a book? Or is it *too good* a book? Ay, it is too good a book! None but priestly hands may touch it or venture to open its

seals! It may decorate Papal halls, but must not shed its mild and heavenly radiance on the cottages and shanties of the poor. It may stand abreast with all social advancement, and its progress become the brighter with the brightening ages of time, and the brighter characters of men; but Rome must watch, if she can not arrest its progress. It must be embarrassed by her interdict; and when it travels into her dark lands, it must be under the anathematizing ban of her empire. Does this look like Christianity? Does it savor of the things that be of God? Is it expressive of reverence for him, or his word? Does it honor his wisdom and love in giving the world his glorious gospel? What a wretched system must that be which professes to *protect* the people from the knowledge of such a book? Protect the human mind *against the influence of God's truth!* Is such a book as this so polluted a fountain, so poisoned at its source, that men must be warned against it as against the pestilence? Yet this is the doctrine of Rome. Of all the books in the world, the Bible is the one she is most afraid of. No matter by what name it may be called, nor how time-honored, nor how splendid and gorgeous in its forms, nor how consecrated by the decisions of fallible men; we may well suspect a religion, all the precepts and tendencies of which are to produce a neglect of the Holy Scriptures.

In the fourth place, *we claim for the common people the right of reading the Scriptures, because they are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.* The Bible and Rome are conflicting elements; they never come in contact without coming in collision. The doctrine of Rome is, that the rule of faith is the received faith of the Papal Church. What the Church of Rome receives as true, she regards as the infallible criterion of truth, and claims that all men are under obligations to respect her decisions. She arrogates the exclusive prerogative of judging what the truths are which the word of God reveals. Protestants, on the other hand, affirm that the *only* infallible rule of faith and practice is the word of God. The writings of good and learned men, the decisions of Synods and Councils, venerated confessions of faith, and other helpers in Biblical research, may assist them in ascertaining the true import of the sacred writings; yet, after all that human productions can accomplish, their last resort is to the Bible itself, as the only and infallible rule of faith and practice.

And is not Protestantism, in this article of her faith, the doctrine of the Bible? The Prophet Isaiah declares, "*To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*" "Why," says the Saviour, "do you transgress the command-

ments of God by your tradition ;" in "vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Again, he says, "Thy *word* is truth." The apostle solemnly declares, "If any man, or an angel from heaven, preach *any other gospel*, let him be accursed !" The true faith rests now just where it rested in the days of primitive Christianity—on the testimony of "the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." There is, there can be, no other *ultimate* reason, or ground of it, in any age of the world, than the Holy Scriptures.

We demand, then, in the name of common sense, and a common Christianity, and on the behalf of human liberty, and those inalienable rights which the God of the Bible has given to man, *Why* may not this sacred book be read by the common people? If you say the church is the depository of it, let her give it to the people ; for how can she let her light shine so long as she puts it under a bushel? If you say, she does give it to the people in the decisions of the Pope and her councils, in the instructions of her priesthood and the confessional, then she has nothing to fear when the people search the Scriptures. If the doctrines of Rome are in accordance with the Bible, her doctrine and her authority will only be confirmed in the minds of the people by their acquaintance with the Scriptures. Where is the

danger in allowing the people to read and judge for themselves? If the Bible teaches Romanism, Romanists are the last men in the world who should object to giving it to the people. If the Bible will make men Romanists, the sooner they become so the better. We have no objection to becoming such Romanists, as Peter and Paul, and their adorable Master. Romanists understand this matter perfectly well ; they well know the power of the Bible. Hence their hostility to the circulation of the Scriptures. The empire of passion and self-interest ever have been, and ever will be opposed to the empire of truth. Rome no where shows its weakness so much as in this jealousy of the Bible. There is no effort to which they are so sensitive as that of instructing their people in the truths of the Bible. It rouses all their depraved passions, and they at once begin to tremble for mother church. Give their people the Bible, and tell them that this is the Book of God, and they find to their astonishment, that their favorite doctrine of the *authority of the church*, of *oral tradition*, of the *Papal supremacy*, of *transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass*, of the *seven sacraments*, of the *invocation of saints and the use of images*, of *purgatory and the doctrine of merit*, of *penance and purchased indulgences to sin*, and of the *Catholic hierarchy*, have no place in the teachings of God's word, and are not



named there except to be reprobated and condemned. I cannot here suppress a narrative which sets the doctrine of auricular confession and priestly absolution in their true light. An Irishman, belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, but who had imbibed some ugly notions in one of our Sabbath schools, was asked by his curate why he did not come to confession, replied, "Please your Reverence, do *you* confess?" "Yes I do, to the Rector." "And do you *pay*?" "Yes." "And to whom does the Rector confess?" "To the Bishop." "And does he pay him?" "Yes." "And to whom does the Bishop confess?" "To the Vicar General." "And pays him?" "Yes." "And to whom does he confess?" "To the Pope." "And pays?" "Yes." "And to whom does the Pope confess?" "To Jesus Christ." "And does he pay any thing?" "No." "Then, please your Reverence," said the man, "as I am very poor, I think I shall go to Jesus Christ at once." If Popery is thus refuted by common sense, well may this Dagon fall before the ark of God. Common sense and natural conscience, enlightened and directed by God's word, are sure to prevail over the silly writings and traditions of men. It is not any new revelation that the world needs. It is not the church to which the last appeal is to be made. The church may err, and has no sure guide for herself but God's word. There

is but this one way, and that of God's own revealing. Why the people should not know it, and judge of it; and if they do so, why they should be consigned to infamy, is a problem for Rome to solve. Why is it but to enslave the minds of men, and ride rough-shod over the necks of the people? She is in this respect nothing better than her principles; and if she had her own will and way, this fair land would be reduced to the intellectual and moral bondage which have so long crushed her own Italy. Once abjure the Bible as the only true and infallible rule of faith, and God's word is of little worth. We remark,

In the fifth place, *the influence of the Scriptures in forming the character and deciding the eternal destiny of men* demands that they should not be withheld from the people. When the Apostle Paul asks the question, "What *advantage* then hath the Jews?" his reply is, "*Chiefly* because to them pertain the oracles of God." The Jews, as a *nation*, and not their priesthood merely, were thus distinguished from other nations. "What nation," said their great Lawgiver to this assembled people, "hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I have set before you this day?" It was by their obedience to the Scriptures, and by that obedience alone, that they should "become a peculiar people unto God above all people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

The same great principle of the divine government, founded so obviously in the nature of man and his relations to God, is recognized, if possible, with greater clearness, under the Christian dispensation.

Man is made for truth ; he can not attain the end of his creation without the attainment of truth. He has capacities for truth ; there is no other element by which his ever-thinking, ever-acting mind can be healthfully sustained. He has no holy, no joyous, no elevated existence but in the bright and permanent realities of truth. This was his original element and native clime. It was the atmosphere which enveloped him, he lived in it, now gazing at its meridian sun-light, now reposing in its soft shade. He reveled amid its flowers, drank the freshness of its streams, inhaled its breezes, and became resplendent with its splendor. Nor is there now any other means of reclaiming him from his deep and dark apostasy but the truth of God. "The law of the Lord is perfect, *converting* the soul." "*Faith cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the *word of God*." "Of his own will begat he us by the *word of truth*." The child of God in his veriest infancy is the child of truth ; its very twilight cheers him, even though it but peers through his curtained cradle. He has nothing else to live upon but "the sincere milk of the word." Ignorance is darkness to him ; error

scathes his spiritual intellect ; it passes over it like the cold winds of autumn, and the chilling, searching breath of winter. Truth is the means of all his spiritual growth and progress. "Now ye are clean," says the Saviour, "through *the word* which I have spoken to you." "Sanctify them *through thy truth*." "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified *through the truth*."

Piety is but the impress of truth on the heart—truth known, received, loved, obeyed. With the same explicitness do the Scriptures assure us, that the *joys* of piety flow from an acquaintance with God's truth. The Scriptures are not only rich in thought, but in joyous thoughts, thoughts which beautify and adorn the mind, and give it a quickened and glad impulse. They contain consolations which can never be exhausted. Their truths comfort ; the soul feeds upon them as a feast of fat things. It is refreshed by them as the parched land is refreshed by the rain of heaven. They come over it like mountain dews upon the desert. "Thy statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments, at all times. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. More are they to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." God himself also teaches that

there is no *salvation* without the knowledge of his truth. "My people are *destroyed* for lack of knowledge." "Where no vision is, the people *perish*." "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto *salvation*." "From a child thou hast known the Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise *unto salvation*." "These things are *written* that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing ye *might have life*." Aside from these operations of the Divine Spirit, by which the infant mind is immediately taught of God, and it may be some few minds in Pagan lands, we have no warrant for concluding that any are saved without the knowledge of truth.

If, then, such is the influence of the Scriptures in forming the character and deciding the eternal destiny of men, shall they be denied to the common people? When Heaven's bounty is daily showering this manna, this true bread which is given for the life of the world, shall the people be prohibited from gathering it? When Omnipotence smites the rock, who shall say to any one that thirsteth that he may not come to these waters of salvation? *Why* consign the masses to that intellectual degradation which is a blot upon their existence, an unseemly excrescence upon the fair intelligence with which their Maker has endowed them. *Why* subject that immortal *mind*

to this perpetual conflict with itself, for ever struggling with its own condition, and like a pale and sickly plant seeking after the light of heaven, even though it be a solitary beam piercing the crevices of its dungeon? We have had Roman Catholic servants in our families, to whom we have endeavored to communicate some knowledge of God's truth; but who to our simplest instructions have replied, "How can we, poor ignorant creatures, know any thing but what the priest tells us!" It is a heart-affecting sight to see them like children in the dark, thus "feeling after God if haply they may find him!" If we reason from the principles of Romanism, they lead us to such melancholy results as these; this is their natural and legitimate influence. If there be instances in which these principles are counteracted by other and associated principles, and any of them are better than their creed, we are glad of it. We hope there are many. There is some scriptural truth mingled with their errors; and while we should rejoice to know that it has influence in forming their character, there is too much reason to apprehend that its power is so crippled and embarrassed that it is effectively neutralized. Ignorance of God's truth is not incidental to their system; it is an essential part of it. To no one feature of it do its abettors attach greater importance; and no one which will be found more diffi-

cult to eradicate. O, it is a soul-destroying error to lock up this word of God from the common people! to deny them this directory to holiness and heaven! to silence their inquiries by the oracular dictations of their priesthood! to substitute the voice of man for the voice of God, and the flickering lights of Rome as their guide through the desert, when God has given them the cloud by day and by night the pillar of fire! Men are lost without this guidance. They are in the road to death. The results will be fearful beyond thought. Rome, in her infallibility, may scoff at them; but that day shall reveal them when the blind and their leaders shall both sink to the pit. I add,

In the sixth and last place, *God has made the common people responsible for the right use of his Word.* He requires them to *read* it; if they neglect to do so, he holds them accountable for their negligence; "a price is put into their hands to get wisdom, and they have no heart to it." He requires them to *believe* it; if they neglect to do so, he holds them accountable for their disbelief. He requires them to *receive the truth in the love of it*; if they refuse to do so, he holds them accountable for their indifference and hostility. He requires them to *obey* it; if they disobey, he holds them accountable for their disobedience. His language is, "If thou be wise,

thou shalt be wise *for thyself*; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." Religion is a personal thing; no man may believe or disbelieve by proxy; no man, or a set of men, can stand in another's place at the bar of judgment. No parent can then stand in the place of his child, and no child in the place of his parent; no husband in the place of his wife, and no wife in the place of her husband; no church in the place of their minister, and no minister in the place of his church and people. "*Every one of us*," says the apostle, "must give account of *himself* unto God." God has given men their intellectual faculties for no purpose in the world so certainly as to form their own judgment upon the subject of religion; and if they abuse this high privilege, he holds them accountable for this abuse. The very essence of piety consists in receiving the truths of the gospel in a deliberate and personal conviction of its truth and importance. But how can men thus receive them if they may not read the Bible, and ascertain what they are? The Pagan world, though condemned for their wickedness, are not condemned for their unbelief in Christianity, because they are ignorant of it. And would not the neglectors of the gospel and its institutions have a good excuse for not being Christians if God had required their religious teachers to deny them the Scriptures? If the divine government



had thrown upon me such a responsibility, and into such a dilemma as this, I should think it a hardship. Reason, conscience, common sense and the Bible, all unite in the truth that men may be made responsible for their belief only when they have the means of knowing what God commands them to believe. They are responsible for their unbelief only when there is evidence of the truth. It is this relation between the evidence of divine truth and their rejection of it that condemns them.

And this responsibility necessarily carries with it the right of inspecting and weighing that evidence. The Bereans were commended for bringing even the preaching of Paul to the test of the divine oracles. This apostle says to those whom he addressed, "I speak as to wise men; *judge ye* what I say." None may be refused access to those truths by which they are to be at last acquitted or condemned. That man defames the equitable government of the Most High who affirms that men are condemned for not believing truths which they may not examine. God professedly rests their responsibility upon their opportunities to become acquainted with his will. "Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal; are not your ways unequal?" "And now, O inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, *judge* I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been

done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it ?” Man’s responsibility, as a free, moral agent, is utterly exploded by the preposterous doctrine that denies him the Scriptures. He does not act with intelligence, nor from the influence of motives, but from constraint. He does not think ; his priest thinks for him. He has no consciousness of moral freedom ; he is conscious only that his freedom is abridged, and that he acts from the compulsory power of human authority. So far as this doctrine of Rome governs him, he is the merest machine. He has no perception, no memory, no reason, no conscience, no will ; they are all merged in the authority of his priest.

Such are some of the considerations by which we would advocate the rights of the people to possess and search the Scriptures. It is the claim of Protestants ; it is the disclaimer of Papists. Which is the more noble ? Which is the most honorable to God, and which most honors his holy word ? Which is most approved of God, and which does his word approve ? Which makes the divine glory and man’s salvation its great end ? Among which does true religion most flourish ; which enjoys the presence of his Spirit ; and in the midst of which does his church look forth in the beauties of holiness ? Over which do the angels of God most rejoice ? Which makes the great interests of Christ’s kingdom its

great concern, and which the kingdoms of this world?

The Bible is our birth-right. Our forefathers left the land of bondage in order to enjoy an open Bible. Give us the Bible, and it is our own fault if we are not free, and if we are not Christians. Give it a place in our churches, in our colleges, in our schools, in our courts of justice, in our families; and we have nothing to fear from Rome. We ask no other weapon in our controversy with this man of sin, than the Bible. There is nothing so fatal to his dominion as the Bible. Give the Bible to the common people, and the God of the Bible will give testimony to the word of his grace, and conduct the controversy to issues that shall be glorious to his holy name. The Bible was revealed for man, and man was made for the Bible. The counterpart is perfect; if the human mind be but cast into this mold of light and love, it will come out in all the forms of beauty and loveliness—a new created mind. Of all the books in the world, it is the one which the friends of truth would fain disperse on the wings of every wind.

There is a demand for watchfulness and effort in the age in which we live. The night of superstition is not passed away; nor is the controversy yet decided between the powers of light and darkness. It is an old controversy in older lands; but it has not changed either in its charac-

ter, its aims, its tactics, or its strategy in this new world. The recent and simultaneous movements in several of these States to secure to Rome those scholastic, civil and pecuniary immunities which Protestants never desired, and never thought of for themselves, indicate her subtle and far-reaching policy. She has probably, by this time, become convinced that the movement was premature, and made too soon. She shall not, after this, find the Protestants of this land sleeping at their post. We still occupy common ground, and are prepared at the first note of alarm to merge all differences, religious and political, in repelling every thing in the form of Papal usurpation. Far distant be the day when the inhabitants of these States or any portion of them shall be prohibited from reading the Scriptures, and when the thunders of the Vatican shall render us deaf to the voice of God! We would have you valiant in resisting Papal oppression. The cause of Protestantism is still, as it ever has been, identified with all that is valuable in Christian truth, intelligence and liberty, in man's salvation and God's glory. Sooner or later every friend of the Bible must take an interest in it, put on the heavenly panoply, and stand on the defensive, or address himself to the assault with this shield of faith in his hands.

But we may not stop here. This Bible must also have a place in our *hearts*, as well as in our

hands. We must acquaint ourselves with this Book of God. The God of the Bible, the Saviour the Bible reveals, the salvation the Bible proclaims, the obedience the Bible requires, these must be our study and his joy. We must learn to live, and be prepared to die, reposing on the great and precious lessons of God's own unalterable truth.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### The Happiness of True Religion.

IT is a glowing landscape which the sacred writers depict when they speak of the happiness of true religion. They are the pleasure-grounds of Paradise which we seem to travel over when we survey it. "Comfort ye, comfort ye *my people*, saith your God. I, even I am he that comforteth you. For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Let the righteous be glad, let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice." It is indeed "joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

These may be strange sounds to the ears of the ungodly, but they are vibrations from the harps of those holy men "who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and whose song was inspirited by the joys of heaven. It is light from higher worlds that here dawns upon us, nor can

it be extinguished by all the powers of darkness. We are well aware that it is a trite and threadbare topic when we speak of the joys of true religion, and urge the truth that it is indispensable to a man's real happiness that he be a Christian. Yet we are not without the hope that it may be no useless or uninstructional topic. We shall be thankful if it prove an edifying topic, and if the thoughts we may suggest should cast even a glimmering light on the path of some benighted pilgrim to the heavenly city.

The innate sinfulness of man naturally leads him to the pursuit of evil. His capacities and his desires for happiness remain, but he has lost sight of the true sources of happiness. He wanders in darkness, and the inquiry is ever on his lips, "Who will show me any good?" But one disappointment only follows another, and, with restless anxiety, he is still in search for good he can not find. "It can not be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. The depths saith, It is not in me; the sea saith, It is not with me." He is banded about from one pursuit to another, from object to object, from idol to idol, but cannot reach the prize.

"So when a raging fever burns  
We shift from side to side by turns;  
And 'tis a poor relief we gain  
To change the place and keep the pain."

It is just here that the religion of the Son of God meets the anxious inquirer with the fullness of its proffered consolations, assuring him that "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." From the top of those high places, whence the fountains of heavenly mercy are opened, and whence they are flowing over this desert world, unearthly voices fall on his ear: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; ho every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!" It is no illusive fountain such as betrays the traveler in Eastern deserts, and leaves him to feed on ashes, but a never-failing supply to those immortal desires which are too vast for the things of time and sense to gratify.

What are these enjoyments? We may not regard this as an unimportant or unimportant inquiry. They do not arise from presumptuous and unhallowed hopes. Vain imaginations, undefined and undefinable emotions, be they ever so joyous, are not religious consolations. Dreamy sentimentalism, however exciting and transcendental, is not the happiness which flows from true religion. What, then, is the nature, and what are the sources of religious enjoyment, and how shall the child of God be instructed to answer the question: Do I know anything of the joys of



true piety? Perhaps the following series of observations may throw some light on these inquiries.

It is essential to a right answer to them that we begin by remarking, that the happiness attendant on true religion is mainly found *in, and from God himself*.

So the Scriptures teach us. "Be glad *in the Lord*, and rejoice ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." "Delight thyself also *in the Lord*, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart." "Let those that seek thee rejoice, and *be glad in thee*." "Let Israel rejoice *in him that made him*; let the children of Zion *be joyful in their King*." "Thou shalt rejoice *in the Lord*, and glory *in the Holy One of Israel*" "Finally, my brethren, rejoice *in the Lord*; rejoice *in the Lord* always; and again I say, rejoice." "My heart rejoiceth *in the Lord*; mine horn is exalted *in the Lord*." "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice *in the Lord*, I will joy *in the God of my salvation*." "Whom having not seen, ye love; *in whom*, though now ye see him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Scanty as such declarations are, regarded as

the language of the Bible on the great source of religious enjoyment, they are sufficiently expressive of the truth we desire to illustrate. The source of all man's misery is that sin has alienated *from God*. He has no satisfying portion; no competent guide, refuge, and friend, because he is alienated from God. The turning point in his history, and that at which he begins to be a happy man, is when the enmity of his carnal mind is slain, and he is reconciled to God through the gospel of his Son. In all his departures from God, he had been "forsaking the fountain of living waters," and hewing out to himself "cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water." It is the veriest truism of nature, of reason, of revelation, of history, written every where, and announced by ten thousand voices, that that great and good Being who is the perfection of all greatness and goodness, is himself the source, the center, and the dispenser of all happiness, and that it is only as the soul returns to him that it becomes partaker in the blessedness of which he is the source and which he bestows. The almost endless gradations of happiness in the created universe are determined by the moral proximity which creatures sustain toward Him. The mind that recoils and starts back from the knowledge and fellowship of the "First Fair and the First Good;" that banishes the thoughts of

God, and shuns the tokens of his presence, is a desolate and miserable mind; while the mind that acquaints itself with him and is at peace, that flees not from him but to him, that comes out from the world, lives above the world, and walks with God, is cheered by the light of his countenance, happy in his smiles and joyful in his presence. There is no such source of joy as this. Come what will, such a man feels safe and happy. His soul thirsts for God, for the living God; he drinks water, where the well is deep, and goes no more to earthly cisterns to draw. It is joy that earth can not give, when a creature of yesterday, a poor, guilty sinner is enabled to say, "Whom have I in heaven but *thee*, and what is there on the earth that I desire beside *thee*." There is nothing below this that can satisfy man's immortal nature, and there is nothing above it to which he can aspire. It is the day of his espousals, when he first fixes his heart on God; it is the crown of his hopes and the completion of his blessedness when every other desire, and interest, and hope are lost and swallowed up in him. The Holy Spirit never uttered a prayer for those he sanctifies, more comprehensive than that they "might be filled with all the fullness of God." There are joys in the pursuits of earth, in the accumulation of wealth, in the giddy whirl of pleasure, in the swelling triumphs of fame, in the

researches of science and the inventions of art, in the purity and tenderness of the social affections, and in the unnumbered gratifications of thought and sense ; but what are they all, compared with the higher, more substantial, and lasting good which is found in God ? Let the Christian look within his own heart, and ask himself if there is any thing that exceeds the sacred tranquillity of his clearest views of God. What perfect repose comes upon the soul, like the calm and sunshine of heaven, when it looks up to Him on the throne who calls the stars by their names, and numbers the hairs of our head ! How unutterably joyous the thought, that the Eternal and Omnipotent God who is decked with light as with a garment, and is arrayed with majesty and excellency ; who wields the thunderbolt and carries the ocean as in the hollow of his hand, and exerts so benevolent and resistless a sway over the whole extent of creation, providence, and grace ; is over all, above all, God blessed for ever ! Here we repose. We forget our griefs ; we forget ourselves ; we forget every thing but God. Power may oppress, and injustice may spoil ; enemies may threaten, and friends may prove treacherous ; we may be suspicious of men and distrustful of earth ; but what matters it so long as there is no unrighteousness, no treachery, no unkindness, no unfaithfulness in the Holy One of Israel ? “ They that *know thy*

*name* will put their trust in thee." Poverty may depress, and shame may refuse us the world's sympathy; disease may render us helpless, and make life a weariness; death may separate us from all earthly joys and break the last bond that ties us to things below; but nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We may still sing with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Not altogether disconnected from the preceding is another thought, which, if we mistake not, commends itself to every Christian heart. The happiness of true religion consists, in the next place, in *the enjoyment of its truths*. The religion of the gospel is nothing without its truths; its truths make it what it is. It is distinguished from Atheism, from Deism, from Infidelity, from false philosophy, from error, from phantoms and reveries, only by its truths. Truth is the great instrument and means of *all* the moral transformation which is produced in the characters of men, whether it be from sin to holiness, or from a perturbed and unhappy to a tranquil and hap-

py state of mind. "Sanctify them through thy *truth* ; thy word is truth." Truth gives the religion of Christ all its value, preciousness, and beauty.

There is no clearer, and no more important distinction between holy and sinful beings than that the holy enjoy, and the unholy do not enjoy God's truth. Angels are happy, because they love and enjoy his truth ; devils are unhappy, because they hate and quarrel with his truth. Wicked men are rather afraid that it is a reality, than rejoice that it is so. The truths of religion are either unknown to them, or make no impression on their minds, or excite their uneasiness and hostility. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It is one of the evidences of a change of heart that where there is a clear and distinct impression of the truth, it is attended with emotions that are tranquil and joyous. No matter what the truth is, the contemplation of it excites pleasure, and pleasure that ordinarily corresponds with the weight and importance of the truth itself.

The circle of vision is more enlarged and extended in some minds than in others, and therefore their sources of religious enjoyment are more numerous. Some persons are great readers, and

know much of God's holy word. They are attentive hearers and close thinkers, they have treasured up large stores of spiritual knowledge, and are rich in sacred thoughts. Their minds are beautified and adorned by them; and their best and most heavenly and heavenward emotions receive from them a quickened and glad impulse. Their gracious affections are more fervid and more vigorous because they have more objects to dwell upon, and more that are delightful. The truth of God *fixes* their hearts; they are not perplexed by the doubts of a fickle and unsteady faith; nor "carried about by every wind of doctrine." They have something to rest upon, and are established in the truth as it is in Jesus. The language of their hearts is, "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee? thou hast the *words of eternal life*, and we know and *are sure* that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God!" It is no easy matter to disturb the tranquillity and peace of mind that thus reposes upon God's truth. No matter what assaults are made upon it; or what changes take place in the outward condition of such a Christian; or what creature comforts are removed and die; he has learned to say, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be *my Rock*, and let the God of my salvation be exalted!"

Nor are these comforts denied to the more unlettered believer, and those who occupy the hum-

bler, walks off Christian knowledge. You will often find Christians that are not extensively informed on religious subjects, who have nevertheless great religious enjoyment, because their minds have taken *strong hold* of a few great and precious truths, and their hearts so rest upon them, that they can not be moved. There are so many truths in the Bible, every one of which is capable of filling the heart with peace and joy, that a devout mind can not fail of comfort in contemplating any one of them. The most weighty and important are the most delightful and precious. They contain consolations which can never be exhausted. The devout mind revels in them; they are full of joy, like the spring-tide when it overflows all its banks. We contemplate them and feel that God takes an interest in us, in what we are, and do, and enjoy, and suffer. They are beautiful in themselves. Clearly seen and duly appreciated, they banish gloom and despondency; they gild all the works and ways of God, and make them resplendent with his own loveliness! Nothing gives such joy to the devout mind. Truth is the Tree of Life, and the Christian loves to sit under its shadow. The promises grow upon it, and when he shakes its trunk, or its branches, they fall like the ripe fruits of autumn. "Thy words were found," says the Prophet, "and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."



Authoritative truth, instructive truth, comforting truth, humbling and self-condemning truth; far-reaching truth, immeasurable truth, the absolute certainty, the unchanging verity, the unblotted purity, the unequalled beauty, the unsearchable riches of truth; this is what man's renewed nature longs for and enjoys. Even though the well is deep, with joy does he draw water from these fountains of salvation.

Just in the measure, therefore, in which the children of God are acquainted with the truths of religion, and love and enjoy them, do they enjoy its comforts. Its truths are so rich, so beautiful, that they love to contemplate them. The picture charms them. They gaze upon it; they look at it from different positions, in its different lights and shades, in its varied relations and effects, and the longer and more intensely they fix their thoughts upon it, the more beautiful and lovely does it appear. Sometimes when they read a portion of the Scriptures, or listen to an instructive and edifying discourse from the pulpit, the truth of God comforts them; they feed upon it; it is a feast of fat things. They are refreshed by it as the parched land that thirsts for rain. The atmosphere of truth is congenial to their spiritual nature; it is fitted to their wants. It comes over them like mountain dews upon the desert. When they speak of it, it is often in the

glowing and rapturous language, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. More are they to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Thy statutes are my *songs* in the house of my pilgrimage." Often can they sing,

" And when my spirit drinks her fill,  
At some good word of thine,  
Not mighty men that share the spoil,  
Have joys compared with mine."

Dwell then a few moments on another thought. There is great comfort and joy in the *spirit* of piety itself.

There is a bright and a dark side to almost everything in the world except the religion of Christ. There are joyless Christians, but there is no joyless Christianity. True religion may be of sickly and stunted growth, yet in its deepest and saddest decline what remains of its true spirit is all that remains of internal consolation. It lives even during the dark night and long winter of the soul ; but when it "warms in the sunshine," all those gentle graces which are the fruit of the Spirit come forth and blossom. The most somber and pensive of them are not joyless, while the brightest and gladdest are "righteousness and peace and joy *in the Holy Ghost*."

The excellent and lovely graces which are thus produced are always the objects of approving contemplation. To a greater or less extent they are also the source of delight and joy. Where a wicked spirit absorbs the heart, and there is nothing there but the perpetual conflict and effervescence of sinful emotions, it is like "the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." But it is otherwise where the heart is right with God. The spirit of religion brings its own reward; it is full of consolation in its own nature. That love, that repentance, that faith, that submission, that humility, that self-denial, that meekness, that hungering and thirsting after righteousness, that kindness and charity and purity of heart, which constitute the essence of vital godliness, possess inherent sweetness. If there is enjoyment in the truths of religion, there is enjoyment when the heart is conformed to these truths, and its emotions and spirit become the counterpart, the response and echo to these precious truths themselves. Truth itself is not more certainly productive of gracious affections than gracious affections are productive of a happy state of mind. Reconciliation to God, through Jesus Christ, is no turbulent and dissatisfied spirit. The storm is past; the warfare is over, and the soul is at peace.

The Christian knows what his reconciliation is.

In the earlier stages of his religious experience his thoughts may not be turned to the fact that he has become the subject of a spiritual change; all he knows is, that his controversy with God is over, and he is tranquil. He finds a difference in himself because "his distressing convictions are passed away," his tormenting fears are gone, and terrors no longer break his repose. In a little while he learns that this state of moral feeling is the gift of the spirit of piety, that the gospel has brought its glad tidings to his heart, and that he has actually passed from death unto life. The consciousness of possessing the spirit of religion is now superadded to the blessedness of that spirit itself, and becomes one of the sweetest convictions he is ever permitted to cherish. His own spirit witnesses with the Divine Spirit that he is one of the children of God. Because his character is changed, his relations are changed; if his relations to God and to his fellow men, to time and eternity, are all changed. His own state of mind and this change of relations change every thing around him. He sees everything in a new light, because he sees it through a different medium, and with a single eye. He lives in a new world. Everything now is full of God, and he enjoys every thing. Sometimes his joyful emotions are greatly excited, his heart is full, and flows out in praise. Even in his less excited and

more tranquil hours he is happy. He may be a sufferer and in trouble. He may be loaded with chains and excoriated with stripes, but he sings in the dungeon, and his very chains remind him of the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free. Desolate as he is, he has the presence of the Comforter. And then his joy is enhanced by his bright prospects. Because his Great High Priest and Redeemer-King lives, he shall live also. He is called unto eternal glory. He is begotten again unto a lively hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. In a word, he has religious consolations, because he has a religious spirit. His heart is glad and his glory rejoiceth. God shows him the path of life. He has sympathies with scenes and with hearts such as this world knows not of. Rays of heavenly light shine upon his path. The love of heaven attracts him and cheers him on his way, and even in the darkest passages of the wilderness he is encouraged with the assurance that in God's presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

There is another thought, also, of deep interest. The comforts of religion consist in *enjoying its duties*. We speak now of *religious* duties, in distinction from those which are secular. They are such as

the diligent study of the Holy Scriptures—daily intercourse with God in the closet and in the family—the religious education of children—the punctual observance of the Sabbath and the duties of the sanctuary—care and charity to the sick and poor, and the varied efforts to extend the kingdom of God in the world. That remarkable book in the Old Testament, in which the great question is discussed, which pagan philosophy has so often discussed with so much learning and sagacity, but which it could not solve—*What is the chief good?* closes with this instructive declaration:—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man." Man's aim and end, his true honor and highest good are here. No human attainments, no magnificence of wealth, no eminence of power, no giddy whirl of mirth can impart that calm, quiet and steadfast mind which arises from doing the will of God. All else is "vanity and vexation of spirit," and leaves the heart unsatisfied and restless. Man's active nature, renewed and sanctified, finds its enjoyment here. "I delight to do thy will, O God, yea, thy law is within my heart;" this was an expression of happy piety. "I have meat to eat which ye know not of; my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish his work;" this was the expression of perfect piety, and the perfect joy that was set

before him who endured the cross, despising the shame.

The religious duties to which we have referred are not more truly the means of grace, than the sources of religious enjoyment. If there is enjoyment in religious *truth*, and in the *spirit* of religion, there is enjoyment in those duties by which our knowledge of the truth is increased and a religious spirit promoted. The Christian who loves the Bible can not be an unhappy man. The apostle's injunction is, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." The mind and heart must both be exceedingly barren without the diligent study of this sacred book. Many a desponding Christian has retired to his chamber with the Bible in his hand, and as his eye was fixed upon one bright line after another, his despondency has vanished, and the sunrise of hope has beamed upon his soul. Many a Christian can look back upon scenes when care, danger, strife, perplexity, and evil in every form seemed coming upon him like storms upon the wind, and when he found the Bible his refuge. Thousands remember the moments sanctified by sorrow, and bless God that his word was the sanctifier. And is there no enjoyment in *prayer*, as well as in reading God's word? To commune with God; to come near even to his seat and fill our mouth with arguments; to have a deep sense of his pres-

ence, his holiness, and his love; to have access through Jesus Christ within the veil, and the soul lifted up above this low earth, and find its repose and home in the spirit-land; are these barren and joyless services? And when the children which God has graciously given you, and which he has made like olive-plants round about your table, instead of being neglected and allowed to grow up as weeds on the shore, are carefully instructed in the knowledge of his truth and their duty; notwithstanding all the toil and discouragement, is there not great peace and enjoyment in the effort to train them up in God's fear? When you fold their hands in prayer with yours, and with them bow before the throne of mercy; and their youthful lips with yours are taught to sing his praise; is this a wilderness to you, a land of darkness? And when the light of returning Sabbath calls you to the place where God has recorded his name; there to worship him in the beauties of holiness; to mingle your confessions and your praises, your sorrows and your joys; your hopes and your fears with those who have common sympathies with you as lost sinners; are you ever constrained to say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts?" And when you meet at his table, who is the true Mediator between God and man; and his Spirit overshadows you, and his banner over you is love, do you never exclaim with Peter on



the Mount, Lord, it is good to be here? When the ignorant hail you as their teacher; and the poor rise up and call you blessed; and the widow and the orphan greet you; and the sick who pine and sigh in secret remember you because you visited them; and the damp cellar, the confined garret, and the pillow of straw bear testimony that the cause which you knew not you searched out; have you no evidence that there is enjoyment in religious duties? In such a field of labor as this lost world, what Christian can ask to be happy in indifference to its character, or in the neglect of its wants and its woes? The joys of religion are cultivated only by cultivating the love of its duties. Religious feeling without religious action is the romance of piety, and neither its substance nor its comforts. Religious impulses, where they lead not to religious duties and active virtues, are just as spurious and joyless as the active virtues without religious impulses. It is wonderful, passing wonderful that worms of the dust should be allowed to engage in such services, and enjoy the privilege of uniting with holier and happier beings, who come forth as ministering spirits to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation; but it is a most joyous service. Not a few of these duties are self-denying and call for sacrifices; and on this very account are they the more joyous. There is very little comfort where

a man is all for self. Sooner or later we must learn that we must go out of self for our enjoyment, as well as for our salvation.

We affirm also, that the consolations of religion are enjoyed in the *faithful and conscientious discharge of the ordinary and secular duties of human life.*

The sphere of Christian effort is no narrow sphere. It comprises not only the duties we owe to God and our own souls, and the souls of our fellow men ; but all the duties of our secular vocation. Whether they relate more immediately to the future world or the present, they all partake of the same character, because they are all regulated by the same law, directed to the same end, and if rightly performed, flow from the same Christian spirit. Very many are the deeds in which you may serve God in duties that are not strictly and professedly sacred and religious, and which true religion furnishes no motive to overlook. The law of Christianity is, "Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Men are made for something else besides mental abstraction, be it ever so devout. They are called to other things as well as reading the Bible, and secret, and social, and public devotion. The best Christians I have known are those who had "the warmest hearts for God, and the most industrious hands for the world." Worldly care does not

then shut out religious thought, nor does religious thought shut out worldly care. There is great beauty of character and great religious enjoyment where the head and heart and hands are full of duty. Amid the wear and tear of human life there could be no comfort without frequent fellowship with God; while amid the attractions of fellowship with God, we should have no world to live in without the wear and tear of human labor. Religious duties are never acceptable when they are performed at the expense of those secular duties which God and conscience assure us it is sinful to omit. If we would be happy we must enjoy the work of God as well as the worship of God. Duty and hardship are the Christian's allotment; and the only way to be happy is to "go to it and go through it" patiently and cheerfully. The spirit and enjoyment of religion may be carried every where, and infuse themselves into every lawful calling. The harvest-field may be an altar, and the work-shop a sanctuary. The physician in the chamber of sickness, the advocate at the bar, the judge on the bench—nay, the poor woman at her needle and her wash-tub, may as truly enjoy the consolations of religion, as the minister of the gospel in the pulpit, because they may be alike employed in doing the will of God. It is their duty, and they are happy in it. There is something wrong in that state of mind that is drawn off

from religious enjoyments by the duties of secular vocation. God's presence and blessing are as truly with us in our labors as in our devotions; nor may we look for them in our devotions if we neglect our commanded labor. Religious hopes never evaporate by doing his will. There is sweet attraction in all duty, and there is religious joy in it. I have sometimes thought that some honest and worthy Christians have mistaken views upon this plain and important subject; because they expect to find all their religious enjoyments in religious duties alone. This is a sad mistake. The purely contemplative Christian is no more the happiest Christian than he is the brightest pattern of Christianity. Asceticism is not piety, nor are monasteries promoters of its joy. We are free to confess that the danger lies in the absorbing spirit of the world; but there is a class of minds with whom this is not all the exposure. We have a poor opinion of those devotional raptures, and that piety which are sought and enjoyed by inattention to secular duties. The heart that loves God most, and most enjoys him is most employed in every duty in its proper place and season. Duty is man's great concern, whatever the form of that duty be. It is not pleasure; it is not even religious enjoyment; it is doing the will of God. Religious enjoyment comes from doing what is right, and is never found by being directly sought after.

God will see that our religious comforts are cared for, if we duly seek his grace, and take care to do his will. This is the great substantial good, and the only true way of enjoying the tokens of his favor; and walking in the light of his countenance. No man can be happy, much less a Christian man, who has nothing to do. The only use of his religion is to give him fore useful and penitential labor. That love which is the vital principle of all religion is actively if not actively it is dead and joyless. There is nothing which many depressed and complaining Christians need so much as to be drawn out from the retirement of wealth and leisure, and introduced to some field of active labor. Not a few pious men have lost the brightness of their religious hopes and been plunged in darkness because they had nothing to do. Their hearts are right with God; all they want is some sphere of active duty in which their best affections may be employed, indulged, and gratified. To do good is the way to get good; set them to some good work, and they are happy.

I add, as the last thought, the comforts of religion are enjoyed *when we enjoy the approbation of our consciences* a misanthrope or a nihilist to be sure is not happy. Happy is the man that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. There can be no enjoyment of the truths, or the spirit of religion, or of religious or secular duties, where there is a frown-

ing conscience. "Peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost" are twin sisters, and have the same parentage. "Our rejoicing is this ; the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, and not in fleshly wisdom, we have our conversation in the world." Conscience is quick to discern, quick to condemn, and quick to approve. She is thorough in searching into the nature of moral conduct, and into the spirit and motives from which it proceeds. Where an enlightened conscience approves, God approves ; and there is the sweet conviction that, in the end, the whole universe will approve. "If our heart condemn us not, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." We have but to afford conscience all the light she asks for, and give her the fair opportunity of judging, and leave her unembarrassed to do her whole office ; and we need never doubt her approbation of all that is right. Severe as her criminations are of all wickedness, she is all gentleness and love, all honor and peace to well-doing. "Great peace have they who love thy law, and *nothing* shall offend them."

It is no marvel that those are strangers to the comforts of religion who maintain a constant struggle with conscience. One besetting sin unsubdued, indulged, cherished, poisons the cup of joy. It grieves the Spirit of God, shuts out the light of his countenance, excludes the soul from all com-

fortable access to the mercy seat, envelops it in darkness, and if not mortified, sinks it in despair. Secret sins, unknown and unsuspected by the world, are the ruin of inward peace. What if the world does not know them ; God knows them, the guilty offender knows them, and they hold him in bondage. It is true that the best of men groan under the burden of "the sin that dwelleth in them ;" and they have a peaceful conscience because they groan under it, and long for liberty, and are making honest efforts to liberate themselves from this miserable servitude. They have no besetting sins that are cherished ; no secret sins that are palliated and allowed. Their peace of mind does not arise from the delusion that they are free from sin, but from the fact that they maintain a warfare with sin. They are not submitting to its dominion ; its dominion is subverted, and it no longer reigns over the outward man, nor holds its throne in the heart. Their conflict with it costs them struggles, and shame, and confusion of face, and disappointment, and mortification that the victory is not more complete. It costs them tears, and sighs, and prayers ; and they never put off the armor until at last they come off conquerors through Him that loved them. Their consciences are more sensitive than ever ; but it is not the burdened, fretted and galled conscience of the wilfull and persevering offender, because it

is witness to the honesty and strength of their desires, their watchfulness, and their efforts to be delivered from sin, and their daily application to the blood of sprinkling for pardon and peace.

It is, therefore, an important and precious truth that the consolations of religion are found in the approbation of conscience. It is in this

view, that "a good man is satisfied from himself"

His own conscience is a source of sweet tranquillity. There may be troubles without, but there is

peace within. Without, there may be darkness

and storms; within, it is calm as the summer

lake, and bright as the smiles of the unclouded

sun. A peaceful conscience is a mine of wealth

to the soul, when all things else are poor. It is a

pearl of great price, when every thing else is

worthless. It is a fountain of life, when earthly

cisterns are dry. The sense of guilt and fears of

wrath are taken away, because the heart is

sprinkled from an evil conscience; and the op-

pressive burden of sin is relieved by the hope of

pardon through atoning blood.

When, therefore, you propose the question to

yourselves, *Do I enjoy the comforts of religion?*

it is not difficult to find a true answer, and I

hope a satisfactory one. You have but to ask,

*Do I enjoy God himself?* *Do I enjoy the*

*truths of religion.* *Do I enjoy its sweet and heav-*

*enly spirit.* *Do I enjoy its refreshing duties.* *Do*

*I enjoy the ordinary duties of my calling? Do*



I enjoy the approbation of my own conscience?  
 If you enjoy these, you enjoy the comforts of  
 piety; you enjoy its hopes, its prospects, its tri-  
 umphs in the world, its everlasting triumphs.  
 You enjoy its author and finisher. You can say  
 with the apostle, "Thanks be unto God who al-  
 ways causeth us to triumph in Christ." Such is  
 his love and the benevolent spirit and tendency  
 of his gospel, that none are shut out from its con-  
 solations except those who shut themselves out.  
 You have but to turn to the proper sources of  
 comfort, and you will be comforted. Those of  
 them that are out of yourselves and in God, are  
 pure, perfect and permanent. They do not change  
 with the fickleness of earth, nor with the varia-  
 tions of your own frames and feelings, but ever  
 remain the same transparent and perennial foun-  
 tains of joy. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday,  
 to-day, and for ever—his perfect character, and  
 work, and truth—the perfect fullness of his grace  
 and power—the perfect brightness of his great  
 glory—what conscious tranquillity and what a  
 glow of joy are they fitted to impart! There is  
 no ebb and flow on these rivers of salvation; the  
 fountain is full; whosoever will may take the  
 waters of life freely.  
 God's message to you, is a delightful message.  
 His voice to his ministers is, "Comfort ye, comfort  
 ye my people, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem!"  
 He himself declares, "I, even I am he that com-

forteth you." How delightful are the words, "Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord. For the Lord shall comfort Zion ; he will comfort all her waste places ; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." His word tells us of Him who himself has told us of the Comforter. It tells of the day when "the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion ; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head ; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." It would seem as though we might more often take the place of the disciple whom he loved, and lean upon his bosom, and hear him say, "Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me." Let the duties and conflicts of life be what they may, and the close of it come when, and where, and how it will, we have his own assurance, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest!" This is *our* joy, as well as yours. "Thy *watchmen* shall lift up the voice ; with the voice together shall they sing." O sing, ye whose privilege it is to proclaim this salvation. "Break forth into joy ; sing together ; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### *The Embarrassments of Wicked Men.*

**T**HERE are various classes of wicked men who, while they differ in the aggravations of their wickedness, all possess the same radical character. The atheist and the deist, the infidel and the speculative believer, the moral and the immoral, the frigid formalist and the bold profligate, the ethereal transcendentalist and the subtle rationalist, the self-righteous, the self-deceived, and the self-hardened much as they may differ in the sight of God and man in the degree and enormity of their wickedness, are destitute of holiness, and the enemies of God and the gospel of his Son. They are not the "children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." They are not men of piety, but are "weighed in the balance and found wanting."

If there be truth in the delineations of character, presented in the preceding pages, all good men possess a character and pursue a course of conduct which is peculiar to themselves. It is

habitually the course which God has marked out for them in his word; and notwithstanding its confessed deviations from a rectilinear path, is "the path of the just," which as the rising light "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It differs from "the way of transgressors" in the rule, the motives, and the principles by which it is governed, in the tranquillity and comfort with which it is pursued, and in the end at which it aims and terminates.

Wicked men also possess a character, and pursue a course of their own. Natural temperament, age, and condition, as well as the powerful influence of education and the social relations, give it a different direction and coloring in different individuals; yet is it "the way of transgressors." Their work and business, their way of life and end, are those of *transgressors*. The path in which they are walking is one in which God has forbidden them to walk, and is marked out by their depraved minds. His law never governs them; they do not aim at promoting his glory and his approbation and favor; they never seek after him. Nothing is more characteristic of their entire course, than that they live "without God in the world." They have no abiding sense of his being; his government, his presence, nor of their dependence upon him, nor their accountableness to him. The very thoughts of God trouble them, and they banish him from

their minds, from their duties, and from their enjoyments. They live unto themselves and not unto God. The love of wealth, the love of power, the love of influence and honor, or the love of ease and pleasure—these are their great impulses, and these the principles by which their course is determined. Here their thoughts dwell, and their strongest and most ardent affections are concentrated. The ardor of youth and the vigor and patience of manhood exhaust themselves here. Their attachment to the course they are pursuing is the stronger, the longer it is indulged. Their natural and acquired proneness to it becomes strengthened by *habit*, until they become so hardened in the pursuit of it that no power of argument, no motives, no offered mercy, and no stirrings of the Spirit of God lead them to repentance. Even that wondrous redemption into which angels desire to look, and which comprises those wondrous means and agencies of infinite wisdom and love, to reclaim the wandering and save the lost, they make light of and will not accept that great salvation. And thus is their unrepenting course brought to the test and proved. Nothing arrests them in their downward career. It is rapid and sure. Nor are its dangers seen and felt until it has become hopeless because it is too late to retrace their steps, and because God has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

Now, the truth of God affirms that this "way of transgressors is *hard*." There are serious and affecting embarrassments in this course of unrelenting wickedness. Our earnest desire is, and it shall be, the object of the present chapter to illustrate and impress this single thought.

Our first remark is, that *all wickedness is in itself unsatisfying*.

We have summarily exhibited it in the preceding paragraph; and we are bold to demand, if there is any one feature of it that satisfies the wants of man, as an intellectual, moral, and immortal creature. We may not say it is joyless, because men enjoy it; but we do say that the joys it gives are not the joys which satisfy, and that, after all the sensual and transient good it dispenses, there are cravings of the soul which it overlooks, hungerings and thirsting which it does not supply, an "aching void" which it does not fill.

Man is formed for a different course of life, and different pursuits and attainments from these; nor can he make these his great object without doing violence to those essential properties of his being in which he differs from the inferior orders of creation. He is cast in a higher and finer mould, and must enter upon a higher walk of existence than error and sin. Thought has little to feed upon there, and the active emotions little to gratify them. His range of desire, purpose and

calculation, must be more ample, stretching into richer scenes and brighter glories. His affections must have an object that are worthy of them. He must have something to love, intensely and safely, and in loving which, his warm and restive heart can find *repose*. He must have something to trust that is trustworthy; some will and decision that he can submit to which are wiser and better than his own; some object of worship that meets his religious propensities to the full; some guide and refuge, some unfailing source of tranquillity, hope and joy.

There is nothing of all this in any form of impenitence and unbelief. There is no repose, and no satisfying portion there, because there is no God. There are broken cisterns that hold no water, but there is no fountain of living waters. There are no exalted thoughts, and no elevated joys. It is an impure atmosphere, and the heart throbs with a forced and unhealthy action. There are deep anxieties, but no relief; severe and bitter struggles, but no conquests; while in the midst of the strife, the victim is borne off the field vanquished by his own conceptions, and "in the gall of bitterness and in bonds of iniquity." It is but to excite the sinful emotions within his own bosom, and he is unhappy. They react upon his own mind, and often with such power, that unless he is stupefied by sin, his progress is through

a land of darkness, where there is nothing to cheer, nourish, or shelter him. It is a bleak land, and amid wintry snows that he is traveling. He himself needs but to survey his path in order to discover and feel its dreariness, and see how it is overhung with clouds.

In *itself*, therefore, every wicked course has its embarrassments. The creature of God, who treads it, learns from his own heart and his own experience more bitter lessons than others know, or he himself is willing to confess. They are not merely a few dark moments he encounters; cheerless days and nights await him, and cheerless caverns which beset his path; nor can he travel all its gloomy length without the consciousness that it is an embarrassed and bitter course.

In the next place, all wickedness is *condemned of the sober and deliberate conviction of the judgment*.

Men can see *folly* in sin even when they have no impressions of its moral turpitude. There is no *wisdom* in neglecting what God has required, nor in doing what he has forbidden. Reason does not teach men to fall in with the pretensions of error, or to fall out with the claims of truth. Nor does it teach them to love the evil and eschew the good. Reason does not teach them to rush upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler; nor to turn a deaf ear to the voice of his paternal love; nor



to despise the heaven-devised remedy for their lost estate; nor does it sanction their improvidence for futurity. Yet this is the course pursued by all unrepenting men. The Bible challenges them to an impartial investigation of its divine origin; its truths challenge them to disprove them; their Maker challenges them to show wherein his ways are not equal; the gospel challenges them to discover any other way of salvation; things unseen and eternal challenge them to compare them with the things that are seen and temporal; and the reason of the Infinite mind challenges them to weigh the decisions of frail and fallible men against the decisions of unerring and unsearchable wisdom. Yet, though confounded, vanquished, and condemned out of their own mouth, "madness is in their heart." They resist the evidence of divine truth, though it is so plain; they repel the conclusions of their own judgment, though they are so convincing; they reconsider and counter-vail even their own resolutions, and press on in a course which they themselves all the while confess is, to the last, degree foolish and unwise.

It may be doubted if the history of human inconsistency and folly furnish a record equal to that in which wickedness thus practices deception upon men, and without the smallest prospect of permanent advantage. If the men of the world conducted their secular pursuits as irrationally

and recklessly as impenitent men conduct their everlasting interests, when they give, and persist in giving time the preference to eternity, they would be regarded as insane. The very instinct of brutes would suggest a wiser course than this. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not *know*, my people do not *consider*. Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." There is great force in the *whys* and the *wherefores* with which God so urgently and so tenderly expostulates with wicked men, and which are everywhere inmingled with his entreaties and earnest protestations against their infatuated and guilty career. And they are fitted to bring the inconsiderate and foolish sinner to his right mind; to commend to him a more "reasonable service;" to arrest him in his downward progress; and if he will not change his course, to make him feel that he is his own worst enemy, and is devising evil against his own soul. At every step, if he finds no other obstruction, he meets the stern and repulsive decisions of his own reason and judgment. When thoroughly awake, reason and judgment are intractable and stubborn, and in their own quiet way dispute every inch of ground he occupies. He may, and

often does, affect to despise these expostulations ; while at the same time he knows that it is his highest wisdom to attend to the concerns of his soul, and that the day is coming when he will curse his folly for neglecting them. It is no difficult matter, in conversing with such persons on the subject of religion, to carry their judgment to outreason them. All reason and argument are against them ; they outreason themselves, and have no confidence in their own defences. If they have any thing to say in vindication of their impenitence, it is in the form of *apology* and *excuse*, which always implies that they are wrongdoers. They try, indeed, to close their eyes upon the light ; yet all the while they know that the light is everywhere shining around them. Nor does it shine in vain ; nor do these inward convictions in vain lift up their voice. They trouble them ; they embarrass and perplex their progress.

It is of still greater importance to remark, again, that this obstruction is augmented by *the violence which the unrepenting sinner does to his own conscience*.

It is not merely an unwise and inexpedient course he is pursuing, it is a *wicked* course. It not only injures himself—it is wrong, and would remain wrong even if he himself were annihilated and it were no injury to his own soul. This is

the great reason why God is displeased with it, hates it, forbids it; nor is there any other reason in the universe why he should thus hate and forbid all iniquity. The mere suffering that is consequent on sin he could prevent, and overrule to benevolent ends; but he can not alter the nature of the wickedness. It is wrong in itself, and infinitely abhorrent to his own pure and holy nature. And this is the reason why *conscience* revolts at it, and wages against it such a perpetual warfare.

It is this conflict with *conscience* that is so painfully embarrassing. Men can afford to meet with trial and difficulty when the path they are traveling is the right one, because they have a self-sustaining and approving conscience. They can welcome obloquy, content and suffering. These are "infirmities" which the spirit of man can bear. Thousands have borne, and do bear them, cheerfully. But a "wounded spirit," a perforated and bleeding conscience, is another and a very different burden. Yet such a conscience always accompanies an ungodly life. If there are incidents in it which smooth its rough features, and if it is beguiled by "the pleasures of sin," there is nothing to give firmness and tranquillity to the minds of those who pursue it. It is enough to make the transgressor unhappy that he knows himself, and is privy to his own wickedness. His own heart smites him. There is that within his

own bosom which awakens solicitude, induces self-reproach and shame, excites his fears, and even in the midst of apparent tranquillity produces "a fearful looking for of judgment," and originates those livid apprehensions which foreshadow the coming wrath. There is nothing more exciting than that vigilant witness and fearless guardian of rectitude, a faithful conscience. A *guilty* conscience is, of all enemies, the most inexorable; there is a tenaciousness and a severity in its remorse which torments the transgressor "before the time." There are combustible materials within the bosom of conscious guilt, which the angry breath of almighty justice can at any moment kindle into a flame. Nothing is easier than for the incensed majesty of heaven to fasten a sense of guilt upon the soul that shall be like the gnawing worm that never dies. *One* sin, well remembered, and viewed in a just light, were enough to wither every hope in the man who does not forsake it, and find pardon in the blood of the cross. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee," says the Psalmist, "our *secret* sins in the light of thy countenance." God was in mercy communing with him of his past wickedness, and he exclaims, "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted; thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off."

In the ordinary course of human events, unre-

penting sinners are not indeed thus held in bondage. Yet how true is it, after all, that "the way of *peace* they have not known." There are seasons when they can not but call their sins to remembrance. It is a melancholy retrospect, and they are pensive and sad. The light of noon and the shades of midnight tell the same melancholy story of depression and gloom. And if such admonitions are unheeded, conscience plants thorns in their pillow, and thorns in their path. She assails the stubborn sinner with unsparing severity, sets herself to her fiercest opposition, and pursues, and lacerates, and sacrifices her victim with her whip of scorpions and her flaming sword. He is no longer giddy and gay, because there are signals of alarm within the inner chambers of his soul, and deep and noiseless searchings of heart. Amid the noise of men and bustle of the world, he is restless and wretched. He has nothing to quiet an agitated and febrile mind—no hope in the slaughtered Lamb of God—no secret intimations of the divine favor—nothing to dispel the clouds that are gathering over the grave, or light up the darkness that hangs over the interminable future. There are deep thoughts within of his approaching doom; and could you watch his conflicts and mark his struggles, you would need nothing more to convince you that he treads a rugged and painful and embarrassed path.

It is not less true, in the next place, that a life of impenitence is pursued *in opposition to the most persuasive and powerful inducements to forsake it for the paths of holiness and peace.*

Consideration is multiplied upon consideration, "line upon line and precept upon precept," the strongest and most persuasive motives within the compass of the created—nay, of the uncreated mind, set themselves against the transgressor's progress, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age. The truth of God, in all its forms of instruction, example, threatening, and promise, addresses him with a power, an authority, and tenderness, which he only can express who speaketh from heaven. It addresses him in the written word and by the living ministry ; from the lips of parental tenderness and pious friendship ; from the Baptismal altar and the Communion Table ; and from the chambers of sickness and the bed of death. It comes in the severity of rebuke, the patience of expostulation, and the earnestness and solicitude of prayer. They are motives that are urged, not only in this variety and richness, but with uninterrupted *frequency*—at all times and in all places—at home and abroad—on the Sabbath and during the week—in seasons of thoughtlessness and of serious reflection—in periods of pervading stupidity and lukewarmness, and with augmented

power in those seasons when the Lord builds up Zion and appears in his glory. They are motives also which often derive great strength and appropriateness from the dispensations of Divine Providence; sometimes from mercies, and amid the bright smiles of prosperity; and sometimes from judgments, and amid the gathered and falling clouds of adversity. They are fitted, too, to all the changes in the moral history of the sinner himself, and to the different states of his own mind; sometimes availing themselves of his local sympathies—sometimes of his attachments—sometimes of his filial love, and sometimes of his conjugal and parental tenderness—sometimes of his prospects and usefulness in the world, and always when his mind is most awake to the realities of the world to come.

It were a touching view graphically to trace the way which wicked men are treading, if but to mark the arduous and indefatigable toil with which they tread it, the mountains of difficulty it travels over, and the rugged scenes through which it winds itself. Sometimes it is along the cliffs where God the lawgiver speaks out of the midst of the fire; and then it lingers near the mount where the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things. And many a time, amid these alternate scenes, we have seen the bewildered pilgrim hesitate, and brought to a stand-still, and “almost persuaded to



become a Christian." He knows not where to go, nor which way to turn. He is so pressed on every side that his resolution is staggered and his steps falter. And when in some guilty and hapless hour he shuts his ear to these calls, and stifles these convictions, resists the Spirit of God and resolves, through every obstacle, to force his passage to the gates of death; it must be with no small embarrassment. It costs him effort and many a desperate struggle, and a sad and heavy heart.

Nor is this all; this embarrassment is increased by the fact that *at every step the sinner is contending with God.*

God he can not shun. Everywhere the Great God compasses his path and his lying down, and is acquainted with all his ways. We need not specify in detail the particulars in which his progress stands opposed to God's will, government, truth and way. We have but to survey it, as it has been already sketched in the foregoing remarks, in order to see that in spirit, and aim, and unrelenting purpose, it is one continual conflict with his Maker. So God regards it in his word. He represents it as originating in the carnal mind which is "enmity against him;" he entreats men to become "reconciled" to him; he challenges them to "bring forth their strong reasons," and show wherein they have cause of complaint against him; and he repeatedly affirms that he has a con-

troversy with them, and calls upon "the mountains and the hills" to bear witness to the reality and earnestness of the conflict. A moment's reflection must convince the sinner that he is "striving with his Maker."

Such a life must be one of perpetual embarrassment. Little do transgressors think against whom they take counsel when they set themselves against the Lord and against his Christ. "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth; but wo unto him who striveth with his Maker!" Just think of this *unnatural* contest—a creature striving with his Creator, a subject with his rightful prince, a child with his father who is in heaven! Think of this *painful and degrading* contest of lawless rebellion with equitable authority, sin with holiness, earth with heaven! Think of a contest thus *unequal and hopeless*, in which an atom, a mere point in existence contends with the immense and omnipresent Deity; a creature of yesterday with him that inhabiteth eternity; a creature who has no refuge and no resources, and who is frail as the tender grass, with him who is the omnipotent sovereign of the universe, and who has all its resources at his command! So impotent is the pride of man, that there needs but a *look* from God to abase him to the dust. Impregnable fortresses, mighty armies, combined nations, are but the pageantry of power, the glittering sym-

bols of human weakness. They are swallowed up like Egypt; they fall like Babylon, they are ploughed as a field like Jerusalem; they "are brought down to the sides of the pit" and "cast out of their graves as an abominable branch." The "flower of Lebanon fades, the beauty of Bashan and Carmel perish;" the earth and all they that dwell therein tremble "at the hiding of his power," and none can stand before the face of his anger. O, it is a tremendous warfare! and though the sinner is perpetually foiled and discomfited, yet is he perpetually renewing the contest, and with a recklessness, and sometimes an exasperation that are the more augmented as the controversy itself becomes more hopeless. None ever hardened himself against God and prospered. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo he was not; I sought him, but he could not be found." The bold and obdurate may stand it out for a little while, and because they presume to sin with impunity, may have a momentary firmness and fortitude; but they will find in the end and in "their own place," that it were better to contend with the created universe than with the eternal, omnipotent God.

This thought leads me to add, in the last place, *that fearful embarrassment attends the sinners progress in its final termination.*

Human reason revolts from the conclusion, that in the world of retribution there is no difference between the righteous and the wicked. Its conclusions fall in with the decisions of the Bible ; and these all assure us that the Great Being whom the incorrigible sinner has offended, and whose mercy he refuses to accept, is a being of immutable *justice*. Justice is an essential perfection of his nature ; his throne stands firm, because justice is the place, the habitation, the foundation on which it rests. Everywhere and always, he is governed by an unchangeable love of rectitude and an unchangeable hatred of wickedness. He has, therefore, revealed the truth that " the wages of sin is death." However diversified the course of wicked men, it has the same termination : " their *end* is destruction." Nor is this painful truth one of which they are ignorant. They know it ; very often they have the evidence of it in the state of their own minds. They are self-convicted men, and their own heart bears witness to the sentence that is gone forth against them. There is an echoing voice within their own bosoms, that is to them " as the knell of their righteous and everlasting condemnation." There is an unfailing provision, not only in the government of God without them, but in the elements of their own sinful character for the execution of this fearful threatening. Already is it begun, and is con-

tinually hastening to its fulfillment. They need but look within themselves in order to see no dubious foreshadowings of their final destiny, no doubtful indications that they are "treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath." They may seem to be gliding pleasantly on the surface of the stream, but its agitated and foaming waters sound the note of alarm. Stop their ears as they will, they hear the voice of these many waters, nor can they resist the force of the current.

And even though they see not the precipice, they gain nothing by their profound and slumbering insensibility. Time moves onward, and they move with it onward to eternity. In the midst of all their thoughtlessness and mirth the wheels of providence move high and terribly, and to their final issues. *They* do not stop in their course of wickedness, nor does *God* stop in his course to judgment. *They* do not hesitate, nor does *he* hesitate. *They* will not repent and turn from their evil ways, and *he* may not repent of his purpose to destroy, but with incessant and resistless energy is preparing to execute it to their everlasting defeat and shame.

The difficulty and ruggedness of the sinner's course, therefore, is not limited to the present world, because his course itself is not thus limited; it stretches onward, and still onward, with-

out end. O they are not "light afflictions" which the unrepenting must suffer, nor for a "little moment." They are not these presages of God's wrath which will hereafter alarm them; they must grapple with the reality. They are not these foretastes of the wormwood and the gall, which they will then drink, but "the wine of the wrath of God, poured without mixture into the cup of his indignation." Their sinning here is but the preliminary of their sinning hereafter; and this anxiety and remorse and trembling of time are but the prelude to sorrow and sighing, "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," that shall never pass away.

How think you the course of such men as Cain and Pharaoh and Saul and Ahab and Judas will appear as they hereafter look back upon it from some mournful eminence of their future history? How will the retrospect appear when the deeds of the past, like so many spectres from the grave, march by in gloomy procession? How will it appear, when hope, no longer trembling in the balance, is turned into despair; and when, amid the awful havoc of lost opportunity, they "mourn at the last," and exclaim: "How have I hated instruction and despised reproof!" How many voices will then utter the thought, "*The way of transgressors is hard!*" How many lips quivering with agony will respond, "*The way of trans-*

*gressors is hard !*" How many tongues, parched with thirst, in shrieks of horror will exclaim, "*The way of transgressors is hard !*"

We say to the reader, Do not then tempt your fate by still pressing on in the paths of the Destroyer, and rushing to these gates of death. Messengers and voices of heavenly Mercy now invite you to turn and live. There is another and a better way, "a new and living way" which leads to God's right hand. There is a point in the sinner's path where he may turn and live ; and there is a point, a crisis in his history, beyond which there is no return. I know not where it lies, nor do I wish to know. I know not but you may have already taken the irrecoverable step. We may not say that you have taken it ; we may not say that you *will* take it until death close the door of hope. Yet are they but a few circling years at most, and your Sun is set. There is a painful struggle, immortal men in some of your bosoms between the claims of God and the world, holiness and sin, Christ and Belial, the way of life and the way of death. O that we could persuade you, before the irrecoverable step is taken, to stop in this downward career of wickedness and death !

## CHAPTER XV.

### The Points of Contrast presented in a single View.

THERE are two ways of exhibiting the contrast between the righteous and the wicked, each of which is important in its place. I mean the philosophical and the practical; the metaphysical and the illustrative; the condensed and the discursive. The efforts of instructive divines to reduce this distinction to a single point, are in some respects worthy of all praise; while, at the same time, it may be questioned if philosophical dissertations upon the nature of holiness and sin commend themselves to the universal conception and consciousness of mankind, so readily as those delineations of character which are so variously and abundantly furnished by the Sacred Writings. They are not *definitions* of good and bad men which we so much want, as descriptions and portraits of their true character. The best writers on the peculiar spirit of Christians, and the peculiar character of wicked men, even where



the writers themselves are of a philosophical turn of mind, if we mistake not, place more dependence upon the *striking examples* of holy and unholy men, as recorded in the Scriptures, than upon the abstract difference between holiness and sin. When we inspect the character of men as delineated in the Bible, it is not necessary for us to be told who are the bad, and who are the good. We "know them by their tokens." We have the best means of knowing in their biography. The faithful mirror is held up to us, which reflects the various traits of character by which they are distinguished, and we can not help seeing whether they are the friends of God, or his enemies. Nimrod was a very different man from Noah; Pharaoh was a very different man from Moses; Saul was a very different man from Samuel; Nebuchadnezzar was a very different man from Daniel; and so was Judas Iscariot a very different man from Peter, and Saul of Tarsus a very different man from Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. But wherein does this difference consist? Is it in one trait of character, or in many? No one trait is sufficiently comprehensive to comprise this very obvious difference. They are many traits, and the design of the present chapter is to cluster them, and so far as our limits will allow, present the points of contrast in a single view.

We begin by remarking, that *good men believe*

*God, and wicked men do not believe him.* If we look into the Bible, we find that this forms one of the leading points of difference in their character. No matter what God declares, good men believe him, because they know he is a Being of perfect rectitude and truth. Let the subject on which he speaks be what it may ; let it concern himself, or his creatures ; his own character and claims, or their character and obligations ; his purposes, or their destiny ; this world, or the world to come ; because he declares it, they believe his declarations. Their religious doctrines, their rules of duty, their foundations of hope, their sanctions of eternal retribution are those which he has revealed. Human opinions, human reasoning, human science hold a secondary place in their estimation to the word of God ; and when any, or all of these contradict God's word, or call it in question, a good man just bids them stand aside, and hear "what God the Lord hath said." It is the unfailing characteristic of every good man that "he sets to his seal that God is true." He moves not a step in the path of life and godliness without this firm conviction. There is nothing, the importance of which he feels more deeply, than right views of the mind and will of God. He seeks to know God's truth ; and when he has found it, it is "more to him than gold, yea, than much fine gold." The late Lady Glenorchy, of

Edinburgh, offering one day to read to her dying minister a passage from one of Hill's Sermons, he said, "O, no, read the Bible, all other writings are insipid to me ; they are the words of men, and some of them are good ; but the words of God are my *delight*. One promise gives me more comfort than all the writings of men." And how many millions of dying men and living men place the same estimate upon God's word. They know themselves, and they are known of their fellow men by this one token that *they believe God*.

On the other hand, they are those who *do not believe him*. Some of them do not believe that he has spoken to men at all. Others do not believe that it is possible for him, from the mere ambiguousness and uncertainty of language, to make any such revelation of his mind and will, as shall be an infallible rule of faith and duty. Others who believe that he speaks to them in his word, profess to believe some parts of it, while they disbelieve the rest. Others go to the Bible to confirm opinions which they have already formed, rather than to form their opinions. Others bring the teaching of the Bible to the standard of their own reason, and reject every thing which their own short-sighted minds do not approve. Others read it with vain-glorious notions of their own character, and will not believe it because it condemns them. Others do not believe it because they do not like it ; they

are afraid it is true ; but they had rather be infidels than believe such fearful truths. Others believe it in some sort ; but they have no realizing sense of its high-born realities. They give their cold assent to it ; it is a forced conviction, but stirs not one ardent thought, or warm affection of the soul. Such men do not *believe God*.

Nor need we ask, which are the good, and which the bad ? There is, and must be a radical difference in their character. Men are influenced by their *belief*, or *unbelief* in the ordinary affairs of the world. If an insurance office believes that a ship is seaworthy, and her officers and crew competent, it will not hesitate to give her owners a policy of insurance ; if it does not believe this, it will refuse the policy. If a stranger meets you on the road you are traveling and tells you that a flood has passed over the country, swept away its bridges, and rendered your way impassable ; if you believe him, you will turn back ; if you do not believe him, you will not alter your course. The testimony of men influences the purposes and conduct of men. And so does the testimony of God "which is greater," whether believed, or disbelieved. Faith in God's word leads to those practical results which form the character of good men ; disbelief in God's word leads to those practical results which form the character of bad men. No man's character is better than his principles.

If it is true that men do not believe God because they are wicked ; it is also true that they are wicked because they do not believe him. The contrast is wide between such an unbeliever, and the true believer in God's word. The one honors God, the other dishonors him. The one trusts him, the other mistrusts him, and makes God a liar. You go into a family where those who compose it believe God and confide in his word, and you see a godly house ; you enter a house where there is no faith in God and where his word is neglected and despised, and you see a wicked and ungodly household. That parent, that child, that son or daughter of Adam who believes God, has "some good thing in him toward the Lord God of Israel ;" that unbeliever has a heart that is "full of wickedness" and to "every good work reprobate."

A *second point* in this contrast is, that *good men regard God with gratified complacency and joy, while bad men regard him with indifference and hostility.* There is an essential difference, not only in their *views* of God, but in their *affections* toward him. Every Christian has a high esteem for God. Language can not express, thought can not reach those adoring views which he would fain cherish of his infinite greatness and goodness. He loves to think of God ; and his thoughts are elevating, subduing, happy thoughts, and some-

times transforming and transporting. He loves to speak of God; and when he speaks his language is, "Who is a God like unto thee;" thine, "O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty!" He loves to hear men speak well of God, to mingle his word and worship with theirs, and with theirs his praises. He wonders, he admires, he loves, he adores. Here his soul is satisfied and finds its repose. Worldly joys stupify, intoxicate, and at best ensnare him; here he drinks deep and they are fountains of joy springing up unto everlasting life. He rejoices that such a God as Moses saw on Horeb, such a God as Isaiah beheld high and lifted up, and before whom adoring Seraphims cried, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts," lives and reigns, God over all, blessed forever. He loves to lie at his feet, and look up from the dust and see him in his luminous and resplendent glory. He depends on him for all things, and thanks him for all. In perplexity, God is his guide; in trouble, God is his refuge and comforter; and in joy, God is his crown of rejoicing. Such is the recorded and delighted complacency of good men in every age of the world. God has taught them that *he Himself* is the fountain of happiness; that likeness to him, friendship for him, and communion with him form the basis of all true enjoyment. The late Dr. Payson, after

months of severe suffering on a sick bed, once remarked, "God has been cutting off one source of enjoyment after another, till I find that I can do without them all, and yet enjoy more happiness than ever in my life before." We could select testimony upon testimony, to weariness, that furnishes emphatic responses to these sweet thoughts. Nothing short of God can fulfill the desires of a good man's heart. It is God himself that he needs and seeks. He is supremely happy only when he finds his delight in God.

On the other hand, wicked men regard God with indifference and hostility. They rarely think of him, and do not love to think of him. The thoughts of God trouble them, and they banish them. "Hast thou marked the *old way* which wicked men have trodden, which said unto God, *Depart from us.*" Introduce a wicked man to a circle where the living God is the subject of conversation, and men are speaking of him reverently and affectionately, and he feels that he is out of his place and retires. His thoughts run upon other themes. The very presence of God fills him with fear. A godly parent, unexpectedly intruding upon the reveling and debauchery of an ungodly son, would not be less welcome, nor more certainly disturb his tranquillity than the thought of God's presence would be to one who is "dead in trespasses and sins." And when he does think of

God, what are his thoughts? Why, he thinks of him as a being who is afar off. "How doth God know, and can he judge through the dark-cloud?" And when he thinks of him as "about his path and about his bed," what are his thoughts but thoughts of suspicion, disingenuous, and unfriendly thoughts? He thinks of him as a hard master, a severe judge, it may be as a cruel tyrant, partial, inequitable, and to whom he is subject only because he is omnipotent; and none can flee out of his hand. And when he speaks of God is it always in the language of reverence, or even circumspection? Do such persons never speak falsely of him, and impugn and slander his character? Do they never speak lightly of him, as though he were "altogether such an one as themselves?" Do they never speak fearlessly of him, and even jocosely and profanely? Do they never profanely inweave even in their common conversation, *his holy name*, and the imprecations of his vengeance upon those who happen to offend them?

And if we venture a step further, and take off the veil from their hearts, what is there there but cold disaffection, if not deep-rooted and conscious hostility. They do not love him, but other things more than him. When they are in darkness it is not God they go to, that he would send out his light and his truth, and let him guide them. When they are in distress, it is not him they go



to for relief and tranquillity. They go to the world, to business, to pleasure, to forgetfulness, to an airy nothing; and because they find no peace they sink in the sullenness of gloom and despondency. Good men flee to God; they are men of prayer. Bad men flee from him; they cast off fear and restrain prayer. This test is of easy application. "You perceive a number of children playing together in the street; but you could not, without previous knowledge, determine who are their parents, or where are their homes. But let one of them receive an injury, or get into any trouble, and we learn who his parents are, for he immediately runs to them for relief. Thus it is with the Christian and the man of the world. While we observe them together, pursuing the same employments and placed in the same circumstances, we may not be able at once to distinguish them. But let afflictions come upon them and we are no longer at a loss. The man of the world seeks relief from earthly comforts, while the Christian flies to his heavenly Father, his refuge and support in the day of trouble." O, this estrangement from God in wicked men! It is one of the darkest traits in their character. They are not merely God's enemies, but the moral disposition and state of their mind is enmity itself. Enemies may be convinced; may be persuaded; may be terrified; may be bribed into friendship and over-

come. Enmity can not be. It must be subdued and slain.

If, then, we look at the fact that good men regard the ever blessed God with gratified complacency and joy, and wicked men regard him with indifference and hostility, we are constrained to confess there is a difference in their character. And the difference is obvious and palpable. It is a test which never fails. Every good man is the friend of God; every bad man is his enemy.

A third point in this contrast relates to the *duties men owe to their fellow men*. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is the second great precept of the divine law. External morality may exist without religion, but true religion can not exist without external morality. There is no such code of morals as the Bible; no morality so pure, so thorough, so far-reaching, as that which the Bible requires and makes essential to Christian character. There is, no doubt, a great deal of morality that does not spring from Christian principle and motives. Many a man who boasts of his outward conduct as irreproachable and stainless, neither loves God nor believes his word. There have been some professed infidels of noble, generous, and upright deportment toward their fellow men. Their natural temperament, their good breeding, their pride of character, as well

as a sound discretion and wise policy, have made them true, honest, and even kind. The young ruler who, in view of the requisitions of the second table of the law, replied: "All these things have I kept from my youth up," lacked the "one thing needful." And, though he had a very good opinion of himself, he was obliged to give it up when he was told that he must forsake all and follow Christ. His morality was rotten at the core. It went just so far as self-interest led the way, and there it stopped. It terminated in self and the world. It had no other object. The morality of such men never looks so high as God, nor so far as eternity. When self and the world require one course of conduct, and God and eternity another and a different course, they are at fault. They can not serve God and Mammon. Their morality asks indulgences, and claims reserves, which God does not acknowledge.

Yet while we say these things, we must give emphasis to the truth, that one of the points of contrast between the righteous and the wicked relates to the duties they owe to their fellow men. Men have their claims as well as God, and they are claims which God recognizes. The Great Guardian of the universe keeps a watchful eye upon those social affections and those relative duties to which the world owes so much of its

rectitude, its harmony, and its happiness. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for if he loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" If we advert to the character of such men as Nimrod, and Pharaoh, and Balaam, and Herod, and Saul of Tarsus, we can not resist the impression that they took pleasure in the calamities of others, and loved to inflict injury upon their fellow men. There are those who have no "good will to men" in their bosoms. If there are those whom they befriend, it is only to serve their own ends. If they have rivals they crush them; enemies, they ruin them if they can. They have a slanderous and ungoverned tongue, and a crooked policy in all their dealings. They are not truthful, but treacherous and dishonest. They sometimes perform kind actions; but the more you know of them the less you are convinced they know and practice the golden rule, "to do to others as they would that others should do to them." They are artful robbers of the rich, and unrelenting oppressors of the poor. They are the enemies of good men, rejoice in their failings, and "eat up the sin of God's people as they eat bread." Instead of taking any interest in the moral or spiritual welfare of their fellow men, they rejoice in their wickedness, minister to their vices, and live upon their profligacy and

degradation. We look at such persons and can not doubt that they are bad. Their conduct proves it. "The tree is known by its fruit." No fig-tree ever bore such thorns.

Now, look at such men as Noah, Abraham, and Paul. You see they were men of a benevolent spirit. They were not selfish; they were public-spirited men; men of truth, of honesty; men of Christian honor; men who might be relied on at the hazard of every personal interest. All good men have not made such attainments in excellence; yet their disposition and their course of conduct show that they make conscience of doing right. They do not live to sin, nor do they sin to live. Their spirit is the spirit of love, of forgiveness, of tenderness, and well-doing. It is not a malignant, unkind spirit. They do not live as though they had leave, from their profession as Christians, to defraud, and slander, and injure, and envy, and hate their fellow men. While they take special delight in the character of those who are the friends of God, their affections are those of kindness toward his and their enemies. They are not the sins more immediately against God, and these only, which they strive to mortify and avoid, but sins against their fellow men. Nor are they religious duties merely which they endeavor to perform, but the duties they owe to their fellow men. It is a sense of their

universal responsibility which governs them. The will of their Master in heaven is but one, whether it regards God or man ; they know no other master, no other law.

A fourth point, in this contrast, is their *different views of sin*. The wicked men whose character is described in the Scriptures, thought little of sinning against God. Because they made light of God they made light of the precepts, the prohibitions and penalties of his holy law ; they made light of eternity ; and, therefore, they made light of *sin*. This is one of the characteristics of wicked men all over the world. From the cautious formalist, who covers up his transgressions by hypocritical professions of goodness, to the bold blasphemer, and the fool who " makes a mock at sin ;" all wicked men, though not alike in the number and enormity of their offenses, are alike destitute of holiness. He whose eye is on every wicked man's heart sees nothing there but sin. Some are stupid and thoughtless ; and though often warned and admonished, slight these calls and put far away the evil day. Some sin against great light ; they have been distinguished for their religious privileges ; and though they have known their Lord's will, they have not done it. Some have lived long in sin ; their day of grace has been prolonged beyond that of most of their fellow men. Some have stifled the voice of con-

science and resisted the strivings of the Holy Spirit. Yet have they no heart-affecting views of the sinfulness of sin, of the turpitude and ill-desert of their own character as sinners, and no earnest desires to be delivered from this moral tyranny, and bondage. If you tell them they are condemned by the law of God, this is a truth they do not comprehend. If you tell them that the day of retribution is near, they comfort themselves with the thought, that it is no nearer to them than to others. Nothing convinces or alarms them. They take refuge in the hackneyed excuses for impenitence; and, because they cover their sins from their own eyes, presumptuously hope that they are covered from the all-searching eye. Thus they live, and thus they die. This is their wickedness, and such the views they have of that abominable thing which God's soul hateth.

Most certainly this is not the character of good men; Moses and Paul were not such men as this. The views which good men have of God, produce heart-affecting views of sin. The more they see of him and of themselves, the more do they abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Their past conduct is a grief to them, and touches them with humility and contrition. Their iniquities often overwhelm them with shame and confusion of face. As memory recalls them in all their

varied forms, and conscience unfolds their turpitude, and the spirit of God reminds them of what they have failed to do, they can not suppress the exclamation, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." They are sinners still; and when they sin, like Peter, they "go out and weep bitterly." They are still tempted to sin, because the Canaanite is still in the land, and there is much remaining depravity of heart to be overcome. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" still ensnare them, while that single thought, "How shall I commit this great wickedness and sin against God," has great power over their conscience, heart and life. With terrible majesty, and unutterable tenderness, and with "a loud voice," like that he uttered when he gave up the ghost, the sufferer of Calvary bids them beware of sin. A good man is accustomed to receive lessons from that Great Teacher, and there, on his cross, he reads the lessons written in blood. He would be the foe of that which nailed his adorable Master to the tree. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." They long to be delivered from the power of sin. They "groan being burdened." When God "pours the spirit of grace and supplications upon them," they "look on him whom they have pierced and mourn." There is a luxury even in



these tears. Here lies the difference between the good and the bad.

A fifth point, in this contrast, will be found in the different views which these two classes of persons entertain *toward Christ*. The ancient saints, from Abel down to Malachi, saw Christ in the Old Testament, though they beheld him under a cloud, in the mere shadow of the "good things to come." Like Abraham, they rejoiced to "see Christ's day, and saw it and were glad." Like David, they beheld him "fairer than the sons of men;" and with the delighted church in the Canticles, they could say of him, "My Beloved is the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely." When in the fullness of time, this Saviour became incarnate, and gave himself an offering for sin, all good men honored him. There were men like aged Simeon, and like Peter and John, and holy women, like Anna, and Mary and Martha, who forsook all and followed him. They prized the invitations of the gospel, repaired to that Saviour, and rested upon him for pardon and eternal life. They found hope only in him; every other refuge left their heart sad. Vile as they felt themselves to be, and were, they returned to their offended God through Him, and desired to be saved in no other way. They "esteemed all things but loss for Christ;" they gloried in that cross by which "the world was crucified to them, and they to

the world ; they denied themselves to the death that they might follow him. And such, substantially, have been the views and affections of all good men in all time. Christ is the magnet which attracts them. Him they know ; him they love ; in him they trust, because there is no want of all-sufficiency in his person, and no defect in his sacrifice. The alarm and wretchedness of a guilty conscience, and the terrors of apprehension find repose here, and here their peace is as a river, and as a flowing stream. Such is the simplicity of the gospel, that this trust, these hopes, and this consecration to Christ are not peculiar to well-instructed minds, nor even to Christian lands. "In a portion of our Southern territory, from which the red man has now been driven, at a protracted meeting held in the wild forest, the subject of, *Christ and him Crucified*, was the preacher's theme, and was illustrated with surpassing beauty and grandeur. As the preacher drew a picture of Gethsemane and of the unbefriended stranger who wept there, and then pointed to him as he hung bleeding on the cross ; the congregation wept. There was a slight movement in the assembly, and a tall son of the forest, with tears on his red cheeks, approached the preacher and said : *Did Jesus die for me ?—die for poor Indian ? Me have no lands to give to Jesus ; the white men take them away ; me give him my dog*

*and my rifle.* The minister told him, Jesus would not accept this. *Me give Jesus my dog, my rifle, and my BLANKET ; poor Indian he got no more to give ; he GIVE JESUS ALL.* The minister replied, that Jesus could not accept them. The poor ignorant self-sacrificing son of the forest bent his head in sorrow and meditated. At length he raised his noble brow, and fixing his eye on the preacher, sobbed out, "*Here is POOR INDIAN ; will Jesus HAVE HIM ?*" This is Christianity ; this is goodness, alike in the learned and the unlearned. To those who believe, Christ is precious. The work of Christ, the thought of Christ, consecration to Christ is sweet to all good men. Their hearts, their hands, their persons, their praises are given to Him that sitteth upon the throne.

Just the converse of these are the views and emotions of wicked men. Who sought to strangle the young child Jesus in his cradle ? The wicked Herod. Who accused him of blasphemy, rebuked him for his condescension to sinners, and insisted upon it that he was in league with the Devil ? The wicked Scribes and Pharisees. Who held a council how they might destroy him ? That same "generation of vipers." Who were sore displeased, because the children in the Temple sang Hosanna to the Son of David ? The wicked chief Priests and Scribes. Who took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk ?

The infidel Saducees. Who came out against him in the Garden? A wicked soldiery, from the more wicked Sanhedrim. Who spit in his face and buffeted him; who cried out crucify him, crucify him; who stripped him, scourged him, nailed him to the cross, and triumphed in his agonies and shame? Vile men and viler instigators. Wickedness and Christ have no common sympathies. Rejection of Christ comes from the love of wickedness. Who are wicked men if not those who trifle with their immortality; who repudiate their obligations to the law of God; who laugh at conscience; who are controlled by their corruptions, and whose idols are self and the world? Yet, to say nothing of grosser wickedness, these are the men, all over the world, who neither esteem, nor love, nor confide in the Son of God. "Suppose you wish to separate the minute particles of brass and steel mixed together in the same vessel. Apply a loadstone, and immediately every particle of iron will attach itself to it, while the brass remains behind. So in a large, or small community of men, we may not be able to distinguish them; but let Jesus Christ come among them, and all the good will be attracted toward him as the steel is drawn to the magnet, while all the bad will remain at a distance." Or, to change the parallel, the spirit of piety is like an electrified body. Let it come in

contact with Jesus Christ, and the wave of heavenly fluid will flow ; its sympathetic vibrations will be excited, and a single flash of heaven's spiritual lightning will multiply its wavelets indefinitely. The spirit of impiety responds to none of these heavenly vibrations ; nothing can excite them, because it has no spiritual susceptibility. There is an electrical attractiveness in the Saviour which all good men know and feel ; while in those same properties, so attractive to the good, there is all that is repulsive to the evil.

Another point in this contrast is, that good men *are submissive to the will of God, and bad men are unsubmissive.* All men fall in with the will of God when his will is accordant with their own. It is no act of submission then to desire that God's will may be done. But when his will countervails our own, and our desires are thwarted, and our hopes defeated, and all our plans deranged by his providence—then to prefer his will to our own is proof of goodness. This is what God requires, what the creature owes to the Creator, what human ignorance, human infirmity, human dependence, and the imperfect rectitude of men owe to unerring wisdom and goodness. This single line of demarkation is no unsafe criterion of moral character. This is the disputed question between God and the soul, and the very point at which it turns from sin to holiness. “Not

as I will, but as thou wilt"—this is Christianity; this was the spirit of its Author; this is piety; this is heaven. Just in the measure in which men are sanctified, they desire no will but God's. If you carefully inspect the lives of holy men as recorded in the Scriptures, you will find that they have learned to say, under the most trying and painful events, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth to him good." It is the joy of good men that all their interests, and all the vicissitudes of their condition are at his disposal.

It is a fearful convulsion in the human mind when the *will* of man refuses to be controlled by the will of God. The restless will, the unsleeping will, the strong will—proud man would have it all his own. This is the culminating point of his apostacy. The great English poet could not have better defined the essence of wickedness than when he puts the words into the mouth of the arch-fiend,

"Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven."

Yes, this is wickedness. This is hell. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Wicked men are at war with God. When he opposes them they murmur and repine. The clay quarrels with the potter. They do nothing from an honest and ingenuous regard to the divine authority; they submit to nothing from a true and

cheerful regard to the divine pleasure. This is wickedness; and where you see only this you see wicked men.

Still another point in this contrast is the difference *in the views and aims of good and bad men as they respect the great objects of human life*. When you look upon the world in which you dwell, you see some persons who have a deep and abiding sense of their responsibility; who in the different spheres in which they are employed aim to do right, and set their duty above their own interests and pleasures; and who live in order to accomplish the great end of their existence. Their time, their property, their talents, their associations, their employments and influence, are habitually so employed as to meet the approbation and promote the glory of God. Man was made for this end, just as the sun was made to shine, the clouds to give rain, and the earth to bring forth fruit. Those who live for this purpose are good men. They have a self-sacrificing and disinterested spirit. Their aims are generous and high, both in moral attainments and active usefulness. They do not stagnate in sloth and pleasure. They are not ambitious of "vain glory" but stimulated by the high ambition of doing good. With their two talents they gain other two; and with their five, other five; and if they have but one they are strangers to the ignoble indolence that hides

it in a napkin and buries it in the earth. They "seek great things," but not "for themselves;" rather do they prefer the honor of God to their own honor, and the interests of his kingdom to every other interest. It is their highest consolation in life and in death, that they are not their own; but belong body and soul, to their gracious and faithful Lord. Often do they renew the consecration of themselves to him, and the direct and cherished purpose of glorifying him, spurning the earth as their portion, "looking for and hasting unto the day of God," stretching onward and upward to a boundless immortality. We say that such men are not bad men; if Gabriel were to observe them would he not say, they are good men? Will not such persons at last enjoy the approbation of the King of heaven, and though "not by works of righteousness which they have done," but according to his abundant mercy, be found among those who encircle his throne?

On the other hand, there are those who live for a very different purpose. Sin is a debasing thing; it polutes and contracts the mind and heart; it sinks the soul into abject selfishness. If you look over the world, you see a class of men who live *for time*. Some of them are men of indolence and sloth. They do not so much live *with* their fellow men, as *upon* them. Their "ambition is to sink." Their business is to do nothing. They



are "cumberers of the ground." The world would not miss them were they all to die to-morrow, except that its condition would be changed for the better. There are others who live for the mere purposes of self-gratification and pleasure. Their character is withered by their vices, and the fair flower that might have bloomed in beauty and fragrance, is blighted, and its stalk rots on the low lands where it grew. There are others whose sole object is wealth. They contrive, and toil, and economize for gain; not for usefulness, not for competency and comfort, but to *be rich*. Some of the finest minds in the world are consumed by this passion after wealth; it may be the pomp of riches, or the pride of riches, or the mere self-complacency of riches, that infatuates them. And there are others who live for fame; who are agitated night and day with the throes of ambition. The pride of power and the pageantry of state intoxicate them. They live for a name and the proud career of earth. These are the leading aims, the "ruling passion" of millions. But they are not rational aims; they will not bear reflection; they leave the heart dissatisfied; and they yield little comfort on the bed of death. They are all for self; and if not exclusively for self, for that circle of which self is the centre. They stop with time and have nothing to do with God and eternity. The soul does not expand, nor is it the

better for being under their power. Men were made for higher ends than either to be loungers on God's earth; or plunge into the gulph of pleasure; or attain the wealth of the Indies; or wrap themselves in robes of fame. God has assigned them a higher service; nor will he hold them guiltless for neglecting it. Those who have no higher destination than this, may attain their object; but it is not the end aimed at by good men.

And when these two classes of men come to the bed of death they themselves see which has, and which has not, attained the great ends of their existence. "Who," says Voltaire, "can without horror, consider the whole world as the empire of destruction? It abounds with wonders; it also abounds with victims. It is a vast field of carnage and contagion. Every species is without pity pursued and torn to pieces, through earth, and air, and water. In man there is more wretchedness than in all the other animals put together. He loves life, and yet he knows that he must die. If he enjoys a transient good, he suffers various evils, and is at last devoured by worms. This knowledge is his fatal prerogative; other animals have it not. He spends the transient moments of his existence in diffusing the miseries which he suffers; in cutting the throats of his fellow creatures for pay; in cheating and being cheated; in robbing and being robbed; in

serving that he might command ; and in repenting of all he does. The bulk of mankind are nothing more than a crowd of wretches, equally criminal and unfortunate, and the globe contains carcasses rather than men. I tremble at the review of this dreadful picture, to find it contains a complaint against Providence itself ; and I WISH I HAD NEVER BEEN BORN !” \* A fitting view this to be taken by an infidel of the life of man. This is infidelity. Turn now to the view of a Christian man, “ who died as he lived, full of confidence in God.” “ I shall shortly,” said the excellent Halyburton, “ get a very different sight of God from what I have had, and shall be made meet to praise him forever and ever. O the thoughts of an Incarnate Deity are sweet and ravishing ! O how I wonder at myself that I do not love him more, and that I do not admire him more ! What wonder that I enjoy such a composure under all my bodily pains, and in view of death itself ! What a mercy that, having the use of my reason, I can declare his goodness to my soul ! I long for his salvation ; and bless his name that I have found him, and die rejoicing in him. O that I was where he is ! I have a father and a mother, and ten brothers and sisters in heaven, and I shall be the eleventh. O there is a telling in this providence, and I shall be telling it forever. If there

\* Fuller on Truth.

be such a glory in his conduct now, what will it be to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne? BLESSED BE GOD, THAT EVER I WAS BORN!"\* This is Christianity. Good men "live for something," and to bless God that ever they were born. Bad men live for nothing; they do not accomplish any of life's great ends, and at its close only regret that they ever had a being! They are beautiful thoughts of the great Chalmers, when he says, "Thousands of men breathe, move, and live—pass off the stage of life and are heard of no more. Why? None were blessed by them; none could point to them as the means of their redemption. Not a line they wrote, not a word they spoke, could be recalled, and so they perished. Their light went out in darkness, and they were not remembered more than the insects of yesterday. Why will you thus live and die? O man immortal, live for something. Do good, and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storms of time can never destroy. Write your name by kindness, love, and mercy, on the hearts of thousands you come in contact with year by year, and you will never be forgotten. No; your name, your deeds, will be as legible as the hearts you leave behind, as the stars on the brow of evening. Good deeds will shine as brightly on the earth as the stars of heaven."

\* Jay.

Such is the contrast between good men and bad, as exhibited in their conduct. There are those, we know, who disregard it, and who affirm that good men sin as well as others, and that the distinction between them is only in name. We regret the sins of good men. Their wickedness is the more noticed, and the more trumpeted, because they are good men. Their wrong doing is so rare, and so out of place, that a fault-finding world glories in their faults. "To a young infidel who scoffed at Christianity, on account of the misconduct of some of its professors, the late Dr. John M. Mason, once said, Did you ever know an uproar made because an *infidel* went astray from the paths of morality? The infidel admitted he had not. Then, replied the Doctor, do you not see that you admit that Christianity is a holy religion, by expecting its professors to be holy; and that thus, by your very objection, you pay it the highest compliment in your power." There is no need of saying that good men are not perfect men; yet is the standard of their character a perfect standard. And say what the world will, the contrast between them and the wicked who know not God, can not be called in question by any fair and ingenious mind. The points of difference are obvious, even summarily as they have now been exhibited. They lie at the basis of all moral character, and when taken together, are applicable,

not only to some men, but to all men, and are indicative of the righteous and the wicked, wherever they are found. The wicked, not of the vile merely, but of all who are not born of the Spirit of God—the righteous, not of the best of men only, but of all who, by mighty grace, have been quickened from the death of trespasses and sins. It is a searching inquiry to which they may well incite us, and many a solemn retrospect, and faithful self-inspection. These inward questionings are salutary, and will not disturb our hopes if they rest on a firm basis, nor shut out the light of God's countenance, though for a time they may lead us to walk in darkness. God dwells with the humble. Distrust of self should lead us to more implicit trust in him. Doubt of self should confirm our faith in the riches of his grace. Holy joy is the offspring of godly sorrow. The harp on the willows is destined to sing the Lord's song.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### The Rich Man and Lazarus;

#### OR, THE CONTRAST IN ETERNITY.

NO truth is more fully accredited by believers in divine revelation, than that there will be a day when God will judge the world. Every mind in the universe will be awake when the great Judge thus pronounces the destinies of men. It will be a day that lifts the curtain; that brings forward the long-expected scenes of a future world; that ushers the race of man into the regions of immortality, and discloses the catastrophe of that magnificent plan, which has occupied all time to accomplish.

Think of Lazarus—think of Dives, and you will know how to estimate the decisions of that Great Day. It was as the rich man lay on that burning lake, that the father of the faithful announced the unchanging decree which were enough to “make the ears of him that heareth tingle.” He had just been imploring Abraham to *send Lazarus that he might dip the tip of his*

*finger in water and cool his tongue, because he was tormented in that flame. But this was a boon that could not be granted in that world of torment. He in his life-time had received his good things, likewise Lazarus his evil things; but now Lazarus is comforted, and he is tormented. And Lazarus could not go; there was an impervious, insurmountable barrier. Between us and you there is a great gulph fixed: So that they which would pass from us to you can not; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.*

In this affecting parable three things are distinctly observable—

That by the allotments of his providence in the present world, God does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked;

That at the end of the world there will be a difference between them; and,

That their condition then, will remain forever unaltered.

The first truth here suggested is that by the allotments of his providence in the present world, God does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked.

It has been the grief of many good men, that the dispensations of providence in this world afford so little evidence of the impartiality and rectitude of the divine government. Without some intimation that the present is a probation-



ary, rather than a retributive state, there would be no inconsiderable ground for this apprehension. It was the complaint of the wise man, that *there is a vanity which is done upon the earth ; that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked ; and again, that there be wicked men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.* In the distribution of mercies and judgments, there is so little discrimination of moral character, that one might be tempted to conclude it were a matter of indifference what character men possess. *All things come alike to all ; there is one event to the righteous and the wicked ; so that no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.* It is true that the friends of God enjoy a composure of mind, an inward security and peace, a hope of pardon and acceptance which the wicked do not enjoy ; but in regard to outward mercies, his enemies are usually blessed above his friends. The church has often complained *that the proud were happy ; yea, they that work wickedly were set up ; yea, they that tempt God were even delivered.* The most enviable comforts are often reserved for the proudest heart ; the highest honors for the most flagitious life ; the most remarkable deliverances for the most irreverent and presumptuous. The Psalmist once *thought to understand this, but it was too painful for him.* His feet were almost gone ;

*his steps had well nigh slipped*; because he was even *envious at the foolish, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked*. The men of the world are represented in the Scriptures, as having *their portion* in this life. Whether it be to show the comparative meanness and significance of all earthly good; or that the Father of mercies is kind even to the evil and unthankful; or to illustrate their own impenitence and obduracy; or to give them the opportunity of filling up the measure of their iniquity; or to accomplish all these purposes;—the fact is unquestioned—that thus far in the history of the world, by far the greater portion of those, who, like the rich man in the parable, have fared sumptuously every day, have been of the wicked rather than of the righteous.

It is true that there are, in the present world, expressive indications of the divine displeasure against iniquity. The hurricane, the volcano, the pestilence, the flames, the floods, the tempest, with all their terrific ravages, together with the numberless sorrows and untold agonies of body and mind that agitate the world in which we dwell, are tokens of God's displeasure. Impressive and emphatic examples there have been, in which the wrath of God has been "revealed from heaven against the unrighteousness and ungodliness of men." The Old World was swept by the waters of the deluge; Sodom was overthrown as in a

moment, and no hands stayed on her; Babylon sunk like a millstone into the depths of the sea. Yet, after all, an attentive observer must be driven to the conclusion that this is not the world in which the Holy God designs to make the distinction visible between the righteous and the wicked. We do not perceive, indeed, how this could be done, unless the established laws of nature and providence were suspended, and the world governed by a perpetual series of miracles.

The real disposition of the divine mind toward holiness and sin must be exhibited in the distribution of good and evil in accordance with their respective characters. The present world, therefore, is but the season of trial, with a view to a future retribution. We must look beyond, if we would see the line of demarkation between the friends and foes of God drawn with visible and permanent distinctness. This difference will be clearly and distinctly made, at the end of the world. The time of trial on the earth was never designed to be long. Human life with all its invaluable opportunities, is but a "a vapor that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away." Death closes the scene in which the holy and the profane appear in an undistinguished garb, and discovers not only their true character, but their fitting state and destination. Every man then enters upon allotments,

which, so far from being influenced by his earthly standing, are exclusively determined by his moral character.

As there is an essential and immutable difference between holiness and sin, so is there a visible propriety in assigning different allotments to the righteous and the wicked. The method of grace by Jesus Christ contemplates nothing more certainly than this, and confirms nothing more absolutely. God can not do justice to himself, nor to the universe, without making it appear in another world, that this difference lays the foundation for a difference in his manner of treating them. When Abraham drew near to plead for the few righteous that remained in Sodom, he rested his solicitations on this well-known principle of the divine government. *That the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee ! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?* This is a sentiment common to all men. However favorably their natural selfishness may induce them to judge of their own deserts, and whatever may be their desires and hopes ; they have no such thoughts within them, that God will so far disregard his own character, as to pay no respect to the conduct of men here, in fixing their condition hereafter. To say nothing of the nature and extent of the difference, every man feels that between those who have done good and those who have done evil, there must be *some*

difference in a future world. The veriest pagan feels this ; pagan philosophers have extensively taught this truth ; and it would be a violation of every sentiment of natural conscience to suppose the contrary. In defiance of their love of error, men can not easily persuade themselves that they have nothing to hope, nor fear, on account of the course of conduct they pursue in the present life.

*The beggar died, and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man died also, and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment.* What more impressive description of the difference between the righteous and the wicked in another world ! The state of these two men is designed to be a just representation of all the dead and all that ever shall die. Every individual of the human family will be found with Lazarus in heaven, or with Dives in hell. There are but two different classes of moral character in this world, and there will be but two different conditions adapted to their difference of character in the next. The righteous and the wicked will, therefore, then be separated, and the difference between them be seen.

And in accordance with this representation is the testimony of the Scriptures throughout. We are told, that there is a time coming when men "shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, and between him that serveth God

and him that serveth him not." That time is the end of the world. This truth is recognized and enforced in almost all the parables of the New Testament. The parable of the vineyard contains it. The parable of the sower, the parable of the marriage supper, the parable of the ten virgins, the parable of the talents, and of the wheat, and the tares, contain it. To illustrate and enforce this truth, our Lord directed his Apostles, wherever they proclaimed his gospel, to publish its sanctions and threatenings as well as its offers of mercy. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.* It is also inwoven with the very genius and spirit of the whole gospel. It is implied in its doctrines ; it is implied in its precepts ; it is implied in its offers and terms of salvation ; it is implied in its very promises. If these do not draw a dividing line between the righteous and the wicked after death, then have they no significance. But there is no part of the Bible in which this truth is more clearly taught, than in that unaffected, but most affecting account our blessed Lord has given of the Day of Judgment. *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall SEPARATE THEM ONE FROM*

ANOTHER, *as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. Then shall the king say to those on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.* One would think that no man could read this narrative without being convinced that it was the design of Christ to inform the world, that he would, at the last judgment, make a wide difference between the righteous and the wicked. If such be not the teaching of the sacred writings, they are certainly fitted to lead men to false conclusions upon a subject of the highest importance. If it was their honest purpose to teach that there will be no difference hereafter between the righteous and the wicked, would they have made use of such language as this?

There will be a difference between them, else is this book of God a tissue of deception, from beginning to end. And it will be a *wide* difference. The righteous shall be holy as God is holy, lovely and beloved, and their bosoms shall become the residence and the reflection of all that is serene and joyful; while the wicked shall be matured in wickedness, hateful and hated, and their minds shall be the seat of every foul, inordinate, and un-

gratified lust and affection. The righteous shall dwell in the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, the pure palace of the skies; while the wicked shall inhabit the dark dungeon, the deep cavern, the mournful prison of the universe. The righteous will be associated with the spirits of just men made perfect, the angels of light and the adorable Redeemer; while the wicked are associated with vile spirits of incorrigible men, and the vile companions of the Prince of Darkness. There will be a difference of character, of place, of society, of employment, of prospects. They will be unlike in every conceivable particular. A great gulf will lie between them—a chasm that is indefinitely wide and without a bottom. A vast continent, an immense world will lie on either side, entirely dissimilar in every view, except that of bare existence and accountability. There will be no common sympathies between them; no communion; no reciprocity either of thought and feeling, of enjoyment or suffering. There will be no common lot. What is known and felt by one class is unknown and inexperienced by the other. If there be pain, and woe, and despair on the one side, there is none on the other; and if on the one side there be felicity, and joy, and exultation, there is none on the other.

Look up to Abraham's bosom. Look down to that tormenting flame. Hear the song of Lazarus,



and listen to the moans of Dives ; and you will see how widely the righteous and the wicked differ in a future world. O fellow immortals ! what a picture is here presented to our view ! What a gulf is this which separates the righteous and the wicked ! On the hither side of it, the wicked are clothed in rags ; on the remoter shore, the righteous shine in all the beauties of holiness, and the fine linen of the saints. The wicked are denied a drop of water to cool their tongue ; the righteous drink of the pure water of the river of life, from the throne of God and the Lamb. The wicked have no rest day nor night from the tormenting fury of God's indignation ; the righteous rest from their labors and their sufferings, and their works do follow them. The wicked, while they behold the blessedness of the righteous, *blaspheme God and gnaw their tongues for their pain ;* the righteous with all their compassion for such woes, but with their still greater admiration of the divine rectitude and justice, say, *Alleluiah !* while they see *the smoke of the torments of the damned ascending forever and ever !*

What truths are these which the God of truth thus utters in our ears ? Is every living man on this terrestrial globe to be assigned to one or the other of these allotments ? And for how long a period ? How long ? O, how long ? Read the words of the parable and you will perceive that

these decisions of eternal justice will never be reversed. The gulf is *impassable*.

We must dwell then on the great truth, that this difference remains unaltered.

When the rich man craved a drop of water to cool his tongue, he was not only reminded that in the present world he had received his good things; but that besides this there was a great gulf between him and the regions of the blessed, so that all intercourse was forever barred. They who would pass from heaven to hell could not; neither could they pass to heaven who would come from hell. There was an impassable gulf between them, and it is between them still, much as the wickedness and ingenuity of men have been put upon the rack to devise means to remove, or diminish, or cross this impassable barrier. There is no arch that spans it; no tunnel that runs beneath it; the effort is as vain as the hope of Dives to procure a drop of water from Lazarus.

Nor are these bold and strong assertions without proof. This parable was uttered by him who "spake as never man spake," and who is truth itself. And the natural and necessary construction of it must produce the conviction upon every fair and ingenuous mind, that there will be no change in the allotments of men after they leave this world. After having been once admitted into heaven the righteous shall never be thrust down

to hell ; after having been once shut up in hell, the wicked shall never enter into heaven. These are two distinct propositions ; each of them deserves a few distinct remarks.

*Will then the righteous, after having been once admitted into heaven, ever sink to hell ?* The floating lights of human reason can not be trusted to decide so grave a question as this. Classic mythology furnishes us the best teachings of human wisdom ; but they are obscure and doubtful. The subject is one about which we may reason and speculate, and adopt conclusions justified by strong probability ; but after all, we *know* nothing about it except from God. What then has God told us ? How readest thou ? *These shall go into LIFE ETERNAL. He that believeth shall be SAVED. The Father's commandment is life EVERLASTING. Because I live, ye SHALL LIVE also. At God's right hand there are pleasures FOREVER MORE. There shall be NO MORE pain, nor death, for the former things are passed away. From that temple they shall go no more out.* We need no more. Who does not see that this representation accords with all the principles of God's government, with all the dictates of sound reason, and all the better feelings of our hearts ? If there be any meaning in words, the Scriptures teach us that the blessedness of the righteous will be literally without end.

It is a delightful thought, that after all their

fears and conflicts, all their sins and unfaithfulness, the righteous will all, at last, be confirmed in their integrity and blessedness. And it is a thought which not only falls in with, but is required by, the whole scope and design of the sacred writings. We take up the Bible and ask ourselves such questions as the following : For what did God create the world ? For what is all the vast machinery of his providence, and the still more wonderful method of his grace ? For what the incarnation and death of his only Son ? the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the effectual calling and progressive sanctification of his peculiar people ? For what the day and means of salvation ; the final judgment and sentence ; if after all this exhibition of wisdom, love, and power, the nations of the saved may, at some distant period, leave their abodes of glory and sink to the realms of woe ?

There are but three ways in which we can conceive the character and condition of the righteous in the heavenly world will ever be altered. Either there must be something in the heavenly world itself to change the character and diminish the joys of its inhabitants ; or they themselves must change their own character and destiny ; or God himself must change his purpose, and after all that he has done for them, leave them to relapse into sin and perish.

But is there any thing in the heavenly world that will tend to change the character, or diminish the joys of its happy inhabitants? God is there, but he is without variableness, or shadow of turning. If the pure spirits around his throne ever have reason to love and adore him, they will always have reason to do so. And since he does not alter, their affections and joys will not alter. Throughout ceaseless ages will he unfold the luster of his character; and those who have once beheld his beauty, can never be offended with his excellence, or weary of his glory. Nor will there be any thing in the character of the angels, or of the employments and enjoyments of the heavenly world that will have a tendency to satiate or disgust a holy mind, but every thing to cherish and enkindle within it the flame of hallowed joy. And as there is nothing in heaven to alter the disposition of its inhabitants, so its inhabitants will never voluntarily turn their backs upon it to welter in the flames of hell. They have no motive to do so, arising either from their judgment, their conscience, their prevailing disposition, or their highest interest. And as the saints will be satisfied with their inheritance, and never choose to exchange it for the portion of the reprobate, so we have the assurance of the God of love that his purpose will never change. His faithfulness and mercy are pledged to keep them. His eternal

covenant is pledged to keep them. "The word of his oath" is pledged to keep them. Nothing shall pluck them out of his hands. Nothing shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.

O! whose heart will not fasten on this inestimable truth! What child of grace does not look down upon the mighty chasm between him and the pit, and rejoice that *they which would pass from hence* CAN NOT? On this infinitely interesting inquiry, therefore, every fear may be hushed. We have the security of a God of truth that the heavenly inheritance *fadeth not away*. "Once has he sworn in his holiness, that he will not lie unto David." By *two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, they may have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them, which hope they have as an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil, whither the forerunner hath for them entered*. Mournful, indeed, would be the tidings, if when you open the everlasting doors to welcome the departing spirit, a doubt might flit across it that the time may come when this inheritance may be forfeited. The anchor of the Christian's hope is more sure and steadfast than this. Everlasting thanks to the perfected work of the Son of God, no such mournful tidings shall ever fall upon the ear of redeemed men. *There is a great*

*gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from heaven to hell can not !*

The inquiry is not the less interesting: *Will the wicked, after having been once shut up in hell, ever be admitted into heaven ?* Within the whole compass of human thought, there is no question more solemn than this. Human reason can not decide it, any more than it can decide the former question. It can not determine whether a just God will pardon sin at all ; a supernatural revelation was necessary in order to establish this great truth. So far as the pagan world have decided by their mythology, its decision is that there will be no change, in the condition of wicked men after death. Bad men were doomed to wander *forever* in the dark spirit land. The Elysium and Tartarus of human reason point significantly to the world of unalterable doom. Yet human reason *knows* nothing where it would know all. Who shall answer this great question but God ? How should we know any thing of that world where we have never penetrated, and where all is darkness except to the eye of infinite knowledge ? Here then we make our appeal to the divine testimony. What is it and what is its import ? Here allow me to say, that wicked men have nothing to gain by denying it, or refusing to understand it. If they are honest in their inquiries, they are desirous simply to ascertain the

*truth.* What, then, is the language of the Bible on this great subject? We can not now recite a tithe of it; we may classify its declarations under the following heads :

1. In the first place, there are a multitude of passages which affirm that the wicked *shall not enter into heaven.* "Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should *not* enter into my rest." "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall, *in no case*, enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall *not* enter the the kingdom of God." "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor theives, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." "I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things *shall not* inherit the kingdom of God." "There shall in *no wise* enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Thus far the testimony of God is clear and decisive, that there is a class of men who shall *never enter into heaven.* And if they shall *not* go to heaven, where shall they go? You reply, perhaps, they will be destroyed; their existence will cease, and they shall sink into utter annihilation. If these and similar declarations were *all*



that God has uttered upon this subject, there might be some ground for this conjecture. But we must add to these a

2. Second class of passages, not merely of this negative kind, but which affirm *positively*, that wicked men *shall be cast into hell*. "The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God." They shall "be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell." "They that have done evil shall come forth unto the resurrection of damnation." "The beast and the false prophet were cast alive into a lake of fire, and whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." "The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, to be punished." The wicked, therefore, are not to be admitted into heaven; they are not to be annihilated; but to be cast into hell. There God will take vengeance on them, and there they are to be punished. And now,

3. In the third place, we turn to a few of those passages which instruct us *how long their punishment will continue*. "Then shall he say to them

on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed into *everlasting* fire prepared for the devil and his angels." "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Four times in the same paragraph, the gracious Saviour repeats these awful words. "The chaff he will burn with *unquenchable* fire." "Who shall be punished with *everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." No other being can punish thus but God ; and he calls up and calls forth the strength and glory of his *power*, in order to inflict this *everlasting* destruction. Sodom and Gomorrah, we are told, are set forth "an *example*, suffering the vengeance of *eternal* fire." There is a class of wicked men spoken of by the Apostle John, who "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation," and the "smoke of whose torments ascendeth up *forever and ever*."

Put these three classes of tests together, and we can not question their import. We may wish they were not true ; but they are as true as the sweetest promise in the book of God. We may quarrel with them, but this will not help the matter ; there they stand. "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." He is a being of too much rectitude to deceive men, and he has no motive thus to utter himself for the sake of practicing on their fears.

He has access to the minds of men ; he is the author of their language, and knows the power of language when he would instruct them. And we are free to say, that if these instructions in relation to the endless punishment of the wicked can not be relied on, there is no declaration in the Bible on which we can rely. The Bible is a whole revelation ; the everlasting punishment of the wicked constitutes an essential part of it. Disprove this doctrine, and you undermine and destroy the whole fabric ; you *must* sink into absolute infidelity. If language *can express* the never-ending miseries of the wicked, they are here expressed ; if God *can reveal* his truth, it is here revealed. These and such like declarations determine with certainty that the miseries of the wicked will be co-eternal with the happiness of the righteous. An impartial examination of the Scriptures must convince every reflecting and honest mind that they furnish the same evidence of the unalterable allotments of the one, which they furnish of the unalterable allotments of the other. The Bible presents us with nothing but a gulf equally impassable to both.

But there are other considerations which may not be thought of lightly. According to our selfish views, we very naturally suppose that while the inhabitants of heaven will never wish to go to hell, the inhabitants of hell *may* wish to go to

heaven. But where do we learn this? No doubt the wicked will earnestly desire to be delivered from their pains; but *will they ever desire* the holy happiness of heaven? It has been offered them, and they have declined it. It has been sincerely offered to them, and earnestly urged upon them, and they persevered in declining it to the last. They "would not come unto Christ that they might have life." His expostulation with them was, "How oft have I been willing; but ye were not willing!" They have pursued their own chosen way up to the very hour when the door of hope was closed. Even amid the debility of disease, and the agonies of death, they had no heart to yield the controversy with their Maker. The fact may not be questioned, that the salvation of the gospel is distasteful to them. There is nothing in heaven to make it *desirable* to an unholy mind; but rather every thing which, to a wicked man, renders it the object of aversion and disgust. They could not be induced to chose it while they lived, and they can not be induced to chose it now that they are dead and entered into the world of spirits. They are *sufferers*; but the punishments of the damned will never change their dispositions, nor soften and purify their hearts so as to prepare them for the bliss of heaven. Suffering will not lead men to God and holiness. Punishment never leads a *bad man* to love the punisher.

Never was there a greater delusion than that the place of future punishment is designed to be a place of discipline, a school of reform. The Scriptures teach us that it is a place of *punishment*, and punishment merely. Men will not become the better by being there, but the worse; and every wicked passion will express itself in irritated fury. There is not the least intimation in the Bible that the wicked are punished in the future world for their *benefit*. It is a delusion of the devil. God declares that he punishes them not in kindness to reclaim them, but in anger to curse them; not in mercy to save them, but in wrath to destroy them. Cain, and Pharaoh, and Judas, are no more meet for the society and enjoyment of heaven now, than when they first entered the world of woe, but have waxed worse and worse, and deserve the curse now far more than when they first began to suffer it. In defiance of all their sufferings, the wicked in hell will remain the avowed and malignant enemies of God; and being thus eternally unqualified for heaven, will never find access across the gulf to those regions of unpolluted bliss.

Nor is there the least intimation in the word of God that he will devise any method by which his enemies may hereafter be *restored* to his favor. The great *restorative process* under the mediatorial reign of the Son is going on *now*, and in the *pres-*

*ent world.* It began immediately after the first apostasy, and ends with the resurrection and the general judgment. "The heavens have received" the great Restorer until he shall come again "the second time" to perfect this restoration by gathering together the holy of all worlds into his Father's house. There is not a passage in the Bible which speaks of any restoration after this. "Then cometh the *end* ;" every thing will then remain as it was at the judgment. Yet it is at the close and completion of this only restoration, that the Judge shall say, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire." Why should men be so infatuated as to indulge the thought, that after the preparation of thousands of years for a day of final decision, and after the decisions of that day shall have been pronounced, that there will be another day of grace—another Saviour—other offers of mercy—that God will pour out his spirit upon the tenants of the pit, and revive his work in the regions of despair? No, no! "Their *end* is destruction." It is not restoration, but destruction. It could not have been said of them, "whose *end* is destruction," if they were in the end to be restored to the divine favor. With fearful emphasis it is written, *He that is filthy, shall be filthy still!* There will be no opportunity for the wicked inhabitants of hell to be saved *through Christ* ; for they have been condemned for rejecting him. "There remaineth

now no more sacrifice for sins." The eternal Son, too, will then have *given up the kingdom to God even the Father*, and no longer set upon his mediatorial throne. When he shall return from heaven to pronounce the sentence, and fix the allotments of the assembled universe, his work will be accomplished, and the mediatorial kingdom will be closed. The door of heaven and hope will be shut. There will be no possibility of reconciliation to God, for there will be no Mediator. The great gulf will be fixed. Heaven and hell shall remain forever, and the impassable gulf eternally roll between them.

These are solemn truths; nor can they be contemplated with indifference, even by beings who have no immediate concern in them. The angels of God who are spectators of such scenes, are moved by them and regard them with deep and solemn interest. *We* are concerned in them. *We* are actors in them. It is of *us* that they speak. Of all the race of Adam, there is not *one*, but will at *last find his unalterable allotment either in heaven, or hell*. Every man possesses the character of the righteous, or of the wicked. One of these characters you will possess as long as you remain in the present world; one of them you will possess when you come to die, and when you rise from the dead, and when you appear before God in judgment. And the character you then

possess will determine your unalterable residence hereafter. This will prove true, not merely of those who lived before the flood ; not merely of those who lived and died during the prophetic and apostolic ages ; not merely of other nations, other churches, and other men ; but of no living man more than you. You may not realize it ; you may think it all an idle tale ; you may be thoughtless and unconcerned about it, but it is not on this account the less true. Men are very apt to feel that there is no such thing as hell, simply because they *do not believe it* :—just as though its existence depended upon their own impressions, and not upon the immutable truth and justice of God. This seems a very easy way of getting rid of future and everlasting punishment ; and it would be so in reality, if disbelieving it were any evidence that it would not prove a reality. We scarcely know how to reason with such men. Shall your unbelief make the truth of God of more effect ? *You do not believe there is a hell !* Well, what of that ? Does this prove there is none ? Did you never disbelieve *that* which you afterward found to be true ? *You do not believe there is a hell !* But what if God knows there is one ? Did you never read of those who are given up to strong delusions, to believe a *lie*, that they all might be damned ! Your disbelief only shows that you are in the broad way that leads to death.



I beseech you to beware of this soul-destroying error. More are ensnared by it than choose to avow it before the world. We honor their discretion, and beg them to escape the snare. As for those who avow, and more especially the few who preach it, we leave them in his hands who says: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." I never could understand how any man should preach the doctrine of universal salvation. If it were true, nothing is gained by preaching it; but as it is false, the loss is one that never can be repaired. If it were true, we do not *need* it; but as it is false, we do not *want* it. No, the world does not want these Synagogues of Satan, and these teachers of lies. It is the Lethean cup which lulls the soul to death on the brink of the pit. There is a class of men that never will believe there is a hell until they are plunged into it. Could you blot that world of perdition out of existence as easily as you can disbelieve it, I would not thus alarm you, nor plead more with you to escape the coming wrath. Just as though God could not send you to hell without your believing it!

Heaven or hell! how inexpressibly solemn the thought! How near these affecting realities! In how short a time will every one of us be in heaven, or hell! Which will it be? Who went to Abraham's bosom? Who sank to the tormenting flame?

It was no crime in Dives to be rich ; it was no virtue in Lazarus to be poor ; but the one was the friend, the other was the enemy of God. The one forsook, and the other persevered in his iniquity. The one accepted, and the other rejected the great salvation. The question for eternity is decided in time. Death separates you at a stroke from all opportunity of deciding it. Every year, every Sabbath, every hour is now exerting an influence on this decision which interminable ages can not reverse. Human life is but a day ; yet within this short term are crowded the momentous concerns of an unalterable eternity.

As I bring this book to a close I am sometimes constrained to anticipate the hour when the writer and his readers shall meet at the judgment seat of Christ. Sometimes I can not help asking myself the question, *Who of all my readers will at that day be numbered with the righteous, and who will be gathered with the wicked?* It is a problem I can not solve. It is a question that might well make an angel tremble. Many are there who will tread the path of more that have gone before them, and set down at God's right hand. But are there none, who, with the wicked man in the parable will lift up their eyes in hell, being in torment? O, this thought agitates me ; sometimes it confounds me. Eternity sometimes appears very near ; and well I know

that it will be a glorious life that the righteous attain—a dreadful death that the wicked die. When the angels shall come forth to bind the tares in bundles and burn them, and to gather the wheat into the garner of the great Husbandman; how wide the difference that will then be made! Between them a great gulf is fixed, that “shuts out fear from heaven and hope from hell.” Tremendous thought—AN UNALTERABLE ETERNITY! If there be but a single thought which you carry away from reading these pages, let it be this one—AN UNALTERABLE ETERNITY! This is the thought which affects my own mind as I utter these solemn truths. This is the thought which fills me with solicitude when I contemplate the coming glory and the coming wrath—that the destiny of immortal beings, once fixed, can not be altered! No, never. It is an eternal Heaven, an eternal Hell.

THE END.