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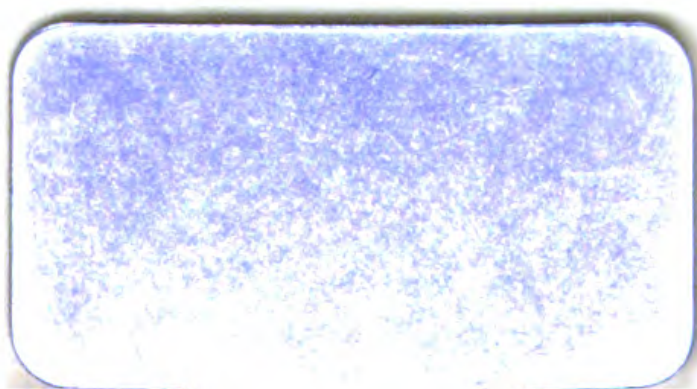
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- EXPLANATION :—1. Two glorified spirits in the attitude of praise, in the kingdom of Heaven.
2. A man, and a woman and child, travelling through this world towards the better country, which is a heavenly.
3. A person on horseback riding carelessly down to hell.
4. A young man and a woman thoughtfully returning from the brink of ruin to the path of duty.
5. Two lost souls receiving "the wages of sin" in the bottomless pit.

THE  
GOOD OLD WAY.

BY

WILLIAM GARNER,

PRIMITIVE METHODIST MINISTER.

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“ He who takes the word of God for the rule of his faith and practice, can never go astray; but to the mazes and perplexities produced by traditions of elders, human creeds and confessions of faith, there is no end.”—DR. A. CLARKE.

“ Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”—JER. vi. 16.

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*And may be had of the Primitive Methodist Ministers.*

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## PREFACE.

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THE principal outlines of the following Treatise were drawn up about fifteen years ago, while I was stationed at Hull. The occasion was as follows:—My attention was particularly fixed on Jer. vi. 16, as a *text*, which, if judiciously handled, would afford an ample supply of materials for a profitable sermon. As I mentally turned the sacred passage over, and contemplated it in its various bearings and relations, a crowd of impressive ideas rewarded my reflections. And lest the fugitive thoughts should make to themselves wings and escape my recollection, I resolved to give them “a local habitation and a name” on paper. While thus employed, the stream of thought, as is not unfrequently the case, even with ordinary students, flowed more spontaneously than was anticipated; and what was originally designed as a brief sketch for the pulpit, ultimately extended beyond the length of an ordinary discourse.

It then occurred to my mind that I would preserve the manuscript, and if at any future time it should appear providential to revise, enlarge, and publish the papers, in the form of a Treatise, I would act accordingly. It will therefore appear, from the lapse of

years between the conception and execution of the design, that this work has not been hastily committed to the press.

Since I was called by the church to reside in London, having had to officiate at public religious services on work-day evenings but seldom, and anticipating a return—should it please God to spare my life and health—to the regular ranks of the itinerant ministry, I was wishful to improve my leisure hours in some profitable employment connected with my sacred profession. And having recently published *The Candidate for Heaven*, to which the public press and our beloved connexion have been pleased to affix their approbation, I presumed that a favourable period had arrived for the revision and publication of *The Good Old Way*. Another reason for my sending the following sheets to the press is, the present struggle between the pope of Rome and the protestants of this country—the former, for spiritual supremacy over a people whom Providence never suffered to fall beneath his aspiring and tyrannic rule; the latter, for securing their civil, intellectual, and moral independency against the aggressions of a proud, a crafty, and an ambitious priesthood. It is a duty which we owe alike to ourselves and to posterity never to forget that our country was once down-trodden and blindfolded by popish superstition and oppression: and that at an immense cost of wealth, and effort, and suffering, and blood, the infernal incubus was thrown off, the fetters of Rome were shivered, the cup of her fornication was dashed to the ground, and the palpable darkness which had been gathering and condensing for ages was dispersed. The truths of Christianity then shone out in

their native simplicity and glory, and the nation was gradually blessed with increasing measures of civil and religious freedom.

Since the overthrow of popery and the revival of Christianity in our land, millions have rejoiced to walk in the brilliant, generous, and cheering light of Divine truth. But of late Antichrist has made some bold and desperate efforts to eclipse the glorious luminary of PROTESTANTISM, to drag old England within the pale of his ghostly jurisdiction, and once more to displace the rational and spiritual worship of God, in this free and enlightened realm, by the paganish, fantastic, and picturesque mummeries of old apostate Rome. Under these circumstances, it is the duty of Zion's watchmen to sound an alarm—to reconnoitre and announce the hostile movements of the foe; and to employ every lawful means for the purpose of rendering his artful manœuvres abortive. Amongst these means must ever be reckoned the circulation of truth, through the medium of the million-tongued pulpit and the press. In accordance with these sentiments, I undertook the voluntary task of preparing this little Treatise for publication: and I hope it will be found that the title of the work is appropriate, and scripturally supported in the following pages. Every paragraph has had my careful attention; and a thousand ideas, which offered themselves for registration, have been rejected.

Many an hour before the break of day, and after the evening twilight—and many an hour, while perambulating on business the crowded streets of the British metropolis, my thoughts have been seasonably diverted from the noise and bustle of the overgrown city, by

the attractions of the "Good Old Way." Besides, preparing the following pages for the press has frequently proved an agreeable relaxation from other labours, and has helped to counteract the secularizing influence of dry, official duties.

It will be seen at once, from the plan of the work, that it would have been an easy task to swell the book beyond its present size; but against this I studiously guarded. I was wishful to open before my readers a considerable range of ideas, and, at the same time, to compress my thoughts within a moderate compass, especially as I was solicitous to place within the reach of the poor a convenient and profitable companion. If my endeavours to allure sinners in the way to heaven, and to encourage those who are already journeying towards the glorious land, be crowned with success, I shall have a good reward for my labour: and should the reader derive as much benefit from this pocket manual as the author has from its composition, he will have no cause to regret the time spent in its perusal.

WILLIAM GARNER.

*London, May, 1851.*

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THE  
GOOD OLD WAY.

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CHAPTER I.

THE WAY TO HEAVEN—ITS PROPERTIES, AS DESCRIBED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

I. *The way to heaven is a plain way.* “The way-faring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*.” (Isa. xxxv. 8.) In other words, it is a way in which the traveller shall not, through the mere want of acuteness and education, wander astray. Were the path to heaven mysterious and intricate, could none explore it but the wise and prudent, the unlearned might despair. But this supposed calamity is graciously prevented by the goodness of God. In compassion to our ignorance, He hath condescended to favour us with a clear revelation of His will, in all things which are essential to life and godliness. On the map of revelation the road to the celestial city is marked with broad and coloured lines, which cannot fail to guide the soul who is honestly asking the way to Zion, with his face thitherwards. While many sublime truths are beyond the grasp of the unlearned, the great leading doctrines of Christianity float on the surface of the Bible, and may be easily comprehended by any ordinary capacity.

From age to age, conceited and interested men have endeavoured to throw a mysterious veil over the luminous truths of the Bible. But God hath graciously raised up able and enlightened champions, who have exposed the fraud, rent the veil asunder, and contended successfully for the plain and lucid character of the divine oracles.

On this vital subject, the good and learned Dr. A. Clarke says—"Notwithstanding all the helps which the various manuscripts and ancient versions afford for the illustration of the Sacred Text, the reader must not imagine that in those manuscripts and versions which do contain the *whole* of the Sacred Text, there is any essential defect in matters that relate to the *faith* and *practice*, and, consequently, to the *salvation* of the Christian: there is no such *manuscript*—there is no such *version*. So has the Divine Providence ordered it, that although a number of mistakes have been committed by careless *copyists*, as well as by careless *printers*, not one *essential truth* of God has been *injured* or *suppressed*. In this respect, all is *perfect*; and the way of the Most High is made so plain, even in the poorest copies, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, utterly destitute of deep learning and critical abilities, need not err therein." To the perspicuity and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, such is the testimony of one of the brightest stars that ever shone in the constellation of sacred commentators. Such, too, were the sentiments of *Milton*, the author of *Paradise Lost*. "Let others," said he, "dread and shun the Scriptures for their *darkness*: I shall wish I may deserve to be reckoned with those who admire and dwell upon them

for their *clearness*." The gospel is not a candle set under a bushel, but a candle set upon a table, that it may afford light to all who are in the house, whether or not they be skilled in the science of optics: and the glorious gospel of the blessed God has brought life and immortality to light, not only to the learned and great, but also to the unlearned and poor. On this deeply interesting subject, a Christian poet beautifully sings—

- "Let everlasting thoughts be thine,  
For such a bright display,  
As makes a world of darkness shine  
With beams of heavenly day."

If a man enjoys the benefit of a liberal education, it is a talent which he may improve to great advantage; but the want of such an education is no excuse for living in sin. For if he is so illiterate that he cannot distinguish, by their proper names, the letters of the English alphabet, he may, nevertheless, if he will, become wise unto salvation. And it cannot be denied that thousands, and tens of thousands, are exemplary Christians, whose literary attainments are very limited. Penurious circumstances are unfavourable to intellectual cultivation; but in the beginning, "the poor had the gospel preached unto them;" and to their mental capacity, the fundamental truths of the New Testament are admirably adapted.

A soul that is teachable, and in earnest to make its calling and election sure, experiences but little difficulty in finding the way in which God would have it to walk. Many a man who neglects the things which belongs to his peace, under a pretence that they are beyond his comprehension, deserves to be told, that

the difficulties of which he complains are more attributable to the depravity of his heart, than to the confusion of his head. What can be more intelligible, and what can afford greater encouragement to an illiterate inquirer after salvation, than the following divine announcement? "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John, iii. 16.) A poor man, whose eye Providence directed to these precious truths, having paused to reflect on what he had read, exclaimed, in a tone of admiration—"Whosoever! why, that means any one; and of course it means ME." The man was perfectly right. His unsophisticated simplicity, and his direct application of the gospel to *himself*, by faith, was doubtless acceptable to God. Reader, whoever thou art, go and do likewise. Search the Scriptures, pray, walk by faith—then unerring Wisdom will direct thy steps, and "all thy goings shall be ordered of the Lord."

II. *The way to heaven is a high way.*—It is a way raised above the level of the ground; for such is the meaning of the original word. (Isa. xxxv. 8.) The downward passage to hell is a deep and loathsome stream. Its position and crooked course corresponds with the moral character of that load of human beings whom it constantly bears on its pestiferous bosom. It rolls its fatal waters through the dark and dreary ravines of sin, and is continually launching its thoughtless victims into "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

But the royal road to heaven is elevated, kept in good repair, commands, at every point, a glorious

prospect, conducts its happy travellers through the grandest scenery, and is every moment introducing them, successively, into the cloudless regions of paradise. While the believer cheerfully prosecutes his journey, he will do well to reflect, that the lofty position to which Christianity has exalted him exposes him to the observation of a thousand spectators, many of whom would rejoice at his downfall. But at this fact it is beneath the dignity of a Christian to be terrified. Although surrounded by myriads of malevolent beings, who are secretly desiring his ruin, why should such a man as he fly? Many who privately profess to be the disciples of Jesus Christ, have not resolution enough to confess Him openly. Awed by the fear of man, they cowardly shrink from "the world's malignant eye," and endeavour to conceal their principles by standing aloof from Christian fellowship. They would rather, in a certain circle, pass for undecided characters, than have it known that they are professedly on the way to heaven. This is not modesty—it is slavish fear. The eccentric Dean Swift, it is said, regularly performed divine worship in his family; but he did it with so much studied secresy, that a gentleman was in his house several months before he knew that God was ever worshipped at the domestic altar. We know not how to justify the cautious dignitary in withholding the light of his candle so long from his friendly guest.

We abhor pharisaical ostentation; but no man's heart can be right with God who is afraid of being seen in the livery of Christianity. In some persons we believe that diffidence is constitutional, for they are timid in everything which they take in hand; and

in others it originates in an erroneous judgment which they have formed of the nature of humility. But in too many instances it is the effect of *shame*; and, in such cases, shame is the offspring of pride. In no part of the Scriptures are we taught to conceal our religion; on the contrary, we are instructed to "so let our light shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven."

III. *The way to heaven is an illuminated way.*— "He that followeth me," saith Christ, "shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." The way to hell is dark and gloomy. Blinded by Satan, the sinner is led captive on this melancholy road, as a man, stupified by strong drink, is ignominiously dragged by infamous wretches, in the guise of friendship, to the haunts of licentiousness and death. His prospect beyond the grave is never enlivened by a single ray of living hope. When he is strongly excited by the pleasures of sin, he may flatter himself that he is a happy man; but let the tide of his animal spirits ebb, and reason ascend her throne, and he shrinks beneath the stroke of self-condemnation, and is constrained to exclaim—"The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" His situation is something like that of the Egyptians when the dark side of the cloud was turned towards them—it is both gloomy and alarming.

How happily different is the condition of those who are travelling to the New Jerusalem! The day-star is risen in their hearts, and has dispelled those dark and portentous clouds which formerly hung over their pathway, and threatened to involve them in everlasting

ruin. Now the Sun of Righteousness shines upon them with healing in His wings. The thunder, and lightning, and thick darkness are succeeded by a clear and serene sky. Every foot of their journey is enlightened by a splendour emanating directly from God. And so long as they follow in the footsteps of their heavenly Master, they can experimentally sing:—

“Not a cloud doth arise to darken the skies,  
Or hide for a moment the Lord from my eyes.”

As they proceed on their journey, their prospect becomes increasingly glorious. “The path of the just is as the morning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” The soul of the believer may indeed, without his fault, be “in heaviness through manifold temptations;” but the Lord will not on that account withdraw “the light of His countenance.” God is never angry with His dutiful children; and as He is always well pleased with them, He constantly favours them with his smiles. If they are occasionally surrounded with providential darkness, through personal affliction, domestic griefs, or commercial embarrassments, their souls are nevertheless “light in the Lord.” Besides, natural evils are frequently channels through which spiritual good is communicated to the soul. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.” (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.) A belief in these



inspired truths drew from the pen of a Christian poet the following beautiful couplet:—

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.”

And, finally, when the light of this world is extinguished by the sable hand of death, the vale through which the Christian must pass to his eternal home is illuminated by the uncreated glory of heaven.

IV. *The way to heaven is the way of truth.*—“I have chosen,” says the Psalmist, “the way of truth.” (Psa. cix. 30.) And Peter says, by means of false teachers and their disciples “the way of truth will be evil spoken of.” (2 Epis. ii. 2.)

The way to hell is emphatically a *false* way. The ringleader in this way is the devil; and “he was a liar from the beginning.” It was by the most deliberate and bare-faced falsehood that he enticed our original parents to depart from that straight line of rectitude which God had laid down for their guidance. The same vile and detestable means he still employs with fearful dexterity and success to beguile and mislead their posterity. That he may with the greater ease allure mankind into his snares, “he transforms himself into an angel of light,” and represents spiritual objects in false and deceitful colours. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.” (Prov. xiv. 12.) But how comes it to pass, that to rational creatures the road to ruin “seemeth right”? Jesus Christ says the reason is, “men love darkness rather than light,”

because their deeds are evil." Thus the devil prophesieth falsely, and the people love to have it so.

Every soul who is travelling the way to hell is guilty of practical falsehood. By his actions he calls evil good. He depreciates holiness, and gives the voice and the vote of his example in favour of sin. He reproachfully represents Christ as a hard Master, and His service as a yoke which mankind ought not to bear. Thus his life is an unbroken career of practical falsehood. And it is a species of falsehood which is aggravated beyond description, inasmuch as it is levelled against the testimony of God. With a little modification, they imitate the ancient heathen, and "change the truth of God into a lie, and worship the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. Amen." From the above remarks it is evident that the way to hell is fraught with lies and delusion. But the way to heaven is eternally conformable to *truth*. (1.) It was marked out by Him who is too wise to err, and too holy to do wrong; consequently it does not deviate a hair's breadth, at any point, from moral right. It is uniformly so holy, so just, and so good, that it is incapable of improvement. The slightest alteration would subject it to injury, and destroy its perfection. The precepts of the Lord, concerning all things, are right. "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." (2.) All who travel this way are such as have been converted from the errors of their ways, and have embraced the truth in the love thereof. Christianity is **THE TRUTH**, because it is conformable to the unerring mind of Jehovah. And the genuine disciple of Christ, having the eyes of his understanding enlightened, has

correct views of spiritual objects. His sentiments concerning the nature of sin, of holiness, of God, of heaven and of hell, harmonize with the representations of Scripture.

V. *The way to heaven is a good and a right way.*—The way to hell is an “evil way.” The path of sin is forbidden ground; and whoever walk therein are trespassers against the law of God. His law is holy, just, and good; consequently the violation of His law must be sinful, unjust, and wrong. To justify his rebellion, one sinner pleads example: he is no worse than are the generality of mankind. He merely does what most others do. But Jesus Christ says, “What is that to thee?—follow thou me.” Another pleads worldly care: “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it.” I must provide food and raiment for myself and family. But our Lord says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” A third pleads necessity: “I am pressed with engagements, which require my immediate attention; therefore I cannot come. My difficulties are innumerable and insurmountable. My way is hedged in on every side, and walled up to heaven. Situated as I am, religion is out of the question.” But Jesus Christ attributes the sinner’s delay to his obstinacy: “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” The way to hell is radically and essentially wrong, and no consideration can make it innocent to walk therein.

But the way to heaven is the good and the right way. In this way we are directed to walk by the dictates of reason and the precepts of revelation.

Scripture and conscience harmonize, lift up their united voice like a trumpet, and proclaim, "This is the way, walk ye in it." All those who obey this voice have an inward testimony that they are doing right in the sight of God; and the disobedient may know if they will, that they are "sinning against God, and wronging their own souls."

VI. *The way to heaven is a pleasant way.*—It is constantly ministering to the rational enjoyment of its travellers. The way to hell is strewed with pleasures, but they are "the pleasures of sin." They are deceitful, transient, and ruinous. However agreeable vicious pleasure may now be to the depraved appetite of the wicked, in the end "it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." The man who prefers the thorny path to hell, for the sake of the withering flowers which he may accidentally pluck on his way, will "mourn at the last, when his flesh and his body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ears to them that instructed me!" (Prov. v. 11—13). But the road to Paradise, like Paradise itself, affords a rich variety and a royal plenitude of innocent, refined, and abiding pleasures—pleasures which never surfeit, and pleasures which never reprove those who indulge in them. And if Christianity does not always secure for her disciples exemption from the calamities which are incident to this life, she relieves their afflictions with the sweetest consolations. It is to the church in trouble that the Lord saith, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations

with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee." (Isai. liv. 11—14.) Under the most adverse fortune which can befall the good man in this vale of tears, the strong consolations of the Gospel enable him to go on his way rejoicing. How delightful it is to know that we are accepted of God through faith in His beloved Son. What happiness it affords to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. What inexpressible satisfaction it yields, to experience redemption in His blood—the forgiveness of our sins. Blessed with this assurance, with what heavenly rapture can the Christian sing—

"My Jesus to know, and feel his blood flow—  
 'Tis life everlasting, 'tis heaven below:  
 In the heavenly Lamb, thrice happy I am,  
 And my heart it doth dance at the sound of his name."

The pleasure, too, arising from self-denial is far superior to the pleasure of self-indulgence. A good conscience is a continual feast. And amidst the calamities of this life, what solid happiness it affords to be assured that all things work together for one's good; and that if we be faithful unto death, the Lord will give us a crown of life that fadeth not away. What a happiness to know, that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that hereafter shall be revealed in us. And what a

satisfaction it is to serve a Master, who is so deeply interested in our welfare, that whatever is done unto us, he takes it as done unto Himself. It was no spasmodic excitement, but a joy unutterable and full of glory, with which the prophet Habakkuk was inspired when he recorded the following sentiments:—“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Nor is it less the privilege of the Christian to “rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks.”

VII. *The way to heaven is a peaceable way.*—In the figurative style of the Bible, religion is personified as a discreet and virtuous female, conducting her disciples through peaceful paths and crowning them with glory and honour. “Length of days is in her right hand; *and* in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace.” (Prov. iii. 16, 17.) And the grand design of the Gospel is “to give light to them that sit in darkness, and *in* the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace.” The way to hell, at every step, is marked with strife and discontent. By reason of sin, its guilty travellers enjoy neither internal tranquillity nor external quiet. “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. *There is* no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” They naturally thirst after happiness, but as they seek and expect it in

transitory objects, they invariably meet with disappointment: consequently, they are all their lifetime subject to vanity and vexation of spirit. Their father the devil cannot give them true peace. He may decoy them into a refuge of lies, administer the opiate of a delusive tranquillity, and inspire them with presumptuous hope, but he cannot bestow rational, solid, and abiding peace. Nor can the world give them peace. The ungodly may join hand in hand to sin against the Lord. The self-interested may rack their invention in providing for the lovers of pleasure an endless variety of curious shows, splendid exhibitions, and fascinating entertainments. Both parties may interchange their friendly services by daubing each other over with untempered mortar, and in the zenith of their enjoyments sing to themselves the syren song:—"We sit as a queen, and shall know no sorrow;" but destruction and misery are in all their ways, and the way of peace they have not known. The wicked cannot create true peace in their own bosoms by any efforts of infidelity or by any flights of imagination. In vain they try to compose the disquietude of their minds. The immortal soul can rest contentedly in God only. Out of His favour it hangs in dreadful suspense. Or if the conscience be seared as with a hot iron, and the heart callous and unfeeling—that is not peace—it is stupefaction.

But the way to heaven is essentially the way of peace. Jesus Christ is the "Prince of peace." He came to bring peace on earth—to terminate hostilities, and to reconcile man to God by the blood of His cross. Every true believer enjoys (1) peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. "The peace of God

which passeth all understanding, keepeth his heart and mind through Christ Jesus." (2.) Peace in his conscience. When the spirit of adoption enables the soul to call God Father, the tormenting accusations of conscience are heard no more; but the mind is filled with peace and joy in believing. (3.) The disciple of Christ is inspired with peaceable dispositions towards his fellow-creatures. Pure and undefiled religion necessarily produces "good will to man"—a sublime and virtuous philanthropy. It does not dispose us to indiscriminately approve of human conduct; but it inclines us to wish well to every human being. Consequently, wherever genuine Christianity is triumphant, "peace flows as a river, and righteousness abounds as the waves of the sea." The sudden and extraordinary insurrections by which Europe has recently been convulsed—the hasty flight of sovereign princes, who but yesterday seemed firmly seated on the thrones of their ancestors—the overthrow of ancient dynasties, with fearful sacrifices of human life—all these stupendous events are traceable to SIN. Were the whole earth filled with the glory of God—did all savingly "know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest,"—the rights of men would be better understood, and reciprocally acknowledged and respected; warriors would "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation would not lift up sword against nation, neither would they learn war any more." (Isai. ii. 4.)

VIII. *The way to heaven is a honourable way.*—In the cause of Satan no man ever acquired a lasting reputation. "Sin is a reproach to any people;" and ere long it will expose its impenitent votaries "to



shame and everlasting contempt." All is not gold that glitters. Titles and dignities are usually bestowed by men without regard to moral worth. But honour which is undeservingly enjoyed is a mere vapour, which appeareth but a little while, and then vanisheth away. To many an infamous man, whose mortal career was stained with pride and revenge; and who, to all appearance, died as he lived, the false marble ascribes virtues which he never possessed, throws a veil over his vices, and declares to successive generations, that he *fell gloriously* in the cause of his country. But follow the eulogized hero beyond the grave, then who would envy his condition or wish to share his inheritance? Not heaven, but hell, is his miserable abode; not holy angels, but apostate devils, are his wretched but appropriate companions.

And even in the present life, it is inexpressibly disgraceful in a rational creature to seek supreme happiness in the beggarly elements of this world. God hath graciously endowed the human soul with vast and dignified faculties, and thereby rendered it capable of sublime and heavenly enjoyments. But to exercise these noble powers in low and dishonourable pursuits, is an infallible symptom of a vicious and grovelling mind.

There is yet another consideration which stamps a life of sin with indelible infamy—Satan is a traitor, a usurper, and a tyrant. The ungodly are his vassals. To his degrading yoke, they ignominiously bow their necks, and cowardly suffer themselves to be led captive by the devil at his will, to grace his infernal triumphs. What a reproach is this to human nature! But such is the degeneracy of the times, that a man may be

entirely destitute of moral goodness, and yet be regarded with honour, provided he is rich, or possesses superior political knowledge, mechanical skill, or physical force in the field of battle.

But the way to heaven is the only path where laurels of unfading glory can be won.

Christianity opens the prison doors to them that are bound, looses the heavy burden, and lets the oppressed go free. The day of conversion is a day of jubilee. The chains of the infernal tyrant are broken asunder, the miserable slave is released from worse than Egyptian bondage, and introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Jesus Christ "breaketh the yoke of his burden, the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor as in the day of Midian." (Isai. ix. 4.) In this life religion crowns the soul with glory and honour. It is of a mind under the influence of evangelical principles that the prophet says, "The glory of Lebanon is given unto it." Lebanon was renowned for its lofty height and stately cedars, and consequently was the emblem of anything which was great and sublime. An illustrious Assyrian is styled by Ezekiel a cedar of Lebanon, whose head was exalted above all the trees of the field. Hence "the glory of Lebanon" is a magnificent figurative description of moral grandeur.

In the same moment that a man fully consecrates himself to the Lord, he is raised from the dunghill and seated among the princes of God's people. In temporal circumstances he may resemble his Divine Master—he may be poor and a man of no reputation; but in spirit he is truly rich and noble. The righteous man with poverty is better than the wicked with many

treasures. But the dignity of a Christian in the humble walks of life is like a precious pearl embedded in the shell of an oyster, or a valuable diamond within a rough incrustation. Its real value is concealed. But remove the mean coverings from the costly gems, and let them receive the finishing stroke of the lapidary, and they will appear in all their inherent richness and brilliancy. The richest pearl on earth, whose value is estimated by millions sterling, is said to be in the possession of his Brazilian Majesty. But that "pearl of great price," which now adorns the cabinet of an earthly monarch, was once deeply buried in the ocean, unknown and uncoveted by man. How strikingly similar is the heavenly treasure in the earthen vessel of a poor disciple of Christ! Beneath his plebeian exterior there lies a jewel of inestimable worth—the image of God impressed on his renewed mind. But to men who look on the outward appearance only, this glorious resemblance is not discernible. Hence many of "the excellent of the earth" drop into their tombs like holy Lazarus, unregretted by the world. "The righteous perisheth (dies), and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." (Isai. lvii. 1.)

At the last day, when the eternal destinies of mankind shall be fixed, the Judge of all the earth will bestow on the righteous extraordinary marks of His favour. He will grant them to sit down with Him on His throne, and invest them with palms of victory and crowns of glory. How mean and contemptible is earthly grandeur compared with those immortal honours, which shall hereafter adorn the children of

God. The time is at hand when it may be truly said of those who are now the poorest members of the Redeemer's family, that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

IX. *The way to heaven is a free way.*—At the entrance of the Good Old Way there stands the golden gate of salvation; and over this beautiful gate the pilgrim may read, in heavenly characters, the following delightful inscription: "KNOCK, AND IT SHALL BE OPENED UNTO YOU." No fee is exacted; nor is there even so much as a certificate of character required. Were money demanded, the case of the destitute would be hopeless: or were meritorious recommendations essential terms of admission, who could approach with reasonable confidence? With these credentials, no flesh living could be furnished. The most dutiful servants of Christ are "unprofitable servants:" what judgment, then, are we to form of rebels, who are but just laying down their hostile weapons and returning to their allegiance? But, blessed be God, neither money nor merit is required. Were we to attempt conciliating the favour of God with offerings or works of righteousness which we have done, we should insult Him and deceive our own souls. A broken and a contrite heart is infinitely more acceptable to God than either thousands of gold and silver, or the most perfect philosophical morality. For any man to suppose that he can purchase salvation with costly presents, offered to God or to His church, is one of the most unaccountable delusions by which the degenerate heart of man has ever been deceived. And to convince mankind of this glaring folly, Jehovah says, "Every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the

cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the fields are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine and the fulness thereof." (Ps. l. 10—12.) Nor is it less absurd for any one to recommend himself to the favourable notice of Heaven on the ground of pharisaical righteousness. To all who are attempting to force the gate of salvation with gifts and self-praise, we would lift up a warning voice and say, "Thy money and thy self-righteousness perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money and merit. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." On the other hand, to the broken-hearted penitent, who is deeply humbled under a sense of his own poverty, guilt, and wretchedness, we exclaim—

"See from the cross a fountain rise!  
 For you in healing streams it rolls;  
 Money ye need not bring, nor price,  
 Ye labouring, burthen'd, sin-sick souls.

"Nothing ye in exchange shall give;  
 Leave all you have and are behind:  
 Frankly the gift of God receive;  
 Pardon and peace in Jesus find."

After the pilgrim has passed through the gate of salvation, the whole line of road, stretching as far as heaven itself, is free and open at every point. Not a bar is erected or a toll demanded between the entrance and the terminus. To the meanest traveller, not the slightest obstruction or annoyance is offered by the

proprietor of this royal way. It frequently occurs, indeed, that professed guides of this way levy "rates" on indigent pilgrims, and relying on the sword of state, threaten vengeance on those who have the courage to withstand their rapacious demands. But the reader is reminded that these hateful taxes are not imposed by God, or by His authorized commissioners. And we should be careful never to confound the iniquitous exactions of powerful and intolerant sectarians with the generous provisions of the gospel. The institutions of Christianity cannot, indeed, be supported without pecuniary assistance; but compulsory payments to a privileged sect are nowhere sanctioned in the New Testament. It is a just ground of thankfulness, that "the Good Old Way" is as free for the "poor man in vile raiment," as it is for the "rich man, with a gold ring, in goodly apparel." With God there is no respect of persons. In the Church of Christ, men of high degree and men of low degree enjoy a common salvation, and are hastening to a period when earthly distinctions will be annihilated, and each believer will rise in the scale of glory in exact proportion to his moral excellency.

X. *The way to heaven, during the whole term of probation, is always accessible.*—The great sacrifice for sin is ever available—the fountain in the house of David is ever open—the invitations of the gospel are constantly in force—and God is incessantly addressing the sinner in these gracious words: "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts. Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Were the gate of life alternately open and closed, or were it difficult to move the Divine compassion, the penitent sinner would be tempted severely to despair; but as

“The glorious gate of gospel grace  
Stands open night and day,”

and as the Lord God is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; the true penitent, although he may have been the vilest of the vile, has sufficient encouragement to come boldly to the throne of grace. No sooner does the prodigal resolve to forsake his wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts, than his Heavenly Father regards him with paternal affection, and listens attentively to his penitential supplications. At any moment Jesus Christ is both able and willing, on gospel terms, to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

XI. *The way to heaven is a narrow way.*—The way to hell is broad, the gate of death is wide, and many there be who go in thereat. After this broad way none need inquire; for this wide gate none need seek. Our natural propensities, if we blindly follow them, will hurry us headlong in the downward road to perdition. Let a man lean to his own understanding, and trust in his own heart, and his career will as certainly terminate in hell, as if his eternal condemnation were sealed. “But strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” The strait gate cannot be found without the most careful search, it cannot be entered

without the deepest humility, and the narrow way cannot be trodden without habitual self-denial and circumspection. A single crime would cause the pilgrim's foot to slide, and place his salvation in jeopardy. God will never suffer this way to be widened for the accommodation of the unwatchful. The boundary lines of this royal road, on the right hand and on the left, were drawn by infinite wisdom; and before any one is suffered to pass through the strait gate, he is required to make an unreserved profession of his purpose to walk in the narrow way, without attempting to remove or break down the fences. "If any man," says Jesus Christ, "will follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and come after me." When Moses died, Jehovah appointed Joshua as his successor, and delivered to him the following charge:—"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses, my servant, commanded thee; turn not from it *to* the right hand or *to* the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." And to ensure spiritual prosperity, that which was necessary for Joshua is equally necessary for every other person. But, although the greatest caution is essential to stability and final success, no one has cause to be discouraged; for if all the world would leave their sins, all the world might walk abreast in the good old way.

XII. *The way to heaven is a holy way.*—"The unclean shall not pass over it." (Isai. xxxv. 8.) The path to hell is strewed with all manner of moral impurities. The travellers are infected with the most loathsome diseases. "From the sole of the foot, even unto the head there is no soundness in them; but



wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (chap. i. 6.) And the reader is desired to bear in mind, that this horrible portrait is drawn by the unerring pencil of eternal truth. There is, consequently, no exaggeration; the likeness is a faithful copy of real life. And what is still more appalling, the wicked revel in sin with greediness, and every day wax worse and worse, till at length they miserably perish in their own corruption. How polluted must be the way which is crowded with a generation of people so degenerate and impure! But the way to heaven is holy and set apart for the godly, and for them exclusively. God Himself guards it night and day, and He never suffers it to be defiled by the intrusions of the wicked. Before any one is permitted to set his foot on this holy ground, he must be purified from his leprosy of sin, and wash his robes in the all-cleansing fountain of the Redeemer's blood. Then, and not till then, does the gate of salvation turn on its golden hinges, and open to him the path of life. If he stand fast and order his conversation aright, God will sustain him with His grace, guide him with His counsel, establish his goings, and, finally, bring him to glory. But, if he grow weary in well-doing, and draw back, God will not, through a blind partiality for him, wink at his crimes, and continue to bless him with the light of His countenance; but He will correct him severely, by withdrawing from his soul the precious tokens of His approbation. And if the fallen disciple do not repent of his transgression, and obtain restoration to the Divine favour, he will become a confirmed backslider, be filled with his own ways, and,

in the day of judgment, be a castaway. Although this sacred road is forbidden ground to the ungodly and the sinner, millions of deluded formalists crowd the wayside, who are confidently dreaming of admission into the Kingdom of God. But how surprised and confounded will they be when, after having boldly exclaimed, "Lord, open unto us," the King shall answer frowningly, "Depart from me, for I never knew you. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord!"

XIII. *The way to heaven is the way of salvation.*—Those who walk in this way are a people saved of the Lord. Through faith in God the Son they are renewed by the Holy Ghost, and accepted of God the Father. Every soul in the way to hell is in a lost and perilous condition, and stands in awful jeopardy every hour. He is suspended over "the bottomless pit." His fall is only prevented by a brittle, attenuated thread, which is constantly liable to a thousand injuries. Any moment, a single act of Jehovah's will is sufficient to snap the vital cord asunder. This moment the sinner is alive. Now he may repent, believe in Christ, and be fitted by true holiness for the kingdom of heaven. The next moment he may be dead. Sudden destruction may overtake him. His probation, and all the advantages connected therewith, may be at a final end, and his soul cast into devouring fire, far beyond the most distant limit of hope. Hence the dreary road to everlasting punishment, at every step, is marked with ruin and danger.

But those who are travelling to Zion with their faces thitherwards, are completely safe. Their lives are hidden with Christ in God. Under the shadow of His wings they put their trust, and He is their

refuge, their hiding-place, and strong tower. By whatsoever calamities they may be overtaken, they have nothing to dread. In tribulation they may rejoice. At destruction and famine they may laugh. Over death and the grave they may triumph. In the way in which they walk there is no lion, nor any ravenous beast—no moral adversary who is able to overpower and destroy them. If at any time the Christian is brought into heaviness through physical disorder, mental anxiety, or satanic influence, he hears a voice behind him, whispering—

“ Keep the way to endless bliss,  
Then you cannot fare amiss!  
Shun the path that leads to hell;  
With heav'n in view, all is well.”

XIV. *The way to heaven is the way of life.*—The path to hell is emphatically the path of death. All who walk on this path are dead while they live—“dead in trespasses and in sins.” But the way to heaven is “a new and living way.” All who travel this road have experienced the Word of God to be spirit and life to their souls. Once they lay, as moral skeletons, in the valley of dry bones; but the Holy Spirit covered them with flesh and with skin, breathed into them the breath of life, and they became living souls. Now they are dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. They are guided into all truth by the living oracles of the only true and living God. They are nourished with living bread sent down from heaven. They are refreshed with living water, springing from the inexhaustible wells of salvation; and the germ of eternal life is planted in their hearts.

In the sacred Scriptures the term *life* is sometimes used to signify a holy and a happy existence. "He that hath the Son, hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."—1 John, v. 12. In this world the wicked enjoy transitory blessings in common with the righteous. Ordinarily, "one event happeneth to all." Our heavenly Father maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, without any visible marks of discrimination. The kindness of God, in ten thousand various forms, is lavished on the unthankful and the evil: and not a few of them enjoy large possessions of gold and silver, flocks and herds, houses and lands. But an infinitely richer inheritance is enjoyed by the people of God. To them, even the good things of this life afford a refined satisfaction, to which the wicked are entire strangers. A devout recollection that every blessing cometh down from the Father of lights, greatly enhances the value of His gifts, and enables us to extract from them a sweetness which is never tasted by an ungrateful world. About twenty years ago, I recollect being on a passing visit at the late R. Shafto's, Esq., Bavington Hall, Northumberland. My friend politely showed me his gardens and pleasure-grounds, which, in that season of the year, were arrayed in their most glorious dress. On my offering a few remarks with respect to their delightful appearance, &c., my host made a reply which I shall never forget. Substantially, it was as follows:—"Yes, they are beautiful; but my deceased brother never rightly enjoyed them. He did not properly consider to whom he was indebted for these good things. And without this consideration, it is

impossible to appreciate, as we ought, the blessings with which we are favoured." But the advantage which the righteous have over the wicked in this life, does not merely consist in the *religious satisfaction* which the former derive from temporal blessings. In addition to this, they are distinguished by a long list of *spiritual* blessings. Pardon of sin, reconciliation with God, peace of conscience, a title to heaven, a foretaste of glory, a prospect of eternal felicity—these are privileges which belong exclusively to the saints of the Most High. For them a banquetting-room is opened and a table spread, of which the ungodly are never invited to partake. To the impenitent, the blessings of the new covenant is forbidden fruit. But to the faithful Jesus Christ saith, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." This is LIFE. It is a state of existence in which man enjoys the highest good of which his nature is capable.

But the way to heaven is a living way with respect to its tendency. It leadeth unto life, and infallibly conducts those who walk in it to the end of their days, to life everlasting. On this subject I have enlarged in the last chapter of this book.

XV. *The way to heaven is one and the same, throughout all time.*—It is not a modern path, which has been opened by some recent provisions: it is coeval with the creation of man. This way, substantially, was trodden by our original parents in the garden of Eden; by Abel, Enoch, and Noah, before the deluge; by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, before the giving of the law; by Moses, Samuel, and the prophets, under the Levitical dispensation; and by the

apostles, evangelists, and all the faithful in Christ under the gospel economy. In a modified sense, there never was, and there never will be, but one way from earth to heaven. The truly pious of all nations, of all generations, and under all dispensations, have uniformly walked in *one path*. In their religious rites, ceremonies, and non-essential opinions, there has existed a great variety; but in the essentials of religion the people of God have invariably been of one heart and of one mind. They have all been characterized by faith in the revelations of God, love to His person, reverence for His authority, and obedience to His laws: and all of them have placed their supreme happiness in the performance of His pleasure, and the enjoyment of His approbation.

Immediately after the fall of Adam, the promise of a Saviour was given. By faith in this gracious promise Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than his brother Cain, and obtained witness that he was righteous. By faith Enoch received a testimony that he pleased God. By faith Abraham saw the day of Christ through the long vista of ages, and when he saw it he was glad. By faith Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. By faith the Jewish church ardently expected the promised Messiah, and anticipated the time when in Him all families of the earth should be blessed. Faith in the same divine Person is exercised by every Christian. And as saving faith is necessarily accompanied by love and obedience, it follows that the way to heaven, from the beginning of time, has been one and the same in its essential properties.

This important subject is entitled to our most care-

ful consideration. Many a professed master in Israel, when he hears the true and ancient road to heaven faithfully described, exclaims, in a tone of surprise, mingled with indignation, "How can these things be?" According to his creed, the path to eternal life lies "across the village-green to the parish church." Baptism, episcopal confirmation, and regular attendance on the ministry of "the parish priest," are confidently regarded as evidences of salvation. "Churchmanship" is identified with religion: hence it comes to pass that thousands are congratulated as children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, who are known by their fruits to be children of the devil, and to be led captive by him at his will. On the other hand, thousands who worship God in spirit and in truth without the pale of the parochial church, are stigmatized from the pulpit as heretical schismatics. No matter how scripturally the good old path is pointed out to sinners by Eldad and Medad, my lord Moses is entreated to forbid them; and the parishioners are warned, by line upon line, and precept upon precept, to avoid the servants of the Most High God, as false teachers, who would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.

The best preservative against the pernicious influence of ecclesiastical bigotry, is a thorough acquaintance with the word of God. Of all men, a bad scriptarian is the most liable to be imposed on by a narrow-minded intolerance. When a teacher of religion, of any church whatsoever, arrays himself with apostolical authority, and says to a mere novice in evangelical truths, "I have a message from God unto thee," the ignorant man is in danger of following the

instructions of his ghostly teacher, with a reverence and confidence which nothing but the word of God should command. The counterfeit ways to heaven, which have been invented by the pope, Mahomet, Joseph Smith, &c., never could have been passed off for the true, original path, on millions of mankind, had they carefully compared the traditions of men with the commandments of God. But when the prophets prophesied deceit, as the people loved to have it so, God gave them up to strong delusion, that they might believe a lie. When a blind guide uses the binding language of "Thus saith the Lord," to a man who prefers his Bible to forged revelations, or to the decrees of pontiffs and councils, he is not easily led astray in the paths of error. He fearlessly says to his dogmatical instructor, "I will search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things be so; I will test your doctrines by the infallible standard of divine truth, prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." Could all the by-way travellers, who are deluded by ignorance and prejudice, be persuaded to take this sound and rational course, they would soon discover, to their unspeakable astonishment, that the way which they now admire, and in which they confidently walk, is fraught with error and danger; and that the way which they call heresy, is the true and ancient road to heaven.



## CHAPTER II.

## HOW THE GOOD OLD PATH WAS OPENED.

THAT there is *now* an awful possibility of our being consigned to hell, must be acknowledged by every believer in divine revelation ; but from the beginning it was not so. Originally, there was no road from this world to the world of perdition. Hell was not prepared for men, but for the devil and his angels. A passage from hence to that dreadful region, was afterwards opened—not by the sovereign, arbitrary will of God ; but by the voluntary transgression of man. Our first parents were created in the image of God, their feet were established in the good and the right way, and they were constitutionally inclined to walk therein ; and in this delightful way they continued to advance while they retained their primeval character. But in this honourable and happy estate man did not long remain. He sinned wilfully against heaven and in God's sight, and thereby deserted the path of life. In that fatal moment the way to heaven was closed against him ; a way to hell was opened ; in that dreadful way he entered, after which wilful apostasy, nothing could prevent his final ruin but the infinite compassion of God.

In that critical extremity it pleased God to glorify His mercy in behalf of sinful man. The manner in which He conducted the trial of our fallen parents was remarkably clement and forbearing ; and the punishment which He inflicted on them was but a

slight correction, compared with the magnitude of their offence. Their crime was committed—not against a fellow-creature, nor against any superior order of created intelligences—but directly against God, who had an indisputable right to their implicit confidence and cheerful obedience. But in the midst of deserved wrath He remembered them in mercy. Nor did He merely suspend the deserved punishment; but He devised means to restore the transgressors to His forfeited favour. He gave them the promise of a Redeemer, and thus provided a ransom to deliver them from going down into the pit. The way to heaven was re-opened, and it became possible for guilty man to escape the wrath to come, and to find his way to the regions of eternal felicity.

The redemption of the world was effected by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Without the shedding of blood there could have been no remission—no reconciliation with God. Nor was it possible for an atonement to be made by the blood of bulls and goats.

“Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give a guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away its stain.”

The Levitical sacrifices were in themselves entirely inefficacious. They possessed no atoning or purifying property. They were merely typical of that all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, which in the fulness of time had to be offered on Calvary. The law could never, with those sacrifices which were offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. Had they possessed a saving efficacy, they would not have ceased to be offered; because the worshippers once

purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there was a remembrance again made of sins every year. (Heb. x. 1—3.) No enlightened Jew believed that even the annual atonement cancelled his sin before God; yet he continued to make his offerings, the law of God having so enjoined, because those sacrifices pointed out that sacrifice which then had to be offered. They were offered, therefore—not in consideration of their own efficacy, but in reference to Christ. Common sense is sufficient to teach any reasonable man that the blood of brutes could never satisfy the demands of injured justice, and remove guilt from the human conscience. Sin must be atoned for in the same nature in which it was committed.

Agreeably with this view of the subject, we are informed that “God was manifest in the flesh that He might destroy the works of the devil.” The Word was made flesh and assumed our nature for the express purpose of atoning in that nature for our sins. When He was about to be incarnated, the Scriptures introduce him as saying to God the Father, “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” (Ver. 5—7.) “It is remarkable,” says Dr. A. Clarke, “that all the offerings and sacrifices which were considered to be of an atoning or cleansing nature, offered under the law, are here enumerated by the Psalmist and the Apostle, to show that *none* of them, nor *all* of them, could take away sin; and that the grand sacrifice of Christ was that alone which could do it.”

But as many who call themselves the disciples of Christ deny the sacrificial character of His death, and as the reader may be assailed by their perverse disputings, it is necessary to guard him against their deadly sophistry. We do not suppose that anything which we can bring out of God's treasury, whether it be new or old, will convince them of their fatal delusion; but if in any instance we be the means of neutralizing their doctrinal poison, we shall be amply rewarded for our labour.

In our judgment, the doctrine of atonement for human guilt by the death of Christ is so clearly taught in the Bible, that we are astonished any professed believer in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, should ever have called the doctrine in question. Isaiah, speaking of Christ, says, "But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (liii. 5.) "Messiah," says Daniel, "shall be cut *off*, but not for himself." (ix. 26.) The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, contrasting the service of the Jewish temple with the priesthood of Christ, says, "But Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building: neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to

God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. ix. 11—14). “Here the redemption of man is attributed to the *blood of Christ*; and this blood is stated to have been shed in a *sacrificial* way, precisely as the blood of bulls, goats, and calves was shed under the law.” The same doctrine is taught us by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians: “We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Consequently, the blood of Christ was the redemption price paid down for our salvation. The vicarious sufferings of Christ in behalf of sinful men, is a doctrine distinctly taught by St. Peter. It is of Christ that he says: “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” (1st Epist. ii. 24.) That is, Christ endured the punishment due to our sins. He suffered as our substitute, the Just for the unjust. In no other conceivable sense could he bear our sins. The Apostle John, in his preface to the Book of Revelation, ascribes everlasting glory and dominion “to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” (Chap. i. 5, 6.) Finally, an angel informed the apostle, that the glorified saints had “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (vii. 14.) The proofs which we have advanced in support of the doctrine for which we contend, are, one would think, more than sufficient to convince all whose minds are open to conviction, that the redemption of the soul, with the remission of sins, and purification from unrighteousness, are attributed in the Scriptures “to the *blood of Christ, shed on the cross for man.*” And if in defiance of this evidence any refuse to believe, neither would they be persuaded

though one rose from the dead. And as they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, artfully explain away their obvious meaning, and put on them an unnatural and forced construction, it is for our eternal interest to regard them as "enemies of all righteousness, who will not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord." As all the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Christ, and as He opened the kingdom of heaven by His sacrificial death,—to regard those as His disciples, who rob Him of His divinity and atonement, is a latitude of charity which we think the holy Scriptures neither require nor sanction. Some Socinian controversialists, to get rid of the grammatical and common-sense meaning of the inspired proofs of our Saviour's atonement for human sin, admit that *sacrificial terms* are employed by the sacred writers, but deny that these sacrificial terms were designed to express *sacrificial ideas*. But this artifice is a wretched effort in support of a wretched heresy. Were this mode of interpretation allowed, the Bible could be made to sanction the reveries of every false teacher.

As to the extent of the atonement, it embraces all mankind. Jesus Christ tasted death for every man; that is, for every individual of the human family. We all fell in Adam; and we all rise into a salvable state in Christ. "He is the propitiation (or atoning sacrifice, as the word signifies,) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* of the whole world"—for all the descendants of Adam, whether Jews or Gentiles. To deny this, is a fearful outrage against God and His word. St. Paul assures us that "God is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."

(1 Tim. iv. 10.) For those who trample underfoot the blood of Christ, salvation is purchased and freely offered, and they might accept it if they would. In this sense, God is the Saviour of all men. The remedy which He hath provided for the plague of sin is commensurate with the disease.

After Jesus Christ had died for our sins and risen again for our justification, He ascended into heaven, where He ever liveth, in the presence of God the Father, to make intercession for us. Of this important relation of Christ to mankind, Isaiah spake seven hundred years before our Redeemer's incarnation. (Chap. liii. 12.) And because He is an everlasting High Priest, who has offered, by the shedding of His own blood, an available sacrifice for sin, He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. The keys of the heavenly kingdom are in His hands, and He is both able and willing to open the gate of salvation to every believing soul.

## CHAPTER III.

## HOW TO GET ON THE GOOD OLD WAY.

As the subject of this chapter is unspeakably important, and as one false step might prove fatal to the inquiring mind, it is necessary to speak with the greatest caution, and with a constant reference to the Word of God. Even the soundest experience of the most holy and enlightened Christian upon earth must submit to the supremacy of the Bible. No experience is evangelical which is unsupported by divine revelation; but between the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and the heart-felt experience of a true Christian there is a perfect agreement. The work of the Holy Spirit on the human heart invariably harmonizes with His revelations in the Sacred Volume, and one answers to the other, as face answers to face in a glass.

But with respect to the mere theoretical Christian, however humanly qualified he may be to teach others, "he 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." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) And as the fixed habit and bias of his mind is opposed to experimental religion, he is a dangerous guide in all things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. From such a teacher, it may be reasonably anticipated that the important question—"What must I do to be saved?" would draw a very defective, if not an unscriptural answer. Had the author of this little performance possessed no more religious knowledge



than that which men and books supply, he probably would have never attempted to give lessons to others on a subject so grave as this which is under our consideration. But as the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto him, and he has been a preacher of the gospel nearly thirty years, he does not deem it presumptuous to offer instructions to those who are asking for the good way, that they may walk therein. Before I proceed to particulars, I shall lay it down as a general principle, that *no man is in the way to heaven till he is born again*. This is the grand boundary line, which separates between the church and the world. Two descriptions of moral character, and only two, are recognised in the Bible, these are the righteous and the wicked; the friends and the enemies of Christ. The former are a people near unto God, and contending for heaven; the latter are a people far from God, and going down to hell. In the vast family of human beings, by which the various countries of the earth are peopled, there are innumerable degrees of holiness on one hand, and innumerable degrees of sinfulness on the other; but there are only two grand divisions. Every human being is either a child of God or a child of the devil. On this broad scriptural principle we take our stand, lift up our voice like a trumpet, and exclaim, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

But perhaps you say, "I was born again of the Spirit almost as soon as I was born of the flesh. I was regenerated by baptism in infancy, and confirmed in the faith in my youth, and have never renounced my baptismal covenant. I hope, therefore, that I am a

child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." But water baptism is not regeneration. It is only the outward sign of the inward and spiritual grace. And if you rest satisfied without the thing signified, the mere sign can do you no good. And human confirmation is not the same thing as being strengthened with the Spirit's might in the inner man. Religious rites and ceremonies may help or deceive the soul, according as they agree with, or differ from, the Word of God; but nothing short of Divine grace can ground and build up the Christian in his most holy faith. Consequently, if you were confirmed by man before you were converted by God, you were confirmed in your sins, and the men who offered thanks to Heaven for your establishment in grace, may be righteously charged with having performed, on your account, a sinful, religious farce.

"What is it, then," you say, "to be born again?" We reply, it is to be turned from sin to holiness—from Satan to God. It is to exist in a spiritual sense in a manner entirely new, the same as an infant, in a natural sense, exists in a manner entirely new, the moment it is born. Paul says, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, or, there is a new creation. All old things are passed away; and behold, all things are become new. (1 Cor. v. 17.) Now he is a partaker of the Divine nature. His mind is spiritual. He obeys the law of God outwardly, and delights in it after the inward man. In such a person, not slavish fear, but filial affection, is the spring of virtuous action. And none are on the way to heaven except those who have experienced this essential, glorious, and happy change.

But how is this necessary change to be obtained? In the following manner:—

*First.*—The first thing that is necessary is a *feeling sense of sin*. A mere acknowledgment of sin, without a painful conviction of your guilt and danger, will be of no avail. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; and you will never earnestly desire to be delivered from your sins, till you regard them as a foul and dangerous pestilence. Till then, in defiance of the most faithful warnings, you will love your sins, and be as reluctant to part with them as though they really rendered you virtuous, safe, and happy. Till you forsake sin, you will never obtain forgiveness; but you will never feel inclined to part with sin, till you regard it with aversion. And hence appears the necessity of a strong and clear conviction that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord.

*Secondly.*—*You must feel contrition for sin*. The depravity of your heart, which has been effected by rebellion against God, must never be contemplated as a mere misfortune, but as a state of wretchedness produced by crime. This is the only light in which the pollution of the human soul is portrayed in the Word of God. The revealed will of our Maker is the rule by which we are bound to regulate our affections and behaviour. And this rule no man was ever under any kind of necessity to transgress. Every sin committed is a voluntary act, and a wicked opposition to the most holy and benevolent Being in the universe. Consequently, sin should not only be regarded with aversion, but also with godly sorrow that leadeth to repentance.

*Thirdly.*—*You must abandon your sins*. Take

care that you do not, through the corruption of your nature, and the violence of temptation, allow that which you condemn. To confess your guilt with occasional sighs, and tears, and purposes of amendment, is not sufficient. You must immediately commence a radical reformation. Resolve, by the grace of God, that you will from this moment deny yourself of all ungodliness, whether actual or mental; that you will cease to do evil, and learn to do well. This is your duty. Nor can you reasonably hope for God to pardon your sins while you continue to repeat them. To hope where there is no promise, and especially to hope in defiance of a threat, is presumption. And while God hath graciously declared that He will "abundantly pardon" those who "forsake their wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts," He hath also declared, that those who continue to rebel against Him shall not go unpunished. If any man will be my disciple, says Christ, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and come after me. However hostile to your natural inclinations, the deeds of the body must be mortified. The old Adam must be crucified, with all his sinful affections and desires. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; or if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out. Your besetting sin, whatever that sin may be, must be laid aside. And if your bodily maintenance and worldly reputation have depended on some criminal habit or employment, such habit or vocation must be immediately renounced. On the broad way of transgression you will never find a pardoning God. Nor should you consider it unreasonable that God withholds forgiveness from those who refuse to forsake their sinful practices. If an intem-

perate man is parched with inflammation, or burned up with a raging fever, no physician can save his life, if he will indulge in his fiery beverage. Nor can the Physician of souls heal the plague of your heart so long as you indulge in unholy habits. Many a patient has deliberately risked his life, by submitting to surgical operations, and suffered himself to be cut to pieces, from the hope that the grave shall be disappointed a few days longer of the vital parts of his frame. How much more readily should you practise the severest self-denial, and make every sacrifice in your power, for the purpose of securing the salvation of your soul.

*Fourthly.*—*When you have proceeded thus far, you will probably ask, "What lack I yet?"* We answer, you still lack the principal thing. You have lopped off the outward branches of sin, but the root of bitterness remains. You have whitewashed the wall and painted the sepulchre, but the rottenness and dead men's bones are not removed. Your soul is still immersed in pollution—a pollution which penetrates the most secret recesses of the heart, and defiles the spirit of the mind. And this pollution you can no more wash away by your own doings and sufferings, than an Ethiopian can change his sable complexion, or a leopard remove his spots. Do you believe this doctrine, and feel the force of its truth acting on your conscience? Then methinks I hear you exclaim—*"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* Thank God, you may be delivered through Jesus Christ our Lord. His bowels of compassion are now yearning over you; and with an earnest desire to heal your diseases, to

create in you a clean heart, and to renew within you a right spirit, He is saying, "Wilt thou be made whole?" His precious, sacrificial blood cleanses from all sin. Its purifying virtue is sufficiently efficacious to purge the soul from the foulest stains; and the Holy Spirit is both able and willing to renew it in righteousness and true holiness. Listen to the Divine invitation and promise: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isa. i. 18.)

With this "great salvation," God is waiting to bless you now. Regeneration is a great work—it is "a new creation;" but He who "made the heaven and the earth by His great power and stretched-out arm," can transform thy soul, and turn thy heart of stone to flesh in a moment. The magnificent works of God do not, like the magnificent works of man, require length of time to bring them to perfection. He can produce the most stupendous effect in an instant, by a single act of His will. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it standeth fast. When He resolved to create day and night for the benefit of the animate creation, He said, "Let there be light; and there was light." When the leper fell at the feet of Jesus, and said, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. Jesus put forth *His* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." And—

"His tender heart is still the same,  
And melts at human woe."

He is still willing and "able to save to the utter-

most all that come unto God by Him; seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

*Fifthly.*—Do you ask, how shall I obtain this "uttermost" salvation—this "glorious liberty" from sin? We answer, BY FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. "By the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified;" but "to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." But is not faith the gift of God? Yes, as to the grace by which it is produced; but the grace or power to believe, and the act of believing, are two different things. Without the grace of Divine assistance, no man ever did, or ever can, believe to the saving of his soul; but the exercise of faith is a man's own act. God no more believes for a man than he repents for him. Nor does a penitent always and necessarily *exercise* saving faith when he possesses the *power* to believe. The power to believe may be present long before it is exercised, else why does God call on all men to believe, and threaten to consign all those to eternal condemnation who do not believe? God mocks no man by requiring him to perform impossibilities; nor does He punish any man for not doing that which he is not empowered to do. And so long as God affords us His powerful aid, our own helplessness is no excuse for our inactivity. If you could not believe in Christ without Divine assistance, and Heaven withheld that assistance, you would have an excuse for your unbelief; but if *power* to believe is granted with the *command* to believe, and yet you continue in unbelief, "thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art." At social prayer-meetings, at the penitents' form, and

even in the pulpit, we have frequently heard persons entreat God to grant the *power* to believe, when we thought it would have been much better had they pleaded for the *disposition* to believe. The former mode of praying intimates that sinners would venture on Christ for salvation if they were able, and arms them with the plea of inability; whereas, the latter mode supposes that God hath graciously vouchsafed the power, and all that is now wanting is a suitable state of mind on the part of the sinner. If we mistake not, this view of the subject is amply confirmed and illustrated by the Word of God. To the unbelieving Jews, Jesus did not say, *Ye cannot* come to me, but, "*Ye will not* come to me, that ye may have life." To the man whose hand was withered, Jesus said, "Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole like as the other." And to you He is saying, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And if you confidently rely on this soul-cheering declaration, and make a personal application of the gracious promise, your faith shall be imputed to you for righteousness; and "being justified by faith, you shall have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Nothing," says Dr. A. Clarke, "is plainer than the way of salvation by faith in Christ, had it not been puzzled and blockaded or broken up by the thriftless systems of men. Is it not strange, that when man's circumstances and danger are considered, that faith should be so little in action? \* \* \* And is it not one of the wiles of the devil that persuades man that the exercise of this grace is the most difficult of



all, and, in short, almost impossible without a miraculous power?"

One of the principal snares of the devil, in which many penitents get entangled at the throne of grace, is, they desire and expect to feel the peace of God before they confidently receive Christ as their Saviour: and hence it is, that they are frequently held in bondage through fear for many days and weeks, and perhaps months and years. Whereas, if they would at once dismiss their fears, and accept Christ with a firm reliance on his sacrificial death, and all-availing mediation at the right hand of God the Father, peace and joy would spring up in their hearts as a necessary consequence. It is extremely important that we should bear in mind, that with everything which Jesus Christ hath done and suffered in behalf of sinners, God is well pleased. Through Christ, the kingdom of heaven is constantly open to them that believe. God requires no more sacrifice for sin—no entreaty to incite Him to pardon and save the penitent. For the sake of His Son Jesus Christ, and from His own benevolent nature, in which the precious gift of Christ originated, He is already infinitely disposed to shed abroad His forgiving love in every believer's heart. Reader, is this great and glorious doctrine an article in thy creed? And art thou wishful to receive salvation on gospel terms? Surely, then, thou canst feel no difficulty in believing in Christ to the saving of thy soul?

Nor should it be overlooked, that salvation is a present blessing to meet a present necessity. A state of sin is a state of imminent danger. The sinner stands on the slippery verge of an awful precipice,

over which if he fall, he will plunge into "THE BOTTOMLESS PIT," where he will be overwhelmed with irrecoverable and everlasting ruin. And into this deep gulph of destruction he is liable to fall every moment! Who that believes this doctrine, dares plead for a slow and gradual deliverance from sin? In the great question of salvation, faith and hope are too frequently confounded. Hope invariably has reference to the future. "For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. viii. 24, 25.) But the object of saving faith is *present*. This grand object is,—not the remission of sin, but Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, as set forth in the Gospel. And true faith now receives Christ in his saving character. "Faith," says Paul, "is the subsistence of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." It is the conditional foundation on which our salvation rests; and it secures to the soul an assurance of its interest in the atoning blood of Christ. Now, this faith is a *present* act or exercise of the mind. No man can *savingly* believe that Christ will, at some future time, deliver him from sin; but millions *savingly* believe that they have *now* redemption in Christ's blood, even the remission of their sins.

And in every case, faith that works by love procures the grace which purifies the heart. A confidence in Christ, which is unaccompanied by a godly life, is not evangelical faith, but antinomian presumption. So says the Apostle James: "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead: for as the body without the spirit is dead, so

faith without works is dead also." Jesus Christ also teaches us, that "the good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good."

Be careful that you do not rest short of a sound conversion to God. To be only almost a Christian, would leave you in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. You will probably meet with some who name the name of Christ, that will teach you not to expect so great a salvation as that which God hath promised to bestow. To the lukewarm Laodicean, or the half-awakened formalist, the doctrine of a *partial* deliverance from sin is more agreeable than the doctrine of a *total* deliverance from sin. And it is rational to suppose, that what is the most grateful to his own feelings, he will cordially recommend to others. It is a characteristic of the false teacher, that he takes away the key of knowledge, and will neither enter into the kingdom of God himself nor suffer those to enter that would. But to the honour of Divine grace, a great cloud of witnesses, whose good sense and sterling piety cannot rationally be questioned, know, to their unspeakable comfort, that the Lord hath delivered them from the pit of destruction, and cast all their sins behind His back. And these living epistles may be read and known of all men. Their circumspect conversation affords satisfactory evidence that they have passed from death unto life. Had their conversion been an airy dream, it would have passed away like a phantom, without producing any profitable results. Imagination may create a species of mental derangement; but it can never renew the heart, and produce a firm and sober

reformation in the life. A bunch of shavings may support a momentary blaze; but a fire that keeps burning steadily for years, must be sustained by substantial fuel. And those Christians, who profess to enjoy salvation from sin, and who steadily walk in all the ordinances and statutes of the Lord blameless, are not following cunningly devised fables; but the truth as it is in Jesus. And what the Lord hath done for them, He is both able and willing to do for you; for with Him there is no respect of persons.

By others, you may perhaps be told, that your expectations are far too high—that a comfortable hope of their adoption into the family of God, is the strongest evidence which the majority of Christians enjoy—that a knowledge of sin forgiven is a favour which God reserves for his special favourites; and that this exalted and happy state is not to be expected in the ordinary dispensations of grace. But search the Scriptures to see whether these things be so. If any man speak not according to the Law and Testimony, however respectable his learning, or however unblameable his morals, there is no light in him. And if we understand the Bible, it is the privilege of every believer to obtain “the full assurance of faith.” Conversion is a release from prison,—a restoration from sickness to health,—an emersion from gross darkness into marvellous light,—a resurrection from the dead—or, to speak without a figure, it is a transition from habitual sin to habitual holiness. And whoever has experienced this glorious change, may rest assured that he is a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

The disciple of Christ is exhorted to rejoice, be-

cause his name is written in heaven; but if he did not know that his name was written in heaven, how could he consistently rejoice on that account? Uncertainty and fear concerning his acceptance with God would preclude rational exultation, and afflict his soul with painful anxiety. We grant, that some pious people, who are constitutionally diffident, may sometimes suspend their harps on the willows, and write bitter things against themselves without cause; but the beclouded experience of timorous Christians should not form the standard of your anticipated enjoyments. Let me persuade you to aim at something *higher*; and ever reckon that you are below the mark, till the Spirit itself beareth witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God.

*Sixthly.*—*If you be willing this day to consecrate yourself to the Lord, but are not united with any Christian church, make up your mind immediately, that you will enrol yourself as a member of some religious denomination, with as little delay as is consistent with prudence.* Look about; pray for Divine direction; and endeavour to ascertain with what Christian community you can reasonably expect to receive and do the most good.\*

Your personal welfare and usefulness in the cause of Christ will be greatly promoted by a present judicious choice of religious companions. With the people of God, you cannot enter into too close a fellowship. They are one with Christ, as He is one with the Father: and as you wish to be united to your living Head, it is but reasonable that you should

\* On this subject my "*Candidate for Heaven*," Part VI. may assist your inquiries.

be united to His members. Nor should this union be only invisible and spiritual: it should also be conventional and open to the world. A cautious profession of Christianity, without the visible pale of the church, is doubtful, ambiguous, and liable to suspicion; but an unreserved profession within the visible fold of Christ is a public announcement that the professor "is on the Lord's side." A still more powerful argument in favour of our recommendation is, the pasture and scenery *within* the visible fold of Christ are incomparably richer and more delightful than are those *without* His visible fold. Above all, it is the will of our Heavenly Father that His children should come out from the world, and form a separate, holy community.

At the gates of every evangelical church, there are constantly standing men after God's own heart, who are disinterestedly stretching forth the right hand of Christian fellowship, and saying, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." Then do not linger in the plains of indecision. Escape for thy life, lest thou be consumed. Enter some of the dwellings of Jacob; and share the esteem, the confidence, the counsels, and the prayers of the household of faith.

## CHAPTER IV.

## SIGNS OF BEING ON THE GOOD OLD WAY.

JESUS CHRIST lays it down as a general principle, that "*a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.*" (Matt. vii. 18.) And on this broad, solid principle, He bases the following maxim: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (ver. 19.) These doctrines so clearly and strongly commend themselves to every rational understanding, that one would think no person would ever dream of making a profession of religion, unless he supported his profession by a suitable deportment. But, alas! such are the wiles of the devil, and such is the duplicity of the human heart, that thousands, while they confess Christ in words, in works they deny him. The absurdity of this melancholy fact may receive some illustration from the following anecdote:—Two men were crossing a river in a ferry-boat. They entered into a controversy respecting faith and works as essential to a religious life. One pleaded for faith manifested by works; the other contended for faith alone. "Well," said the former, "we will call these *oars* faith and works. Let us now strive to propel the boat forwards by faith alone." The attempt was made; but it was a failure. The vessel moved in a circle, but made no *head-way*. "Now," said he, "let us try what we can do with faith and works united." The effort was made; and it was successful. The boat went *a-head*, and soon reached the opposite shore. And so it is in the king-

dom of heaven. Although the penitent is justified or pardoned by faith alone, there is nevertheless a disposition to obey God in his heart at the moment of his justification. And so long as he stands in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free, he obeys the law of God outwardly, and delights in it after the inward man.

It is much to be regretted that many persons, in avoiding the pharisaical doctrine of merit, have hurried into the opposite extreme, and repudiated obedience, as unfriendly to the doctrine of grace. "A great saint" (rather a great fanatic,) used to say that he was more afraid of his duties than of his sins; for his duties made him proud, but his sins made him humble." But, surely, the "great saint" was not aware of the grievous heresy which his doctrine involves. And it certainly does involve a grievous heresy; for it arraigns the attributes of God, and in effect declares, that what He hath commanded, is more dangerous to man than what He hath forbidden. From doctrines so dishonourable to Thee, and so pernicious to man, good Lord deliver us.

If you wish to have a correct view of your spiritual state, take the Apostle's advice: "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) And while you sit on the tribunal in judgment on yourself, you may be guided to a proper decision by a careful comparison of your conduct with the operations of unrenewed nature, and the practical results of a mind transformed by Divine grace. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*: adultery,



fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. v. 19—21.) Let it be remembered, that every root of bitterness in this catalogue is a growth of the flesh, and consequently indicates a state of nature. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against which there is no law." These precious fruits are of a supernatural growth; and therefore indicate a state of grace.

Now return to the Apostle's exhortation: Examine yourself, and determine the character of the tree by the quality of the fruit—the state of your heart by the tenour of your life. That you should inquire into your spiritual state, is an obvious duty. To profess religion, without a scriptural evidence of your religious character, would be the foolishness of folly. Although you are not required to make an ostentatious parade of your religion, and to cast your pearls before swine, you are certainly expected to "be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." But how can you arrive at a satisfactory evidence of your being on the way to heaven, without self-examination? If a tradesman in doubtful circumstances wishes to ascertain whether he be solvent or insolvent, he must take his stock, and balance his accounts: or if the hopeful heir of an estate would not be disappointed, he must test the validity of his title. And if you would not take your salvation for granted

on dubious testimony, you must take the supreme, infallible test of God's Word for your guide, and subject your spiritual state to an impartial scrutiny.

"Prove your own selves," says the Apostle. This implies, of course, the possibility of knowing whether we be in the favour of God. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates;" or unapproved, like base metal, which cannot stand the ordeal of the fire, as the original term signifies.

The Bible is a *crucible*, or a refining furnace. Whatever stands the test of this furnace, is pure gold—sound doctrine, and sterling gospel morality. On the contrary, whatever cannot stand this fiery trial, is wood, and hay, and straw, and stubble—false doctrine, and unsound morality. It is a matter of comparative indifference what is the doctrine of this or of that church; but it is a point of vital consequence what is the doctrine of the Bible.

The Bible "*is* a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path." By this heavenly light spiritual objects are made manifest, and are shown in their proper shapes and colours. Walk by this brilliant light, and you will never stumble through an optical illusion.

The Bible is a telescope of vast magnifying power. Optical instruments of human invention may assist the eye in discovering spots in the sun, mountains in the moon, and a thousand other glorious phenomena in the starry heavens, which transport the intelligent astronomer with astonishment and admiration; but on immaterial objects mechanical instruments can throw no light. But the Word of God, applied by the eye

of faith, penetrates the world to come, and brings within the field of our mental vision the realities of eternity—

“ The things unknown to feeble sense,  
Unseen by reason’s glimmering ray,  
With strong, commanding evidence,  
Their heavenly origin display.

“ Faith lends its realizing light,  
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly ;  
Th’ Invisible appears in sight,  
And God is seen by mortal eye.”

The Bible is a faithful mirror, which reflects an exact likeness of the original picture. It delineates with astonishing clearness and accuracy the features of the sinner and the features of the saint ; consequently, in ordinary cases, an attentive observer, when himself is the subject of examination, cannot easily mistake one for the other. A jaundiced eye, it is true, may tinge every object towards which it is directed with a yellow complexion ; and a beclouded understanding or a perverted judgment may give a false appearance to a moral countenance, although seen in the faithful mirror of the Bible. But a mind illuminated by the Sun of Righteousness, and sincerely searching for truth, may see itself as a man sees his face in a glass. The Bible is a road book. It furnishes the traveller with circumstantial and unerring instructions respecting the way to heaven and the way to hell ; so that the wayfaring man, though a fool, needs not err therein. From the unambiguous teaching of the Holy Scriptures, it is as clear as the sun, that Christianity does not consist in mere opinions and forms of worship, however true those opinions

and unobjectionable those modes of devotion may be; but in a divine, living principle, which is necessarily productive of practical holiness. In short, Christianity is LOVE, producing cheerful obedience to God, and benevolent action towards man. And you have reason to doubt the existence of this heaven-born principle in your heart, unless you exhibit in your walk and conversation the following signs:—

1. *Nonconformity to the sinful fashions and customs of the world.*—No man, whatever be his rank and position in civil society, deserves the honourable appellation of Christian, who voluntarily stands in the way of sinners, takes counsel with the ungodly, and copies their pernicious example. The command of God to His people is, “Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers. (2 Cor. vi. 14.) To court and to establish familiarity with unbelievers is a direct violation of this plain and positive command. Again: “Have no fellowship,” says the Apostle, “with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them.” (Eph. v. 11.) To the same effect is the command in Paul’s second Epistle to the Corinthians, vi. 17, 18: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” Consequently, every custom and usage of the world, however innocent or respectable such custom may be esteemed, but on which you cannot seemingly invoke the blessing of God, Christianity requires you to renounce.

2. *A conformity to Jesus Christ.*—Except ye have the spirit of Christ, ye are none of His. But what is

the spirit of Christ? He tells us Himself, in very few words: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." (John iv. 34). And if you be not of this world, even as Christ was not of this world, you will feel a prevailing desire, and make a continued successful effort, to follow in His steps. And those who are best acquainted with you will take knowledge of you, that you have been with Christ and learnt of Him. As sure as the genial warmth of summer causes the precious seed to vegetate and spring forth, first the blade, then the ear, and finally the full corn in the ear; so surely does the saving grace of Christ fertilize the soul, and cause it to bring forth the fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. To assist the reader in his endeavours to obtain a lucid and comprehensive view of this important subject, I will submit to his consideration a few thoughts on some of the leading features of practical piety.

(1.) *Honesty*.—The most equitable conduct may be maintained by an unbeliever. Many a man, who has acquired tolerably correct views of the common rights of humanity, and whose mind is elevated by honourable and liberal sentiments, would firmly resist every temptation to dishonesty in his intercourse with mankind. In his education he was happily instructed to regard rectitude as essential to the support of a respectable reputation, and knavery as the infallible mark of a villain. And having thoroughly imbibed these sound principles, they have formed in his soul a spring of integrity, which stamps his social transactions with dignity, and secures for him the tribute of universal respect. But although uprightness may be cultivated

and flourish in the absence of religion, religion cannot exist apart from uprightness. A dishonest Christian is an unknown character. Such a being never did exist, and never will exist. Short measure, false balances, or any other species of fraud, is an abomination to a righteous man. The law of God is in his heart. That law requires him to do to others as he would have others do to himself. By this Divine precept he feels his conscience bound. By this Divine rule he regulates his social conduct, and disdains to take advantage of a person's ignorance, or poverty, or necessity.

(2.) *Industry*.—While many who bear the Christian name are so earthly minded, that they voluntarily condemn themselves to a life of drudgery, others, through a sluggish constitution or an erroneous view of duty, unhappily contract the disgraceful habits of supineness and inactivity. Like drones in a hive, they unscrupulously share the fruits of others' industry; and, without a blush, eat the bread for which they never toiled. The world is a vast market-place, where the indolent man stands gazing about with a vacant countenance, or sauntering from place to place to gratify his morbid curiosity; while both the members of his body and the faculties of his mind are suffering through want of proper exercise. Such a life is *disgraceful*. How scandalous for an intelligent being to abandon himself to a life of indolence, while the meanest of God's creatures are actively employed in providing for their respective wants! What a shame for a strong, healthy man to consume his days in idleness—a burden to himself, a trouble to all around, and a nuisance to the earth! What a reproach for a vigorous woman to sit nursing herself on the hearth,

or to be gossiping from house to house, to hear or to report every slanderous tale, while her house and her family are buried in dirt and disorder! What a blot on the reputation of a gentleman, to lavish away thirty, or forty, or sixty years without doing anything for the public good! What a stain on the character of a gospel minister, not to give attention to reading, not to study to show himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, not to do whatsoever his hand findeth to do with his might! If a minister will not *labour* in the gospel, he ought not to *live* of the gospel. Let justice be done to him, and he will be stripped of his title, deprived of his revenue, and turned out of his office. How many hirelings in pastoral habits have grown grey in idleness; and although they were fed and clothed by the church, her spiritual advancement was never an object of their solicitude; and when they died, they left no honourable works behind them to perpetuate their memory.

Idleness is *injustice*. There is a sense in which it is no crime to pronounce a lazy man "a thief and a robber," and to accuse him of subsisting by plunder. On the ground of equity, that man who refuses to labour has no right to support. "If any man will not work, neither should he eat." (2 Thess. iii. 10.) No apology, however plausible, can justify indolence. Man, whether intellectually or physically considered, was evidently designed for action; and it never was the intention of religion to withdraw him from the innocent and useful employments of this world, and lock him up in a cave or monastery, to spend his days in solitude and devotion. The necessary business

of the world must be transacted, and a profession of religion forms no exemption from our obligation to be industrious. Sloth, indeed, is so great a crime, that it is utterly incompatible with a rational hope of salvation. It is no less the duty of a man to labour six days, than it is his duty to rest on the seventh. "The idler," says Dr. A. Clarke, "is next to the Sabbath-breaker." The latter avariciously robs his Maker; the former meanly throws himself as a pauper on his fellow-creature. Even the *rich* man, if he do nothing for the good of the public, is a burden to society. His mansion, his table, his wardrobe, with all the wants and enjoyments of his household, are provided at the expense of other people's skill and industry. He is constantly receiving and consuming, but to the stock of human happiness he offers no contribution. Is not this unjust?

Idleness, in a multitude of cases, is *cruelty*. What a heart of stone has that man who is surrounded by a famishing wife and a group of helpless, hungry children looking up to him for bread, and he refuses to use those means which a gracious Providence hath placed at his command for the purpose of supplying their wants. The wretch that can witness such scenes of domestic misery with indifference is undeserving the appellation of either husband or father. The dire necessities of his family would penetrate him with anguish, if the current of conjugal or paternal affection circulated in his veins. As to the religious profession of a lazy and an unfeeling husband or father, it is nothing better than vile hypocrisy. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an



infidel;" so saith the Scriptures, 1 Tim. v. 8. Whatever pretensions, therefore, the idle father or husband may make, his barbarity proves that he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Idleness is frequently the forerunner of *beggary and ruin*. While the diligent hand maketh rich, drowsiness clothes a man with rags. If the sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold, he must beg in harvest while others are blessed with plenty. How many families are now perishing with hunger, that in times past had bread enough and to spare; but through extravagance and sloth, they have reduced themselves to the verge of starvation. "I went," says Solomon, "by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, *and* nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." (Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.)

Industry does not invariably meet with all that encouragement which it deserves, and sloth sometimes escapes with impunity; but in general the diligent are rewarded, and the negligent are punished. While, therefore, we take no restless thought for the morrow, let us actively and cheerfully serve God and our generation in the post which is assigned to us by Providence.

(3.) *Temperance*.—But what is temperance? By many persons in the present day, the term is used to denote sobriety in reference to drink only; while by others, the term is employed to signify total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors; but the word is expressive of a far more comprehensive meaning. It properly denotes moderation in the gratification of our

natural appetites. Every appetite and passion which properly belongs to human nature may be innocently gratified, provided it be in subjection to those salutary restraints which are imposed by our Maker. But *artificial* appetites, which are voluntarily created by criminal indulgence, such as a love for opium, tobacco, snuff, alcohol, &c., should be mortified by rigid self-denial. It too frequently occurs, that men who are severely abstemious in one thing, are shamefully indulgent in others. One man refuses to moisten his lips with intoxicating drink ; but he is a glutton, and makes no scruple to fare sumptuously every day, if he can only command the means. Another man despises the dainties of the table ; but he adores the bottle and the decanter. Of each of these it may be appropriately affirmed, "his god is his belly." But a third, who eats and drinks with becoming restriction, abandons himself to licentious pleasures.

If these statements be correct, and we believe they cannot be successfully controverted, it is possible for a man to be a rigid teetotaler and at the same time grossly intemperate. This sentiment is not recorded with a view to disparage teetotalism, (as I have for many years been a pledged abstainer myself,) but to show the necessity of being *temperate in all things*. It is equal to no excuse to plead, "this or that indulgence is my besetment ;" for we are commanded to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us." And obedience to this command is essential to Christianity.

(4.) *A reconcilable disposition.*—Agreeably with the instructions of Jesus Christ, we daily pray, that

God may forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. We greatly fear, that few reflect as they should do on the awful nature of this petition. If we show no mercy to those who injure us, but regard them with inexorable feelings, as oft as we present this petition to God, we request Him, in effect, to shut His ear to our prayer, to show us no compassion, but to retain our sins in the book of His remembrance. But from such a prayer, surely our souls would shrink with fear and trembling.

A revengeful spirit is from beneath, and is one of the foulest marks of the beast. What would become of us, were God to visit us with punishment proportionate to our sins? In His sight, on the ground of merit, no flesh living can be justified. The reason why we are not consumed is, the forbearance of God, through the sacrificial sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do we believe this doctrine? and do we hail these glad-tidings with joy? Surely, then, we shall not deny that pity to our fellow-sinners, which we are gratefully receiving every moment from the hands of our God. Besides, we are positively required to treat our enemies with kindness. "If thy enemy hunger," says Jesus Christ, "give him bread; if he thirst, give him drink: and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Return not evil for evil; but overcome evil with good." Let him curse; but do thou bless. Let him blaspheme; but do thou pray. And who knows but the fire of love may melt him down into contrition, and be a means of leading him to the cross for the remission of his sins?

And we shall most certainly find our own advantage in forgivingly passing by most of the insults and

wrongs which we suffer in our intercourse with mankind. "In civil society," says Dr. A. Clarke, "men must, in order to taste tranquillity, resolve to bear something from their neighbours; they must suffer, pardon, and give up many things; without doing which, they must live in such a state of continual agitation as will render life itself insupportable. Without this giving and forgiving spirit, there will be nothing in civil society, and even in Christian congregations, but divisions, evil surmisings, injurious discourses, outrages, anger, vengeance, and, in a word, a total dissolution of the mystical body of Christ. Thus our interest in both worlds calls loudly upon us to give and forgive."

But there is yet another powerful reason supplied by the sacred Scriptures why we should cultivate a forgiving temper. It is this:—As the unfeeling creditor who had no compassion on his fellow-servant, was delivered by his angry lord to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him; "so, likewise," says our Lord, "shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Matt. xviii. 33.) From this plain, admonitory text, it is sufficiently obvious, that our own eternal well-being is promoted by a compassionate regard to our erring fellow-creatures. If it be possible, then, as much as lieth in us, let us "live peaceably with all men."

(5.) *Humility*.—"Six things the Lord hateth; yea, seven are an abomination unto Him;" and the first crime in this abominable catalogue is "a proud look." Pride is emphatically "the snare of the devil." It is a masterpiece of infernal iniquity, to persuade us to

think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. And the declared intention of the gospel is to destroy this work of the devil. "For the weapons of our warfare," says the Apostle, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." And in every soul where the gospel has a free, uninterrupted course, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, and pride is annihilated. Only let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, then there will be no vacant corner in your breast for haughtiness and self-sufficiency. "Pride," as a great man hath justly observed, "ever sinks where humility swims; for that man who abases himself, God exalts. To know that we are dependent creatures, is well; to feel it, and to act suitably, is still better."

Nor should it be overlooked, that modesty in our carriage towards our fellow-men, and a humble confidence in the grace of God for our preservation unto eternal life, are highly conducive to our spiritual advancement. On this important point listen to the gracious words of our Redeemer: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." He also teaches us that our elevation in the esteem of God is suspended on our humility: "Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, *even* Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

In the sin of pride there is a peculiar absurdity; for no man can rationally make an ostentatious display of his *vices*; and if he possess any virtues, for them he is indebted to the grace of God. Where, then, is there a just ground for boasting? It is excluded. Shame and confusion of face is far more befitting a criminal under sentence of death, than arrogance and self-admiration. When, therefore, the vain-glorious and shallow-minded, bloated with self-esteem, regard their fellow-creatures with contempt, and their Maker with irreverence, let us fervently pray that God may preserve us from this condemnation of the devil, and clothe us with humility as with a garment.

(6.) *Contentment*.—In acquiring this valuable state of mind, most Christians experience considerable difficulty. We are naturally disposed to repine, and this natural propensity, in almost every condition of society, is often strongly excited by the injustice and provocations of our fellow creatures. And in numerous instances both our physical and mental sufferings are so severe, that we find it no easy task to look up to our Heavenly Father, and resignedly say, “**THY WILL BE DONE.**”

To justify or to extenuate murmuring and fretfulness, apologies are almost endless. One pleads the loss of property; another, the complete ruin of his fortune; a third, the decay of his health; a fourth, domestic bereavement; a fifth, the cruelty of enemies; a sixth, the treachery of false friends—and how, say they, is it possible, under these inexpressible trials and vexations, to be content? This question is certainly an important one, nor ought we to witness the suffer-

ings of humanity with stoical indifference; but the Scriptures furnish us with a complete answer; and to their supreme authority every heart must render homage. "Be content," says the Apostle, "with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb. xiii. 5.) And in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, the same Apostle assures us, that "godliness with contentment is great gain." And between his doctrine and his practice there was the most admirable consistency. At the feet of his divine Master he had received and inwardly digested the doctrine of entire resignation to the sovereign will of God; and his proficiency in this grace is recorded for our instruction and edification. "For I have learned," says he, "in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

But that which ought to have the greatest weight with us, is, the example of our Saviour. Although He passed through scenes of deep poverty and privation, there never fell from His lips an expression of discontent. If His frugal board supplied only a little fish and barley bread, before He partook thereof, He gave thanks to Heaven for the blessings of His table. If the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, while He had not where to lay His head, He did not give utterance to a murmuring word. Weary and fasting at Jacob's well, He said unto His disciples, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent

me, and to finish His work." Reader, go thou and do likewise. Instead of comparing your own adversity and misery with the supposed prosperity and happiness of your affluent neighbour, and from that comparison drawing conclusions injurious to yourself and dishonourable to God, reflect on your own past sin and guilt, and your present unworthiness—the infinite mercy of God in forbearing to consign you to hell—the love of Christ in laying down His life for your salvation—and on that exceeding and eternal weight of glory which is reserved in heaven for the faithful Christian;—then contrast the imperishable glories of the New Jerusalem with your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, and instead of beclouding your existence, and grieving God by repining at his dispensations, you will be disposed to "praise the Lord with a song, and to magnify Him with thanksgiving."

Let spiritual blessings be thankfully received and duly appreciated, then we shall neither break our hearts with discontent, nor destroy ourselves in a fit of temporary insanity, occasioned by earthly misfortunes. Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, the soul will rise like the palm-tree under the various pressures of life; and rather go through fire and through water to the land that floweth with milk and honey, than return to the leeks and onions of Egypt.

Even heathen philosophy has done wonders in reconciling her unfortunate disciples to providential calamities. When Demetrius took the city of Megara, and asked Stilpo the philosopher what he had lost—"Nothing," replied Stilpo, "for I had all that I could



call my own about me." He had lost his children, patrimony, and country; but he did not esteem these as real, permanent riches, because he was every moment liable to lose them. But his intellectual treasures he carried *within him*; and of these a victorious enemy could not deprive him.

Seneca, the Roman, reasoned much in the same manner. "Place me," said he, "among princes or beggars; the one shall not make me proud, nor the other ashamed. I can take as sound a sleep in a barn as in a palace, and a bottle of hay makes me as good a lodging as a bed of down."

And is Christianity less powerful than pagan philosophy? Certainly not. In every breast where the gospel of Christ is permitted to exert its full and proper influence, there is a holy and an elevated satisfaction, with which philosophical contentment is not worthy to be compared. Let St. Paul be in labours more abundant, in strifes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often—let him receive of the Jews five times forty stripes save one—let him thrice be beaten with rods, once be stoned, thrice suffer shipwreck, be a night and a day in the deep—let him be in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon him daily, the care of all the churches—after having been harassed, through a succession of many years, by this

long train of evils, what is the state of the apostle's mind? Is his patience exhausted? Is he tempted to curse God and die? No: none of these things move him, but he "glories in the things which concern his infirmities."

But lest any of my readers should write bitter things against themselves without cause, I wish them to bear in mind, that the highest state of evangelical contentment is consistent with sensibility. Religion is designed to modify, not to destroy, our natural emotions. A woman once told me that she prayed for the death of her children, and rejoiced when they were dead, as she believed they were gone to heaven. But neither fanatical joy nor stoical indifference is sanctioned by the gospel. Rachel may weep for her children because they are not—David may complain of treachery—Jacob may mourn the loss of his son—Israel may groan in bondage. Christ himself lamented the fate of His countrymen, and shed tears of sympathy over His friend Lazarus. Hence those are not the most content who are the most unfeeling. The contentment enjoined in the word of God is a holy and an enlightened satisfaction in submitting to His supreme pleasure.

(7.) *Benevolence*.—By benevolence we mean good will to man in general, without regard to his rank or creed, clime or colour. Whatever distinctions, whether physical or moral, social or intellectual, exist among the human species, we are certain they form but one vast brotherhood. "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us all?" Has not every human being derived his existence, in an unbroken line of succession, from Adam? In uninspired

works we read a great deal about noble blood—ignoble blood—the best blood, and the worst blood; but in the Bible these aristocratic distinctions are unknown. “God,” says the Apostle Paul, “hath made of ONE BLOOD all the nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth.” And as Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh, God enshrined in human nature, He stood in the same relation to all the varieties of the human family. And as He was without sin, He was no more ashamed of the poor than He was of the rich; or of the sable slave, than of his fair-complexioned master. With Him there was no respect of persons—no educational or national prejudice. His benevolent heart overflowed with impartial kindness towards Jew and Gentile, small and great, bond and free. The unthankful and the evil shared his goodness, and over the vilest sinners He yearned with bowels of compassion. Had our Lord not been animated with inexpressible kindness, He never would have taken upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh, and become a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, for the benefit of sinners. Well might the apostle say, “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich.” Nothing less than exuberant grace could have induced the Lord of Life and Glory to assume the form of a servant, to become a man of no reputation, and finally to lay down His life on the ignominious cross, for the salvation of His enemies. The benevolence of His nature is emphatically described in the following expression: “*He went about doing good.*” The grand object of His incarnation, and the sole

tenour of His life and labours were, to communicate good to a fallen world.

And be it remembered, that the example of Christ is held up to us in the New Testament, not merely for our admiration, but for our imitation also. That it is the duty of every man to cultivate, and to exercise a spirit of universal benevolence, is manifest from the precepts of the gospel. "The first of all the commandments," says our Lord, is this: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it—*namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." But who is thy neighbour? Thy fellow creature. But may we not indulge revenge or unkind feelings towards an enemy? No: The Jews thought they might innocently hate their enemies; but Jesus Christ taught them a very different lesson. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." (Matt. v. 43, 44.) "Do good," says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Such are the glorious precepts of the gospel; and wherever these precepts are cordially received as the grand principles of moral action, peace and good will to man are the certain and happy results. That man is not a Christian who liveth to himself only, and cares not

who sinks so that he swims. The genuine disciple of Christ stretches his philanthropic regards to the utmost bounds of the human race, and

“Extends the arms of fervent prayer  
In grasping all mankind.

A remarkable saying of Dr. A. Clarke expresses with peculiar felicity the universal philanthropy of a good man :—“ I should hate this scoundrel heart of mine,” says the Doctor, “ if it did not love all the world.” And we have already seen that the example and instructions of our Saviour require us to cherish friendly feelings towards mankind at large, without regard to their moral character.

But how is the principle of benevolence to be manifested? By a respectful demeanour towards those whom Providence hath placed above us—by kindness and condescension to the poor—by compassion to the afflicted and unfortunate—by a courteous behaviour towards all men, whatever be their rank or condition in civil society.

But there is yet a far nobler sphere, where there is ample room for the exercise of the most exalted benevolence of which human nature is susceptible—that is, *the world of souls*. In this vast field there is employment and reward for every one who is willing to labour. It was in this field that the Apostles, constrained by the love of Christ, toiled, and suffered, and bled. It was in this field that Liebisch and Turner braved the dangers of the polar seas, and were content to dwell in huts built of ice and snow, on the frozen shores of Labrador. It was in this field that David Brainerd preached the unsearchable riches of

Christ to the savage Indians of North America. It was in this field that Smith counted not his life dear to himself, so that he might be the honoured instrument of releasing the slaves of Jamaica from the bondage of Satan, and blessing them with the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It was in this field that Wesley and Whitfield passed the bounds of a stereotyped formality, and expounded the word of God in the streets and highways to myriads who had never entered a house of prayer. It was in this field that John Williams suffered martyrdom, on the Isle of Eromango, at the very moment that he was devising means for the salvation of his murderers. It was in this field that William Clowes cast abroad the precious seed, and lived to see the fruit thereof shake like Lebanon. It is in this field that Moffat exiled himself from civilized society, traversed deserts haunted by lions and tigers, visited the kraals, cities, and encampments of savage tribes, at the peril of his life, in South Africa.

Let it not be objected, that the Apostles and the most illustrious missionaries are stars of the first magnitude, whose splendour but few can equal. The glimmering rushlight is useful, as well as the brilliant gas. And a person with one talent may, if he will, serve God as acceptably, though not so extensively, as another person with ten talents. That ocean of glory which pours down upon the earth from the sun, is composed of single rays; and in like manner, every individual Christian, however low he may be in the scale of intelligence and wealth, reflects the light and grace which he derives from the Sun of Righteousness, and thereby contributes to that flood of heavenly light

and joy by which the moral gloom of this world is relieved.

And what a magnificent sphere of benevolent exertion the missionary field opens to the Christian philanthropist! Many tribes and nations are yet enveloped in heathen darkness because the light of the gospel has never been conveyed to them. And even millions of our kindred and countrymen are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, for whose conversion but little solicitude, and but few well-directed efforts, have been employed. Every good man is not called into the gospel ministry; but every Christian is divinely required, "as he has opportunity, to do good unto all men." Let, then, the talented consecrate their gifts; the powerful, their influence; the opulent, their wealth; and the poor, their humble but valuable services to the glory of God, and the salvation of their fellow men. Did all professing Christians care practically for perishing sinners, and harmoniously strive for their conversion, we should soon witness glorious accessions to the kingdom of Christ.

(8.) *Brotherly love.*—This virtuous affection of the human heart is nearly allied, in its nature, to that which I have described in the last paragraph; but it is exercised, not towards mankind indiscriminately, but towards a select class of objects only. Philanthropy has respect to men merely as fellow-creatures—Brotherly love regards them as fellow-Christians. Consequently, although the latter affection is more circumscribed in its operations than the former, it is more elevated and heavenly in its character. As God is infinitely gracious, He hateth nothing which His hands have made. He is so far from having appointed

any man to wrath, and delighting in the death of the wicked, that He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son to die for them, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And in accordance with this extraordinary manifestation of His love to a guilty race, He still regards impenitent sinners with compassion and forbearance, and daily loadeth them with benefits. But the holiness of His nature precludes the possibility of His loving them with complacency. Hence it is written, "God is angry *with the wicked* every day."

And on these two points the same mind that is in Christ is in His disciples. The Christian, as such, can and does so love his greatest enemies, as to pity their folly, and to wish and pray for their salvation, although they are utterly destitute of moral goodness. But he does not, and he cannot, love their moral character, because it is entirely sinful, and consequently odious. They may be objects of his ardent philanthropy; but they cannot share his brotherly-love.

But the household of faith are all brethren, and *as such*, they are enjoined to love each other. To them we (believers) are united by the sacred ties of a celestial relationship—ties by which we never can be bound to the ungodly and the sinner. In the Church of Christ, regarded as a widely dispersed, but firmly united brotherhood, there is something peculiarly amiable and captivating. And this is certainly one aspect of the Church which is entitled to the careful consideration of every Christian. Notwithstanding the numerous denominational peculiarities which intersect the catholic Church, and serve as lines of demarcation



between the several sections of which she is composed, she is still but one vast enclosure, protected, cultivated, and enriched by the same heavenly Husbandman. The disciples of Christ, of whatever name, or rank, or country, are children of one family, under the eye of one common parent: they walk by the same rule, mind the same thing, serve the same Master, contend for the same faith, and are travelling towards the same heavenly Jerusalem.

Sometimes, alas! bigotry and intolerance are unhappily associated with true religion. Good men, looking through a glass darkly, sometimes see objects but indistinctly, like the person who "saw men as trees walking," and judging according to the appearance of things, they uncharitably withhold the right hand of Christian fellowship from all who refuse to *follow them*. Yet, if we worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh, "doubtless God is our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." (Isaiah lxiii. 16.) And if our erring brethren will not cordially acknowledge the relationship existing between us, let us be careful not to disown them, merely because they are deficient in fraternal affection. The scales which obscure the mental vision of good men will ere long fall from their eyes; then will they rejoice to identify themselves with those "Israelites indeed," whose moral excellency they once could not perceive. In the meantime, let us pray that "the Light of the world" may vouchsafe to them an increase of divine illumination, and an enlargement of heart. This employment will react beneficially on our own hearts. It will expand and warm them with more

ardent affection, both towards God and the household of faith.

Brotherly love is not a cold, barren, sentimental thing; but a generous, active principle. It is a tree laden with good fruit. It is a fountain perpetually sending forth refreshing streams in a dry and thirsty land. It is a good Samaritan, who delights to relieve the sufferings of a fellow-traveller. There are many ways in which this godlike disposition may exert itself, as—

*First, By an obliging carriage.*—To the unmeaning and deceitful compliments and affected kindness of flattering sycophants, the gospel gives no countenance. Dissimulation, though arrayed in the most splendid robes which fashionable politeness can manufacture, is a reproach to the person by whom it is practised, and an indignity to the person for whom it professes a sincere regard.

On the other hand, a studied rudeness, or a careless vulgarity, which shows no respect for the sensibility, convenience, or comfort of a fellow-creature, is utterly at variance with the social and gracious spirit of the gospel. If the illiterate and semi-barbarous glory in their clownish rusticity, they are not models for our imitation. We have infinitely better examples in Jesus Christ and his Apostles. In their intercourse with society, their manners were strikingly graceful. On certain occasions, when there were special reasons for it, they administered reproof with severity; but in their ordinary converse with men, a benign and dignified courtesy habitually marked their deportment. While fulfilling their glorious missions, their disinterested and honourable motto was, “*We seek not*

*yours, but you.*” And it is obvious that they steadily aimed at engaging the confidence, winning the affections, and saving the souls of those with whom they entered into conversation. Of Jesus Christ it is said, “the common people heard Him gladly,” and that “all bear Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” And in Paul’s address to Festus, who had vulgarly accused him of madness in the presence of an illustrious assembly, the insulted man of God showed the politeness of a gentleman, as well as the dignity of an Apostle.

Now, if Jesus Christ and His ambassadors sanctioned “good breeding” by their example, who dares question the propriety of our following in their steps? Genuine Christianity files off the rough and repulsive asperities of our nature, makes us easy of access, and disposes us to promote, and to rejoice in, the happiness of others. In the estimation of some writers, politeness is simply “the art of pleasing.” But this is certainly a very low meaning to ascribe to graceful manners; for the most nefarious villain may study and practise “the art of pleasing,” under the influence of the vilest motives. Christian politeness is invariably concerned for the *interest* of those whom it is anxious to *please*; and, consequently, is always the effect of honourable and virtuous intentions. Such was the politeness of St. Paul. “Let every one of us,” says he, “please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification.” (Rom. xv. 2.)

*Secondly, By sympathizing with each other in the day of adversity.*—Is a brother afflicted? Let him be cheered, instructed, and strengthened, by our religious

and friendly visits. Is he in heaviness through manifold temptations? Is he passing through some mysterious and painful dispensations of Providence? Take him by the hand, lead him through the gloom, and say unto him, O, my brother, why art thou cast down, and why is thy soul disquieted within thee? Hope thou in God; and thou shalt yet praise Him, and He will again lift upon thee the light of His countenance. Is he in want, and have you bread enough and to spare? Then do not regret that his poverty has come under your notice; but be grateful for your ability to relieve him, and let him share, without grudging, your superabundance. On this important subject the New-Testament Scriptures are remarkably clear and pointed. "Charge them," says Paul to Timothy, "that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." (1 Epist. vi. 17, 18.) "But whoso hath this world's good," says the beloved disciple, "and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" That is, the love of God *does not* dwell in him, whatever may be his pretensions. The same doctrine is forcibly taught by the Apostle James, in the following passage:—"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto him, depart in peace and be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give him not those things which are needful for the body; what

doth it profit? From these plain Scriptural statments it is evident that he does not love God whom he has not seen, who does not practically love his brother whom he has seen. But is a brother persecuted and ill-treated by wicked men? Then do not leave him nor forsake him. Stand at his right hand, and maintain his cause. In a word, "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

*Thirdly, Bear with each other's infirmities.*—In the family of God there are babes and little children, as well as young men and fathers, not only in regard to their tender age, or recent standing in the Church, but also with respect to the limited nature of their intellectual and experimental attainments. And it is alike the dictate of reason and religion, that the strong should bear with the infirmities of the weak. Indeed, the most intelligent and devoted Christians are not glorified saints, but fallible probationers, and, at one period or another, need the indulgence and long-suffering of their brethren.

*Fourthly, Affectionately admonish each other, when admonition is necessary, and endeavour to raise up him that is fallen.*—Never connive at sin; that would be cruelty. For sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. If we see a brother transgress we should faithfully remind him of his guilt and danger, and entreat him to escape for his life. Open rebuke, in such a case, is better than secret love. Besides, God says, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him." No Christian should be offended at reproof, seasonably and fraternally administered. "For he that hateth reproof," says the wise man, "shall die; but he that heareth reproof getteth un-

derstanding." These grave truths had their proper influence on the mind of David. Hence he exclaims, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil that shall not break my head." The same great principles we should apply to the interpretation of Proverbs xxvii. 6: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." But if we wish our reproofs not to offend and goad the transgressor further into sin, but to operate as healing medicines, before we administer them we must have a prudent regard to time, to place, to the temper of our erring friend, to his years, to his position in society, to his general character, to the witnesses, if any be present, and then tender our admonitions in the fear of God.

But has a brother gone astray? Is he wandering and stumbling on the dark mountains? Then go after him, and, if possible, persuade him to return to the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul. Do not say within thy heart, "He is irrecoverably fallen. He is a confirmed reprobate." Plead earnestly with God for his restoration, and accompany your prayers with suitable efforts. Even the complicated and atrocious crimes of an apostate David, or those of a fallen Peter, may be forgiven, and the transgressor brought out of the horrible pit into which his sins had plunged him, and re-established on the Rock of Ages. And, "Brethren," says the Apostle James, "if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." A statement so important and so

richly fraught with encouragement, should stimulate us to pursue the backslider, and earnestly endeavour to effect his reunion to Christ.

*Fifthly, Suppress slanderous reports, which tend to blast an innocent brother's reputation.*—A malicious person will fabricate an injurious story out of materials which are altogether false, or he will so remodel and colour an original report, as to completely change, or even reverse, its meaning: and a busy-body, who is more intent on sowing discord than making peace, will always welcome slander, and gladly go up and down as a tale-bearer. But it is one of the characteristics of a true citizen of Zion, that "he taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour." (Ps. xv. 3.) So many evil reports are either partially or entirely unfounded, and levelled at the very excellent of the earth, that we ought never to give them credit, much less to lend them our sanction, till unquestionable evidence perfectly satisfy us of their authenticity.

The most unblamable person that ever trod this earth was accused of being a winebibber, a gluttonous man, a traitor, a ringleader of sedition, a confederate of the devil; but all this manner of evil was spoken of Him falsely. His disciples, too, were persecuted and vilified in proportion to their zeal in copying the example of their Divine Master. Hence they were stigmatized as "pestilential fellows," and charged with propagating "a pernicious superstition," and "teaching customs unlawful to be observed;" and in their social capacity, they formed "a sect that was everywhere spoken against." But did they merit all this contempt and defamation? What evil had they done? None at all. A wicked heart set an unruly tongue on

fire of hell; and it shot abroad firebrands, arrows, and death, to slay such as were of upright conversation. To a great extent it is the same now; and so it will remain till the carnal mind, which is at enmity with God, be destroyed by the power of the gospel. In the meantime, the members of the household of faith should watch each other's character with a friendly eye. I do not mean that we should be blind and deaf to each other's faults, or proof against evidence; but when we see a deadly blow aimed at an unoffending brother, it is our duty to arrest the hand of the assassin.

We fear it frequently occurs in the Church of Christ, as well as in civil society, that, at the instigation of some wicked Jezebel, a conspiracy is formed against an innocent person. Then, like Naboth, he is arraigned before a tribunal, and men of Belial bear false witness against him, a verdict of guilt is returned, and he is undeservingly condemned. If these are evils which no human prudence can entirely prevent, let us cultivate that charity which thinketh no evil, and choose rather to err on the lenient side of a question, than to indulge in a censorious disposition.

*Sixthly, Prefer each other's company.*—To consume our precious time with each other when we ought to be elsewhere, and otherwise employed, would be manifestly wrong. But, at proper seasons, let it be clearly seen that you honour them that fear the Lord, and that your delight is to dwell with the saints. When a professor of religion voluntarily and cheerfully stands in the way of sinners and commingles with the ungodly, he exposes his character to suspicion and reproach. There is much truth in the old rhyming proverb:—

“Birds of a feather flock together.”



It is difficult to conceive how a spiritually-minded person, who loves God with supreme affection, can form and relish an intimate acquaintance with persons who have no relish for the things of God. And we hesitate not to affirm, that the society of the wicked is an element unfriendly to the progress, and even to the existence, of holiness. "Evil communications corrupt good manners;" and "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." These are not the maxims of monkish austerity; but the admonitory declarations of God.

In a state of society where the righteous and the wicked are intermixed, some intercourse of the former with the latter is unavoidable, and, consequently, allowable; but so far as *choice* is concerned, it should be obvious to the world, that the followers of Christ are our select and favourite associates. In so doing we shall imitate the wise and good of past ages. "I am a companion," says the Psalmist, "of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts."

The love which one Christian exercises towards another in all its modifications, is pure in quality. It is excited by the perception of moral worth. By the appearance of sin it is repelled. By the exhibition of grace it is attracted and inflamed. It is completely free from every animal or selfish admixture. The amicable object on which it is placed is contemplated with a heavenly satisfaction; and the more strikingly that object resembles Jesus Christ, the more intense is this sacred passion. Consequently, a circle of Christians who are eminent for piety, and whose moral worth is well understood and duly appreciated, "love one another with a pure heart fervently."

And it is a cheering fact, that the existence and reciprocal exercise of this holy affection affords a conclusive evidence of our adoption into the family of God. "By this," says our Lord, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another." In accordance with this declaration, the Apostle John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

(9.) *Supreme love to God.*—I designedly waved the consideration of this subject till now, because I regarded it as the clearest and strongest evidence of our discipleship. A person can make great proficiency in a course of virtue, and yet remain unconverted; but no one can love God with sovereign affection without being a Christian. Unrivalled love to God is the richest jewel in the believer's crown. "And now abideth faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them is love." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Without this grace, all other properties, however excellent, would avail us nothing.

But what is the *nature* of this supreme and essential grace? "Love," says Dr. A. Clarke, "is a sovereign preference given to one above all others, present or absent; a concentration of all the thoughts and desires in a single object, which is preferred to all others. Now, apply this definition to the love which God requires of his creatures, and you will have the most correct view of the subject. Hence it appears, that by this love the soul cleaves to, affectionately admires, and consequently rests in God, supremely pleased and satisfied with Him as its Portion; that it acts from Him, as its Author; for Him, as its

Master; and to Him, as its End; and that by it all the powers and faculties of the mind are concentrated in the Lord of the Universe; that by it the whole man is willingly surrendered to the Most High; and that, through it, an identity or sameness of spirit with the Lord is acquired, the person being made a partaker of the Divine Nature; having the mind in him that was in Christ, and thus dwelling in God, and God in him."

That the existence of this grace in the soul is of the first importance is evident, from the nature of our Lord's reply to a certain Scribe, who asked Him which was the first commandment of all:—"The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." (Mark xii. 29, 30.) In this passage our Saviour gives us a remarkably impressive description of that supreme affection which we are bound, by our profession as Christians, to exercise towards the Divine Being.

Sober reflection, enlightened by revelation, would supply any man with very powerful and lucid reasons why the Lord our God ought to be the grand object and centre of our affections. God made us, and not we ourselves. And Man originally was made but a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour. And even the *wreck* of what was once so glorious and honourable, is a splendid monument of our Creator's infinite perfections. The machinery of the universe—the admirable adaptation of one thing to another—the stability of the laws by which it

pleases God to govern material objects, whether organized or unorganized—the very evident tendency of these arrangements to promote the happiness of sentient creatures, and of man especially—are overwhelming manifestations of the boundless power, the illimitable wisdom, and the exuberant goodness of our Heavenly Sovereign. How delightfully true it is, that “the heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament sheweth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech; and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” And how irresistible the evidence, that “the visible things of the creation declare His eternal power and Godhead.” The evidence is not less clear, that we are all sustained, protected, and blessed by His gracious and paternal care. He openeth His hand, and giveth us richly all things to enjoy. So that every reflecting mind, unless it is perverted by sin, must see and feel, and will gratefully acknowledge, that God is good to all, and that His tender mercies are over all His works.

But the attribute of God’s love to us is calculated, beyond anything else, to inspire and support the flame of love to God in our own hearts. “We love Him,” says the Apostle, “because He first loved us.” And if we believe the Bible, it is impossible to overlook the fact, that the Father’s free and unsolicited gift of His well-beloved Son to ignominy, to suffering, and death, for our salvation, is the most stupendous proof of God’s love towards the human family. In this light the transaction is presented to us by Jesus Christ himself. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John iii. 16.) Is it possible for any one to believe

this gracious declaration, and to reflect upon it seriously, without feeling in his heart a *reason* why he ought to love God in preference to any other object, either in heaven above, or on earth beneath? We think it is not. And it is nothing but sin which prevents mankind from loving God, in accordance with their duty, with all their heart, and with all their mind, with all their soul, and with all their strength. Did we uniformly live up to our privilege, and enjoy the great salvation of the gospel, we should love God with all the strength of our affection, and with all the vigour of our intellectual capabilities. For such a salvation, and for such a measure of love, let us fervently offer the prayer of faith.

It may be proper to remark, that as love to God is the principal element in Christianity, it is the distinguishing feature of every good man. But in giving verbal expressions to this predominant and heavenly passion, the people of God are not equally frank and decisive. Some, through an excess of modesty, seem afraid to communicate their Christian experience, lest they should expose themselves to the charge of pharisaical pride; while others, whose religious language is in a great measure moulded by catechisms and creeds, are incessantly complaining of the sinfulness and carnality of their minds. But, notwithstanding the silence of the former, and the self-reproaches of the latter, it is an incontestable and a glorious fact, that love to God *reigns* in every true believer's heart; and the divine principle is continually shedding a benign influence on both his private and public life.

Does he withdraw from the busy scenes of this world? He is not alone; he enjoys delightful fellowship with his best Friend.

“ God is the sea of love  
Where all his pleasures roll ;  
The circle where his passions move,  
And centre of his soul.”

In seasons of involuntary solitude, when Providence calls him to travel, or to labour, or to sit by the fire-side, without an earthly companion, no anxious cares drink up his spirits—no desponding thoughts brood over his imagination. A consciousness of the approving presence of God inspires his soul with sacred satisfaction. His affections are set on things above, and he rejoices in God as his sovereign good. At midnight, when deep sleep falleth on the sons of men, and the objects of vision are sealed up in thick darkness, and all around him is as silent as death, if slumber depart from his eyes, he is not haunted by the terrors of hell. His soul towers upwards as on eagles' wings—his meditations of God are sweet ; and he can sing with the spirit and with the understanding also,—“ How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God ; how great is the sum of them !”

In public life, too, his love to God is continually shedding a salutary influence on his social transactions. His respect for the rights of mankind, and his concern for their present and eternal welfare, are necessarily much more enlightened, conscientious, and benevolent, than they possibly could be were the love of God not shed abroad in his heart. And by thus developing the true principles of Christianity, and maintaining an upright and dignified character, he glorifies his heavenly Father, and commends religion to the judgment of the “ great cloud of witnesses” by whom he is constantly surrounded.

## CHAPTER V.

BY-PATHS WHICH, IF FOLLOWED, WILL LEAD THE  
TRAVELLER TO ZION ASTRAY.

WERE the final salvation of every Christian unconditionally insured by the word of God, the remarks which we have to offer under this head would be altogether unnecessary. For why should we caution a person against an evil which cannot possibly befall him? For such a course we are unable to conceive any rational motive. But believing, as we do, that a Christian may draw back, and thereby unfit himself for the kingdom of God, we feel constrained by the most solemn considerations to warn the believer against apostasy, and to exhort him to be faithful unto death.

To illustrate the doctrine of final perseverance, a very respectable writer says:—"A field of wheat may grow with different vigour—may at times be checked by cold, and stunted by drought; and may, at other times, and under the influence of refreshing showers and kindly seasons, flourish with strength, verdure, and beauty. Still it will always be a field of wheat, and not tares or darnel." Granted; but the illustration does not answer the purpose for which it was chosen. Wheat was *always* wheat. It never was tares or darnel. But the Christian was not *always a Christian*. He was once a child of wrath, even as others. By grace he is saved through faith, and is, consequently, "a new creature." Besides, wheat may

be blasted with mildew, and lose its wholesome and nutritious properties ; and then, instead of being used as food, it is consigned to the dunghill. "Salt is good," says our Saviour ; "but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden underfoot of men." In like manner "the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression." For thus saith the Lord, "When I shall say to the righteous *that* he shall surely live : if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered ; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it." (Ezek. xxxiii. 13.) See also 1 Sam. ii. 30. Hence we learn, that certain promises and assurances which wear an absolute form, do nevertheless contain an implied condition ; while to others a more extended application is given than the analogy of faith will warrant. For instance, the Bible assures us that "the righteous shall hold on his way." This we steadfastly believe ; but the backslider is *not* righteous. In him is fulfilled the proverb : "The sow that was washed is returned to her wallowing in the mire."—"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." We believe this testimony is true ; but backsliders are *not* just. They are emphatically *unjust*. They have "robbed God" of that reasonable service which they had solemnly engaged to render Him, and crucified the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame. Jesus Christ says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." All these things we



steadfastly believe ; but backsliders are not the sheep of Christ, in the full and saving sense of this gracious promise. For "my sheep," says the good Shepherd, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"—conduct, the very reverse of that which is pursued by unstable souls. Let the disciple of Christ be steadfast, unmovable, and always abound in the work of the Lord, then we doubt not that his final perseverance is guaranteed. But we believe a Christian may "grow weary in well doing," return to the beggarly elements of this world, and never more be renewed unto repentance. Nor is the danger of our apostasy insignificant, if we take into the account, as we certainly ought to do, the "strong delusions" of which the human mind is susceptible. "There is a way," says Solomon, "that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." And may it not be truly said of thousands, who were once an ornament to the Church of Christ, "A deceived heart hath turned them aside?"

How to obscure the glorious light of the Gospel, and how to darken the believer's understanding, are some of the devil's principal devices. And if these infernal attempts prove successful, he feels but little difficulty in disaffecting the heart towards the right ways of the Lord. The reason why the religious sentiments of good and conscientious men are so various and conflicting is, because they see the *same objects* in different lights, and from different points of observation. And the light in which any individual contemplates the way to heaven, necessarily influences both his judgment and his conduct. Of this great truth the wicked one is aware. He consequently

exerts his diabolical ingenuity for the purpose of presenting moral objects to the believer's mind, in artificial and beguiling colours. Against his snaky wiles our security requires us to keep a constant and vigilant look out.

The good old way is not like a crooked and devious mountain-pass; or a river, that runs through an extensive tract of country, and abruptly turns, gently curves, or takes a sweeping circuit, to find an easy outlet into the ocean; but it resembles the great Roman roads, which ran in a straight line, and traversed extensive plains, deep valleys, or lofty mountains, regardless of the toils and difficulties which they presented to the traveller. But this glorious highway, which opens a free communication between earth and heaven, is intersected by cross roads and oblique paths at every step. And each of these deceitful avenues is strewn with enchanting allurements, which invite the pilgrim to turn aside from the good old path. Now from the right hand and then from the left, a lying spirit, transformed into an angel of light, employs his demoniacal arts to draw us into forbidden paths. Therefore, if we would not finally become castaways, we must turn a deaf ear to every temptation, incline not to the right hand nor to the left, but vigorously press forwards toward the mark for the prize of our high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus.

To specify and to descant on every false way which would mislead the traveller to Zion, would require more space than our proposed limits will allow. We shall therefore notice only a few of those fatal paths, and be brief in our remarks. We commence with—

I. *Pride*.—Pride may be defined inordinate self-

esteem, mingled with contempt for others. This sin, without controversy, is one of the most ingenious snares of the devil. God is supremely great; but He is not proud: nor can He tolerate the least spark of pride in any of His creatures. A proud look is an abomination to the Lord. And though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knoweth afar off. So long as they are governed by this haughty disposition He will not suffer them to approach Him. Pride ruined angels, and reduced those once glorious beings to the odious character of devils. And pride alone is sufficient to effect the final ruin of men. For God will never open the gates of Paradise to a soul that is polluted with this diabolical temper. Eternal justice has decreed, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." But with Satan's apostasy and consequent downfall before their eyes, how many professors of religion venture to indulge in open rebellion against the Almighty. The ancient Jews, through the pride of their hearts, forsook the Lord, and provoked Him to disinherit and deliver them into the hands of their enemies. In the days of Isaiah, the daughters of Zion were excessively proud, and walked with stretched forth necks, mincing as they went, made a tinkling with their feet, and decked themselves with vain and costly ornaments, unbecoming women professing godliness. (Chap. iii. 16, &c.) When the Son of God manifested Himself to the Jews, instead of heartily and simultaneously exclaiming, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," they were so inflated with pride, that they rejected Him with scorn, and arrogantly said, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

When He rose from the dead, in accordance with what He had foretold, and thereby proved Himself to be the Son of God with power, the priests and rulers, instead of humbling themselves before God in dust and ashes, bribed the soldiers who guarded His sepulchre to suppress the truth, and to propagate one of the most ridiculous falsehoods that was ever invented. "Say ye," said the "lords spiritual and the lords temporal"—"say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept." (Matt. xxviii. 11—13.)

It is impossible to say into what depths of wickedness we may plunge, if we once open our hearts to the admission of pride. Yet alas! how many who call themselves Christians are evidently influenced by this dreadful sin. Some are proud of their personal attractions; others, of their intellectual attainments. Some, of their magnificent houses; others, of their costly furniture. Some, of their dignified parentage; others, of their rich and fantastical clothing. And such are the blinding effects of sin, that many who name the name of Christ, zealously advocate the cause of pride, under the specious names of convenience, decency, and respectability; and especially among the rich and great, as a necessary mark of their elevation above the poor. But believers are brethren. They have all one Father. And a brother of high degree is bound to treat a brother of low degree with condescension. The odious nature of pride and the amiable character of humility as associated with a profession of religion, may be advantageously illustrated by the two following anecdotes:—(1.) A lady of title, apprehending herself to be sick unto death, sent for a

clergyman to visit her. When the spiritual adviser arrived, her ladyship addressed him to the following effect:—"Sir, do you think there will be a *partition* in heaven between the rich and the poor? If I thought not, I could scarcely reconcile my mind to go to heaven." "Madam," replied the man of God, "you have no need to make yourself uneasy on that subject; for while you remain in that state of mind, *you* can never *go* to heaven." This was a terrible answer. But it is supported by the word of God. "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Besides, for that fulness of joy in the presence of God, which is reserved for the meek and lowly in heart, the haughty spirit has no relish. (2.) In the year 1823, I was at the hospitable mansion of Mr. S., of B—. After a little conversation on the Primitive Methodist Society, the worthy gentleman said, in a peculiarly pleasant tone, "Mr. Garner, my son Thomas thinks that I sometimes associate with company that is too low; but I can assure you I associate with some of the highest gentry in the town—even those who look out at the chimney tops." Mr. S. alluded to a pious and respectable chimney-sweeper, with whom he was in Christian fellowship. Judge ye which of the twain, the noble lady or the devout gentleman, spoke most like a disciple of Jesus Christ. We have no wish to exterminate that civil respect which is due from an inferior in rank to a superior. We simply teach, that it is the duty of every Christian, whatever be his

position in society, to "be clothed with humility," and that pride is one of the downward roads to hell. Another by-path, and one which is nearly allied to pride, is—

II. *Ambition*.—Ambition is a criminal desire to gain an ascendancy, and to exercise authority, over others. To co-work with Providence, with a view to rise above the disadvantages of poverty, ignorance, and oppression, is laudable. And it is even possible to aspire to a post of trust, or honour, or power, under the influence of the most upright and commendable motives. There is no office under the sun more dignified than is that of a bishop, or superintendent in the gospel ministry; yet St. Paul says, "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." (1 Tim. iii. 1.) In a position so honourable and influential, a man properly qualified, may render much more important service to God and to his generation than he could render in a private situation. In civil life, too, a good man may, from the best intentions, come out of his obscurity, and offer himself as a candidate for a vacant seat in parliament, that he may secure an opportunity of serving his country to greater advantage. While, therefore, modest and retiring Christians really wish to be

—"Little and unknown,  
Loved and prized by God alone,"

Christians of a more vigorous and enterprising character, constrained by the love of Christ and true patriotism, may innocently aspire, by lawful means, to spheres of public trust and usefulness.

But it too generally happens, that ambitious men

counterfeit virtues by which they were never adorned. Under the plausible pretext of aiming with a single eye to the public good, or to the glory of God, they feel conscious of a predominant desire for self-aggrandisement. And so subtle is that old serpent, which is called the Devil and Satan, that without much prayer and vigilance on our part, he will pollute our aspirations, and give to them a dangerous direction. Some of the first disciples of our Saviour were perverted by this flattering temptation. The mother of James and John, supposing that Christ would found a temporal kingdom, said unto Him, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left in Thy kingdom." And what is still more surprising, "there was also a strife among the disciples, which of them should be accounted the greatest." What a melancholy scene, the disciples of a Master, who was meek and lowly, contending for supremacy. To suppress the rising ambition, Jesus said unto them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye *shall* not *be* so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." Notwithstanding this powerful check to ambition in the church, how frequently has her glory been obscured by restless spirits struggling for power and dominion. It was this sin which agitated all Christendom, produced grievous schisms, rent the church in twain, and cursed her with a ghostly tyrant. Sustained by this sin, a long succession of popes, with their pompous titles, blasphemous pretensions, enormous wealth, interested

sycophants, standing armies, and infernal inquisitions, have oppressed, harassed, and desolated the church of Christ from generation to generation.

But we must not suppose that this mystery of iniquity is confined within the pale of the Romish communion. It is but too obvious that the deadly leaven has infected the protestant churches. It is no breach of charity to suspect that, in a fearful number of instances, both laity and ministers think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, and are impatiently grasping for authority over their brethren. It is doubtful whether any denomination be entirely free from "the accursed thing." In some instances the minister arrogates to himself powers and prerogatives with which neither Jesus Christ nor the Church ever invested him, lords it over God's heritage, and rules with a despotic hand. In other instances, the people rise against their minister, and think it a meritorious thing to treat him with indignity. "You are our servant," say they, "and we are your masters;" and the tenour of their behaviour harmonizes very well with these unbecoming expressions.

Should the enemy of our souls at any time attempt to fire our hearts with the unholy flame of ambition, let us imitate the bright example of Abraham, the father of the faithful and the friend of God. When "there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle," Abraham, as Lot's superior, might have interposed his authority; but he preferred gentle suasion to physical force. He therefore disdained to settle the controversy by might, if he could accomplish his purpose by the law of kindness. Now, hear what he says: "And Abram



said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we *be* brethren." Reader, dost thou admire the conduct of Abraham? Then "go thou and do likewise."

III. *Another by-way is presumption.*—Self-conceit and misplaced confidence keep thousands from a participation of the saving blessings of the gospel. No man was ever admitted through the gate of salvation till he distrusted himself, and approached the throne of grace with reverence and godly fear. And after his goings are established, he is enabled to prosecute his journey no longer than while he ponders the paths of his feet and walks humbly with his God. If he venture to form resolutions in his own strength, in the day of temptation, like a bowing wall or a tottering fence, they will offer but a feeble resistance. The moment before our Saviour was betrayed by Judas, Peter said unto Him, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." After such a declaration, one would have thought that Peter would have displayed the most heroic courage. But no sooner was his Divine Master apprehended, than Peter became timorous and cowardly. And lest he should be identified as one of our Lord's disciples, he lingered behind and followed afar off. And what were the consequences? His faith began to weaken, his love to wax cold, and the fear of man struck terror into his soul. And when he was charged with being a follower of Christ, instead of boldly confessing the truth, he wickedly denied the charge; and having lost all self-government, he protested in the most solemn manner, that he knew not the Man.

If I rightly understand the concise, but deeply affecting history of Peter's fall, he was too confident of his own strength. But by his sudden, shameful, and appalling miscarry, he was fully convinced that independently of Divine succour, he was as weak as another man. "Let him that thinketh he standeth," (or according to Wesley's translation, "let him that assuredly standeth;") (for the original word which is rendered "thinketh," most certainly strengthens, instead of weakens the sense,) "take heed lest he fall." Trust in God only; for He only is able to keep thee from falling.

Many religious persons gradually lose their peace with God, and relapse into a state of gloomy suspense, by indulging in antinomian speculations. Through unwatchfulness and neglecting the ordinances of the gospel, they acquire a sickly state of mind, and a disrelish for religious exercises. Poverty and leanness of soul is the inevitable consequence. Still, the backslider in heart tenaciously retains his hope of heaven. But how can he reconcile his cold, languid, and inactive state with a hope of everlasting life? He has recourse to "faith without works." In words he confesses Christ—in works he denies Him, and flatters himself that he shall be saved by faith alone, however deficient he may be in affectionate obedience. Devils believe, and have acknowledged, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; but neither devils nor men ever were, or ever will be, saved by a mere dead and barren assent to the truth. If we serve the Lord with a perfect heart and a willing mind, He will never forsake us. But if we forsake Him—however orthodox may be our creed—He will cast us off for ever.

Not a few professors of religion are drawn aside from the path of duty by presumptuously calculating on the protection and blessing of God, in situations which he hath forbidden them to enter. In direct opposition to the gospel, one knowingly accepts a situation where he will be expected to be a partaker of other men's sins; and absurdly asserts that the grace of God is sufficient to preserve him untainted. Another unequally yokes with an unbeliever, although he is strictly forbidden to do so, and has the rashness to expect that, notwithstanding his open rebellion, God will make him a blessing to his ungodly companion. A third, in opposition to the visible indications of Providence, transports himself to some foreign wilderness, for the sake of worldly gain, where the joyful sound of a preached gospel is seldom or never heard; and yet he believes that God will smile on his selfish and uncalled-for enterprise. And as they are too wise to learn, too impatient to deliberate, and too determined to be restrained, they rush headlong upon their own destruction. Would we avoid the like misfortunes? Then let us modestly listen to the advice of men, who are venerable for their piety and experience. Above all, let us devoutly implore the all-powerful protection and the infallible counsel of Heaven. Beware of lying spirits, lest you substitute the *sound* of Scripture for the *sense*, and mistake the voice of Satan for the voice of God.

When the prince of devils tempted our blessed Lord to presumption, the arch-deceiver hypocritically supported the temptation by a misapplication of Scripture: "Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple,

and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." The devil knew that he was perverting the truth. And he still employs the same crooked policy, for the purpose of beguiling the unwatchful Christian.

IV. *Another by-way is the fear of man.*—It is our duty to honour all men; but no person, however great and powerful he may be, should be an object of our slavish dread. "The fear of man," says Solomon, "bringeth a snare." And in this snare, how many who call themselves the Lord's free men, suffer themselves to be miserably entangled. They are so overwhelmed by the fear of what man can do, that they fawn, and flatter, and cringe before him, as though he were a god. The plainest dictates of conscience, and the high commands of Heaven, are deliberately violated, merely to subdue the anger, or to conciliate the favour, of a dying worm.

When we are in danger of being terrified into sin, by an undue reverence for a fellow-creature, we should recollect, that man cannot do to us what he pleases, but only what God pleases to let him do. When our Lord was dragged before Pilate's bar, Pilate asked Him whence He was; but Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said unto Him: "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power over me, unless it were given thee from above." God is the fountain of all power, and He can withhold it when

and from whomsoever He will. When a riotous mob rushed on John Nelson, the celebrated Methodist preacher, and threatened to murder him, Nelson, inspired with an unshaken confidence in God, courageously replied—"You cannot do it, unless my Master give you leave." And what believer of revelation dare accuse the Methodist preacher of fanaticism? Unreasonable and wicked men are under the control of Jehovah, and He can restrain their fury and wither their puny arms in a moment. This important truth is awfully illustrated by the severe punishment which an avenging God inflicted on Pharaoh, Absalom, Jeroboam, Ahab, Jezebel, Sennacherib, Elymas the sorcerer, and many others.

The plea of human intimidation, as a reason why we transgressed the law of God, will not be admitted at the last day. In the most critical and perilous moments, the authority of Heaven should outweigh the threats of mortal man. For thus saith the Lord, "I, *even I, am* He that comforteth you: who *art* thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man *that* shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?" (Isaiah, li. 12, 13.)

Now, what is the severest calamity to which wicked men can wrongfully subject us? It is death. Further than this they cannot go. And all that a man hath would he give for his life. But it is better to please God by dying than to offend Him by living. Jesus

Christ forewarned his disciples that some of them should be put to death for his name's sake; and to inspire them with unconquerable intrepidity in His cause, He said unto them—"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."

The apprehension of immediate danger has frequently operated with disastrous effect on the minds of good men. Both Abraham and Isaac, through a servile fear of man, denied their wives. Peter, through a slavish dread of human vengeance, denied his Master with an oath. And if patriarchs and apostles have been shorn of their strength, by rendering that homage to wicked men which belongs exclusively to God, how extremely necessary it is that we should watch and pray, lest we also enter into the same temptation. If, at any time, we should be so circumstanced that we must either sin or suffer, let us, in imitation of the ancient confessors and martyrs, choose rather to be tortured than accept deliverance on dishonourable terms.

When the Babylonian tyrant threatened to cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, for refusing to worship the golden image which he had impiously set up, what effect had the terrible threat on the minds of the youthful Hebrews? Did it awe them into idolatrous submission? No. They nobly defied the wrath of the cruel despot, and stood undaunted champions for the true God. "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it

be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Dan. iii. 15—18.) With the same determined resolution, in the same glorious cause, may the Almighty nerve the author and the reader.

V. *Another by-way is envy.*—"Envy," says Dr. Hugh Blair, "is a sensation of uneasiness and disquiet, arising from the advantages which others are supposed to possess above us, accompanied with malignity towards those who possess them." And of all the depraved passions by which the human heart is debased, this is universally allowed to be one of the most fiendish and detestable. How strikingly does that man reflect the image of Satan, and what fearful progress in sin has he made, who

"Pines and sickens at another's joy."

Designed, as mankind originally were by our beneficent Creator, for social intercourse, and to minister to each other's necessities and enjoyments, we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves, to seek his interest and to rejoice in his prosperity. But envy, like a canker-worm, gnaws the vitals of goodwill, and inspires the soul with the blackest sentiments. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who can stand before envy." (Prov. xxvii. 4.) Rage is boisterous and headlong. It uses no disguise, but reveals itself by a furious and ungovernable behaviour; and being thus put on our guard, we can the more easily counteract its destructive tendencies. But

envy wears a mask and works in the dark. It is cautious, subtle, and hypocritical. The envious man is aware, that were his real character known to the world, he would be an object of censure to every virtuous mind. No plea would be admitted as an extenuation of his guilt. He consequently strives to conceal the dark and dreary passion which rankles in his breast. At one time envy works by plausible slander and sly insinuations; at another time by oblique reproaches, which have not the slightest foundation in justice. Again, through excessive rancour, it bursts all restraint, and vents itself in open persecution.

But is it possible for persons who have the fear of God before their eyes, to fall victims to this disgraceful passion? Most certainly. Rachel envied her sister Leah. Why? Because Leah had children, but Rachel had none. Being childless, in those days, was regarded as a grievous misfortune. Perhaps every Hebrew female indulged the hope of becoming the mother, or the progenitor, at least, of the promised Messiah. And that this circumstance was regarded as a distinguished honour, is evident from the exultation of the holy Virgin, after Gabriel had informed her that of her should be born the Son of God. "Henceforth," she said, "all nations shall call me blessed." Rachel, nevertheless, did wrong in envying her sister.

Joseph was envied by his brethren. Why? Because he was the favourite son of his father. It was imprudent on the part of Jacob to manifest a strong partiality for Joseph; but it was wicked in his brethren to hate, and to torture, and to sell him as a slave on that account. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, envied



Moses. Why? Because God had set him over the house of Israel, and eminently qualified him for an office so dignified and important. Saul envied David. Why? Because the women of Israel had sung in dances, in honour of David's victory over Goliath, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." Before Saul heard the praises of David publicly celebrated, he was well pleased with him, and promoted him to honour. But when the daughters of Zion ascribed more military glory to David than they did to Saul, Saul was very displeased, and he said, "What can David have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward."

It is humiliating to reflect, that there are very early indications of the existence of envy in the Christian Church. (*See* 1 Cor. iii. 3, and 2 Cor. xii. 20.) And how many who bear the Christian name, in our own day, are influenced by the same atrocious sin. They secretly wish to be the idols of the Church to which they belong. They cannot endure to hear their companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus spoken of in terms of high respect. They draw round themselves a circle, and desire to be the centre of admiration and praise. If others are reputed more pious, more talented, and better qualified for office than themselves, they instantly take the alarm, and can no longer love their supposed rivals with a pure heart fervently. But pure religion is a sovereign antidote to this corroding and mischievous vice. "Love envieth not, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

VI. *Another by-way is revenge.*—There is perhaps no man living, who has not at some time or other

been called to suffer undeservedly. And how few there are who bear insults and injuries with all the forbearance which the gospel requires. Some, indeed, teach that lenity and forgiveness are indications of a little and cowardly mind—that revenge is honourable, and inseparable from dignified self-respect. Hence duelling, which is but another name for deliberate murder, is proudly designated “an affair of honour;” and the most wanton, wholesale slaughter of sanguinary warriors, is applauded as “military glory.” Hence the renown of Alexanders, Cæsars, and Napoleons. And how many private wrongs and public law-suits have sprung from this root of bitterness—a retaliating spirit. Under the plausible pretext of maintaining justice and social order, pain, in a thousand various forms, is wantonly inflicted by a vindictive temper. The *ostensible* object sought is public good; but the *real* object is self-gratification. Against a disposition so cruel and ungodlike, our blessed Lord speaks in the most decisive terms. “Dearly beloved, revenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord. Render to no man evil for evil. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.” Such are the maxims of our great Teacher, at whose feet we profess to sit, as His tractable disciples.

But the precepts of the gospel, which prohibit revenge, or enjoin forbearance, generosity, and forgiveness towards our enemies, do not interfere with the prosecution of public offenders. Penal laws for the punishment of evil doers, and religious discipline for the restraint, chastisement, or excommunication of disorderly persons, ought to be maintained. Such

regulations are evidently salutary, and could not be dispensed with, without manifest injury to society. But to inflict pain designedly on any person, when no beneficial results are expected to accrue, either to the individual punished or to the public, is an act of wanton barbarity, and is condemned by both the light of nature and the Word of God.

But how may we know, when we intentionally cause pain to another, whether we do it with a single eye to the proper ends of punishment, or from a spirit of revenge? We may test the motive by which we are influenced by the signs following:—In the former case we proceed to punishment reluctantly, and are prompted by a sense of duty only: in the latter, we inflict the wound with delight, although perhaps we could avoid striking the blow without doing any violence to our conscience. God chastises the wicked for their crimes; but He “does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. And though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.” And if He consigns obstinate and incorrigible rebels to hell, the general good of his intelligent creatures requires that His confirmed enemies should exist as monuments of His just displeasure. Hence, the penal sufferings of the wicked, whether in this world or in the world to come, are not only the proper “wages of sin,” but they are also perfectly consistent with the Divine benevolence. In the sacred Scriptures, how frequently does the insulted God assign as a reason why He punishes sinful men, that all the nations of the earth may know that He is the only God, and learn to reverence His authority. Viewed in this light, the chastisements of the Al-

mighty cannot be regarded as the expressions of mere personal resentment, but as the necessary corrections of a well-ordered government; and therefore cannot reasonably be pleaded as an excuse for unfeeling retaliations.

Revenge is a dangerous rock, and through want of caution, religious men have often struck upon it to their damage. When churlish Nabal, instead of returning the kind offices of David, answered his messengers roughly, and spoke of him with contempt, he was guilty of incivility and ingratitude, and manifested a disregard for the necessities of his countrymen. With such treatment David had reason to be dissatisfied. And had he exercised a little forbearance, and remonstrated with the "son of Belial," he might have peaceably disposed him to furnish all that himself and his followers needed. But, true to the military character, David preferred the sword to reason, and in the heat of his resentment, he marched with his troops towards the residence of Nabal, and resolved to exterminate both him and all his male servants before the morning light. But when David was appeased by the timely importunity of Abigail, he appears to have been convinced of his error in determining to visit the affront of Nabal with a general slaughter; for he said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which has kept me this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."

When the Samaritans refused to entertain our Saviour, because they perceived that his intention was to pass through Samaria and go up to Jerusalem

to keep the feast of the passover, and thereby tacitly condemn their mongrel devotion, James and John moved Him to punish the inhospitable conduct of the Samaritans with instant death. "Lord," said they, "wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" But instead of carrying out their revengeful suggestion, Jesus "rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*." (Luke, ix. 54—56.) In this instance, the disciples certainly did not exhibit the spirit of their Divine Master. Christianity is not a spirit of wrath and vengeance, but of gentleness, peace, and conciliation.

Happy would it have been had James and John only been infected with a vindictive spirit. But, alas for human nature, that unholy disposition has tarnished the glory of many a bright Christian; and it still continues to disturb the peace, to stain the honour, and to retard the moral triumphs of the Church. Exempt from provocation, and surrounded by circumstances which are favourable to his reputation, many a disciple of Christ has not only the law of kindness in his lips, but from the bottom of his soul he sings of peace on earth, and goodwill towards men: but when he is defrauded, or insulted, or traduced by a backbiting tongue, he yields to temptation, loses the command of his temper, and would gladly subject his adversary to immediate punishment. This was not the manner of Jesus Christ. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed *Himself* to Him that judgeth righteously." And He hath left us an

example that we should follow in His steps. "It is the glory of man to pass over an offence; but he that studies revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well."

With the retaliating laws of an abrogated dispensation, Christians have nothing to do in adjusting their disputes. Not Moses, but Jesus Christ, is the supreme Legislator in the Christian church. "It was a maxim with the Jews," says Dr. A. Clarke, "never to forgive more than *thrice*." But Peter, whose charity was enlarged by the principles of the gospel, was disposed it appears, to forgive an offending individual more than twice that number of times. "Lord," said he, "how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven;" which is equal to *four hundred and ninety*. And an offence, properly so called, is that which is given wantonly, maliciously, and without any provocation. And but few men receive so many offences in their lifetime from any individual. And if a man give any cause for an offence, that is an additional reason why he should forgive the offender. As motives to forgiveness, God appeals to both our hopes and our fears. "But when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any, that your Father who is in heaven may forgive you also your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses." May our gracious God dispose us to show that mercy to others which we so greatly need at His hands ourselves. Amen.

VII. *Another by-way is impurity.*—Man is a compound being. His inferior nature is earthly and

animal, with appetites and propensities like those of the brute creation : his superior nature is spiritual, rational, and imperishable. And his Creator has subjected him to laws which are suited to his elevated position, intellectual endowments, and eternal destination. Unintelligent creatures, from the "half-reasoning elephant" downwards to the lowest grade of animal existence, being incapable of knowing whence they came and whither they are going, are governed by their respective constitutional impulses. Of all the millions of them, not one, in a moral sense, is either virtuous or vicious. They are all alike improper objects of either praise or blame. Nature, to them, is law ; and in obeying that law, they fulfil the will of their Creator. But man, possessing an animal nature in common with inferior creatures, and a rational nature in common with angels, is required to act in accordance with his compound and dignified constitution. All his original appetites and inclinations were interwoven with his nature for benevolent purposes ; and God intended, and still intends them to be gratified within reasonable and salutary bounds. It is as true now, as it was in the beginning, that "it is not good for man to be alone." And under the holiest dispensation which ever existed in this world, God hath told us that marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled. It may not be altogether useless to state here, that marriage is the union of two individuals, one of each sex, in *lawful wedlock*.

Such a union, especially if it be discreetly formed, is the foundation of the endearing relations of parent and child, brother and sister, which constitute the

family circle ; and the richest source of the purest social enjoyments of which human nature is capable.

But it should be remembered that man is a fallen creature ; consequently, till he is renewed by Divine grace, his fleshly desires are irregular, sinful, and war against the soul. And hence it is that profligate men, in all ages, have endeavoured to break down those fences which God hath erected to guard human virtue, and to revel in unbridled and promiscuous indulgence. Even men of superior intellectual endowments, abhorring wholesome restraint, have openly advocated the cause of licentiousness, and, in point of sensuality, have identified themselves with the brute creation. Such conduct, of course, can only flow from a "heart that is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

But it is with Christians, at present, we have especially to do. And is it possible for those who are justified and sanctified to fall into this foul snare of the devil ? Most assuredly it is. Broad is the way and wide is the gate that leadeth into this by-path, and many there be who go in thereat. There are two methods of entering this bewitching road to destruction. The principal one is as a seducer, or ringleader, as when one person solicits another person to become the companion of his guilt. By this method David went astray. One sinful step led to others, and the criminal was severely punished by an angry and a sin-avenging God. The other method of entering this unholy path is, by yielding to temptation. It seems to be a favourite stratagem of the devil to attempt the ruin of the sons of God by the daughters of men. "The lips of a strange woman drop *as* an honeycomb, and



her mouth is smoother than oil." She is a dexterous flatterer and deceiver. "But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell." Her career to damnation is hurried, rapid, and consequently short. And "lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable *that* thou canst not know *them*." She is aware that sober reflection would excite alarm and disgust, and thwart her horrid purpose. She therefore varies her mode of attack. Her plots are as dark as hell. Her object is to bring the reputation and wealth of her victim within her grasp; and to secure this object, she deems no expedient too vile. To sanctified affection her treacherous bosom is an entire stranger. This moment she smiles on her intended victim—the next, she would "strike a dart through his liver." With one hand she would embrace him—with the other, she would take away his precious life and dig his grave. But if she be the least abandoned of her polluted class, her snares are fatal to the innocence and happiness of those who get entangled in them. For what saith the Scriptures? "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is in you*." And "if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple ye are*."

Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, was elevated above the world, filled with sublime ideas, and absorbed in the contemplation of divine things. But behold him after outlandish women had turned away his heart from the Lord. He is a foul apostate, and a shocking example of human weakness. What a disparity between Solomon praying to Jehovah at

the dedication of the temple, and Solomon going astray after the idols of the Gentiles, and following the strange woman like a fool to the correction of the stocks. And how shocking, that the sovereign who had successfully pleaded with God for a wise and an understanding heart, that he might know how to govern his subjects properly, and who had astonished the surrounding kingdoms by the wisdom of his administration, should suffer himself to be overcome and led captive by his baser passions. Little do men consider whither sin will lead them, when they first yield to temptation.

Reader, if you would not be drawn into this whirlpool of guilt and shame, do not venture within its circling eddies. The safest way to avoid sin is to flee from the scene of temptation. "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel." Had not Joseph got himself away, he might have been ruined; but he fled beyond the reach of danger. And although disappointed licentiousness laid his feet in irons, and thrust him into a dungeon, he went into confinement with a pure conscience; and a watchful Providence rewarded his constancy with distinguished honours. As a warning to Zion's travellers, on the gateway of this by-path is inscribed, in flaming characters,—**"THIS IS THE WAY TO HELL!"** Turn away thy foot from it, and escape for thy life, lest thou be consumed. And do not forget that "the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings."

VIII. *Another by-way is worldly amusements.*—The mind of man is formed for enjoyment; and if he

do not seek it in right objects, he will seek it in wrong ones. No human spirit is contented and at rest without some kind of satisfaction. The highest, the holiest, and the most durable source of happiness is the favour of God—or a sense of His forgiving love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. But to this supreme happiness the wicked are entire strangers. They have no part nor lot in the matter. And ever restless as the troubled sea, and grasping after something which they have not, imagination, ingenuity, talent, wealth, enterprise—all are severely taxed to provide a substitute for the consolations of religion. Hence music, dancing, masquerades, balls, festivals, and theatrical exhibitions. Hence horse-racing, coursing, hunting, pigeon-shooting, steeple-chasing, and sporting with lions and tigers. Hence cards, dice, novels, profane songs, with every other variety of diversion which can be invented, to engage and satisfy the mind without God. And as the multitude are blinded by the prince of darkness, they, of course, see no harm in these things. Nay, they think they see much good in them. For in their perverted judgment they are not only innocent recreations, but they encourage trade, are friendly to health, and are necessary relaxations from anxiety and business.

Solomon, during some portion of his life, resolved to test the sufficiency of the world to satisfy the soul. (Read Eccles. xi. 1—10.) But instead of realizing satisfaction, he met with melancholy disappointment. "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on all the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit." And such, sooner or later, will be the conclusion of

every one, who has the madness to repeat the experiment.

That the world will ever refrain from hewing out to themselves these broken cisterns, is too much for us to expect. So long as they refuse to drink at "the Fountain of living water," they will weary and waste themselves in digging wells that can hold no water. But the question is, May Christians go and do likewise? A voice from heaven replies, No! Thou shalt not follow a multitude to evil! Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, that your good be not evil spoken of." Whoever violates these commands, whether he be sovereign or subject, rich or poor, young or old, sins against God and wrongs his own soul.

But let us not be misunderstood. Jesus Christ does not require His disciples to suspend their harps upon the willows, and droop their heads like the bulrush. Perpetual sighs and tears are altogether unbecoming the Christian. It is the believer's glorious privilege to rejoice evermore. Even in the most gloomy vale through which he may be called to pass, he may lift up his head and rejoice in the God of his salvation. That great, but licentious poet, who has taught the world that "Man was made to mourn," has published a libel against God. The beneficent Creator made man, not to mourn, but to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And we have the authority of the Bible for saying, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart fretteth against the Lord." Mourning, lamentation, and woe, were introduced into the world by man himself, in opposition to the gracious intention

of his Maker. It is very convenient, though very unjust, for the wicked to charge their vices and miseries on the Author of their being. So far was God from predetermining the wretchedness of His human family, that when they had destroyed themselves by voluntary transgression, such was His unparalleled compassion, that He set before them a glorious hope of immortality, through the sacrificial death of His beloved Son. And every child of Adam, who flees for refuge and lays hold on the hope set before him, is delivered from a fearful looking for of judgment, and filled with peace and joy in believing. It is therefore the peculiar prerogative of a good man to rejoice with "a constant, sound, and serious joy."

But, to intermeddle with the brutal sports, the childish pastimes, or the fashionable pomps and vanities of this world, forms no part of the employment which our Saviour has assigned to His followers. And if any disciple venture on the enchanted ground, and taste the forbidden fruit, he will have "to mourn at the last, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me." Of this inspired truth we have an awful illustration, in the following anecdote, which I heard the Rev. James Caughey relate in the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Fetter-lane, London:—

"A few years ago," said he, "there was living in one of our large American cities, a serious young lady, who was the only child of wealthy and worldly parents. At her change of mind they were greatly alarmed. And lest their beautiful daughter should desert the circles of pleasure for the service of God, they en-

treated and commanded her to return to the giddy world. They surrounded her with fashionable company that tried, but tried in vain, to rivet her affections to things below, and beguile her soul into the pleasures of sin. Her parents made another assault, and endeavoured to rekindle the expiring embers of her pride. To induce her to attend a large party of pleasure, they offered to give her *the richest dress* that could be purchased in the city. The artful temptation was fatal to her religious impressions. She reluctantly consented—went to the festival, completely stifled her convictions, and returned home ruined by sin. The thoughtless parents rejoiced at the success of their importunity, and hoped their lovely child would no more becloud their days by her religious melancholy. But their joy was transient. Before another week elapsed, their ruined daughter was at the point of death, and the physicians pronounced her case hopeless. When this solemn judgment was made known to the dying girl, she lay for a few minutes in perfect silence. Her soul seemed to be surveying the past, and looking into the awful future. Then rousing herself, she ordered a servant to bring *that dress* and hang it upon the post of her bed. She next sent for her father and mother; and in a few minutes they stood weeping at her side. She fixed her eyes first on one, then on the other, for some time; and then, lifting up her hand, and pointing to the dress, said distinctly to each of them, and with the *terrible calmness of despair*, ‘FATHER, MOTHER—THERE IS THE PRICE OF MY SOUL!’” Mr. Caughey added, that he unwittingly narrated this heart-rending story to a company of fellow-travellers, in the

presence of the guilty and unhappy father, who discovered himself to Mr. C. the next morning, and confirmed the truth of the fearful tragedy.

To the above distressing story, the following forms a happy contrast:—A certain gentleman entertained a gay party at his own mansion. For the entertainment of the ungodly company, the young ladies were desired to successively display their skill in music and profane song. To this proposal, the gentleman's daughter, being decidedly pious, respectfully objected. Her father felt severely tried, and begged she would not dishonour him before his friends, by refusing to comply with his wishes. His dutiful daughter unwilling either to offend her parent or to sin against her God, looked up to Heaven for direction, and she saw a way for her escape, and engaged to take her turn. The father fancied he had overcome the religious scruples of his child; and the unholy throng doubtless waited impatiently for the consummation of her fall. A few lingering minutes passed away, and the watchful Christian was politely invited to do homage to the idol which the lovers of pleasure had set up. With a heart attuned to glorify God in the assembly of the wicked, in solemn strains she accompanied her musical instrument with the following words:—

“ No room for mirth or trifling here,  
For worldly hope or worldly fear,  
If life so soon is gone :  
If now the Judge is at the door,  
And all mankind must stand before  
Th' inexorable throne,” &c.

The effect was overwhelming. The disappointed

and reprov'd party stood abashed and confounded. Decision triumphed over temptation, and the daughter of Zion came out of the burning furnace unscathed.

IX. *Another by-way is covetousness.*—The transgressors who throng this dangerous path may be divided into two classes : one class are *misers*. Their desire for wealth is avaricious and insatiable. Their ceaseless cry is, Give! give! and they never have enough. If they can count their gold by hundreds, they ask for thousands ; and if they possess thousands, they pant for millions. To personal comfort and respectability they are scandalously indifferent ; to the appeals of charity they are dead. And some of them are not ashamed to plead poverty and to subsist on parochial relief, while they abound in riches. The other class inordinately desire to possess and to enjoy that which belongs to another. Both these classes live in sin against the tenth commandment. God says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's." And again, "Let your conversation be without covetousness ; and be content with such things as ye have : for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Should our economy and industry be crowned with wealth, gold must not be substituted for God. "If riches increase, set not thine heart upon them." The true riches are the saving and sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit. Godliness with contentment is great gain. It is heavenly treasure. It is a pearl of great price. And as a motive to contentment, we are reminded that, as "we brought nothing into this



world, *it is* certain we can carry nothing out. But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." And we are commanded to "flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." Nor can it reasonably be disputed, that our desires for worldly good ought ever to be regulated by the will of our Creator. His word is law; and it is highly proper it should be so. But how many of His professed subjects have proved untrue to their allegiance, through the "cursed lust of gold." When Achan saw among the spoils of Jericho a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, he coveted them and took them, and hid them in the earth in the floor of his tent. Through this selfish and rebellious transaction, the anger of God was kindled against Israel; and when they fought with the men of Ai they were defeated, and thirty-six of their number were slain. It should be recollected, that before Jericho was captured, the Israelites were informed that *all* the gold and silver, and vessels of brass and iron, were consecrated to the Lord, and should be brought into His treasury. Consequently, Achan was guilty of sacrilege. He robbed God to enrich himself; but he failed in his attempt, and brought on himself swift destruction. When the ambassadors of Balak first attempted to bribe Balaam to go with them to curse Israel, his heart appears to

have been right with God ; for He treated their magnificent offers with a noble contempt. He peremptorily rejected the rewards of divination, and desired the embassy to return to their own country without him, because Jehovah refused to allow him to accompany them. But when he began to "love the wages of unrighteousness," he obtained permission to accept of Balak's invitation. On his journey the angel of the Lord met him and said, "Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me." This unstable prophet came to an untimely end in the field of battle. Reader, if sinners entice thee with riches and honours to sin, consent thou not. Judas, one of the twelve Apostles, for thirty pieces of silver, equal to about 4*l.* 10*s.* English currency, sold his Divine Master, and afterwards, stung with remorse, he hanged himself; and, according to some commentators, the rope by which he was suspended broke, and he fell into a deep chasm, and his bowels gushed out. (See Acts, i. 18.) When the wealthier members of the infant Church sold their estates and threw the proceeds into the common stock, Ananias with Sapphira his wife, wishful to be thought as liberal and self-denying as the true disciples, sold their possession, and kept back part of the price for their private use; then laid the rest at the feet of the Apostles, and said it was the full price of their alienated inheritance.

What was the consequence? They were both struck dead on the spot. All the persons whom we have noticed, as having been drawn aside from the right path, by the magnetic attraction of wealth, were professors of religion. And some of them, if not all, were doubtless once in the way to heaven. And at

this moment thousands and tens of thousands, who have professed to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, are guilty of the most unjust and disgraceful actions for the sake of filthy lucre. Amongst nominal Christians, as well as amongst Jews and infidels, the love of money is a fruitful source of oppression, fraud and misery. Look at the abominations of slavery in the United States of Christian America. Witness the degradation, and agonies, and tears, and groans of three millions of her unoffending coloured population. And witness the unrighteous and cruel exactions of church-rates in Christian England. And look again how this mystery of iniquity works in more limited circles, and in individual life. Should wicked men or the devil tempt us to bow down to this idol, let us remember the words of our Lord: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Could you secure the far-famed Koh-i-noor diamond, the richest gem that now flames in the Crystal Palace,\* by the commission of one sin, it would be a foolish bargain. Holiness of heart is above all price.

X. *Another by-path is impatience.*—"In the world," says our Saviour, "ye shall have tribulation." And in a greater or less degree this truth is realized by every child of Adam. "Man that is born of a woman, is but of few days, and full of trouble." And although, if a man's ways please the Lord, He, in many instances, maketh his enemies to be at peace with him,

\* The scene of the World's Exhibition, in Hyde Park, London, 1851.

the most exalted state of piety will not invariably screen him from injustice and oppression. Religion, indeed, is frequently the innocent occasion of sufferings, which we should never be called to endure were we carnally minded. The fiery darts of persecution for righteousness' sake are never thrown at the professedly wicked. "If ye were of the world, the world would love you, for the world loves her own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world will hate you."

Besides, every Christian has to suffer a share of those calamities which are common to both good men and bad. Innumerable untoward circumstances unexpectedly transpire to disturb our tranquillity during our pilgrimage through this vale of sorrow and death. If fortune smile on us to-day, and promise us a long succession of happy years, such is the instability of earthly good, that we dare not assure ourselves of a single hour's prosperity. The unclouded sun is sometimes suddenly eclipsed, and the pall of night is spread over the face of the earth at noon-day. And how frequently is the lamp of sublunary bliss suddenly put out in obscure darkness. The smoothest calm may be followed by a tremendous storm; and the highest transports of joy may be succeeded by the severest trials. When this is the case, the passions of grief and fear sometimes so violently agitate the soul, as to overwhelm it with distress; and then the devil, ever watchful to take advantage of our weakness, rushes in upon us like a flood, endeavours to break down all restraint, to shake our confidence in God, and to provoke us to fret against Him openly. And it may be that our nearest relations will help the devil to subdue our

fortitude and exhaust our patience. Assailed by this combined force, we need extraordinary help from Heaven to enable us to endure, as seeing Him who is invisible, and to resign ourselves to His sovereign disposal.

At a time when Job needed all the consolation which his wife was able to afford him, like an evil angel, she wickedly taunted him and laughed at his misfortunes. Instead of alleviating his grief with all the pity and sympathy of which she was capable, she said, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die," or, as some of the learned render the expression: "Bless God, and die." Still the meaning of the phrase is bad. It is a reproachful irony. A sly and provoking insinuation, that, although Job devoted himself to the service of God, the object of his devotion was utterly regardless of his sufferings. But to the honour of religion, the venerable patriarch's faith was not confounded by his wife's infidelity. Confident in Jehovah, he firmly and effectually repelled her artful temptations. "Thou speakest," said he, "as one of the foolish women speakest. What! shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Reader, whoever thou art, go and do likewise.

When the Lord mercifully screened the head of impatient Jonah from the burning rays of the sun, with a miraculous gourd, the prophet was exceedingly glad, and got into a pacific humour; but when the gourd withered, and the flaming lamp of day beat upon his head with glowing heat, he lost all patience and wished himself dead. When our hopes are disappointed, and we are crossed in our inclinations, instead of submit-

ting with resignation to the dispensations of Providence, and waiting patiently for a smoother path and a brighter sky, we are too prone to repine, and to indulge in unreasonable wishes. But why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Were our calamities a thousand-fold more than they are, it would be our duty to possess our souls in patience. When our path is rough and thorny we should not turn aside from the straight line of duty; but steadily "follow those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

XI. *Another by-path is intemperance.*—Although the Bible abounds with the most awful denunciations against the man who freely uses intoxicating drink, yet myriads, who profess the highest reverence for the sacred volume, habitually and unguardedly indulge in the deceitful mixture, as though it were the most safe and harmless beverage with which they could quench their thirst. One frequents the low beer-shop, and there mixes with the sediment of society, and voluntarily witnesses the most disgraceful and revolting exhibitions of human depravity. Another is a regular customer at the genteel inn, where he commingles with gentlemen of reputed respectability, with whom he consumes his time, and property, and talents, in fashionable dissipation. Others indulge in their intemperate habits in a more *covert* manner. The intoxicating materials are not "*drunk on the premises,*" but sent for and consumed at home. And, in too many instances, where money is no object, the cellar is stored with ales, wines, and spirits, in quantities sufficient to derange the intellect of a whole parish; and the *stores* are lavishly used by the bacchanalian

proprietor. But if his revenue is limited, his favourite drinks are preserved in the barrel, the bottle, and the decanter; and many a time he hurries prematurely to bed, or is concealed in his private apartment, when he ought to be openly pursuing his calling, because he is "*the worse for liquor.*" For months, and perhaps years, his attempts at secrecy, aided by his relations, are successful; and he passes for a sober man. But when his vile habit is confirmed, his propensity to excess is headstrong and will not brook restraint. In the absence of his domestic guards, he rushes into his besetting sin. No relative is at hand to hide him from public gaze. His works of darkness are brought to light; the mask falls, and his hypocrisy is detected. Were it expedient, these statements could be confirmed by a reference to names and well-attested facts. But I am confident that no unprejudiced man, who is familiar with the operations of this sin within the pale of the visible church, will accuse me of exaggeration. The havoc which intemperance has produced, and is still producing, amongst professing Christians, is beyond description.

Many a strong man has been shorn of his strength, and many a righteous man has been turned from his righteousness, by this delusive crime. No man, however exalted his station, however distinguished his talent, or however fortified by grace, can retain his innocence and honour if he trifle with the drunkard's cup. As an affecting warning, the following cases are submitted to the reader's careful attention:—(1) Mr. J. was a gifted minister of the gospel in North Lincolnshire. At the same time he was a secret drunkard. He afterwards fell into open and scandalous sin. He

abandoned his wife and family; was tried, in Yorkshire, for a grave offence; turned impostor for a livelihood, and fled his country. (2) An amiable young lady, of a respectable family, was a member of the —— Society. She contracted the habit of tipping, and finally became a confirmed drunkard. She married a man of blighted reputation. She had a handsome fortune, which she consumed in sensuality; and she is now dragging out a forlorn existence apart from her husband. A few years ago this victim of intemperance had a flattering prospect of all the respectability and happiness which an elevated position in society can afford. (3) The following case is still more distressing:—"Not a very long time ago," says the *New York Journal of Commerce*, "one of the most eloquent divines of Great Britain, who occupied one of the most important pulpits in the kingdom, became repeatedly so much affected by the use of wine, that he was summoned to give an account of himself. He could not bear, he said, to stand on trial for such a charge before men whose only superiority over him consisted in the possession of harder heads, which could endure potions which overthrew him. He accordingly left his high position, and, under an assumed name, took a passage in the steerage of a ship bound to America. At one of our principal interior towns he took lodgings at an obscure hotel, where, for a while, he bore up under all the pressure upon him, and lived without excessive indulgence. But at length he returned to his glass more recklessly than ever, got into a broil with low fellows, for which he was arrested, and with others compelled to labour in prison. There, of course, he was temperate, but the deep degradation of his condition pre-



vented him from disclosing his real name. At length a visitor, looking at him, thought he discovered traits not common in a prison, and, having procured liberty from the keeper, addressed the prisoner, saying, 'Sir, I judge from your bearing that you have been in better circumstances than those which you are in at present.' 'Yes, I have,' replied the prisoner, shedding tears. By persevering kindness the visitor was able at length to obtain the real name of the fallen man, and the story of his degradation. He repaired to a clergyman of the place with the secret. The clergyman had a parishioner from the church of which the prisoner said he had been a minister. He was invited to the prison. It was so; there was his eloquent pastor working among felons! By application to the proper authorities the prisoner was released from confinement, and placed under the care of kind friends."

Besides, under the influence of strong drink, it is impossible to say what enormities the deranged man will not venture to commit. He may be inspired with the ferocity of a tiger, and perpetrate crimes which, in his sober moments, he could not contemplate without horror. The nearest ties of relationship and endearment may afford no protection in the presence of an intoxicated man. His baser passions may be fired by the slightest incident; and having stupified the faculty of calculation, and perhaps the very power of recognition, he may unconsciously destroy the persons who gave him being, the offspring of his body, or the wife of his bosom.

These melancholy sentiments are confirmed by the following appalling confession of a convict under sentence of death, at Newcastle-on-Tyne:—

“I loved my dear wife sincerely; and on the 22nd of March I had no thought or intention to do her any injury whatever. On that night I was very drunk, and am not conscious to myself of having done anything to cause the death of my dear wife; but, believing the deed was not done by any other person, I am willing to take the blame of it upon myself. I am satisfied that I had a fair trial before my judge and the jury, and I submit willingly to the laws of my country. I beg pardon of all persons whom I may have injured or offended, and freely forgive all who have injured or offended me. I die in peace with all the world, and humbly hope for mercy and pardon from Almighty God through the merits of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I make this declaration truly and voluntarily, in the presence of Alderman George Thomas Dunn, and Mr. Thompson, the Governor of the Gaol, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the 23rd of August, 1850.

“PATRICK FORBES.”

How perilous is an indulgence which leads, though but seldom, to consequences so tragical! And against such an indulgence we surely cannot be too much on our guard.

XII. *Another by-path is bigotry.*—It is alike the dictate of reason and religion, that we ought to exercise a spirit of forbearance and toleration towards those whose religious sentiments do not precisely coincide with our own. If they hold the essential doctrines of the cross, we should not quarrel with them, and condemn them as obstinate and dangerous heretics, although in minor points we have reason to conclude

that their creed is unsound. In articles of faith, mankind are extremely prone to be confident in their own creed, and uncharitable to the Christian who cannot admit into his confession their sectarian peculiarities. The bigot wishes his neighbour to believe just what he himself believes, and nothing more—and just as *far* as he believes, but no farther; and he estimates a man's religious character not by his moral qualities, but by the tenets of his denominational confession. It is a notorious fact, too, that the fiercest defenders of their own orthodoxy, and the most zealous persecutors of dissentients, are characterized by a corrupt creed and an unholy life. Amongst the Jews, the white-washed pharisees "esteemed themselves righteous and despised others." The public teachers of religion affected great piety towards God, and pretended to be zealous for His glory; at the same time they made void His law by their impious commands and foolish traditions, and were "blind leaders of the blind." In their self-conceit they imagined that the saving knowledge of God was confined to themselves and their disciples, while it was a settled maxim with them, that those who acknowledged Jesus Christ to be the Messiah were "cursed." (John xii. 49.)

The Christian church, too, even in apostolic times, was more than once disgraced by the overbearing and uncharitable behaviour of intolerant spirits. Nor did the gentle and affectionate apostle John entirely escape this unsocial pestilence. And John answered (Jesus) and said—"Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, who followeth not us, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." Who this

man was we are not informed. Perhaps he was a disciple of John the Baptist, and a believer in Christ, though he did not associate with his disciples. And it seems the apostles thought it were better for the devils to retain quiet possession of their miserable victims than to be dispossessed in an irregular manner. But what did the Master say? Did he commend their officious bigotry? No: "Jesus said, forbid him not, for there is no one who shall do a miracle in my name that can readily speak evil of me." Christ and the devils are at war. In this war there is no neutrality. He who fights against Christ or his disciples is, in that instance, a champion for the devils; but he who fights against the devils and sin is a soldier of Christ; and whether he "follow us" or not in non-essential opinions, modes of worship, &c., we have no authority to classify him with publicans and sinners.

Another source of bigotry in the infant church was, contention about holy days, and the distinction of meats into clean and unclean. Having been long accustomed to the rites and ceremonies of the legal dispensation, many of the Jewish converts to Christianity retained for those disannulled institutions a superstitious veneration. On the other hand, the Gentiles, who were free from such national prejudice, treated the scruples of their Jewish brethren with contempt. One ate all things—any sort of food that was set before him; another, who was weak, ate herbs, but conscientiously abstained from flesh. And each was advised by the apostle to treat his brother with courtesy and moderation. "Him that is weak in the faith," says he, "receive; *but* not to doubtful

disputations. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not: and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him." (Rom. xiv. 1—3.)

When the grand Italian apostasy took place, and the haughty bishop of Rome claimed presidency over the catholic church, bigotry, supported by wealth, inflated with pride, and emboldened by ignorance, stalked abroad with assurance, and wielded the rod of oppression with a cruel hand. And from the fatal establishment of papal tyranny to this present moment, the degenerate church of Rome has been the grand centre and storehouse of the most barbarous and unrelenting intolerance. Millions of her opponents, whom she could not convince with arguments, she has destroyed with fire and sword; and that, too, while she has made the highest pretensions to holiness. She must, therefore, have been either an ignorant dupe or a profound hypocrite. But I wish it to be distinctly understood, that I intend these animadversions for the church of Rome as a community, not as applicable to every individual of that community. Cruel as she has been as a *sect*, there have doubtless been all along within her pale many honourable exceptions.

We wish we could say that the spirit of popery were milder now than it was in "the dark ages;" but of this we entertain serious doubts. If the tiger in the menagerie is not practically so cruel as he was in the forest, it is not because his disposition is changed, but because he is confined in an iron cage. The reader will know how to apply this figure to the ancient ferocity, and to the modern comparative gen-

tleness of popery. An enlightened policy, aided by religious heroism, has drawn the hideous monster from his haunts, and secured him within a well-fortified den. And now he is regarded rather as an object of curiosity than as an object of dread. The recent flight of the pope from Rome, on a coach-box, in the disguise of a footman, affords an amusing and an everlasting proof that he is "as weak as another man." Events still more recent prove that, did he possess the power, he has the will to silence every man who disputes the infallibility of the Romish church. In his *encyclical letter*, dated January 4th, 1850, he denounces "the hardened enemies of the church and human society" in the following terms:— "They toil incessantly at the publication and distribution of impious little books, pamphlets, and tracts, full of lies, calumnies, and seductions. Especially do they make use of Bible Societies, which have long been condemned by this holy see, circulating the Holy Scriptures, translated into the vulgar tongue, contrary to the rules of the church. \* \* \* Your own judgments, venerable brethren, (he means Romish priests,) will teach you best with what vigilance and solicitude you should labour to cause your faithful flocks utterly to abhor the pestiferous reading of them," &c. Such are the dark, cold, uncharitable sentiments of Pope Pius IX., in the middle of the nineteenth century. Whatever reverses of political power or ecclesiastical influence the Romish pontiff may experience, it is presumable that his intolerance will co-exist with his being. Nor can it be expected that a community, which renders a blind and semi-idolatrous homage to such a teacher, will ever live in charity with churches

that prefer the authority of the Bible to the usurpations of Rome. Jesuitical policy will suggest the propriety of caution and feigned catholicity; but, under the forcible pressure of superstitious zeal, her ladyship will sometimes raise the valve, and allow her real sentiments to escape in expressions which cannot be misunderstood. At this moment, now that she is attempting the re-establishment of a popish hierarchy in Great Britain, and professes to be amazed that her ambitious scheme should meet with any opposition from our Protestant country, the *Tablet*, one of her own journals, scouts the "Protestant impertinence," which seeks "to damn the souls of the Romans," by building a church in Rome for "the propagation of heresy." Hence it appears that while the high priest of Rome consigns to the uncovenanted mercies of God all those who refuse submission to his usurped authority, his "disciples like to have it so."

Happy would it have been for the church of Christ had bigotry been peculiar to the Romish persuasion; but, unfortunately for mankind, it is not so. A very limited acquaintance with the history of our own country, since the glorious Reformation, is sufficient to convince us that superstitious zeal and oppression have been most inconsistently associated with the Protestant faith. One of the distinguishing tenets of the Reformed Religion is, the acknowledged "right of private judgment." Yet, strange to say, with this article of faith standing out prominently in their creed, Protestants have maligned, imprisoned, fined, and put to death their fellow-Protestants, for merely venturing to think and act for themselves in matters purely spiritual. Under the turbulent government of Charles I.

and Oliver Cromwell, churchmen and dissenters harassed and persecuted each other in turn, as they alternately gained the ascendancy. Since the Restoration to the present time, the taxations, civil disabilities, and personal sufferings to which conscientious non-conformists have been subjected by the state-patronized party, have been extremely inhuman and vexatious. And, at the present moment, a very considerable proportion of the endowed church, including both clergy and laity, think it no robbery to spoil other churches to aggrandize their own wealthy establishment, and stigmatize as impious schismatics all who refuse to enter their communion, or who question the equity of their rapacious exactions. But in all churches there are narrow-minded exclusionists, who can see no system of doctrine, no modes of worship, no form of ecclesiastical discipline conducive to salvation beyond the contracted pale of their own party. In the genuine style of bigotry they exclaim—"We are right—you are wrong. Ours is a system of truth—yours is a system of error. We are on the way to heaven—you are on the way to hell. 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are WE.'" Much of this evil is attributable to a defective education. Tutors and governors, professors and presidents, parents and guardians, pastors and teachers, unhappily train the youth committed to their care to receive the lessons which are taught them as infallible truth, and to regard those who differ from them as enemies to the cross of Christ. The inveterate and cruel prejudice of Jews and Mahometans against Christianity, is owing chiefly to the illiberal character of their education. The same



argument is applicable to intolerant sectarians in the Christian church.

If we take a more limited view of the subject, it will be found that members of the same religious denomination frequently come in collision with each other, through a blind and impetuous advocacy of their respective peculiarities. Witness the recent notorious trial of the Bishop of Exeter against Gorham, on the subject of "baptismal regeneration." This extraordinary contest, which was waged, first in the ecclesiastical, and then in the civil courts, at a cost of about eighty thousand pounds, affords a disgraceful proof that bigotry still reigns in the high places of the national church. And even in self-sustained and more honourable churches, how frequently is their peace disturbed, and their onward march retarded, by strifes and questions respecting a thousand points of minor consideration, while the weightier matters of the gospel are treated as though they were but of secondary importance. With these facts before our eyes, and admitting, as we do, the fallibility of our nature, our path of duty is clear. We ought to prayerfully search the Scriptures, with a sincere view to find out the meaning of the Holy Spirit. And then, on one hand, we ought to guard against latitudinarian principles, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; and on the other hand, to maintain our own opinions modestly, and give the right hand of fellowship to those virtuous men who differ from us only in non-essential points. "Grace," says the apostle, "grace be with you all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Were the dying experience of narrow-minded sectarians published to the world, we

should doubtless often be informed of their penitential condemnation of that exclusive and uncharitable intolerance which they inflexibly maintained in health. To Lady Huntingdon, Bishop Benson expressed his bitter regret that he had ever laid the hands of ordination on George Whitfield, to whose ministry he imputed the religious change which was wrought in the mind of her ladyship. "My lord," said she, "mark my words—When you come upon your dying bed, that will be one of the few ordinations you will reflect upon with complaisance." And it is worthy of remark, that her ladyship's prediction was strikingly fulfilled. Bishop Benson, on his death-bed, sent ten guineas to Mr. Whitfield, as a token of his favour and approbation, and begged to be remembered by him in his prayers. It was a happy circumstance that the uncharitable dignitary did not die a confirmed bigot; but it would have been incomparably better had he renounced his contracted views before he arrived on the confines of the eternal world.

XIII. *Another by-path is formality.*—The Apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, foretold that perilous times would come, when men, "having the form of godliness," would "deny the power thereof." And from such characters Timothy was commanded to "turn away." But by the form of godliness we are not to understand fantastical, priestly garments—curious gesticulations—elaborate music—image-worship—flaming candles at mid-day—splendid processions—self-inflicted tortures—vain repetitions, and the like. These human inventions bear no resemblance to that plain and simple form of godliness which is enjoined in the New Testament. Between the superstitious austerities

and ostentatious exhibitions of some churches, and the idolatrous practices of the heathen, there is a striking affinity. But even the externals of genuine Christianity bear no likeness to the pomps and vanities of this world. Were we to witness some Christians at their devotions, and were we unacquainted with their habitual modes of worship, we might reasonably suspect they were profanely mocking at religion, so remote are those modes of worship from the simple ritual of Christianity.

The un-caricatured form of godliness, like godliness itself, is remarkable for its unpretending character. It consists in a profession of religion, and an upright life, associated with a reverential attention to the outward duties of the gospel. And although no man can have godliness without the form, many, it is to be feared, have the form without the power. An original hypocrite *never had* the power of godliness; he never desired that the saving truths of religion might take hold on his heart; he studied the external of Christianity as a mere trade, with the wicked design of observing it as a mask to disguise his real intentions. To deceive was his object; and now, under the cloak of a counterfeit piety, he is a confirmed impostor—a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The backslider in heart is a formalist of *another kind*. His religious professions were once sincere and earnest, he meant what he said. In his spiritual exercises he was devout. He worshipped God in spirit and in truth. Affectation he contemplated with horror. But he was unfaithful. He did not watch and pray as he ought to have done; and therefore fell into temptation, and sinned away the saving influence of the

Holy Spirit, and lost the power of godliness. Or, perhaps, he omitted some known duty, and by such neglect gradually weakened, and finally destroyed, his Christian character. But he has neither withdrawn from the communion of saints, nor fallen into open sin; consequently, the extent of his declension is known only to God and himself. Amongst men he still has a name to live; but in the eyes of Him who searcheth all hearts, he is morally dead. His superficial appearance is no more like his former reality, than a photographic portrait or a marble statue is like a living man. *Without*, the resemblance is striking; *within*, there is no resemblance at all.

One principal cause of this sad and dangerous apostasy is lukewarmness. We are commanded to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling—to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. To do what we find to do with our might. To be fervent in spirit serving the Lord." But by nature we are languid and loath to exert ourselves in things pertaining to the kingdom of God; and it requires a constant supply of grace to excite us to cheerful and vigorous action. Every Christian knows that

"This vile world's no friend to grace—  
To help us on to God."

From the seat of the scorner and the tent of wickedness, how often do we hear the exclamation: "Why so much noise and talk about religion? Surely one may get to heaven without so much reading the Bible, praying, and attendance on the ordinances of the gospel." Relations zealously join in the same ungodly outcry. "It is well enough," say they, "to follow that

which is good with prudence and moderation ; but to labour and toil for heaven as you do is altogether unnecessary and fanatical. Your vehement piety exposes both yourself and your family to the contempt of respectable people." Then we are assailed by the dronish professor with, "Be not righteous overmuch—Be temperate in all things—It is better to walk continually than to run by fits and starts." And our infernal adversary plies a thousand stratagems to extinguish our light and damp our heavenly ardour. He knows that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and that the violent take it by force ;" and that if he can only beguile us into a state of religious indifference he shall gain his purpose.

The churches of Sardis and Laodicea fell into a lukewarm and formal condition through negligence : and if we would not share their fate we must take heed and not sin after the similitude of their transgression. Sluggish professors are to the church what a drag is to the wheel of a carriage—they retard its progress. Or they are like hobbling loiterers in the thoroughfares of a city—they will neither move onwards themselves, nor stand out of the way of others who are disposed to go about their business. In working out our redemption, was our blessed Saviour cold and uninterested ? Was He not rather constantly animated with benevolence and zeal ? "I must work," said He, "the works of Him that sent me while it is day ; for the night cometh when no man can work." Let us remember also the words of the apostle : "But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in a good *thing*."

XIV. *Another by-way is unbelief.*—In the great

work of salvation from sin, the love of God is the *moving* cause; the sacrificial blood of Christ is the *meritorious* cause; the agency of the Holy Spirit is the *efficient* cause; and our faith in the atonement of Christ is the *instrumental* cause. By grace we are saved through faith. And from the moment of our being brought into a state of salvation to the moment of our dissolution, it is our duty to live by faith on the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. And if we would avoid the soul-destroying antinomian heresy, our faith must not only have respect to the invitations and promises of God; but it must embrace the whole compass of His word. The warnings, the threatenings, and the doctrines of the Bible, as well as the consolations of the Gospel, must be the objects of our unbounded and unshaken confidence. We are very far from being sufficiently impressed with the important fact, that the BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD. Were we to ponder this fundamental truth in our minds as we ought, the precious contents of the sacred volume would be engraven on our hearts, as "with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever." We could not doubt a moment, whether God will reward the righteous or punish the wicked.

On the exceedingly great and precious promises we ought to rest with a firm and an entire reliance. Jehovah is a covenant-keeping God. His covenant He will not break, unless the terms of the covenant be violated on our part. Human promises often fall unaccomplished to the ground—sometimes through want of ability, and at other times through want of inclination on the part of the promiser. There is, therefore, some rational ground to doubt the fulfilment

of human engagements. But the word of God is firmer than the pillars of heaven. It is impossible for Him to lie; and it is equally impossible for Him to vacillate. "I, the Lord," says He, "change not." His word is settled in heaven unto all generations. He is always able and always willing to perform the good things which He hath spoken concerning His people. Consequently, the slightest distrust in God is a sin of great magnitude.

Unbelief, or substituting the faith of devils for the faith of a Christian, destroys our interest in the covenant of grace. The promises of God are conditional, and He is under no obligation to fulfil them if we break the terms on which their fulfilment is suspended. To the ancient Israelites God promised the land of Canaan for an inheritance; but when they limited the Holy One, and believed not His word, He revoked his promise to that unfaithful generation, "and sware in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest." So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall through the same example of unbelief." To the house of Eli, God promised that they should minister at His altar till the end of the Levitical dispensation: but when Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, disgraced the priesthood by their abominations, God revoked His promise: "I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Because God took Abraham to be His friend, and

promised to bless him, and his posterity after him, his wicked descendants claimed an interest in the promise, although they walked not in the footsteps of their faithful progenitor. And no sooner had the glorious light of the gospel shed its beams

“Athwart the gloom profound,”

than false teachers and false professors began to pervert the right ways of the Lord, by attempting to supplant living, active confidence in Christ, and recommending in its stead an unfruitful, speculative sentimentality. To these antichristian principles the Apostle James opposes the following inspired argument: “A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead.” The saving efficacy of true faith, and the absolute necessity of a constant reliance on God for salvation, are strongly insisted on by St. Paul when he is cautioning the converted Gentiles against despising the unbelieving Jews: “Thou wilt say then, the branches (the Jews), were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest He also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in *His* goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off. And



they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again."

Let us, then, attentively mark the footprints of those who have stumbled and fallen through unbelief; and where they turned aside from the right path, let us steadily travel on in a straight-forward direction. If clouds and darkness surround us, let us not despair; but walk by faith when we cannot walk by sight. Should difficulties, as broad as the sea and as high as a mountain, obstruct our way, God is able to take us by the hand, and open before us a safe passage. He hath made the heavens and the earth by His great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Him. He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. And He hath promised that those who trust in Him shall never be confounded. Let us, therefore,

"Only have faith in God;  
Wrestle, and fight, and pray:  
Tread all the powers of darkness down,  
And win the well-fought day."

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE HAPPINESS WHICH AWAITS THE CHRISTIAN TRAVELLER AT THE END OF THE GOOD OLD WAY.

IN all our undertakings, and in those especially which are of extraordinary importance, we should propose to ourselves some honourable and beneficial purpose. And as the duration of our existence is literally endless, and as our eternal destiny is affected by all our moral transactions, the solemn realities of the world to come should be invariably associated with our various schemes, arrangements, and calculations for the present life. It is an essential attribute, in a prudent man, to look forwards to consequences, and to be powerfully impressed with the prospect of final results. For him, the short-lived pleasures of sin, which are now within his grasp, have no attractions; but the distant prospect of "a crown of glory that fadeth not away," rivets his attention and captivates his soul.

These sentiments admit of a forcible illustration from the popular subject of emigration:—A poor, but honourable man, on whom a virtuous wife and a helpless family of children are dependent for protection and support, is both able and willing to work, but he cannot obtain employment. If he continue in his own land and maintain his integrity, he sees but one alternative—he and his family must either die for want of bread, or be kept out of the grave by parochial relief. But while he justly considers it would

be highly criminal to allow his family to suffer hunger, so long as any honest means of supplying their wants are available, he feels a dignified reluctance to subsist them on public charity. In this painful dilemma, the poor bewildered man is pointed to some fertile and salubrious colony beyond the seas, where he may be protected by British law, enjoy religious freedom, and where industrious and frugal habits are rewarded with plenty. To this better country, for the sake of improving the condition of his household, he is earnestly advised to emigrate. And although he loves his home and his country, and the place of his father's sepulchres, yet, with a view to secure a *future blessing*, he does violence to his present inclinations, quits his native shores, and embarks for a foreign clime.

A similar train of thought disposed the Christian to enter on a pilgrimage for the heavenly Canaan. In a moral sense, this world is a region of famine and pestilence. The soul is haunted by a thousand fears, which no creature can dispel, and pressed by a thousand necessities, which nothing earthly can supply. It fain would be satisfied without God and salvation; but that is impossible. Apart from Christ, it is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; with a prospect constantly darkening. In this forlorn condition, the finger of revelation points the soul to Jesus, as the only Saviour, and heaven as the final and happy resting-place of the just. Animated with hope by these divine truths, the soul, half ruined by sin, exclaims, "Why sit I here till I die?"

"Begone, vain world, begone!  
(Ye unsubstantial joys),  
Begone, lest I'm for e'er undone  
By your false glittering toys.

“ I’ll seek a nobler prize ;  
One that will ne’er decay :  
T’ ascend beyond th’ ethereal skies,  
And reign in endless day.”

In our travels through this world, we never take one wise step till we set out for heaven. But having once set our feet on the narrow way, every succeeding step in this heaven-ward course is an advance in the right direction. As to the sufferings which we may be called to encounter, in the prosecution of our journey, they are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in us. Our toils, and conflicts, and voluntary mortifications for the kingdom of heaven’s sake, will be infinitely rewarded by “ the joy that is set before us.” The bliss of heaven will consist in two things—the absence of *evil*, and the enjoyment of *good*.

FIRST, *the absence of evil*.—In the present world, believers, in common with unbelievers, are liable to all the ordinary calamities of life. “ All *things* come alike to all: *there is* one event to the righteous, and to the wicked ; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean ; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not : as *is* the good, so *is* the sinner ; and he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath.” Losses, disappointments, bereavements, bodily sufferings, and mental distresses, form the common lot of mankind during the present dispensation.

But this imperfect state of things is not permanent. It is destined to pass away. The present is a state of fleeting probation : the future will be a state of permanent retribution. Here, God bestows ordinary blessings upon the righteous and the wicked indis-

criminally : hereafter, He will separate the righteous from the wicked, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats ; and while He showers rewards upon the just, He will visit the unjust with everlasting punishment. Then shall ye return, and discern the difference between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

1. *In heaven there will be no bodily affliction.*—In that salubrious clime the inhabitants never say, We are sick. There no panting asthma tortures, no pale consumption wastes, no raging fever burns, no accident fractures a limb or dislocates a joint, no lack of symmetry deforms, no lapse of time can impress with old age. But

“ Fresh with ever-during bloom,  
Safe from diseases and decline,”

the glorified saint will uninterruptedly rejoice in his existence.

2. *No death.*—The ravages of death in this nether world are frightful beyond description. Not only the field of battle and the bottom of the ocean, but the peaceful graveyards, which thickly stud the habitable parts of the earth, are crowded with the dead. The world is supposed to be peopled by eight hundred or nine hundred million of human beings, all of whom, on an average, are consigned to the dust in about thirty years, which is equal to one every second of time, day and night without ceasing ! At this rate of mortality, what a countless multitude have suffered the pains of death since the foundation of the world. But the glorified body will be indestructible and immortal. Jesus Christ has virtually “ abolished death :”

and in the golden streets of the New Jerusalem mourners will never be seen going about in melancholy robes, bewailing the loss of kindred and friends. Through that glorious city runs the river of life, on whose banks grow the trees of life. The invigorating atmosphere is never poisoned with pestilential vapours; and the "Resurrection and the Life" has graciously pledged Himself to sustain the life, and to preserve the health of every citizen. Throughout the immense plains of immortality, the symbols of death are nowhere visible. And when the whole family of God shall have assembled in their heavenly Father's mansion, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. *There will be no mental distress.*—This world is a troubled ocean, whose restless waves are incessantly disturbing our repose. No sooner is one storm passed, and the sky a little cleared, than the heavens gather blackness, and another tempest gathers with a thickening frown, till it breaks and expends its violence on our heads. A brilliant morning is often the harbinger of a dark and cloudy day: and a season of joy is frequently the forerunner of a wounded spirit or a broken heart. But in the kingdom of heaven anguish is unknown. Throughout that glorious country grief is nowhere either felt or feared. "And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven

saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. xxi. 2—4.) This description teaches us, in a picturesque and lively manner, that there is a total absence of suffering in the New Jerusalem.

4. *In heaven there will be no evil company.*—The soul of many a righteous Lot, in this world, is daily vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: and many a righteous Noah has to endure the sneers, scoffs, and sarcasms of a crooked and perverse generation. In all nations, and in all ages, holy men have had to contend with the malignant frowns, the cruel persecutions, and the ill-natured contradictions of sinners. To avoid their company always is impracticable. While we are in the world we must have less or more to do with the world; and by their unjust and spiteful treatment our path is often rendered rough and thorny, and at times almost insupportable. But the hour is coming when God will separate the just from the unjust; then the saints of the Most High will be no more annoyed, oppressed, vilified, and tormented by unreasonable and wicked men. Throughout heaven's vast population, well-grounded confidence, universal good-will, and fraternal affection will glow in every bosom, and be reflected in every countenance.

5. *In heaven there will be no hypocrites.*—The unbelieving Jews said, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we;

and yet killed the prophets, and stoned the servants of God. But they did worse: they murdered the Prince of life, the Redeemer of the world. Judas professed devotion to Jesus Christ, and sympathy for the poor; but he was an infamous traitor and an avaricious thief. Annanias and Sapphira affected self-denial and generosity, equal to those of the most disinterested Christians; but they secretly plotted to deceive the Church and to make private provision for themselves. Simon Magus pretended to be a true convert to Christianity; but he had no part nor lot in the matter; and he was no sooner admitted into the Church than he attempted to turn the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit into articles of merchandise. The Church of Sardis had a name to live, while she was dead. The Laodiceans boasted that they were rich, increased with goods, and needed nothing, at the very moment that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. And in every Christian community, it is to be feared, there are many whited walls and painted sepulchres.

But the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. Having concealed his dark designs, and imposed on the Church for a season, God will strip the wolf of his sheep's clothing, expose him to the contempt and abhorrence of all good and intelligent beings, and inflict on him the punishment which he has long deserved. Ranked with the wicked of every grade and kind, he will be cast into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, where the storm of divine vengeance will beat upon his head without interruption and without end.

In heaven, every inhabitant is just what he professes



to be—a faithful and loving subject of the King of kings. What a glorious company! An innumerable multitude, which no man can number, and not one unrighteous person among them—no, not one. Every individual is holy, affectionate, and benevolent. In such a society caution is unnecessary, and distrust can find no place. Integrity, confidence, and reciprocal esteem everywhere prevail. Throughout the whole triumphant Church there is neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. Sincerity, love, and holiness, reign without a rival.

6. *In heaven there will be no apostasy.*—The number of backsliders on earth is appalling. Thousands and millions have practically denied the Lord that bought them, crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame, by their grievous falls. Every nation in Christendom abounds with unstable souls, who have either openly renounced their allegiance to Christ, or secretly left their first love, and in their hearts returned to Egyptian bondage. This is a dreadful evil in more respects than one. On one hand it causes the enemies of God to blaspheme and triumph, and thus hardens them in their crimes. On the other hand, the Church is disgraced, wounded, dejected, and caused to suspend her harps upon the willows. For how can she lift up her head, and cheerfully sing the songs of Zion, under circumstances so discouraging? But the greatest evil connected with apostasy is, God is dishonoured. The glory of God ought to be the object of every individual's supreme desire, in accordance with the apostolical injunction: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." But apostasy is a most direct

and aggravated violation of this command. And no Christian can witness such an affront offered to his Saviour without being moved with anguish.

But in heaven there will be no revolt, no falling away. There no roaring lion can devour—no false angel of light can deceive—no old serpent can beguile. Every subject will be confirmed in loyal attachment to his rightful and glorious Sovereign. Probation will be at an end. He that is holy will be holy still; and the attributes of God will co-operate to secure his constant and everlasting fidelity. Having once entered heaven, he will serve God day and night in His temple, and go out no more for ever. The good and faithful servant of Christ will no more have to tremble and take heed lest he become a castaway. On earth he may grow weary in well doing, and make shipwreck of his faith; but in heaven he will be immovable as the Rock of Ages. Upon his head will his crown of glory flourish, and never fade away.

7. *In heaven there will be no misunderstanding or conflicting sentiments.* There—

“Names, and sects, and parties fall,  
And Jesus Christ is Lord of all.”

The unity and peace of the Church below are seriously impaired by clashing opinions, controversy, and intolerance. Constituted as we now are, with the most sincere desires to know the truth, we cannot all see alike. On certain points of religion, as well as on politics, commerce, and philosophy, the opinions of good and great men are widely diversified. And want of charity towards those who differ from us, is too frequently a fruitful source of censoriousness, animosity, and persecution.

But nothing of this nature will exist in the kingdom of heaven. Dulness of apprehension, and obliquity of intellectual vision, which now becloud and pervert our judgment, are imperfections foreign to glorified saints. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) In the Church triumphant, all our perceptions and views will be conformable to truth. One creed will serve us all. The articles of one's faith will answer to those of another, as face answers to face in a glass; and the sword of controversy will be sheathed, to be drawn no more for ever. In this world our jarring opinions are something like a tune played by an unskilful band of musicians—a clashing, disagreeable noise; but in the better world, our religious tenets will resemble the sweetest harmony, in which there is not a single discordant sound. But, *SECONDLY, Heaven will not only exempt its inhabitants from all evil; but it will also bless them with all good—good of the purest and most exalted kind; and every desire of the soul, being regulated by the will of God, will be fully gratified.* In our opinion heaven is a *place*, and the bliss of heaven is the *state* of its holy inhabitants. The descriptions which are given of the glories of heaven, by the sacred writers, authorize us to form the most lofty and sublime ideas of that delightful mansion. In the figurative language of Scripture, heaven is a city of pure gold, and of very large dimensions. Its length, and breadth, and height are equal. Its buildings are like transparent glass. Its gates are of pearl, and twelve in number. Each gate is guarded by an angelic sentinel.

The wall is built of jasper, on a foundation of precious stones. The city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to enlighten it; for it is illuminated by the glory of God and of the Lamb. Through the city runs the river of life, clear as crystal; and on the banks of the river grows the tree of life, bearing abundant fruit; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. In this glorious city an imperial seat is erected, on which the King eternal sits enthroned, and will reign in transcendent splendour over his willing subjects throughout all ages. Such are the magnificent descriptions which are given us of that celestial city whose builder and maker is God. The most sublime and lively images are borrowed from sublunary riches and grandeur, to set forth, in glowing colours, the splendour and beauty of the saints' everlasting residence.

Now, it is reasonable to suppose that the *state* of glorified saints will correspond with their habitation. And the Scriptures teach us, that the New Jerusalem is designed for a people whose employments and enjoyments will be transcendently glorious. "But flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Cor. xv. 50.) To qualify dying mortals for a purely spiritual and an imperishable state, they must undergo some very important change in their constitution. And what reason conjectures revelation confirms.

*First, with respect to the outward man.*—"The Lord Jesus Christ," says St. Paul, "will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." (Phil.

iii. 21.) Of the precise *nature* of a "glorified body," we can form no distinct and adequate conception. Neither the light of science nor the revelations of theology can expand and elevate our limited capacities to the comprehension of this sublime doctrine. But we can easily conceive, that the body which is laid in the grave shall rise again with a dignified nature, far surpassing that by which it is now distinguished. Of all the animated forms which move on the face of the earth, the human figure is the most beautiful and majestic. But of what materials is this magnificent and living temple formed? Of the most select and precious substances in nature? No: but of the common earth on which we tread. And its constant dilapidations are repaired with materials drawn from the same humble source. But how unlike the inanimate soil is the living active man! And surely God, who hath formed so many millions of human bodies of modified dust, can experience no difficulty in refining and beautifying the resurrection body, in a degree infinitely surpassing the conception of any created intellect. And it is our own fault if the mysterious, but undoubted objects of sense, do not strengthen our confidence in the objects of faith.

Blessed be God, we believe, according to the Scriptures, that the bodies of the saints, which are sown in corruption, in dishonour, and in weakness, will be raised in incorruption, in glory, and in power, and be suitably refined and fitted for their new mode of existence, and be proper and imperishable mansions for their beatified spirits. God hath graciously promised to effect this glorious change; and when He speaks it is done—when He commands it standeth fast.

*Secondly, the powers of the soul will be vastly improved.*—“Now we know in part, and we prophecy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall vanish away.” “The wisest of men,” says Wesley, “have here but short, narrow, imperfect conceptions, even of the things around them, and much more of the deep things of God. \* \* \* In the last day, both that poor, low, imperfect, glimmering light, which is all the knowledge we now can attain to, and these slow and unsatisfactory methods of attaining, as well as of imparting it to others, *shall vanish away*. In our present state we are mere infants in point of knowledge, compared with what we shall be hereafter.”

Some great men have thought that the soul possesses several faculties, which she cannot now display; and that when she is delivered from this earthly tabernacle, they will shoot forth and exert themselves. But, for my part, I regard the conjecture as fanciful rather than probable. The Holy Scriptures, however, without the aid of imagination, plainly teach us that the intellectual powers of glorified saints are far superior to those of probationary believers. In this embryo state of existence, our ideas of men and things are frequently obscure and erroneous, by which we are betrayed into false opinions and hurtful practices; but in heaven we shall be endowed with astonishing powers of discernment, and never go astray, like lost sheep, from the path of truth. The Sun of Righteousness will illuminate our minds to such a degree of perfection, that many things which are now far above out of our sight, we shall be able to comprehend without the least difficulty.

It will then be known whose religious opinions have been right, and whose have been wrong. Then the mysterious dispensations of Providence will be unravelled and opened to our view. Then the ways of God, which are in the great deep, and His footsteps which are not known, will be clearly revealed. And when all these amazing discoveries shall be made, what astonishing exertions of power, what wonderful displays of wisdom, and what surprising exhibitions of mercy, will be brought to light! With what rapture shall we admire the operations of Providence! Every eye will see, and every heart will feel, that God is wonderful in council and excellent in working—that He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. And this amazing increase of knowledge will open an inexhaustible source of pure and refined enjoyment.

*Thirdly. The inhabitants of heaven will form one "universal brotherhood."* Languages, complexions, wealth, poverty, mastership, servitude, forms of government, and every other earthly distinction, will be annihilated; and the truly good out of every tribe and nation will assemble in Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and form one holy and happy family. Confidence, esteem, and affection for his fellow, will inspire every breast, and beam forth in every countenance. No suspicion, or jealousy, or unkind action can, for a moment, mar the friendship of that blissful fraternity. Bound together by the silken cords of fervent and indissoluble attachment, they will for ever dwell together in the most perfect unity. Neither fallen men nor fallen angels can sow amongst them the seeds of discord, or cause any individual to think

more highly of himself than he ought to think. Each redeemed soul will recognise and cordially acknowledge every member of the family, as an adopted child of God—as a co-heir of eternal life; and will contemplate that divine relationship with intense delight.

Our blessed Lord says, “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” And the bosoms of glorified saints will mutually burn with the same endearing and exalted sentiment. Alike partakers of the Divine nature, conformed to the moral image of their heavenly Father, and enthroned above the reach of temptation, nothing can interrupt their harmony or disturb their friendship. The fragrance of universal concord, like precious ointment, will perfume the whole atmosphere of that glorious land.

*Fourthly. To the citizens of heaven, REDEMPTION will open another perennial spring of inexpressible delight.* Every child of Adam, unrenewed by grace, is a sinful creature, a child of wrath, and a heir of hell. But to save ruined man from final perdition, and to elevate him to the kingdom of heaven, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made his soul an offering for sin. And by that sacrificial act He opened the kingdom of heaven to every believer. And it is by faith in the atoning blood of Christ only, that we can obtain the remission of our sins here, and admission into heaven hereafter. Consequently, every human being in heaven has arrived thither, through having “washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” A grateful recollection of this stupendous fact will fill their hearts with transports of joy, and cause the streets of the holy city to resound with their



adoring anthems. With a loud voice they will sing "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

*Fifthly. The society of heaven will be immensely large.* Cruel predestinarians and sectarian bigots would make us believe there are "few that shall be saved." The former exclude from heaven an innumerable multitude of tender infants, who never committed sin; and the latter consign to everlasting fire all who cannot subscribe to the Shibboleth of their creed. But Jesus Christ says, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And Peter says, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him." And when we reflect how many ages the world has stood—how many millions of human beings have died in infancy, and how many millions more, in riper years, have been turned from Satan to God, and died in the faith—we may reasonably form the delightful conclusion, that an immense assemblage of mankind will finally reach the promised land.

In accordance with these views, the Scriptures represent the redeemed in heaven, as "a great multitude which no man can number." Besides, in heaven the righteous will be blessed with the society of angels—angels who have stood firm in their allegiance to God ever since their creation. From the beginning of time, the holy angels have constantly manifested a benevolent concern for the welfare of the human

family. When the foundations of the world were laid, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." When the Redeemer of the world was born, a multitude of the heavenly host visited the plains of Bethlehem, communicated the joyful intelligence to the watchful shepherds; and, suspended on their golden pinions, sang, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace; goodwill towards men." These joyful acclamations are strongly expressive of the piety and benevolence of those bright intelligences.

Throughout our earthly pilgrimage, we are watched with a friendly eye, and assisted by the good offices, of holy angels. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" When they first witness our conversion to God, they experience a new impulse to their exultations. For this assertion we have the authority of Jesus Christ: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." When our eyes are closing in death, they are sympathetically near, and are waiting to escort us to the realms of glory. "And the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." And finally, when the present dispensation shall have closed, and heaven shall have received the last human convert within its pearly gates, our celestial friends will join the chorus of redeemed mortals, and swell the song of praise to our once suffering, but now glorified Redeemer: "And I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

*Sixthly. If we rightly understand the Scriptures, the saints in heaven will know each other.* The description which our Saviour hath given us of the conversation between Dives and Abraham, in the invisible world, implies that the power of recognition survives the grave, and accompanies the soul into the eternal state. Dives in hell knew Abraham and Lazarus in Paradise; and Abraham knew Dives, and referred to his affluent circumstances, with the opposite condition of Lazarus, during their state of probation. "Son, remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." In the thirteenth chapter of Luke's gospel, verse 28, our Lord, after having forewarned the self-righteous Jews of their final disappointment, says, "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out." In this awful prophesy, the wicked Jews are represented as recognising their holy ancestors and faithful teachers in a future state.

It is probable, too, that we shall either instantly know those persons of whom we have no knowledge in the present world, or possess a power of acquiring a knowledge of them with a facility, of which, at present, we have no definite conception. When Moses and Elijah appeared with our Lord on the mount of transfiguration, they were known by Peter, James, and John; by whom they had never been known on

earth. And what unutterable delight will it afford to witness the safe arrival of relations and friends in the kingdom of God; and to know, and hold intercourse with, the faithful of every age and nation! In the meantime heaven should be the more endeared to us from the consideration, that many of those with whom we once took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company, have already entered into rest, and are looking out for our arrival—many more are now our fellow travellers to the same blissful home; and millions more, we trust, of our descendants, will flee from the wrath to come, serve God acceptably in their generation, and finally meet us around the eternal throne.

*Seventhly.*—*In heaven, faith will be turned into sight.* The true believer is favoured with the gracious presence of God on earth; for thus saith the Lord—“I will never leave; no, and I will never forsake them.” But the gracious presence of God on earth is so much inferior to His glorious presence in heaven, that it is a comparative absence. Such it was considered by St. Paul. “Whilst we are at home in the body,” says he, “we are absent from the Lord.” Here, we walk by faith, not by sight. We have never seen heaven. We have never seen Jesus Christ. But we steadfastly believe that there is a heaven; and we believe that our Redeemer liveth and reigneth there the King of Glory. Thus faith is the evidence of things not seen, the subsistence of things hoped for. But the evidence of faith is not so grand and glorious as the evidence of sight. By faith we perceive objects through a glass darkly; but sight is unobscured vision.

When death draws aside the screen which conceals

eternal realities from our view, we shall see heaven—we shall see saints and angels—we shall see the Divine Majesty shining forth in the face of our glorified Emmanuel; and no darkening medium will obscure the brightness of these glorious objects. We shall see them as they are, without a veil between, and eternally gaze upon them with ineffable and increasing admiration.

Constituted as we are at present, the visions of heaven would completely overwhelm us. We could no more sustain that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, than we can steadfastly look at the meridian and unclouded sun. When Jesus Christ descended from heaven, and appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos, the Apostle was so overwhelmed at the sight, that he “fell at the feet of our Redeemer as dead.” But when we ourselves are made to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father, we shall be qualified to commingle with the angelic throng, and to sit with Jesus Christ in heavenly places.

*Eighthly. In heaven, hope will give place to enjoyment.*—The grace of hope is expectation mingled with desire. And on the ground of Jehovah’s faithfulness we now hope for blessings which we neither enjoy nor see. But when we are admitted into the joy of our Lord, we shall realize those exceedingly great and precious promises, from which we now draw, by faith, so much consolation.

*Ninthly. In heaven, the righteous will constantly receive communications of happiness direct from God.* Even now, the true Christian has fellowship with the Father of Spirits; and by virtue of that fellowship he is continually drawing supplies of grace from the

Fountain, to guide, preserve, strengthen, and comfort him, in all his struggles to win the immortal crown. But the richest influences of the Spirit with which the believer is favoured below, is but a crumb from the table, or a drop from the ocean. In glory, every one's measure of happiness is *full*—satisfaction is *complete*. Yes, Lord, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness: in Thy presence is fulness of joy: at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

But let it be remembered, that although future rewards will be distributed with an impartial hand, without respect of persons, yet those rewards will not be equal in value. Every one shall be rewarded according to his deeds done in the body. He that sows to the full, shall reap to the full; he that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly. As the stars in the firmament are all beautiful and brilliant, but shine with unequal splendour, so the righteous in heaven will be resplendent with different degrees of glory. Superior talents and privileges, properly improved, will doubtless advance a Christian further in grace, and thus prepare him for more distinguished honours than others. But the superior dignity and happiness of the former will be in nowise detrimental to the happiness of the latter.

But as two persons may be equally favoured with abilities and opportunities, and yet not equally improve them, and consequently not be rewarded alike, the motive to diligence is impressive and powerful. Therefore, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Press into the kingdom, and get as near to the throne as possible. Contend for a prize of pre-eminent worth—struggle for a crown of superior splendour.

But heaven is a scene of activity, as well as a state of enjoyment. Although the Bible teaches us, that the faithful dead "rest from their labours," we must not hence infer, that their felicity consists in inaction and repose. The Sabbath is a day of rest; that is, a cessation from secular transactions. But who ever dreamed that the Sabbatic law imposed on man a periodical idleness? If, on the Lord's day, the hand and head refrain from ordinary labour, the heart most assuredly should be diligent in spiritual business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord: nor should the hands and feet be reluctant to perform those toils which mercy and benevolence enjoin.

So in heaven; the just will rest from the drudgery of time, from every kind of intellectual or manual *toil*; but indolent repose they will neither have nor desire. Vigorous in body, buoyant in spirit, and vastly improved in their rational faculties, employment suited to their exalted station will form an element in which they will intensely delight.

(1.) *A part of their time, we presume, will be employed in learning each other's history.* It is not improbable that they will inquire, with a laudable curiosity, into each other's past experience. And the rehearsal of their repentance towards God, conversion, temptations, deliverances, dangers, hair-breadth escapes, battles, and final victory, will be listened to with deep interest; and each will rejoice at the successful struggles of his compeer.

(2.) *Another part of their employment will be studying the works of God.* This will open to their minds a boundless field for meditation. The works of creation and Providence connected with this diminu-

tive globe on which we dwell, are inexhaustible sources of instruction and delight to virtuous and industrious minds. "The works of the Lord," says the Psalmist, "are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." The earth, with its endlessly diversified furniture and inhabitants—the great and wide sea, wherein are things innumerable, both small and great—the heavens, declaring the glory of God, and the firmament showing his handiwork—and that wonderful ocean of atmosphere which encircles the earth, are unlimited sources of discovery, knowledge, and satisfaction to mankind.

Notwithstanding the boasted march of intellect and the progress of science, how small a portion of Jehovah's works are known. By reason of the vast, unexplored regions which lay before him, "I know not," said Sir Isaac Newton, "what I appear to others; but I appear to myself, like a boy amusing himself on the margin of a brook, who has picked up a few pebbles a little smoother than those of his fellows." That great man was so far from supposing he had entered the "hall of science," and comprehended all knowable things, that he humbly acknowledged he had only crossed the threshold, and advanced as far as the vestibule of philosophy.

And if within the contracted limits of the solar system there are treasures of knowledge to which no mortal can attain, what infinite stores of information will the wide range of universal creation afford to inquiring saints and angels! And should it please God, He can create millions of worlds and systems in endless succession, which will open new springs of knowledge and joy to the inhabitants of heaven for



an interminable duration. And, ravished with the diversified glories of their Sovereign's boundless empire, they will exclaim, in strains of reverential admiration, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who would not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?"

And as no shades of infidelity or sinful doubt will ever overcast their spotless minds, they will never attribute the admirable order and adaptation of Jehovah's works to a fortuitous arrangement of unconscious atoms, nor to the agency of microscopic and intelligent globules; nor will any one ascribe the steady and regular course of nature to a code of physical laws which operate independently on the Eternal Mind. These vain and ridiculous conceits, which are taught as sober truths by certain infidel philosophers, will never be advocated in the realms of light and perfection. The students of heaven will perceive clearly, that were God to abandon the laws of nature, so-called, but for a single moment, there would be an immediate suspension of the harmonious movements of the universe. As all created beings, whether animate or inanimate, are indebted to God for their existence, so they are constantly sustained and governed by His omnipotent power and infinite skill. Not a particle of matter moves—not a creature breathes—not a blade of grass vegetates—not a ray of light shines—not an insect perishes—not a hair of the head falls to the ground, without the Almighty's command or permission. Profoundly impressed with these glorious truths, the saints will be constrained to exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; in wisdom hast Thou made them all!"

(3.) *Another, and indeed the principal, part of the employment of glorified spirits, will be to glorify God.*—Contemplating Him as the beneficent Author of their unmerited, but abounding happiness, it will afford them inexpressible satisfaction to render Him supreme gratitude, love, adoration, and obedience. Conformed to the Divine image, partakers of the Divine nature, and their cup of bliss constantly full to overflowing, it will be their meat and drink to do the will of their heavenly Father. The cares of this world, and the magnetic influence of temptation, will no more cool their holy ardour, or retard the current of their affections towards the centre of happiness. Equally free from earthly and satanic influence, their devotion to God will be ardent, firm, and liable to no interruption or abatement.

A certain French infidel said, “for my part I have no relish for sitting all day long on a cloud, singing praises to God.” Another exclaimed, “Let me enjoy all the good things of Paris, and never die, then God Almighty may take His heaven to Himself, and welcome.” For the sentiments contained in these impious expressions, we give the infidels full credit. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The floodgates of their uncircumcised lips have been forced open by the pressure of their internal corruption. It is the essential property, and the infamous characteristic of a carnal mind, to be at enmity with God. And the more any soul is under the dominion of sin, the more inveterate is its aversion to God. It is therefore easy to account for the malignant hatred which obdurate sinners bear to the worship of God. But when sin is totally destroyed, the body freed from

infirmity, and the soul released from anxiety and temptation, the saints will serve God with alacrity, and the most voluntary and active service will yield the greatest happiness. In the seventh chapter of Revelation, verses 14, 15, the saints are represented as standing before the throne of God, arrayed in white robes, which are emblematical of dignity and holiness, and as serving Him day and night in His temple.

Notwithstanding we are surrounded by a thousand mundane influences below, it is our privilege, even in the midst of affliction and privation, to "rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of our salvation." How much more, when we shall be completely delivered from the imperfections of our probationary state, will a sense of the Divine goodness awaken in our bosoms new emotions of gratitude and love; and we shall invite and stimulate each other, to glorify the Author of our happiness, world without end.

*Finally, The felicity of the saints will be everlasting.*—Jehovah is "the eternal God." His existence is from everlasting to everlasting, and His years will have no end. And although none of His creatures are necessarily immortal, yet He hath promised to bestow on his people "eternal life." And as He is a covenant keeping God, the never-ending happiness of the faithful is effectually secured. "I give unto my sheep," says our blessed Lord—"I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Suppose the duration of the heavenly state were limited, and destined to expire, the saints would look forward to that event with dismay. The prospect of that awful period, no matter how remote, would pro-

duce a serious diminution of their joy. As duration rolled onwards, the sun of their prosperity would gradually decline, and finally set in endless night. But relying on the pledge of a faithful God, they will feel confident that they shall realize "in His presence fullness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore." And as the beatitudes of heaven will be adapted to the constitution of its inhabitants, they will never surfeit. They will always be fresh and inviting; and as welcome to the soul as savoury food is to a hungry appetite. If once we be admitted to the heavenly banquet, the rich provisions of that divine entertainment will afford us perpetual and undiminished satisfaction.

"Yea, and before we rise  
To that immortal state,  
The thoughts of such amazing bliss  
Should constant joy create."

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### CONCLUDING REMARKS.

READER, in what direction art thou travelling? Whither are thy steps leading thee? Whether with thy heart's consent, or against thy secret inclination, the current of time is hurrying thee rapidly along towards the boundless ocean of eternity. Permit me, therefore, to ask—

FIRST: *Art thou sincerely and earnestly inquiring the way to heaven with thy face Zion-wards?*—If so, hold fast the beginning of thy confidence without wavering unto the end. If sinners entice thee to give up the contest and draw back, consent thou not; but

rather reprove them. Flee from Sodom with all speed. Tarry not in all the plain, and look not behind thee. Remember Lot's wife. Be not slothful; but be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Keep looking unto Jesus, your perfect pattern and Forerunner. Tread in His holy steps. Copy His bright example. Every day strive to make some progress. Never rest satisfied with present attainments. Leave those things which are behind, and reach forward towards those which are before you. Be strong, courageous, and resolute. Let no temptation, no persecution, no difficulty, however formidable, turn you aside from the good and the right way. And go on your way rejoicing. Lift up your head; for your eternal redemption draweth nigh. If virtuous pagans have rejoiced in the obscure and uncertain prospect of being hereafter associated, in the elysian fields, with the wise and good, how much more reason have Christians to rejoice, who have an unclouded prospect of life and immortality before their eyes!

SECONDLY: *Art thou a backslider?*—Art thou like those Galatians, of whom St. Paul said, "Ye did run well—what did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?" O then, proceed no farther. Another step in thy dangerous career may plunge thee into devouring fire—into everlasting burnings. Hark! a voice from Heaven says, "Return unto me, and I will return unto thee. I will heal thy backslidings and love thee freely." What are now the thoughts and purposes of thy soul? Art thou resolved to revolt more and more, or dost thou inwardly exclaim, Oh! that it were with me now as it was in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon me! Dost

thou wish to be restored, on God's own terms, to the joy of His salvation? Then thou hast nothing to fear but delay. Return to thy offended Father and God, and He will forgive thy unfaithfulness, heal thy diseases, and re-establish thy goings. If any man sin, even after his conversion, he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

But although you may not have openly returned to the world, your steps may nevertheless be insensibly sliding in that direction. Once you walked in close company with your Saviour: your fellowship with Him was sweet, and your heart burned within you when He opened unto you the Scriptures, by the agency of His Holy Spirit and His faithful ministers. But where are you now? Alas! by imperceptible degrees, you have diverged from the centre of the Good Old Way—cooled in your heavenly affections; and, Peter like, are following Jesus afar off. You are creeping slowly close to the line of separation, which divides the way to heaven from the way to hell—while the devil with all his infernal subtilty, and the world with all her blandishments, are unitedly striving to allure you across the fatal boundary. In this perilous situation, lift up your heart to God, and pray,—

“ If near the pit I rashly stray,  
 Before I wholly fall away,  
 The keen conviction dart;  
 Recall me by that pitying look,  
 That kind, upbraiding glance which broke  
 Unfaithful Peter's heart.”

And let your actions be suited to your petition;

then God will quicken you according to His word ; so shall you cheerfully run the way of His commandments.

THIRDLY : *But hast thou never yet set out in earnest for heaven ?* Has all thy past life been consumed in travelling in the broad way that leadeth to destruction ? Then is it not high time to arouse from thy lethargy, and return with penitential sorrow to God, whom thou hast so long, so causelessly, and so grievously insulted ? Surely you do not believe, that you can innocently violate His righteous commands and slight His gracious invitations. Surely you do not think it reasonable to trample under foot the precious blood of Christ, and to regard it as a common thing. And yet you are every day declaring that by your actions, which you would tremble to express with your lips. Why then halt ye between two opinions ? If the Lord be God, why will you not follow Him ? If you admit that Jesus Christ has loved you even unto death, why do you hesitate to love Him in return ? If the Holy Spirit mercifully strives with you, how dare you resist His gracious influence ? While Divine compassion is condescending to knock at the door of your obdurate heart for admission, is it just, is it reasonable, is it safe, to answer those tender calls with, "Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season I will send for Thee ?" Remember, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Presumption cannot escape with impunity. A faithful record of sin is preserved in God's book of remembrance. Every transgression helps to fill up the measure of your iniquity. You are now on the brink

of the bottomless pit, and your everlasting state may be suspended on your present choice. Renounce at once the crowded but dangerous road to hell. Seek reconciliation with God. Set out immediately on pilgrimage for heaven. Be steadfast, immoveable, always abound in the work of the Lord, and your journey shall terminate in the cloudless regions of eternal day.

FOURTHLY: *Do not plead youth as a reason why you delay to set out on pilgrimage for heaven.* If you do this, you do a thing of which you must repent, or for which you must be punished. But why should you, in the morning of your life, lay the foundation of future regret or of future suffering? Have you ever reflected seriously on the uncertainty of life? There is not a single moment in which you may not possibly die, and the just reward of transgression is everlasting punishment; consequently, there is not a single moment in which you may not be consigned to eternal misery, while you continue to live in sin.

Giddy and thoughtless people may tell you that it is quite unnecessary, and even foolish, to enter on a strictly religious life while you are young; but folly and crime are plainly on the other side of the question. The longer you live in sin, the less probable it is that you will ever be rescued from its allurements. Suppose you should be suffered to live forty or fifty years—if you now slight the invitations of the Gospel, you do not know how hard your heart may hereafter become, or how dark your understanding, or how stupified your conscience, or how headstrong your will. Sin chills and petrifies the soul, as frost stagnates and congeals water. And when the soul is not warmed and attracted to a virtuous course by the love



of God, it is impossible to say on what forbidden ground it will not trespass, or by what storms of misery it will not be overtaken. The young and beautiful Jael D——, four or five years ago, lived in a minister's family; she was clever, industrious, respected, and a member of a Christian society. But she accepted the company of a carnal young man. With him she wandered astray on the dark mountains of sin; and a few months afterwards was barbarously murdered by the hand of her seducer.

Could we visit the wretched hiding-places of abandoned sinners—the union-houses, the hospitals, the penitentiaries, the gaols, the transport settlements—and above all, the bottomless pit; and there witness the shame and sufferings of the millions, who trifled with religious impressions in the days of their youth, what heart-rending scenes would open to our view!

My dear young friend, let the ruin and despair of others be to you a seasonable and salutary warning. Now you may be privileged, as a scholar or a teacher, with the advantages afforded by a Sabbath-school; the pious example, the fervent prayers, and the godly counsels of religious parents, or the benefits of a faithful gospel ministry. But none of these means of grace, nor all of them combined, can save you, if you forsake the guides of your youth and the covenant of your God. If you now turn a deaf ear to your best advisers, you cannot foresee into what bad company you will hereafter fall, to what sinful advice you will listen, or to what dangerous proposals you will consent. But it is not improbable that you will boldly perpetrate crimes, on which you cannot now reflect without fear and trembling.

Elizabeth Grey was a lovely girl, a faithful servant, and she feared God above many. She was therefore much respected and beloved. But in the choice of her situations she was not sufficiently on her guard. She engaged herself as parlour-maid in a graceless wine-merchant's family. She was quite aware that her new situation would lay her open to temptations, to which, in her former connexions, she had not been exposed. But, confiding in her own strength, she resolved to encounter the danger. As might have been feared, her goodness soon passed away like the morning dew. She deserted her closet, neglected her Bible, indulged freely in strong drink, and became an untidy, negligent servant, and a confirmed *drunkard!* Having blighted her character, and rendered herself unfit for any respectable situation, she became a homeless, miserable vagrant, and was at length found drowned. But how she came to her melancholy end no one could tell.

Had these once amiable young females steadily pursued the Good Old Way, they might have lived many years, ornaments to their sex, and a blessing to the world. But, alas! where are they now? Their bodies are mouldering in untimely graves, and their souls are—we dare not say where.

A few days ago, a man, aged about fifty years, died miserably in London. In his earlier days he had been repeatedly exhorted to give his heart to God. He acknowledged that the homage which God requires was a "reasonable service." But, like Felix, he put off the all-important business of salvation till a convenient season should arrive. His procrastination was fatal. In his last illness he was reminded of his

danger, and entreated to flee to Jesus Christ for refuge. "Ah!" said the dying man, in a tone which bespoke despair, "it is now too late. I shall die and go to hell;" and shortly breathed his last.

Would you escape infamy in life, despair in death, and interminable misery beyond the grave? Then take Solomon's advice: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." (Eccl. xii. 1.) Let the time past suffice wherein you have walked according to the course of this world. Consecrate the remainder of your life to the service and glory of God. Be thou faithful unto death; so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE END.

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