



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>

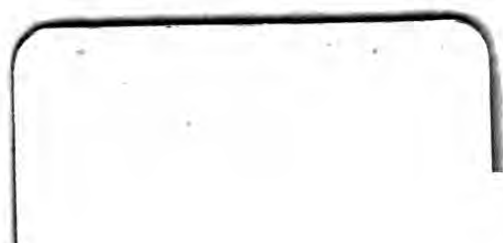


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

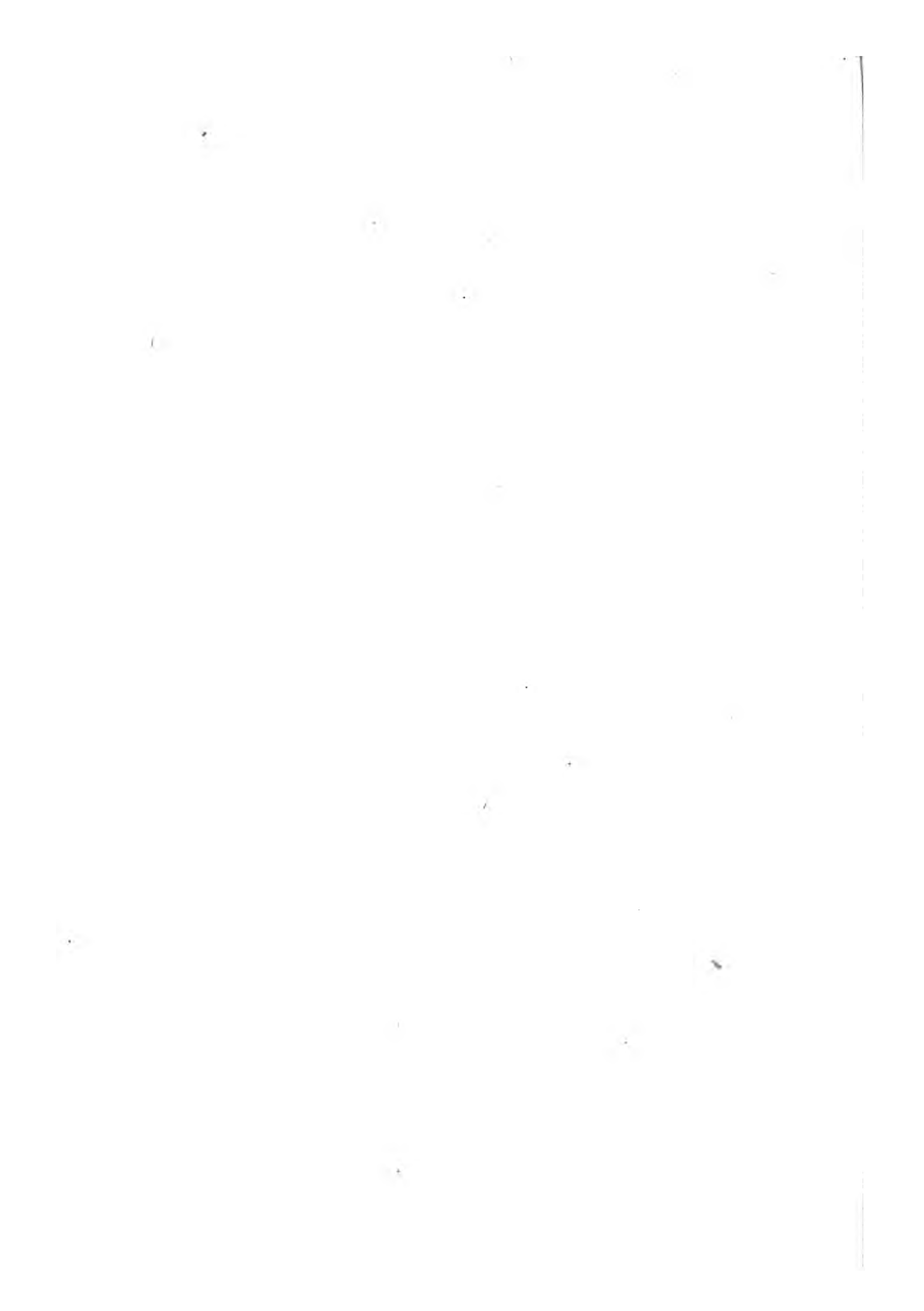


RELIGION NO FABLE

JOSEPH SHENTON.







RELIGION NO FABLE.



RELIGION NO FABLE:

An Essay

*ON THE ADAPTATION OF THE CHRISTIAN
RELIGION TO THE NECESSITIES OF
THE HUMAN SPIRIT.*

BY

JOSEPH SHENTON.

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.”—PETER.

“The Christian religion trusts to its own evidence, and stands firm upon its own bottom, whether any man embrace it or not.”—ARNOBIUS.

London:

HODDER & STOUGHTON,

27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCLXXIV.

141. m. 216.



UNWIN BROTHERS, PRINTERS BY WATER POWER.



PREFACE.



READER, if thou art a thinking man, permit me to call thy attention to the most important of all subjects ; and further, while I am speaking, allow me fair play. Disabuse thy mind from all prejudice, and examine with candour what is now submitted to thy notice.

Owing partly to the apathy of the Church, and partly to the influence exerted by eminent Teachers of Science, Materialism is rapidly spreading among the masses ; nor can we hope to arrest its progress until the Church becomes less worldly, and until scientific men can be persuaded to mind their own business, and not meddle with a subject they do not understand. We hail with pleasure each new discovery made by the student of nature, but we receive with caution the sayings of such

a person on the doctrines of revelation, as in most instances, in their reasoning on this subject, theories are substituted for facts, and dogmatism for argument ; and ultimately it is discovered that what has been propounded as adverse to religion is really no truth at all, but merely the phantasm of a scholarly brain.

The Materialist glances at one side of the truth, and such is the narrow range of his vision, that he can see nothing beyond. But matter is only a part of the wonderful universe in which we live, and that the least majestic and beautiful. It is merely the garment which the spirit wears. On the other hand, in the Christian the spiritual faculties are developed, or developing themselves, and he can see beyond these shadows, and walks in the presence of the eternal. To those who have had their eyes opened, and who abide in the light of God—to the *educated* soul—the shallowness of Materialism is apparent ; there is noise enough in it certainly, but it is the wanton riot, the hubbub and confusion of chaos and night.

The Christian religion submits a fact to the world which exposes the sophistical reasoning of those scientific teachers who advocate the apish origin of man, or who maintain that he was first found in a rude and savage state. In the regeneration of the soul, and in the work of the Spirit upon the renewed mind, man is restored to

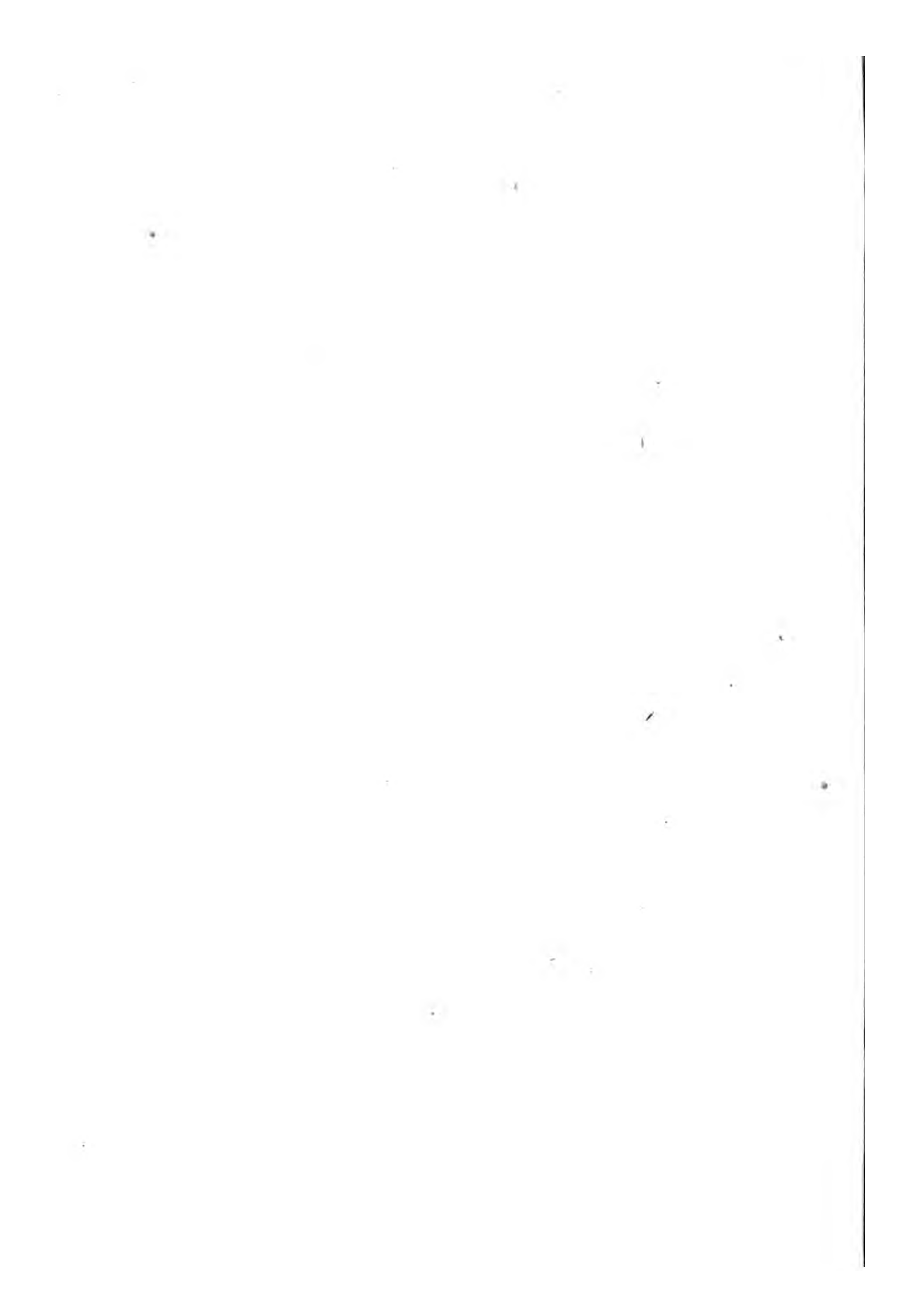
the image of God. In this new creation by Christ Jesus, we discover the design of God in creating man ; and in the issue of redemption we behold in what manner the Lord God shed forth His glory upon the first Adam.

Materialism—the Protean monster—has lately appeared in the garb of a Christian teacher, and in pamphlets and newspapers, and by other means, has made much bluster about life in Christ only, and the annihilation of the wicked. The spiritual nature of man, which it is shown survives the stroke of death, is a fact which *annihilates* this hypothesis.

Some time ago we clipped the following anecdote from the “ Nonconformist.”

“ ‘Those who adhere most closely to facts will be the masters of the future,’ said an eminent naturalist a short time ago. He supposed by this limitation to quietly overset all theories of progress, and define the true path to be that of physical inquiry alone. A distinguished member of the company who had the gift of rapid insight, or, as Mr. Connell called it, of thinking on his legs, answered in a tone of civil but significant assent, which lent a terrible edge to the reply, ‘ Yes, assuredly, but then it must be *all* the facts.’ ”

STAFFORD,
February, 1874.





CONTENTS.



CHAPTER I.

On the Fallacy of Materialism.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| § 1 The Existence of God a Fact | 3 |
| 2 Man, a Spiritual Being | 7 |
| 3 Religion, a Proof of Man's Spiritual Nature | 9 |

CHAPTER II.

On the Relation of the Human Spirit to God.

| | |
|---|----|
| § 1 A Typical Relationship | 21 |
| 2 Degrees of Moral and Spiritual Light | 24 |
| 3 The Conscience and Revelation | 30 |
| 4 The Perversions of Conscience | 35 |
| 5 Accountability | 44 |

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER III.

On the Necessities of the Human Spirit.

| | PAGE |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| § 1 The Remedy for Sin | 51 |
| 2 The Want of more Light | 57 |
| 3 The Desire for Happiness | 66 |
| 4 The Capability of Growth | 76 |

CHAPTER IV.

On the Spiritual Truths Taught by Christ.

| | |
|---|-----|
| § 1 The Doctrine of Regeneration | 87 |
| 2 The Connection of Regeneration with Reconciliation | 96 |
| 3 The Revelation of God | 102 |
| 4 The Conditions of Salvation | 106 |

CHAPTER V.

On Redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ.

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| § 1 The Atonement | 115 |
| 2 Justification by Faith | 131 |

CHAPTER VI.

On the Work of the Holy Spirit.

| | |
|--|-----|
| § 1 The Promise of the Spirit | 162 |
| 2 The Promise Fulfilled | 164 |
| 3 The Author of Spiritual Life | 174 |
| 4 The Spirit Works in Harmony with Natural Laws | 177 |

CONTENTS.

xi

CHAPTER VI.—*continued.*

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| § 5 Through the Spirit we have Fellowship with God ... | 186 |
| 6 The Direct Testimony of the Spirit | 189 |
| 7 The True Priesthood | 194 |

CHAPTER VII.

On the Mission of the Church.

| | |
|--|-----|
| § 1 The Stewards of the Manifold Grace of God | 203 |
| 2 The Responsibility of the Believer | 210 |
| 3 The Conversion of Sinners | 214 |
| 4 The Truth may be Hindered by Unrighteousness ... | 218 |
| 5 The Hope of the Future | 221 |

CHAPTER VIII.

On Immortality.

| | |
|---|-----|
| § 1 The Doctrine of the Eternal Logos... .. | 229 |
| 2 An Eye-Witness | 235 |
| 3 The Reasoning of Paul | 236 |
| 4 The Testimony of Dying Saints | 248 |

CHAPTER IX.

On the Hindrances to Conversion.

| | |
|--|-----|
| § 1 Hindrances Arising from Perversions of the Intellect ... | 261 |
| 2 Hindrances Arising from Perversions of the Heart ... | 266 |

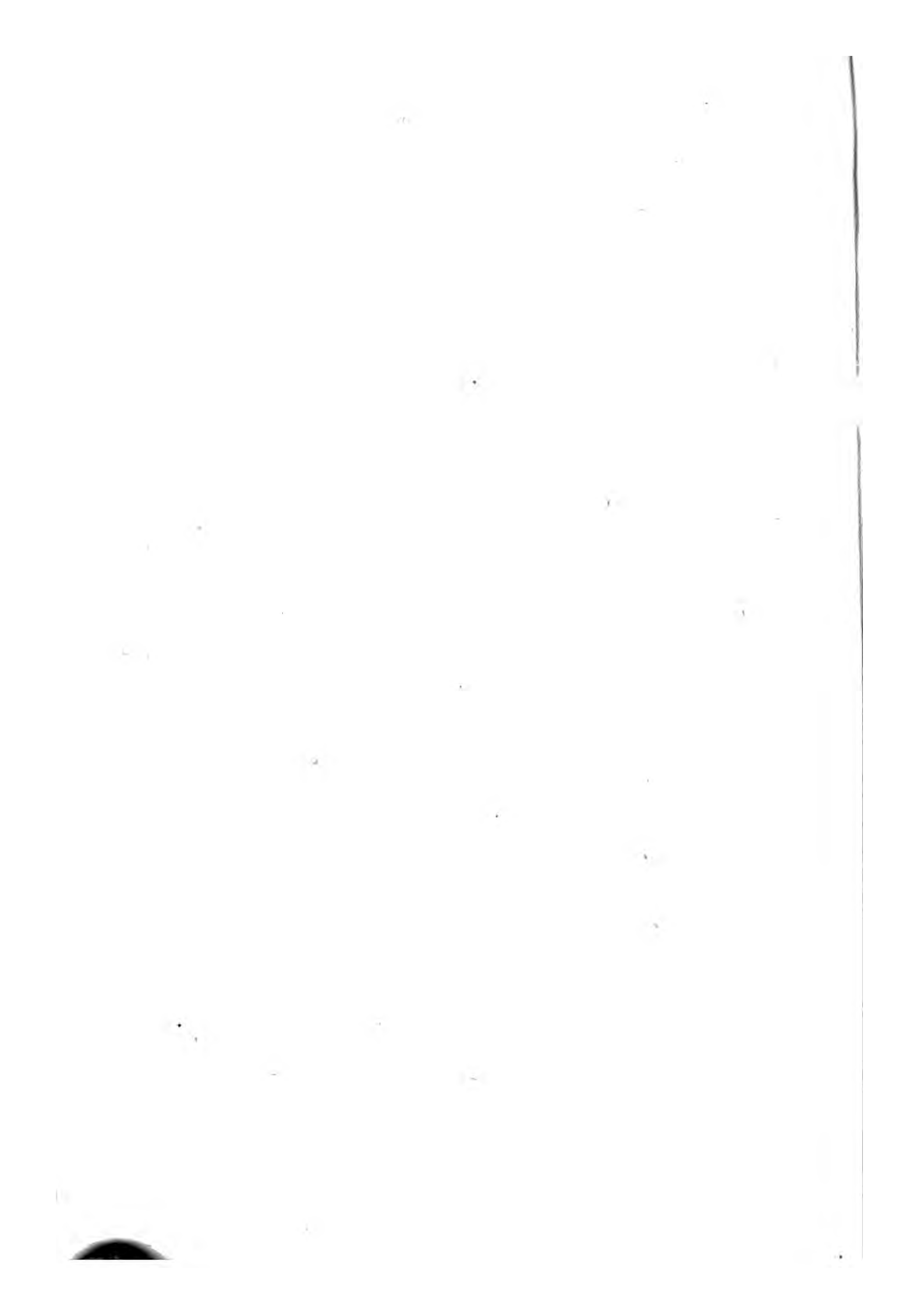
CONTENTS.

CHAPTER X.

On the Condemnation of the Wicked.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| § 1 Moral Agency | 291 |
| 2 The Duration of Future Punishment | 296 |
| 3 Reflections on Duty and Destiny | 301 |
| <hr style="width: 10%; margin: 0 auto;"/> | |
| CONCLUSION | 311 |

*ON THE
FALLACY OF MATERIALISM.*





RELIGION NO FABLE.



I.

§ 1. *The Existence of God a Fact.*

SUPPOSING that one denies the existence of God, and takes refuge in blank materialism, will the opinion of such a man alter or destroy that fact? Not at all. It is true it may appear altered to him, but whatever opinion he may adopt, the fact is there unchanged. Presumptuous mortal! thinkest thou that God depends for His existence upon thy fallible reasoning? Thou art deceiving thyself; and it is evident to others, that instead of proving

there is no God, thou art proving thyself to be morally and spiritually blind. This is the fact which we will now illustrate.

We are constantly reminded of the marvelous adaptation of the various organs of the human body to the world in which we live. The food we eat grows out of the earth, and by the process of mastication and digestion the flame of life is replenished, and the wasted energies renewed. The lungs also are nicely adjusted to the condition of the atmosphere, and their operation is needed every moment to take away the deadly poison from the blood. The eye is a wonderful piece of mechanism, and any one that will consider its structure may read therein the evidence of consummate skill. Surely it came not by chance, that the organ of vision, so delicately constructed, should be curiously lodged under the brow, as in a natural fortress, and be so exquisitely fitted to suit the state of the atmosphere, and the light that falls around us. It must be evident to every con-

sidering mind that the same hand which made the eye also made the sun, and moon, and stars, and placed them in the deep abyss, and commanded them to light the abode of man.

How beautiful is the face of nature! We may stand upon the mountain's brow, and gaze in rapture upon the green carpet beneath our feet, spotted with its many flowers, and upon the fairy landscape in the vale below, and upon the giant forest trees, which clap their hands with gladness as the breeze sweeps by. Yonder an infant rivulet flashes in the light; from the perennial spring it hurries away in babbling music, and anon runs dashing and splashing down the rocky steep, to hide itself in the wooded glen. The air is filled with the hum of happy insects, with the song of birds, and the bleating of herds; above is the blue infinity, without a cloud between; around is the solemn grandeur of the hills; and beyond these, away in the distance, the great wide sea. The sun brightens the heavens with his glory, and

declining westward, the fiery orb rests awhile on the crest of the distant hills, and slowly and silently disappears from view. But as the darkness falls upon the land, one by one the stars appear, until a thousand suns look down upon the earth from their habitations in the far away. While gazing on these, we remember the words of the Psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches."

But what are all the marvels of nature to the blind and deaf? Or of what use is the organ of vision without the light that reveals and makes manifest? Suppose a man should put out his eyes, and then argue that there was no such thing as light coming from the sun, or that there was no sun at all. Suppose that he should say there was no grandeur in the mountains, or the ocean, or the blue expanse, and that there was no beauty in the foliage of the trees, or the verdure of the fields: although

to himself, perhaps, the statements would appear convincing, yet they would seem strange, something akin to madness, to those that could see, and knew to the contrary. We imagine that they would say to such a one, "The sun shines in the heavens, and needs no argument to prove his existence. If you are sceptical, it is a proof, not that there is no light or no sun, but that you are blind, and cannot see."

§ 2. *Man, a Spiritual Being.*

That man is capable of thinking is a fact about which there is no controversy. But what is that mysterious "*ego*" within, that understands, and remembers, and reasons? Is it matter, or is it something distinct from matter? Is thought a result of the material organisation that will cease when the body perishes? Or is it produced by another substance that will survive the stroke of death?

You cannot predicate thought of matter, for if it is said that matter thinks, the definition is

far too comprehensive, as we have no evidence that a stone thinks. We ask again, What is that mysterious *ego* within that thinks? It cannot be matter, for how can dead unthinking matter produce a living being that thinks? It is an utter impossibility, and therefore the thinking *ego* must be something distinct from matter. That something we call spirit. *I think, and therefore I am a spirit*, is a proposition that cannot be refuted.

We need not produce a formidable array of arguments to establish this proposition; but we may indicate the process by which it is possible to arrive at this conclusion. In order then to satisfy yourself, we ask you to cultivate the faculties you possess. Exercise the power of introspection, and examine your own mind; retire within yourself, and think out the great problems that affect our duty and destiny, and you will soon discover that there are truths which lie below the surface of the visible. Let a man study himself until he knows as

much of the *ego* within as he does of outward and visible things; let him think, and think, until he acquires the metaphysical acuteness of John Locke or Jonathan Edwards; and to him, we say, the shallowness of materialism will become apparent, and by this process of thinking it will be manifest to him that there is in man a something essentially distinct from the material organisation. The man who has educated himself, who is acquainted with his own mental faculties, will reply to the blind materialist, in the language of our great dramatist—

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

§ 3. *Religion, a Proof of Man's Spiritual Nature.*

Materialism has been advocated of late by some who profess to be Christians. Perhaps it does not occur to them, that if their notions were correct, then Christ and the apostles were mistaken in opposing the Sadducees. We do not

see how the language of Christ, honestly rendered, can be made to support a system which He decisively condemns, or how His doctrine and materialism can be reconciled to each other. It seems to us that Christianity and materialism are irreconcilable, and that such a monstrosity as a Christian materialist is a moral impossibility.

We suppose that a Christian will admit as true the proposition that "God is a Spirit." But, if he admits the spirituality of God, he must also admit the spirituality of man; for we derive our idea of what we term spirit from what we know of the nature of our own minds. Hence, if you submit the proposition, "that God is a Spirit," to the reason of a man, so far as he is conscious of his own intellectual and moral attributes, he will divine the truth of it from those mental perceptions. We may illustrate this fact by the relation of the earth to the sun.

God and the human spirit are related to each

other in the same manner as the sun and the earth. The philosopher with his spectrum can analyse the light emitted from the sun, and though that ponderous orb is so many millions of miles away, he will venture to give you the result of his investigations, and will tell of what gases and metals it is composed. It was discovered recently that when *sodium* was burnt certain lines were shown in the spectrum, and that similar lines were observed when the spectrum was applied to the sun's rays: hence the conclusion was arrived at that the light of the sun comes in part from the combustion of sodium. Of this sodium something is known, as we find it in the constitution of our planet, and by a spectrum analysis we discover the same substance in the sun, and also other substances with which we are familiar. So far, therefore, as there is a similarity between the earth and the sun, or, so far as we are capable of observing that similarity, we have a correct knowledge of the materials of which that body is

composed. But there may exist in the sun other substances,—such as that which Frankland and Lockyer propose to call *helium*,—which have not yet been discovered in the earth ; and then, although we may call them by certain names, we must of necessity confess our ignorance of the precise nature of any such foreign substances.

This is reasoning which would be admitted by scientific men, and applauded by them, and we hold that it is equally conclusive when applied to the spirituality of God and the spirituality of man. The sun is revealed by its own light, and thus God reveals Himself unto us. We form our idea of the nature of the sun from what we know of the nature of the earth ; and thus, also, we form our idea of the incomprehensible God from what we know of the human spirit. If, therefore, the proposition is true that “God is a Spirit,” then it is true that there is in man an immaterial substance, for we can only understand the meaning of that

proposition by reflecting upon the nature of our own minds.

Again, the fact that it is possible to live on terms of fellowship with God, is a decisive proof that there is a spirit in man.

It was the design of the Infinite Creator, when He made man in His own image, and after His own likeness, that man should enjoy the privilege of living in holy fellowship with Himself. And hence, as there is a physical necessity that the earth remain in its appointed orbit, so there is a moral necessity that the human spirit should be right in its relation to God. If the law of gravitation were suspended, the earth would fly off in a tangent, the sun would never rise again, every vestige of life would be destroyed from the face of the erratic planet, and it would rush through space without a solitary inhabitant, a cold dark mass of stone and ice. This is a true representation of the desolate condition of a soul without God. Such characters are spoken of as

“having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

That it is necessary for man to live in fellowship with God, all men tacitly admit. Hence, if we search the annals of our race to find a model man, a man whose conduct it would be safe to imitate, we instinctively fix upon one in whom the spiritual is most developed, and say, “This is our ideal of true manhood.” Thus we find that our concept of human perfection is inseparably associated with the ascendancy of our spiritual nature. But this spirituality can only be attained by walking with God.

That it is the privilege of man to live in fellowship with God, no one who understands the design of the Christian religion will ques-

tion. "This then is the message which we have heard of Him," says John, "and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

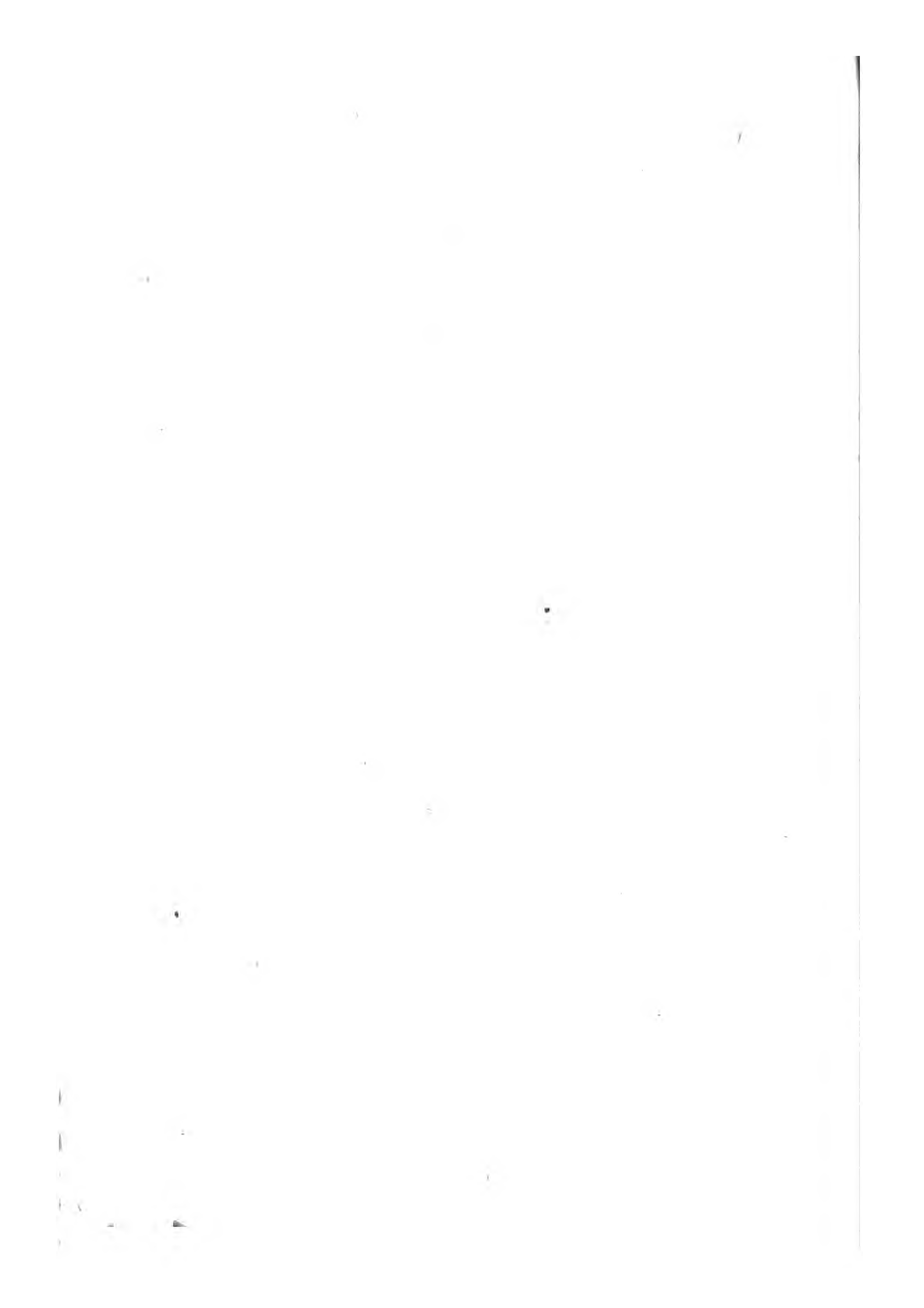
It will be observed that this communion depends upon certain moral qualities, especially the quality of holiness, in which we must be like God. But we cannot conceive of holiness apart from a spiritual nature. If therefore it is possible for man to become holy as God is holy—if indeed God is a Spirit, and man may live in fellowship with Him—then the possession of this quality and the enjoyment of this privilege are a decisive proof that there is a spirit in man,—a substance distinct from the bodily organisation.

Furthermore, if we appeal to the facts of

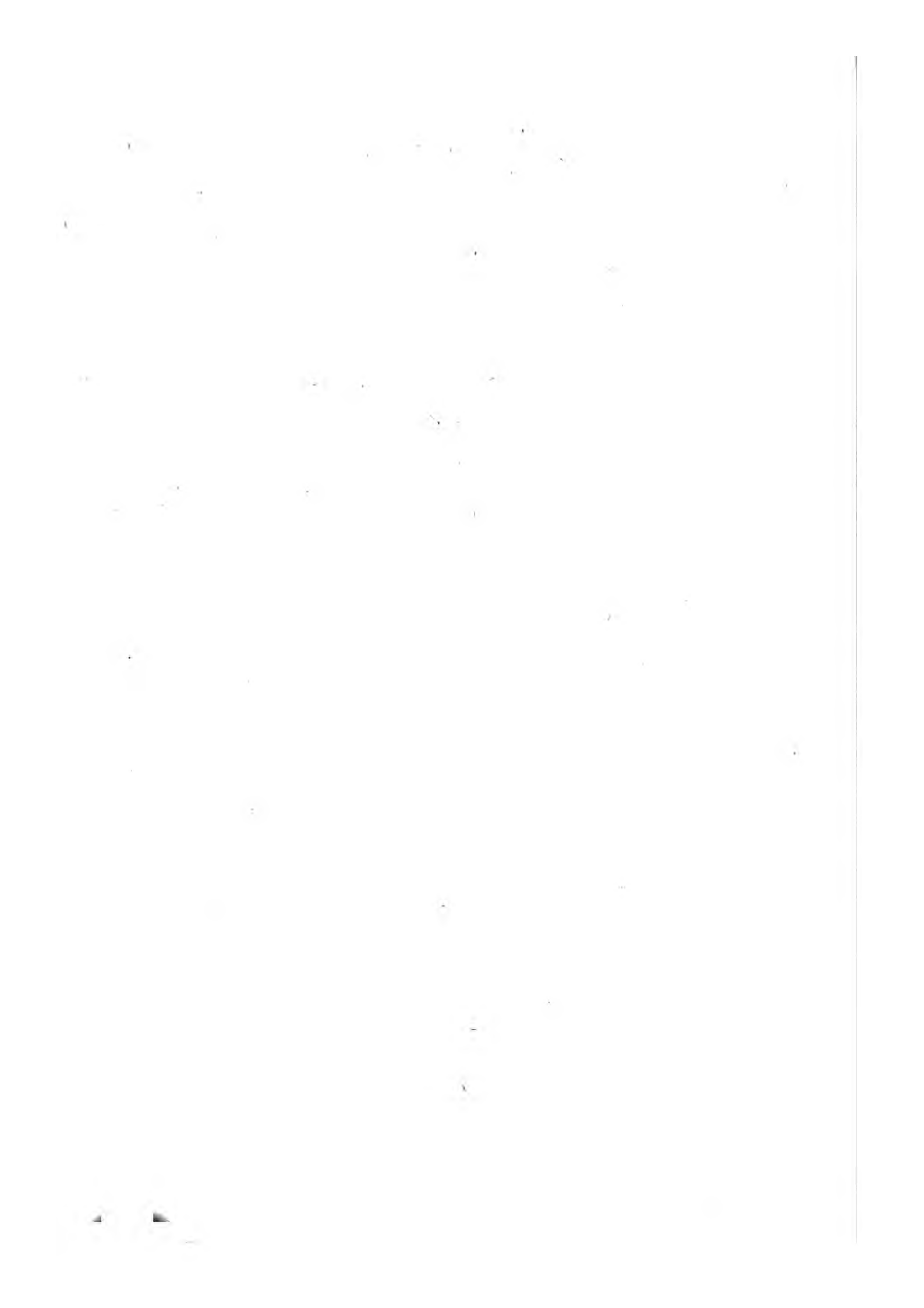
which a holy man is conscious, in those facts we find an indubitable proof that there is a spirit in man. As an illustration, suppose that an infidel, who had set aside the existence of God as an exploded notion, should be permitted to stand before such men as Enoch, and Abraham, and Moses, — men who had spoken face to face with God as a man with his friend. You may imagine the infidel producing his reasons, but, we ask, would his plausible statements invalidate the facts of which those holy men were conscious? Not at all, for facts are indisputable, and the knowledge of God possessed by those men would be a demonstration of the falsehood and folly of the objector's atheism.

Thus, also, in order to prove that there is a spiritual nature in man, we appeal to facts of which the Christian is conscious, namely, to such facts as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the incorruptible nature of spiritual life. If, therefore, any one disputes the existence of an

immaterial substance in man, we refer at once to the spiritual truths of which the Christian believer is conscious, and if we have skill to clearly state those facts, our argument is incontrovertible. And hence, as long as there is one holy man in the world, one man that walks with God, the facts of which that man is cognisant will for all times refute the fallacies of materialism, and show that such specious reasoning is nothing but flimsy sophistry.



*ON THE RELATION OF THE HUMAN
SPIRIT TO GOD.*





II.

ON THE RELATION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT TO GOD.

§ 1. A Typical Relationship.

THE relation between parents and children is a type of the higher relation between man and his Maker. The beginning of human life is a condition of absolute dependence, and during the utter helplessness of infancy, parental affection nurses, with tender solicitude, the pining babe. Thus, also, man is entirely dependent upon God, for He has given unto us our existence, and by Him is our life daily sustained. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

The principles of family government will

also further illustrate the relation of man to his Maker. In a family we have the elements of a kingdom, a representation of the larger empire of which it is a unit. A father is the king of his household, and his subjects are bound in allegiance to him by ties the most tender and sacred. From the position he occupies, we expect him to dispense law and maintain order. It is the duty of a parent to govern and instruct, and the duty of a child to learn and obey. A good father will teach his child that it is wrong to swear, to tell lies, to steal, to break the Sabbath, and that disobedience must be punished. The child is capable of understanding these plain duties, and has the power to obey or transgress. This capacity in the child to know the father's will, to do, or to disobey, will explain what we mean by conscience and moral obligation. For, as a child has the capacity to learn his duty, and obey parental laws, even so we may know and do the will of God.

The conscience is a faculty specially designed for the reception of moral and spiritual light. It distinguishes between right and wrong, between good and evil, and exercises supreme authority on all moral questions.* The Creator has endowed us with this faculty, in order that we may know the requirements of His law, and obey His voice. The culture of the conscience is left in our own hands. We may neglect to educate it, and thus harden ourselves into stubbornness and disobedience, like a wayward son when he throws off parental restraint. Or we may live as obedient children, and reverence the law, and then the constant exercise of the moral sense will give it greater discrimination, and increase

* "Conscience is supreme among the powers of the soul. It must be remembered, however, that it is not absolutely supreme. It is not in itself our *highest law*, but only our *interpretation of that law*. It is absolutely right only when it agrees with that law. It may be wrong through want of clearness or fulness in the law, or through want of humility and diligence in studying it."—*Angus*.

its sensibility. If this mental faculty is properly developed, we cannot help but know and feel our accountability to God. For as the eye is the organ of natural vision, so is the conscience of moral and spiritual; and as the beauties of nature are manifest only to the delicate perception of the artist or the poet, so spiritual truths are revealed only to the cultured conscience. To those who have thus educated the moral faculty, the possession of that faculty, and the light which is received through the exercise of it, will be a convincing demonstration that we are the children of the everlasting Father, the subjects of an invisible King.

§ 2. *Degrees of Moral and Spiritual Light.*

The perfection of moral vision depends upon the proper and legitimate use of the conscience, and upon the degree of moral and spiritual light which shines upon it. As the moon reflects her borrowed lustre upon the

earth, and in some measure dispels the darkness of the night, partially unveiling the face of nature, making many things obvious to those who will use their eyes; so the reflected glory of the invisible God, which is everywhere manifest to the discerning mind in these works of His, is sufficient to enable a man to interpret with some success those laws which the finger of God has written, without,—upon the universe, and within,—upon the fleshly table of the heart.

We are told by the apostle that there is no respect of persons with God. The Gentile will not be condemned because he had less spiritual light than the Jew, but because he sinned without law, against the light he had. The Jew, or Christian, will not be justified because he has the revealed law, but on the condition that he keeps the holy commandments. “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged

by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another;) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel." *

The Almighty Creator has left the impress of His wisdom, and power, and goodness upon His works, and has given these intimations of His existence in order "that men should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him." † The Grecian philosophers had read the volume of nature, and read it with diligence; but after all they were far from attaining a correct knowledge of God.

* Rom. ii. 12-16.

† Acts xvii. 27.

They tried in vain to sound the abyss. The most cultured intellect amongst them was baffled with the profound mystery. Plato speaks of matter as eternally coexisting with God. Indeed, it was a fundamental principle in his theology, that from nothing, nothing can proceed; and hence he supposes that the Architect of the world formed it out of a mass of pre-existent matter. He taught that there is an intelligent cause which is the origin of all spiritual being, and the former of the material world. But the nature of this being, he pronounced, it was difficult to discover, and when discovered, impossible to divulge. This is an important admission, from the highest authority, of the futility of human efforts to find out God. There is in man a feeling which prompts him to worship; but Him whom we ought to worship, reason itself cannot discover. In the most renowned city of ancient times, the city which gave birth to the intellects which ruled the world, reason made a confes-

sion of its weakness, and gave expression to its need of a revelation, in erecting an altar, and inscribing upon it, "To the unknown God."

But, inasmuch as we can trace amongst that people a regard for truth and justice, it is manifest that they were not entirely destitute of some glimmerings of light. The history of such characters as Socrates and Aristides, shows what men may be without the written word. Plutarch, in his life of Aristides, has recorded a remarkable incident, which illustrates the possibility of developing the moral powers and rendering homage to conscience in lands where the revealed law was unknown. "Themistocles having one day declared to the general assembly that he had thought of an expedient which was very salutary to Athens, but ought to be kept secret, he was ordered to communicate it to Aristides only, and abide by his judgment of it. Accordingly, he told him his project was to burn

the whole fleet of the confederates, by which means the Athenians would be raised to the sovereignty of all Greece. Aristides then returned to the assembly and informed the Athenians, 'That nothing could be more advantageous than the project of Themistocles, nor anything more unjust.' And such regard had that people for justice, and so much confidence in the integrity of Aristides, that upon his report they commanded Themistocles to give up thinking of the matter."

We learn from these facts, that the world by wisdom knew not God, neither can the human intellect, by searching, find out the Almighty. But while man vainly aspires to attain the knowledge of God, there is always sufficient light to discover our relation to each other. The duties of the second table are graven in characters that any one may read if they will.

"Thus, in spite of all motive-grinders and mechanical profit-and-loss philosophies, with

the sick ophthalmia and hallucination they had brought on, was the infinite nature of duty still dimly present to me; living without God in the world, of God's light I was not utterly bereft: if my as yet unsealed eyes, with their unspeakable longing, could nowhere see Him; nevertheless, in my heart He was present, and His heaven written law still stood legible and sacred there."—*Sartor. Resartus.*

§ 3. *The Conscience and Revelation.*

The adaptation which is seen in the relation of our physical constitution to the earth, and the whole system of matter, is as distinctly apparent between our spiritual faculties, and the revelation of the will of God in the Holy Scriptures. If we look at those nations that are destitute of a revelation, it will be evident that man without a communication from God sinks to the level of a brute;—as those tribes which have lost all idea of the Supreme, are the lowest and most degraded of the human

family; while, on the other hand, in those lands where the true God is known, and the holy oracles obeyed, we find the best specimens of character, and the highest style of man. We have only to contrast the naked Bushmen of Africa with Sir Isaac Newton or Professor Faraday, or any other man eminent for wisdom and piety, to see the amazing difference. If we take the most perfect representatives of humanity of the last two thousand years, their testimony will be an indubitable proof that the revelation of Christ produces the keenest susceptibility of conscience, and develops the highest moral qualities. Is it possible that a cunningly devised fable would have this beneficial effect upon the heart and the intellect? If Christianity is an imposture, how can we account for the fact that it has produced the great exemplars of the race, and produced them out of the most stubborn material? A few fishermen, that once dwelt in obscurity by the Sea of Galilee, have now

a name that is imperishable. They have instituted a religion that is adapted to our spiritual nature, as light is to the eye, or melody to the ear; a religion that will give eyesight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; a religion that is all purity and truth, — a stream of transparent light emanating from its uncreated Fount; a religion that refines and elevates the human spirit, and makes man perfect; a religion that is love, love to God and love to man—love that assimilates man to the likeness of God, and brings him into close fellowship with the Eternal; a religion that promulgates a better system of morals,—a religion more practical in its nature, and more beneficial in its effects, the world has never seen.

Again, if we notice the effect which the gospel has upon the rude savage, we shall see how, in raising man from the lowest degradation, and making him a child of God, and an heir of immortality, it teaches that

“God hath made of one blood all nations of men.” The conversion of such a character as Africaner is a striking display of the efficacy of the gospel. The name of this man was once a terror in South Africa. The tribes fled in dismay at his approach. But he was brought under the influence of the gospel, and the lion became a lamb. Mr. Moffat relates an incident which shows this marvellous change. The missionary and a Namaqua chief stood, on one occasion, looking at Africaner, who was entreating parties that were ripe for a battle, to live at peace with each other. “Look,” said the wondering chief, pointing to Africaner, “there is the man, once the lion, at whose roar even the inhabitants of distant hamlets fled from their homes! Yes, and I” (patting himself with his hand), “for fear of his approach, have fled with my people, our wives and our babes, to the mountain glen, or to the wilderness, and spent nights among beasts of prey, rather

than gaze on the eyes of this lion, or hear his roar." What a change! The man that delighted in blood and slaughter is become a peacemaker. Brought up out of the degradation and vice of heathenism by the gospel of Christ, we now behold in him the peaceable fruits of righteousness. This man could say at the close of his life: "I feel that I love God, and that He has done much for me, of which I am totally unworthy. My former life is stained with blood; but Jesus Christ has pardoned me, and I am going to heaven."

Such instances of the great change effected by the gospel—and they are numerous—afford a striking proof that it is adapted to the condition of fallen man. We can point to marvellous results accomplished by the preaching of the gospel during the past fifty years. Look at Southern Africa and the island of Madagascar, at the Feejee and the South Sea Islands, and contrast them with what they were half a century ago. Inquire by what means the

horrid cruelties of paganism have been swept away, and the lowest class of our race elevated to the brotherhood of man. Was it by teaching them Professor Tyndall's "Fragments of Science?" No; for however useful such a work may be, this is not its province;—as the only way to elevate a barbarous people, is to take the gospel of Jesus, and embody its teachings in a holy, consecrated life, and God will put honour upon His word and His servants, and make them mighty in pulling down the strongholds of sin.

§ 4. *The Perversions of Conscience.*

The conscience may be perverted through ignorance, or prejudice, or passion.

(a) The conscience perverted through ignorance.

As the eye is useless when shrouded in total darkness, so the conscience, when destitute of spiritual light, is incapable of discharging the functions of its solemn office. Hence, in the

dark places of the earth, where scarcely a gleam of light is perceivable, the most atrocious crimes are committed without the least apparent compunction.

An officer has recorded in his journal, that as he wandered one evening beside the Ganges, he saw a Hindu mother place her infant in a little raft of reeds which she had constructed, and having dedicated her offspring as a gift to the river-god, she pushed out the ark and its precious burden upon the stream. A little way down the river the branch of an overhanging tree arrested the progress of the raft. In a moment the mother had clambered along the bough, reached the raft, and seized the infant. Had the maternal heart relented? Was she about to reclaim and save her child? Alas for the tender mercies of idolatry; she wrung the neck of her innocent babe, and dashed the body in the darksome flood.

Mr. Williams, the missionary martyr, relates the following incident, which transpired at a

feast prepared for the school children:—"In the midst of our proceedings a venerable chieftain, grey with age, arose, and, with impassioned look and manner, exclaimed, 'Let me speak: I must speak.' On obtaining permission, he thus proceeded: 'O that I had known that the Gospel was coming; O that I had known that these blessings were in store for us, then I should have saved my children, and they would have been among this happy group, repeating these precious truths; but, alas! I destroyed them all, I have not one left.' Turning to the chairman, who was also a relative, he stretched out his arm and exclaimed, 'You, my brother, saw me kill child after child, but you never seized this murderous hand, and said, "Stay, brother, God is about to bless us; the gospel of salvation is coming to our shores."' Then he cursed the gods which they formerly worshipped, and added, 'It was you that infused the savage disposition into us, and now I shall die child-

less, although I have been the father of *nineteen* children.' After this he sat down, and in a flood of tears gave vent to his feelings."

(b) The conscience perverted through prejudice.

Saul of Tarsus was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (the most eminent Jewish teacher of that time), and he was acquainted, not only with Jewish, but also with Grecian literature. Besides the advantages of a liberal education, he was a man whose spirit was deeply imbued with religious feeling, who had a strong attachment to the ancient and venerable institutions of Moses, to the form of religion that was interwoven with their national laws. But his zeal for what he considered to be the honour of God, extinguished all his regard for another man's right of conscience, and in a bloodthirsty frenzy he sought the destruction of all who entertained opinions contrary to his own, and in doing so, he thought he was doing God service. When

Stephen was murdered, the men that stoned him laid their clothes at this young man's feet, and he was consenting unto his death. Yet he declares that he lived in all good conscience. Thus may the light enter through discoloured mediums, and thus may the narrowness of religious bigotry warp the mind, and you will see the zealot, warm with devotion, maddened into a fury by opposition, contradicting in his madness every principle of a holy religion, and persecuting to the death the true servants of the living God. Again and again has such wickedness been perpetrated in the name of religion.

(c) The conscience perverted through lust.

Herod Antipas was not destitute of religious knowledge, for he listened to the preaching of John the Baptist, and the words spoken by the prophet had considerable influence upon his mind, for "he did many things, and heard him gladly" (Mark vi. 20). But while listening to John, he became entangled with Herodias,

his brother Philip's wife, and was brought completely under the power of that cunning and voluptuous woman. Hence it became the duty of the prophet to tell him of his sin, and with the utmost fidelity John said to him, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." This unpleasant declaration was sufficient to alarm the conscience of Herod. But will he listen to the voice of righteousness, and sever at once his adulterous connection? Or will he linger spell-bound with its enchantment, and lose his manhood in the pleasures of sense? Perhaps he felt his position keenly, and might honestly desire to amend his life, and this saying of John's would continue to trouble him, and make his sin exceedingly bitter to him. Then it may be that the compunctions of conscience made him reserved when conversing with his paramour; and as guilt is always suspicious, she would quickly notice this seriousness in him, and would press him to disclose the cause of it. And when the saying was reported to

her, she may have received it in sullen silence, or there may have been an explosion of wrath. Any way, from that time she accounted John as an enemy to her, and thirsted for his blood. Who can tell the intrigues of an ambitious woman, when she considers herself in danger of being put away? And Herodias plots, for she hates the prophet with a cruel hatred, and Herod has no peace with her until John is cast into prison. But while the prophet lives, Herodias is insecure, and her wrath will only be assuaged with blood.

The birthday of Herod was at hand, and a feast was prepared for his nobles. On that day the daughter of Herodias danced, and in a moment of hilarity the king "sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom." * By this rash promise he made himself a mere tool to gratify a lewd woman's revengeful feelings. Mark the malicious ingenuity of this

* Mark vi. 23.

deeply-laid scheme! for all this had been artfully planned to work upon the mind of the weak monarch; and as soon as the oath was sworn, “she said, being before instructed of her mother, Give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger.” * For a time, no doubt, there was a sharp conflict in the king’s mind, as he would like to spare the faithful prophet, partly because he venerated the holy man, † and partly on account of John’s popularity—for Herod “feared the multitude.” But the promise had been given and confirmed with an oath, and how ridiculous a king would appear in the sight of his nobles, without honour and without religion! Hence, however chagrined he might be with the audacious request, “yet for his oath’s sake, and for their sakes that sat with him,” the fatal word was given, and John beheaded.

Poor despicable slave! This foul blot upon thy life will never be obliterated. Thy hand is red with blood, nor can all the waters of the

* Matt. xiv. 8.

† Mark vi. 20.

ocean wash out those stains. Think not that the prophet has spoken to thee for the last time. The face of the innocent man will haunt thy memory, and his words of warning will echo again and again through the chambers of thy soul. Thou canst never forget his looks and his words, and the faintest whisper borne to thee on the wind will startle thee with a vision of the murdered man; and thus, thou mad votary of passion, thy insulted conscience will lash thee for ever with its whip of scorpions.

Thus may the conscience be perverted by the want of light, or by the light falling upon the mind through a discoloured medium, or by wilfully closing our eyes against it, "for men love darkness rather than light." "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single,"—sound, clear, in health,—"thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil,"—depraved, sickly, dim,—"thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light

that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! ”*

§ 5. *Accountability.*

We are accountable to God for the privileges we enjoy, whether we use them or not. We may wilfully exclude the light, and despise the laws of God, but we cannot shake off our responsibility. We may yield to the solicitations of sin, and join the ranks of the ungodly, and abuse the forbearance of God, by plunging deeper and deeper into sin, until the conscience becomes seared and the heart is hard; but for all these things He will bring us into judgment. We may trifle with our stewardship, and try to forget God, and thus, with the giddy multitude, we may rush on to eternity, in the whirl of business or pleasure, heeding not the responsibilities of life, or the solemnity of its issues; but at our hand the buried talent will be required. We must all appear before the great

* Matt. vi. 22, 23.

white throne, the judgment seat of Christ, and there every man's character will be justly estimated, and a righteous sentence passed upon the deeds done in the body, whether they are good or evil.

O man! remember that thou art accountable to God, and that one day He will summon thee into His presence. However unwilling thou art to admit this, the fact is still before thee, and that awful day is coming. There is no place of secrecy in the wide universe where thou canst hide thyself from the view of the All-seeing. "Do I not fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."* In society or in solitude, by day or by night, an eye that never slumbers is fixed on thee; and with the patriarch one may ask, "Doth not He see my ways, and count all my steps?"† Invisible to mortal eye, He walks through the palace and the cottage, through the crowded streets of the city, and in the solitudes of the wilderness. Wherever thou

* Jer. xxiii. 24.

† Job xxxi. 4.

art, He is near thee, nor canst thou escape the swift glance of His eye. We may meditate upon this solemn truth in the words of the Psalmist: "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night

shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.”*

This is the God, great and terrible, before whose tribunal thou must stand. He has proclaimed His law in thy hearing, and for a time has left thee to thyself, to try thee and prove thee, and see what is in thy heart. Understand that He will certainly punish thy transgressions, for the arm of Jehovah is strong enough to bring the stoutest offender to judgment; and He will do it. Think not, O man! to escape the day of reckoning, for death is approaching, and soon thy spirit must stand before the Judge. This is thy day of grace, and, therefore, while mercy is offered and salvation may be obtained, make thy peace with God. Putting away the evil of thy doings, humble thyself before Him, and pray to have thy sins blotted out and thy guilt cancelled.

* Psa. cxxxix. 1-12.



*ON THE
NECESSITIES OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT.*





III.

ON THE NECESSITIES OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT.

THE Christian religion professes to be a revelation from God. Its Founder declared that He came from the bosom of the Eternal Father to reveal His character and to do His will. If we consider the nature and condition of the human spirit, we shall find that what Jesus reveals to us, by His words and His works, is wisely adapted to meet the extraordinary wants of man.

§ 1. *The Remedy for Sin.*

From the mental and moral condition of the human race, we infer that man in his present

state is altogether wrong. For example, we find that his intellectual nature is fitted for the reception of truth, and his moral nature for the practice of virtue. But when reading the history of our race, or looking upon the multitudes around us, we see that the intellect is given up to ignorance, or imposed upon by error; and that the moral nature is deformed by many vicious tendencies. How does it happen that there is such a thick darkness upon the mind? and that a being of such noble endowments should launch away with unbridled impetuosity into all the licentiousness of vice? This deplorable fact is an evidence that man is fallen and degraded; he is not what his Maker designed he should be. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Here, then, is an extraordinary want of our human nature. We require a remedy that will take away this intellectual darkness, and this moral degradation. Where can such a remedy be found?

The teachers of science have boasted that the medicine which they prescribe is an infallible cure for the evils that afflict our race. But when we examine their vaunted prescription, and test it by experiments, we are compelled to condemn it as ineffectual. We have observed that it is possible to enlighten the intellect without correcting the vicious tendencies of the depraved heart, and have only to name Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, Voltaire, Gibbon, and Byron, to show the truth of the assertion. Hence, in considering the derangement that we find in man, we regard it as a question of sin and guilt, and not merely one of ignorance. If it was simply the removal of ignorance that was required, the teaching of science might be a sufficient remedy. But it must be admitted that there is positive evil existing in man; and this fact being admitted, the problem is, what will remove guilt from the conscience and sin from the heart? If, therefore, a man lay his hand upon the specific of

ignorance, and speak of that alone, he does not grapple with the most difficult part of our question, but evades it ; and, consequently, the prescription which he offers will not meet the necessities of the human spirit. Man is a moral leper, and the word of science can never make him clean. We want a remedy that will purify the soul from its moral defilement : where can such a remedy be found ?

God Himself has placed before us an effectual remedy for this moral disease. This remedy is the gospel of Christ. We understand that the mission of Christ was a miraculous interposition on the part of God to accomplish a specified object. That object was to deliver man from the condemnation of the broken law, to free him from the guilt and pollution of sin, and to lift the human spirit into a state of holy fellowship with Himself. Jesus is the great Physician, and He alone can heal the sin-disordered soul. When we come to Him, humbly pleading, " Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make

me clean ;” He replies, “ I will ; be thou clean,” and the leprosy of sin departs. Many have heard those words and have felt the power of them upon their hearts. They know in whom they have believed, and are conscious that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin ; and thus, trusting alone in Him who was wounded for our transgressions, they can rejoice in God who abundantly pardons.

The gospel of Christ is God’s remedy for sin, and this remedy operates in every case with signal success. It gives eyesight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, and life to the dead. It completely breaks the power of sin, and liberates the soul from its bondage. It brings the peace of God to the conscience, and fills the heart with unspeakable joy. In the fact that it eradicates evil from our nature we have a demonstration of its truth, an indisputable proof that it is of God. It is not a matter of mere speculation about which we are speaking, for we learn from experiments

frequently repeated, that this gospel, which was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," is to them that believe "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

"The gospel is a restorative dispensation: this is its primary and most essential feature; and the most dangerous and numerous aberrations from it may be traced to the neglect of considering it in this light. It is not a prescription of a rule of life to the innocent, but the annunciation of a stupendous method of relief for the sinner. Overlooking all petty varieties and subordinate distinctions, it places the whole human race on one level; abases them all in the dust before the Infinite Majesty; and offers indiscriminately a provision of sanctification to the polluted and of pardon to the guilty. These are the glad tidings: this is the jubilee of the whole earth, proclaimed in the songs of angels, celebrated in the praises of the Church, alike in her militant and her tri-

umphant state, — whether toiling in the vale of mortality, or rejoicing before the throne.”*

“The gospel is to me not a matter of complacent speculation only, but of momentous use, of urgent necessity. I come to Jesus Christ because I need pardon, purification, and strength. I feel more abased as He appears more Divine. In the dust I listen to His instructions and commands.”†

§ 2. *The Want of more Light.*

When the intellect essays to grapple with the profound mysteries around us, we become conscious of this want. Nature does not teach all that we desire to know respecting the existence of God and our own destiny. There are problems connected with these subjects that unaided reason cannot explain. We find the human heart instinctively yearning after God; yet “He holdeth back the face of His throne, and spreadeth His cloud upon it.” We see

* Robert Hall.

† John Foster.

around us the havoc made by death, and, perplexed with the mystery, we ask our questions about the dark hereafter; but the only reply we obtain is the sepulchral echo of our own voice: "Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

The researches of philosophy throw no light upon the future state. To the teachers of science, what remains after death is an inscrutable mystery; to be, or not to be, is more than they can predict. They may conjecture about what is probable, but we can derive no certainty from a mere guess. Hence it will appear that on these questions, the intellect, left to itself, is bewildered with the uncertainty of doubt.

The desire of possessing clearer light on these momentous subjects is felt most deeply by those who have most thoroughly considered them. It is said that Socrates desired a Divine Teacher, from whom it would be pos-

sible to learn what was the duty of man to God and to his fellow-man.

Again, that this desire for light from heaven is universally felt, is evident from the number of pretended revelations which have been palmed upon the world. In almost every nation we find a system of worship which is regarded as being Divinely instituted, and sacred books which are esteemed as Divinely inspired. The Chinese, the Hindoos, the Mohammedans, as well as the Christians, believe in a Divine revelation. If there was no necessity for such a revelation, why have these false religions been instituted? and how can we account for the fact that they have been so generally accepted? If man did not realise this stupendous need of his, the impostor would have no motive to forge his revelation, and the people would have no disposition to receive it.

As a traveller in the lone desert, parched with thirst, cries out, "Give me water, or I die;" so the human spirit is athirst for the

water of life, and it can only be satisfied by drinking freely of the life-giving spring. We find in man this unquenchable thirst; and has the Infinite Creator made no provision for it? The heart and the flesh crieth out for the living God; and will He only mock us in our pain? Shall man, with his incomprehensible longings, gaze only on the deceitful mirage, and follow it until he miserably perish? Must he wander forth forlorn and desolate, for ever asking and not receiving, for ever seeking and not finding? Is it the doom of man to live a fugitive, the sport of circumstances? and must he at last leap into the abyss, with no ray of hope and no atom of certainty?

If we consider this extraordinary want of our nature, and then turn to the gospel of Christ, we shall find a special fitness in it to meet this necessity. The blessed gospel imparts the light which the human spirit needs, for Jesus reveals unto us the character of God, and has brought life and immortality to light. It is

said by John, "No man hath fully known God at any time, the only begotten Son," — the eternal Logos, — "which is in the bosom of the Father," — and therefore has the most intimate knowledge of His perfections, — "He hath declared Him," — He has brought to light the hidden things of God, and made manifest to us the glorious excellencies of the Deity. (John i. 18.)

By coming in humility to Christ, we obtain that knowledge of God and salvation we seek in vain elsewhere. In Him we behold "the brightness of the Father's glory," and by Him is the incorruptible God made known. This is the true temple, and here we behold the Eternal Majesty enshrined. "The Logos was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

If thou art yearning for the revelation of God, turn aside and see this great sight : behold the burning bush. Be reverent, I beseech

thee, and gaze on this marvellous phenomenon, for here the spiritual and material are strangely blended. This, indeed, is the wonder of wonders. Listen, I entreat thee, to the voice that calls to thee out of the midst of the fire. Thou art commanded to put off thy shoes, for the place is holy. That word, I say, is spoken to thee, and what the symbolical action signifies, must needs be done. Remember, then, if thou art seeking after God, that He requires thee to lay aside every sin, to put away from thee the pollutions of earth,—as the true knowledge of the living God is revealed to the devout worshipper, and to him only on holy ground.

But, furthermore, consider the words: “I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;” for they speak of the existence of departed men. The bodies of these men had mouldered to dust in the cave of Machpelah ages ago, and yet they live. “This is a great mystery,” sayest thou.

True, we reply, but we are sitting now at the feet of the great Interpreter, and from Him we learn that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." These words have thrown a ray of light across the grave, for they declare the fact that after death the spirit lives.

We are invited to come to Christ, and if we obey His words He will make known to us the love of the everlasting Father. This Jesus, we say, is the great Interpreter, who reveals the mind of God and the heart of God. He brings the good tidings of pardon, and peace, and everlasting life. "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." This is the revelation which is made of God by His only begotten Son, the Divine Logos. He came from the bosom of the Father to make known His love to perishing men. Look at that little word "so," and consider its unutterable meaning. Oh, the vastness of that love! it is like the

vastness of infinity, so great that our thoughts cannot reach unto the heights of it.

The God of the everlasting ages has sent His Son into the world to give His life as a ransom for the guilty, and through His death we may live. "This is the record," said John, "that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life." To impart this life to the soul, the Logos came forth from God. "I am come," He said, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." We have felt the power of His resurrection, and through the quickening energy of the Holy Spirit we live. We can now speak with certainty of the destiny that awaits us. We know that there is a blessed immortality in the future, for "God hath given unto us eternal life." The evidence of this fact is written upon our hearts by the eternal Spirit, for, being the sons of God by adoption, we are therefore

“heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” Hence we infer, that as truly as Christ Himself is now sitting at the right hand of God, this will be the portion of His people. We shall dwell with God for ever. The Lord will send His angels to convey our spirits home, and we shall live with Him and reign with Him through the unwasting ages of eternity.

My brother! if thou art longing for a solution of the dark problems of human existence, come to Jesus, the great Interpreter. Prostrate thyself before Him, and He will hear thy prayer. Wait, I say, upon Him, and He will pour upon thy soul the ineffable splendour of heaven’s pure light.

A Mohammedan, in an address to Jesus, said, “The heart of the afflicted man draws all his comfort from Thy words. The soul resumes its life and vigour when it only hears the sound of Thy name. If ever the mind of man can rise to the contemplation of the mysteries of the Deity, from Thee alone can it draw its

knowledge; Thou must bestow the power which penetrates and charms." *

§ 3. *The Desire for Happiness.*

The quest of happiness is the most absorbing of all the pursuits in which men engage. Indeed, the desire to attain it predominates over all other desires, and exerts its influence upon all that we do. We regard this desire as innocent in itself and capable of being made conducive to the good of man. But the inconsiderate multitudes that ask, Who will show us any good? instead of proceeding in the quest of happiness as reason would dictate, in their impetuous haste they grasp the first glittering bauble they see, play with it awhile, and then discover that they have been deluded with a fallacy.

In order to prevent disappointment, it is needful to understand in what true happiness consists, and how it is possible to attain it.

* Smith's "Testimony to the Messiah," vol. I. 138. Note.

We remark, therefore, that the happiness we need is not to be found in the pleasures of sense.

If it was the doom of man to pass away like the beasts that perish, the questions, "What shall we eat? or what shall we drink?" might be considered the most pertinent to this brief life. But a man, do what he will, cannot reduce himself to a mere animal. For instance, the man knows the difference between wisdom and folly, of which the brute knows nothing. The man may act foolishly — may allow himself to be hurried away by evil desires; but in the hour of sober reflection he will think upon his folly, and will feel the pangs of remorse, and the craving of a still unsatisfied heart. The animal has no such stormful passion invading his existence. Look at the patient ox: he eats only to appease his hunger, and drinks only to allay his thirst, and lives without misgiving, and dies without fear. Truly, if religion is a delusion, and there is no

hereafter, it were better to be a beast than a man.

Experience teaches that the pleasures of sense do not satisfy the soul. "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure; and, behold, this also is vanity." One may chase the phantom pleasure until he thinks it within his grasp; and, lo! it vanishes, and leaves him to brood over his disappointment and bemoan his folly. No man will deliberately adopt a course of life that he is certain will produce nothing but misery. But folly, like an alluring syren, whispers, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant;" and the sensual devotee will follow the fair enchantress, not knowing "that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell." That which can produce only vanity and vexation of spirit, and which ends in utter misery, is not what we need.

Again, we observe that the happiness we

need is not to be found in riches and honour. The following passage is taken from the historian Gibbon:—"In a private condition our desires are perpetually repressed by poverty and subordination; but the lives and labours of millions are devoted to the service of a despotic prince, whose laws are blindly obeyed, and whose wishes are instantly gratified. Our imagination is dazzled by the splendid picture, and whatever may be the cool dictates of reason, there are few among us who would obstinately refuse a trial of the comforts and cares of royalty. It may, therefore, be of some use to borrow the experience of the same Abdalrahman, whose magnificence has perhaps excited our admiration and envy, and to transcribe an authentic memorial which was found in the closet of the deceased caliph. 'I have now reigned above fifty years in victory or peace; beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honour, power and pleasure, have waited

on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: they amount to *fourteen*. O man! place not thy confidence in this present world.'”

We remark further, that the happiness we need is not to be found in the pursuit of knowledge, or in mere intellectual culture.

The pleasure which we derive from the culture of the mind, is the most refined and durable, one thing excepted, of aught that man can find under the heavens; but a few considerations will suffice to show that even this does not produce the happiness we need.

The education of the intellect requires considerable energy of character, and much time must be devoted to the work. But the great mass of the people have no disposition to undertake this task, and, even had they the disposition, they have not the leisure which is

required. Hence it will appear that this pleasure can never become universal.

The training of the intellect, apart from the culture of the heart, has never resulted in true happiness. Byron said, on one occasion: "There is nothing but misery in this world, I think."

Again, we are not to take a partial view of the subject, but must consider it in its entirety. Supposing, therefore, that intellectual culture could produce happiness during the whole of this life, what influence will it have upon us, or what will be its result in the life to come? If it is said that this supposition cannot be admitted, inasmuch as another life is regarded as an improbability, then we reply that the man who is decoyed by intellectual pleasure, although a little more refined, is as blind to the future as the drunkard who is decoyed by the pleasures of sense. It is unwise in man to forget the remote periods, and he needs a happiness that is as permanent as his existence.

The Christian religion is adapted to this necessity of the human spirit. It offers a happiness which is placed within the reach of all, which is suited to each capacity, and which is as durable as eternity. The Christian believer receives a Divine peace, a spiritual joy, and a blessed hope of glory. In these things you will find the elements of true happiness.

The Christian believer has peace with God. Before light from heaven shone upon his mind, he saw not the sinfulness of sin, and was insensible of danger. But when the commandment came, he recognised the voice of Him whom he had sinned against, and, like guilty Adam, fain would have hid himself from His presence. This revelation of God alarmed the conscience, and realising the dread forebodings of justly-merited wrath, he trembled before Him. In his distress he began to plead, "Lord save, or I perish," and in that hour of agony he heard and obeyed the invitation of love, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and

I will give you rest." He remembers with what tenderness the compassionate Saviour received him, and how in His gracious smile he found the blessedness of peace. And now with a grateful heart he exclaims, "O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me."

The Christian believer has a spiritual joy. This joy flows from the consciousness of having fellowship with God. This fellowship is the fellowship of purity and love.

It is the fellowship of purity. Sin, like the leprosy, is a disease that mars the beauty of a man, that makes him loathsome, and excludes him from the society of the holy. But the gospel of Christ is the sovereign remedy for this disease. It gives life and health to the soul, and by imparting moral purity, man is restored to the image of God, and, like Enoch, may walk in holy fellowship with Him. This fellowship is also the fellowship of love. Sin

is the principle of rebellion, and as long as the soul is under its power, it is impossible to love God, or be subject to His will, as only a holy nature can truly love and obey Him. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The gospel removes this enmity by the destruction of sin, for the Holy Spirit regenerates the believer, and he is made a new creature. Then, instead of rebellion, there is obedience, and instead of hatred, love; for "the love of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us." This fellowship of purity and love produces spiritual joy. "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John xv. 10, 11).

The Christian believer has a blessed hope of

future glory. The privilege of adoption bestowed upon the believer is a pledge of the enduring blessedness that awaits him in heaven. "If children," Paul says, "then heirs: heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." The hope of living with Christ, of spending a happy eternity with Him, gladdens the spirit of the Christian, and fills him with unspeakable joy. While crossing the stormy sea of life, this anchor is cast securely within the veil. He knows that by-and-by he will follow the Forerunner thither, and will behold the ineffable glory of the Godhead, where the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and where the host of the redeemed worship Him. Like the psalmist he exclaims, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Through faith in Christ there is given to us this Divine peace, this spiritual joy, and this blessed hope. We speak of what we know,

and testify of what we have seen. We are as certain that we enjoy these spiritual blessings, and that there is true happiness in the enjoyment of them, as we are of our consciousness or of our identity.

§ 4. *The Capability of Growth.*

The capacity of unlimited progress is the special characteristic of the human spirit. But if it is the law of our nature to grow, where can we find the indispensable conditions of growth?

In order to develop the principle of life, life in its lowest forms, it is needful to plant the seed in congenial soil. You cannot grow a majestic oak on the barren peak of a mountain, in the region of everlasting snows. In those high latitudes vegetation dwindles to a stunted shrub or a bit of moss. But plant an acorn in its native soil, and forthwith it begins to develop itself; a tiny root strikes downward, a tiny stem shoots upward; the sun glances at

the tender sapling, the wind plays around it, the showers fall upon it, and in the process of years it grows into the pride of the forest. If you deprive the seed of its congenial soil and climate, and the light and heat and moisture which it needs, it can never arrive at perfection. Thus, also, in order to develop a man, and make him a perfect man, certain conditions are indispensable. If the soul has the capacity of unlimited progress, where can we find the congenial soil, and the sunlight, and the pure atmosphere in which it may develop itself?

Our attention is directed to scientific culture, for this, say the modern expounders of science, is what we need to develop the man. We reply to these ambitious reasoners, that man is a moral agent, and it is needful for him to be holy. We find that the true progress of man is inseparably associated with holiness, and the possibility of attaining to holiness implies that there is in man those capabilities that make a philosopher, and something more.

Two things we regard as essential in order to develop the perfect man : namely, wisdom and love. Wisdom for the intellect and love for the heart. As light and heat are essential to vegetation, so are these to the human spirit. Of these two, it may be said that wisdom is great, but love is greater. The first is a revelation of God in nature, the last is the revelation of God in Christ. Wisdom, we say, is great ; it will produce a Socrates : but love is greater, it will produce an Apostle John. But wisdom and love ought not to be divorced, for there is no antipathy between them. Let the light of wisdom shine upon the mind, and let the free breeze of pure love sweep over the heart, and you will see the man growing to perfection. One such specimen of manhood has been given to the world, and that is the Apostle Paul.

Where can you find a man to compare with the Apostle of the Gentiles, a man, the excellence of whose character all the world admires.

If you ask of him the secret of his greatness, he will not trace it to the wisdom of the schools, nor to the formalities of a national creed, but he will tell you, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Christianity alone can produce a man like Paul. The gospel of Christ won the homage of his mighty intellect, and the love of Christ wrought in him so powerfully that it made him, of all men the most devout, of all men the most large-hearted, of all men the most earnest, of all men the most like his Master. The position he now occupies he owes to the religion of which he was so able an advocate. His noble life is written on the brightest page of the world's history; and the memorial will never be obliterated, for the Church of Christ has embalmed his name, and she will hand it down,

as a type of true manhood, to the latest generations.

The gospel, we affirm, is adapted to the necessities of the human spirit, and a Christian is the highest style of man. We were walking early one morning round the base of a mountain. During the night a mist had wrapped its dark mantle round the solitary monarch, and while we pursued our journey the day was breaking, yet scarcely anything was visible but fog. Now and again a gust of wind rushed up the mountain side, and threw the mist in queer, fantastic shapes. Then, as the morning slowly advanced, the breeze stiffened, till at length, when the sun looked forth from the east, the wind had swept away the mist. Enraptured, we gazed on the bold outline of the mountain made lovely with the beauty of the morning, and it seemed as though an angel had been there, and bathed it in a flood of glory.

Thus, when spiritual light is breaking upon the mind, the misty pollutions of sin are swept

away by the Holy Spirit, and upon the renewed soul the Sun of Righteousness shines with healing in His wings. Then the human spirit, wrapped in the glory of heaven, becomes Divinely beautiful. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is " (1 John iii. 2).

*ON THE SPIRITUAL TRUTHS TAUGHT
BY CHRIST.*



IV.

ON THE SPIRITUAL TRUTHS TAUGHT BY CHRIST.

WE learn from the Gospel narrative that the Jews, before their dispersion, were expecting the advent of the Prince Messiah. Hence, when John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, all men wondered if he was the Coming One ; and even the rulers sent priests and Levites to ask of him if he were the Christ, or Elias, or that prophet foretold by Moses. In answer to their inquiries, John spoke of another that was coming, mightier than he, and confessed he was not the Christ, but was come as the herald of the Lord's

Anointed, to prepare the way before Him. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah" (John i. 23).

When Jesus Himself began to teach, He taught as one having authority, and as a proof of His Divine mission, He wrought many miracles. He calls our attention to these miracles as an evidence that He came forth from God; hence He said to the disciples, "Believe me for the very works' sake" (John xiv. 11). We read of some instances where many saw and believed (John xi. 45), and how, on account of His marvellous doings, His fame was spread abroad (Matt. ix. 26). The rulers had heard of this Wonder-worker, and so deep an impression was made by these miracles upon the mind of Nicodemus (a member of the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation), that he was prompted by curiosity to seek an opportunity of conversing personally with Christ. Whether from pride or timidity, or whether (as

appears to us most probable) he thought the night season the most favourable for communing without interruption, it is difficult to say, but he came to Jesus by night, and from that interview arose one of the most interesting and instructive conversations recorded in the New Testament. We regard this man as a type of those who are partially instructed in Divine truths, who admit that Jesus is a Divine Teacher, and who are willing to sit at His feet, while He expounds more fully the spiritual truths of His gospel.

§ 1. *The Doctrine of Regeneration.*

(a) The necessity of the new birth.

The great Teacher explained to Nicodemus,—and to all who are seeking the knowledge of salvation,—the necessity of this new birth. The language He employs is remarkably emphatic: “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ” (John iii. 3).

There is a seeming abruptness in this address, arising probably from Jesus giving His reply, not to what the Jewish ruler had said, but to the state of his mind and the object of his visit. If, therefore, we are anxious to know the truth as it is in Jesus, we must consider, in the first place, the importance of regeneration.

The change spoken of by our Divine Teacher is a moral change. It is not merely a change of opinion, or an alteration in some parts of the conduct only, but it is a thorough radical change of the heart and the life, even the making of a new man, the beginning of a higher life by another birth. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17).

The necessity of this change will be manifest if we consider that holiness is a moral quality of which the natural man is destitute. Neither is it in the power of man to deliver himself

from the impurity of sin, and hence (as holiness is imparted by the Spirit of God to those alone who trust in Christ), before we can enter into this spiritual kingdom, the Holy Spirit must, by His almighty energy, cleanse the heart from the pollution of sin, and renew the soul in holiness. It is necessary that a man be born into the world, and open his eyes upon the beauties of nature, before he can enjoy or understand anything about them; so one must be born of the Spirit of God before he can enjoy the privileges of a Christian, or understand anything of invisible realities. Life in its highest sense belongs only to those who are born of God.

(b) The nature of the new birth.

What then, we inquire, is the nature of this new birth, and how is the change produced? The carnal understanding of Nicodemus was astounded with the mystery of a spiritual birth. But the Divine Teacher (mark His condescension) seeks to remove the perplexity of the

ruler by making the subject plain,—so plain that the feeblest capacity may understand Him. For this purpose He selected a figure which aptly illustrates the great and momentous subject: “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

To rightly interpret this passage, we must consider first, the change itself, and second, the illustration of it. The change is not physical, but moral and spiritual. This was the mystery that puzzled the mind of Nicodemus, and therefore an expressive illustration was selected to enable him to comprehend it. As this was unquestionably the design of Christ, water is used, not to indicate the ordinance of baptism, but merely as an emblem of that change which is wrought by the Holy Spirit. Hence only one thing is intended (that is, the renovation of the soul), though two things are mentioned (*viz.*, the change itself, and the illustration of it). In a similar manner, when

John the Baptist said of Christ, "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Matt. iii. 11), he spoke of fire, to illustrate the refining operations of the promised Spirit. Thus, also, water is used by our Divine Teacher as a figure to shadow forth the nature of regeneration; for as water cleanses and purifies the body, so the Holy Spirit purifies the conscience, and cleanses the heart. It is asserted that this change is produced by the Holy Spirit. Sin is a deadly evil, that degrades and defiles the soul, and only by the energy of the Spirit of God can its power be broken, and the soul quickened into life. We need such an all-powerful Agent to deliver us from our galling bondage, and to impart to us the purity of holiness. And here the true remedy is found, one that works sweetly upon the soul, unloosing the bands of sin with an almighty easiness, and by illimitable power quickening it into newness of life. We learn from this Divine Teacher that those who are

born of the Spirit inherit the privileges of the Christian, and become partakers of the Divine nature. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 11, 12).

(c) A mystery, yet a fact.

How the Spirit of God acts upon the human spirit, may be utterly beyond our comprehension; but there are other things equally mysterious, which nevertheless we admit as true. Perhaps while the Lord was speaking to Nicodemus, they could hear the fluttering of leaves, shaken by the passing wind, and the incident was at once seized upon to illustrate the important doctrine. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (v. 8). As though He had said, "Behold

in this, the natural effect of an invisible agent, and cease to marvel at what I have told thee of the operations of the Holy Spirit; 'for if in the natural world, and before our eyes, visible results are produced by unseen and unknown causes, much more may it be so in the spiritual world.' "

But, says the incredulous ruler, "How can these things be?" (v. 9.) Though Jesus had spoken plainly, and had illustrated the subject by the most apposite simile, Nicodemus was bewildered with amazement; what was submitted to the senses he could decide upon, but the higher laws of the spiritual were too ethereal for him to grasp; yet, notwithstanding this incapacity, he professed to teach others the way of salvation, for he was a master in Israel, "a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes."

Hence we may learn that it is possible for the mind to be educated under the outward

forms of religion, till it becomes the blind devotee of materialism. A training under the pompous ritual of a national religion too frequently entangles the soul in the visible signs of invisible things; the spirit is lost in the letter, and after a time nothing remains but the shadow of a glory that is departed. When the spiritual nature is thus fed with physical objects only, when it asks for bread and we give it a stone, the truths with which it ought to be familiar, and which are essential to its development and growth, are profound mysteries.

We have found two things under the heavens extremely difficult to accomplish: one is, to convince a man like Nicodemus that he is in error; and the other, for that man to break away from old habits and prejudices which he has nursed for years, and which have appeared to him sanctified by the name of religion.

(*d*) A well-merited rebuke.

To the question of Nicodemus, Jesus answered in the language of reproof, "Art thou a master

in Israel, and knowest not these things?" (v. 10.) There was no excuse for his ignorance, as he had the opportunity of informing himself from the Old Testament of the nature of this fundamental doctrine. He may have known how David prayed, "Create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. li. 10); or he may have read the gracious promise that was given through the prophet Ezekiel (xxxvi. 26): "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, and I will put My Spirit within you." But what is only intimated in a few places is seldom discovered, and this eminent Jewish ruler,—a teacher of God's holy law,—was explaining to others the physical parts of a subject which, without the spiritual, was meaningless and of no value. To rebuke his temerity the Divine Teacher declared, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen" (v. 11).

Experimental knowledge is indispensable in order to be successful in teaching the way of life to others. If a man is destitute of this qualification, he may get his living in a honest business, but he is not to meddle with holy orders.

§ 2. *The Connection of Regeneration with Reconciliation.*

In order to place the human spirit right with God, two things are essential, namely, a change of relation and a change of character. By one, the condemnation of sin is removed, and by the other, its pollution. One is justification, the other is regeneration. One gives a title to life, by the other life is imparted. One is the immediate result of faith in the death of Christ, for we are "justified by His blood;" the other is effected in the believer by the immediate operation of the Spirit, and thus he is born of God. One is a change from condemnation to absolution, the other is a change from pollution to purity. But while these two

things are distinct from each other, they are kindred blessings, for at the same moment that the guilt of past sin is remitted or forgiven, the Holy Spirit renews the soul in righteousness. Hence it will appear that there is the most intimate connection between the sacrificial death of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

To enable Nicodemus to see the connection of these related truths, the Divine Teacher illustrated the design of His coming and death by quoting a notable incident from the history of the Jews. This master in Israel had read of the flying fiery serpents in the wilderness, and of the brazen serpent which Moses made, and how the dying, by looking upon it, lived (Numb. xxi. 5-8) : and thus "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (ver. 14, 15). Here it is intimated that sin is a deadly evil; like the bite of a

fiery serpent, it is fatal, and unless delivered from it, the soul must certainly perish. But, according to the appointment of God, the death of Christ restores the believing soul to life and health, as of old, the serpent set upon a pole was the means of healing the serpent's bite; and, as in the one instance they were to look and live, so in the other they are to believe and be saved. Thus it is manifest that the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit are intimately related, for on the condition of looking to Jesus, the crucified, God has promised to heal our soul-diseases; and even while we look the sovereign efficacy reaches our hearts by the agency of the Holy Spirit; and thus, when trusting alone in Jesus, our sins are forgiven, and in that moment the Spirit of God, by His almighty power, purifies and quickens the soul, and we are born again.

On this important subject, compare the teaching of Paul with the teaching of Jesus. In the seventh chapter of Romans, the apostle de-

scribes the helpless condition of a sinner. He represents one with the pride of a Pharisee, looking with self-complacency upon his fancied goodness, and who, trusting in the formalities of religion, thinks that the threatening of the law will pass by him. But the pleasant dream is suddenly interrupted, for light breaks upon his mind, and he discovers that he has fallen far short of what the law requires. That law, which he supposed was ordained to life, he finds is an enemy to him, for it reveals his guilt and seizes him as a culprit. He is now exceedingly afraid, for the broken law speaks to him of nothing but death, and appears as terrible as when it was uttered in thunder from the burning mount, when Sinai shook at the presence of God, and Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." The inflexible law takes hold of the transgressor, and hales him into the presence of the Judge, and he can hear the sentence of condemnation pronounced against him.

But, furthermore, the apostle shows that

the tyrant Sin has taken possession of the heart. It was sin that lured him to rebellion, by unduly exciting the carnal propensities, and which caused him to despise the restraints which the law imposed. The Enchanter came to him, concealing the foulest deformities under flaring colours and a wily speech; and ere he was aware he was hopelessly entangled, and made a bondman of sin. In vain he struggled to be free; the tyrant held him with the grasp of a giant, and bound the deluded victim hand and foot. Who is able to deliver him from the stern sentence of the broken law, and from the cruel tyranny of indwelling sin? Who can rescue the captive from the hand of the mighty, and snap the fetters that bind the spirit? The bondage is exceedingly bitter, and he feels that he is utterly helpless; and, lo, he is sinking rapidly to misery and death. Listen to the wail that is wrung from him by his untold agony, "O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The gospel brings the good news of salvation to such despairing souls; and here we have the remedy that takes away both the guilt and filth of sin, for by the sufferings of Christ we are released from the condemnation of the law, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are delivered from the bondage of sin. This remedy is effectual even in the most desperate case, as one can testify that tried it: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). Friend, art thou bitten by that serpent, sin, and does the poison now inflame thee, and cause thee to writhe in agony? Thinkest thou it is hurrying thee to certain death? Dying mortal, raise thy head and look to the cross. Look, I entreat thee, to the sin-atonement sacrifice; look this moment, look and live. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

§ 3. *The Revelation of God.*

The incarnation of the eternal Logos is a fact which reveals more clearly than aught else the character of the everlasting God. In the works of creation we behold the amazing power and wisdom of the Lord Jehovah, but in Christ He has spoken to us from His heart, and made manifest the greatness of His love. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." There is love, infinite love, love too vast for language to express, dwelling in the bosom of God, and hence He sent His well-beloved Son into the world. It was not a spasmodic, capricious feeling, that for a moment gained the mastery of a dire, vindictive passion, but it was love flowing from its eternal Fountain. It was not a blind or partial affection that could lavish its riches upon a few favourites, and damn the rest,—such a crude notion of the Godhead is not in the revelation of Christ,—but it was a love that yearned to enfold in its wide embrace

the whole human family. "God so loved the world."

The advent of the Son of God is the most unique event in the history of the world. But why did He come from the bosom of the Father, and take upon Himself our human nature? He came into the world to vindicate the honour of the violated law, not by striking down the rebel with the sword of justice, but that He, the holy and innocent, should die for the guilty, and that through His sufferings salvation should be free to all. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

In this method of expiating human guilt, by substituting the innocent to die for the transgressor, the great King has blended the dignity of Lawgiver with the tenderness of a Father, and has thus manifested the depth of His wisdom and the riches of His love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He

loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10).

In this revelation we see the perfections of the Godhead. The Lord our God is not a despotic Sovereign, ungracious in His character and unreasonable in His demands, but He is a loving Father, that delights to bless His children, and who liberally provides for every need. In the history of our race we find that man has often been a foe to himself, and has brought upon himself many a curse; but God has always been his best and truest Friend. Is He not every day long-suffering to the rebellious, not willing that they should perish? And how does He treat our ingratitude and sin? Is it not with great forbearance and pity? And does He not frequently interpose to expostulate with the wayward, and to repeat again and again in their hearing, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked?" Like the prodigal, one may wander into a far country, and by his

extravagance bring himself to shame and a morsel of bread; but there is one heart bleeding for him, one anxious watcher in the far away home. Dost thou say, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee"? Be assured, my brother, that He will graciously receive thee; nay, more, He will eagerly run to meet His returning child, and will kiss thy aching brow in token of His forgiving love. There will be great rejoicings at home on thy return, and of thee it will be said, "This My son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found." Dost thou desire to know the character of God? Then listen to the pleadings of His love, and turn away from the follies of sin. Repent of the evil thou hast done, and return to God now, for He will abundantly pardon. In forgiveness, in purity, in Divine communion, we receive the manifestation of His love, and become acquainted with the deep things of God.

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.”

§ 4. *The Conditions of Salvation.*

We learn from this interview with Nicodemus that faith in the Son of God is the indispensable condition of receiving mercy: “Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” The faith of which Jesus speaks is not the assent and consent of the understanding to the truth of certain doctrines merely, as it is possible to have an orthodox creed, and yet be as far from having an experimental knowledge of salvation, as hell is from heaven. “Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble” (James ii. 19).

Again, a man may be sincere in his belief, and yet have neither a true knowledge of God nor a true faith in Christ. One may suppose that he is living to glorify God, and may

faithfully discharge what he believes to be his duty, and yet be a stranger to vital godliness. There was sincerity in Saul of Tarsus when, like a hungry wolf, he laid waste the flock of Christ.

Faith in the Son of God includes a knowledge of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; a feeling of our lost and helpless condition, and also a knowledge of the truth that the Lord Jesus "was wounded for our transgressions." Then a trusting in, and a relying upon the precious blood of Christ, is the faith by which the ungodly are justified; and as "Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," so our belief in the promise of God, and our trust in the sacrifice of Christ is also imputed to us, and we that are guilty and deserve to die, are justified, or reckoned as innocent, because we obey the command of God, and trust alone in Him who died for our sins.

Two things are always found in connection

with this act of faith, by which we may know if it is genuine.

(a) Faith implies the entire surrender of the soul to God. As Christ gave Himself for us, He requires that we should give ourselves to Him ; and only on this condition can we enjoy the spiritual blessings of His kingdom. “ I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,”—because He has lavished upon you the treasures of His grace,—“ that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service ” (Rom. xii. 1). The offering must be perfect, without spot or blemish, and as fully devoted to God as the whole burnt-offering under the law, every part of which was consumed upon the altar. This sacrifice of the heart, and consecration of the life, is the only service consistent with reason and acceptable to God. Faith in Christ, therefore, implies that whatever opposes the will of God is subverted, that the soul has renounced its idolatry, and crucified

the old man ; that henceforth God is our portion, and we are His. If we give up all for Christ, and with a believing heart trust in the only sacrifice for sin, then our guilt is cancelled, and we are adopted into the family of God.

(*b*) The believer enjoys the assurance of pardon. By the renewing of the Holy Spirit we are raised out of the death of sin into the life of holiness. Hence there must be such a receiving and such a believing of the Gospel, that the soul will throb with a new spiritual life ; the outward revelation, which is accepted as the word of God, must be made soul-quickenings by the eternal Spirit ; and in those who believe unto salvation, there is such an inward revelation, spoken to the conscience and written on the heart. “ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ” (John iii. 36) ; “ In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins ” (Eph. i. 7) ; “ Therefore being justified by faith we have

peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

We observe on these facts that the spiritual truths taught by our Divine Teacher are such as are indispensable to the weal of men. For example, He reveals the only way of delivering the soul from sin and its penal consequences; of attaining holiness and the concomitant blessings of liberty and peace, and joy and love, and everlasting life; in fact, He reveals the only way of placing the soul right in its relation to God. But, in order that the instruction He gives may be profitable, there must be a personal application of it. The marrow of the Gospel, as Luther observed, is in the personal pronouns. We may adopt the language of Paul, and say, "Who loved me and gave Himself for me." Now, therefore, O my soul, look to the Redeeming Saviour, for He came to seek and to save that which was lost; and therefore He is my Saviour, He is my sacrifice, He is my advocate, He is my Lord and my God.

*ON REDEMPTION BY OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST.*





V.

ON REDEMPTION BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

By redemption we understand—

First, the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. In this sense we take Rom. iii. 24, “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Second, a deliverance from the guilt and pollution of sin, which is realised by faith in Christ. To this, we think, the apostle refers in Eph. i. 7, “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin.”

The first of these passages alludes more particularly to the instrumental cause of justification, namely, the propitiatory offering of Christ;

the second, to the beneficent effect which the believer has realised through faith in His blood.

The term reconciliation is employed by the apostle in the same manner, as may be seen from the following quotations:

First, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Second, "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. v. 10, 11).

First, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ."

Second, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 18, 20).

As we wish to refer particularly to the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, and to the experimental knowledge of that subject which the

believer enjoys, we shall speak of the first under the term atonement, and of the second under the term justification. The terms redemption and reconciliation may be employed to denote either or both of these things, and thus illustrate their indissoluble relationship. It is true, there may be atonement without justification, as men may refuse to accept the conditions of mercy; but there cannot be justification without atonement, for "without the shedding of blood is no remission." If, therefore, it is true that we are justified by faith, it is true also that the death of Christ is an atonement for sin, as justification is the result of faith in His blood.

§ I. *The Atonement.*

In discussing this high and mysterious subject, we will endeavour to keep ourselves free from all theories, and will give, as honestly as we can, an exposition of what the sacred writers teach.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has carefully expounded the ritual of the old dispensation, and from him we learn that the priesthood and sacrifices under the law were only typical institutions that foreshadowed a sacrifice of greater value and a Priest of higher birth. In the first chapter of that Epistle we have a description of this glorious Personage. He is God's own Son, the Heir of all things, the Creator of all worlds, the effulgence of the Divine glory, the express image of His person, and by the word of His power He sustains the immense fabric of the universe. He has accomplished a great work for the sons of Adam, namely, by Himself He has made expiation for sin, and is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Inasmuch as He is the Son of God, He must be infinitely higher than the angels, "For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee?" But who can describe the excellence of His name, for His throne endureth

for ever, and all the angels of God worship Him?

Yet, in His amazing condescension, He took upon Himself our human nature, and was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. The specified object of His incarnation was "that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." We understand from these passages that Jesus became man in order that He might offer Himself as an expiatory victim for human guilt.

But consider, further, if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? What need was there that the old

dispensation should be abrogated? Because of its inferior priesthood and the insufficiency of its sacrifices,—a constant change in the priesthood bespeaks its weakness,—and “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.” “But Christ having presented Himself an high priest of the blessings to come, through a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this (world’s) fabrication; and not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us, He entered once for all into the holy place. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and an heifer’s ashes sanctifieth to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your consciences from dead works, in order that ye may serve the living God?” In this passage the blood of Christ is spoken of as our redemption price, and His death is referred to as an expiatory sacrifice.

There are a few more passages in this Epistle which we cannot omit: "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." "The blood of the everlasting covenant." In these quotations an unprejudiced mind may discern that the writer regarded Christ as a piacular victim, and that His death was not merely the death of a martyr, but an oblation to make an atonement for sin.

With these statements, we may compare the sayings of two remarkable men, which have been preserved by the Evangelist John. One of these men was John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, and the other was no less a personage than the Jewish high priest.

Of the Baptist it is said, "The next day

John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world " (John i. 29).

The latter clause of this passage refers to the sacrificial work of Christ, for He is spoken of as an expiatory victim, like those which were offered under the law. It was ordained of old that the transgressor of the law should bring a substitute to the altar, and that the priest should put his hands over and upon the head of the sacrifice ; and thus the sin of the guilty was laid upon the innocent, the victim was punished with death for the sins committed, and the sinner was freed from the penalty of the law. Thus did our Lord Jesus Christ "redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). He delivered up Himself to die for our offences, and as a spotless victim He endured in His own body the penalty of our sin. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto

righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet. ii. 24).

The Evangelist has also preserved the saying of the high priest. “And one of them named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” Then follows an explanation of the purport of these words. “And this he spake not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John xi. 49-52).

In ages past it had been the custom to inquire of the Lord by the high priest, and those that sought counsel of him were answered by Urim and Thummim.* But the oracle had long been dumb, for the office

* See Numb. xxvii. 21 ; 1 Sam. xxiii. 9-12.

which had been Divinely instituted was now strangely perverted. The high priesthood was no longer hereditary, but frequently bought and sold, and that sacred office, which by the original appointment continued for life, was now frequently disposed of to the highest bidder and the best political tool. Caiaphas was the high priest that year,—a fact which we must emphasise, inasmuch as that is the reason why these words were put in his mouth; and hence we may regard them as being delivered with the authority of the mysterious Urim and Thummim. This was the last Divine utterance from the Jewish high priest, and he spoke now, by prophetic inspiration, of the sacrificial death of Christ. In a little while the Levitical institutions would be for ever abolished, but before the gorgeous symbolism vanished away, the successor of Aaron pointed to Jesus, as the one expiatory Victim who should die for the people. That this man should speak of Christ as a propitiatory sacri-

fice, appeared to our Evangelist a singular coincidence, a fact of great significance; and it will appear so to us, if we consider it with due attention, for these words are spoken as from an ancient oracle, and here its revelations end.

Consider, in the next place, the words of Christ Himself, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). The term *λυτρον* denotes the price that is paid to deliver one from death (Ex. xxi. 30) or from captivity (Lev. xxv. 51); and thus Jesus came and gave His life as the ransom-price of our salvation.

"This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28).

When God made a covenant with Abram He commanded him to take an heifer, a goat, and a ram, and divide them in the midst, and at night a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces. Thus in the

blood of those sacrificial victims the promise was ratified (Gen. xv. 9-17).

Again, when the covenant with the children of Israel was confirmed, Moses "took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you" (Heb. ix. 19, 20).

But this is a new covenant, which sets forth the terms of reconciliation between God and man, and this blood is poured out, not to ratify the covenant only, but as a piacular sacrifice (in which the victim died instead of the man) on account of which the guilty may be forgiven. We may confide in God's promise of mercy, for it is sealed with blood, and through the death of Christ we receive the remission of sins.

The apostle has given a particular explanation of this subject in his Epistle to the Romans, which we will now consider.

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

Here the law-breaker is arraigned for his crimes, and being without excuse, conscience smites him, and he feels that he is liable to the condemnation and punishment of the righteous Lawgiver, God, for the law condemns the transgressor, and can give him no hope of mercy.

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Inasmuch as all men have broken God’s law, it is utterly impossible to regain His favour by law-keeping, as the law demands satisfaction for past transgressions, and indeed, so far from attaining justification by legal obedience, we find, when we compare ourselves with the holy law, that it only discovers our sins, and we stand before it convicted of guilt.

“ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe : for there is no difference : for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

But it has pleased God to make known a way whereby the sinner may be absolved from the legal penalties incurred by his disobedience, and of this method the law and the prophets bear witness; the former by its rites and ceremonies, and the latter by their predictions. From this Divine plan of saving men we learn that we cannot secure rightness with the law and with God by obedience to the law, for we are sinners, and have fallen short of the glory of God; but salvation may be obtained, and is even now offered to all alike, on the condition of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. “ Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God hath set forth to

be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 19-26).

The gracious God will freely and abundantly pardon, because Jesus delivered up Himself to death, to ransom us from the penalty of the broken law. Hence He is set forth as the propitiatory sacrifice, and through faith in His blood the guilt of past sin is remitted, and the sinner is absolved from all his transgressions. Mark, it is not by faith in His teaching, or in His example, but by faith in His blood, that the ungodly are justified. Thus the righteousness of God is now manifested, because the death of Christ has satisfied the claims of the law, and sin may be pardoned, not by an irrational exercise of the prerogative of mercy, but by a display of mercy which is consistent

with justice, for through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and because He has by His death expiated our sin, God can "be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Compare now with the teaching of the apostle the predictions of the prophets of old. Isaiah says, "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." "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken." "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for He shall bear their iniquities." "He was numbered with the transgressors: and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. liii). "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to

make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy " (Dan. ix. 24).

By a careful examination of these passages it will be abundantly manifest that the sacred writers regarded the death of Christ as an expiation for sin. They teach explicitly that it was necessary for Christ to suffer (Luke xxiv. 46); that His death meets the requirements of the broken law, or the demands of justice (Gal. iii. 13; Eph. ii. 13-17); that through His blood, and through that alone, it is possible to obtain salvation (Eph. i. 7; Heb. ix. 22); and that His death is a sufficient sacrifice, ransom, and oblation, for the sins of the whole world (1 John ii. 1, 2).

From the fact that a man in distress on account of sin is afraid of God, we may learn man's need of such a mediator as our Lord Jesus Christ. The self-righteous Pharisee may know nothing of this necessity, as he is pure in

his own eyes ; but one who has a knowledge of the law and of his own sinfulness, who can see the enormity of sin and feel the burden of his guilt, such a one knows the need of an advocate ; for the idea which the purity of the law gives him of the justice and holiness of God and of his own deformity almost drives him to despair. Were it possible to look into the heart of this man, to describe faithfully what he feels and longs for, we should learn the absolute need of an Arbitrator between the offended Legislator and the offending transgressor. In the language of the patriarch this yearning of the soul has found utterance for itself. " For He is not a man as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both " (Job ix. 32, 33).

One of the old Puritans has related how a certain Highlander hearing a minister denounce the sins of which he was guilty, became deeply

concerned about his soul, and said, "I will give him twenty cows to reconcile God and me."* What the guilty feel they need has been provided for them. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6).

§ 2. *Justification by Faith.*

The act of faith by which a sinner is justified is an act of which he must be conscious, for how can a man believe and not know that he believes? But the believer is not only conscious of his act of faith, he must also be conscious of the immediate result which faith in Christ produces, for it is said, "The just shall live by faith." Is it possible for the soul to be quickened into life—for the believer to live, and not know that he lives? The question needs no answer.

When we speak of redemption in Christ

* Goodwin's Works, vol. v. p. 174.

Jesus, we do not refer to the creed of any Church, Episcopal or otherwise, but we speak of a truth that may be submitted to experiment, a truth that gives life to the soul. We invite all honest men to examine this fact, to try it, and prove it, for there is nothing in religion of which we are ashamed, and there is nothing to conceal.

In order, therefore, to rightly understand this matter, we will appeal to those witnesses who saw the risen Lord, who knew and confessed the truth in the face of many adversaries. They are witnesses whose testimony is unimpeachable, and they assure us that they knew in whom they believed, and realising the verities of the Christian faith, their life was hid with Christ in God.

1. *The Testimony of Apostles.*

The Apostle John, in the beginning of his Epistle, refers to those historical facts which lie at the foundation of Christianity. "That

which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). We are reminded here that the true disciple is united to the saints in the fellowship of love, and to the Father and the Son in the fellowship of holiness. The apostle adverts to these facts in order to show that we possess the fullness of spiritual joy by union with God and communion with the saints.

But he explains the subject more particularly by stating that Christ has revealed unto us the perfections of the Godhead. "This, then, is the message we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (ver. 5). To guard the subject from the possibility of misconception, he points out the fundamental principle of the gospel, and declares that "God, its Author, is the fountain of light and purity, unsullied by any shadow of darkness whatever." Light is the

emblem of purity and perfection, and hence we learn that the first principle of vital religion is that God is holy and happy and perfect.

The apostle then observes that on the condition of walking in the light—walking in holiness—we may enjoy fellowship with God. But “if we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” It is the consummation of folly to make a profession of religion when the soul is foul with sin, for God is holy, and we cannot enjoy fellowship with Him if we walk in darkness, if we live in sin. If one should say that he enjoys this communion, and yet has not escaped from the pollution and degradation of sin, such an one is merely a counterfeit, a deceiver, a pernicious libel. Go, thou hypocrite, to thine own company, and do not attempt to deceive thyself or others with the mere pretensions of piety; for “what communion hath light with darkness? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” But if the

heart is pure, we are permitted to enter into the presence of God, and behold His glory. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." Hence we learn that it is the privilege of the Christian believer to enjoy fellowship with God, and that moral purity is indispensable to this mystical union. But one may inquire, How is it possible for sinful men to enjoy this privilege? To this question the apostle replies, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

It is evident that the apostle speaks here from his own consciousness, and that he refers to a common privilege. We learn from the testimony of those whose hearts have been purified, that believing in Christ who died for us is not a vain thing, for such is the efficacy of His blood, that whosoever believes in Him immediately receives the pardon of sin, and is delivered from its power. We have complete redemption through the atoning sacrifice, nor do we blindly

guess at the conclusion, but enjoy the evidence of it sealed upon the conscience, for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The Apostle Peter, after referring to the Christian's hope, appeals to the consciousness of the believer in these words, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. i. 8, 9). This language may appear strange to those who are unacquainted with the gospel. It may seem to them a hard saying to speak of loving a person whom we have never seen, and believing in one without beholding him, yet it is a saying that will admit of a reasonable explanation. For as the glory of the inheritance which God hath prepared for His people is so great that imagination cannot pourtray it, so the anticipation of that inconceivable glory even now fills the soul with a

joy that cannot be expressed. Again, the Christian religion not only gives unto the believer the expectation of an eternal weight of glory, but also a foretaste of it, for mark the words of the apostle, "Ye receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." This salvation includes all that we receive through the exercise of faith in Christ, namely, redemption from sin, the blessed hope of the future inheritance, and the love that is poured forth into the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given to us, and hence, having this salvation, we have unutterable joy.

The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans makes this declaration: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. i. 16).

Here there is a distinct avowal of the efficacy of the gospel and of the extent of its benefits. Speaking from his own consciousness, he declares that the gospel is the power of God unto

the salvation of the believer; that in one sense it is limited, as only the believer receives the benefits of it, but in another sense it is unlimited, as it is offered freely to the Jew and the Greek, for God is no respecter of persons. We may learn from a personal experiment that the gospel is the effectual remedy for sin, and the man who has felt its power has no reason to be ashamed of his confidence, but may glory in it, and testify to all what great things God has done for him.

In order to understand the Christian religion we must bring it to the test of an experiment. It was not given from heaven that men should crystallise it into a creed and dogmatise upon its mysteries, but it was given as the remedy for sin. Submit it to this test, and it will be found the power of God unto salvation, for it delivers the sinner from the bondage of sin, and fills the soul with unspeakable joy. This is a fact which is confirmed by the consciousness of every true Christian. If "he that believeth on

the Son hath everlasting life," surely the believer must know whether or not he has this life? If "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins," can we enjoy this common privilege and not know that we have it? Can one have a hatred to sin and a love to God, and not be conscious of it? Can one rejoice in the liberty of the sons of God, and yet have no certain knowledge of his adoption? Nay, we are conscious that a great change has taken place, that "old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." But wherever there is this consciousness; wherever there is one delivered from the guilt and pollution of sin; wherever the Spirit of God has regenerated the soul; wherever there is holiness produced, a meetness for heaven; wherever there is love to God, there is a living witness that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

It was the inward consciousness of their acceptance with God, the consciousness that He

was reconciled to them, and that they were living in holy fellowship with Him, which made the early Christians bold in the presence of their enemies, and fearless of either torture or death. The worldlings may marvel to see these men embracing persecution and shame and contempt, and marvel still more to see them welcome death with a smile,—and to them no doubt the choice appears preposterous; but if they knew the fulness of bliss there is in Christ, and how His love invigorates the soul, and reveals what is true and real in life, they would choose to march with those despised disciples to the dungeon and the stake, and esteem it the highest honour to suffer with them the reproach of Christ.

2. *The Testimony of the Saints of old.*

The Apostle Paul has selected two instances from the religious experience recorded in the Old Testament, to illustrate the important doctrine of justification by faith. It is as though he inquired, “Was it by works or by faith that

Abraham was accepted as righteous?" If by works, then he had reason to boast on account of what he had done to secure the favour of God. But it was not by works: for what saith the Scriptures? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 3). Had Abraham been justified by works, the extraordinary blessings spoken of in the covenant of God would have been his as the reward of his well-doing. But he had no such obedience in which he could stand before a just and holy God, and therefore, believing on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. Thus it is manifest from the example of faithful Abraham that only on the condition of faith in the promise of God is sin put away; and hence, because we are saved by grace and not by works, boasting is excluded.

But it was not to Abraham alone that this doctrine was known, for "David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God

imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. iv. 6-8). The doctrine of justification by faith is taught more clearly in the New Testament than by the sacred writers of old, yet we may see from these instances that this is the only way of salvation which God has revealed to sinful men. On the condition of faith in God there is peace for the guilty conscience and rest for the troubled heart.

The religious prejudice of the Jew restricted the Divine promise of salvation to their own nation, but they had overlooked some of the most essential features of the covenant. To prove this the apostle has selected two instances.

1. Abraham was uncircumcised when he believed in God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.

Hence we learn it was not intended that the blessedness of justification should be limited

to the circumcision, but whosoever of any nation that believeth in the Christ, his faith should be imputed to him for righteousness.

2. The promise that was made to Abraham declared that he should be the heir of the world, a father of many nations.

But this could only be accomplished by dispensing with legal obedience, as all the world is guilty before God, and the moral law contains no provision of mercy, but gives life to the obedient only, and threatens the transgressor with punishment. As, therefore, salvation is by grace, and not by the law, so our receiving it is by faith, and not by works; and as the faith of Abraham was reckoned unto him for righteousness, "it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 23-25).

3. *The Testimony of Reformers.*

At the time of the Reformation the doctrine of salvation by faith in the meritorious death of Christ was either forgotten or misunderstood. For ages the Bible had been neglected and lay buried in the monasteries, and superstition walked through the earth, taking ignorance by the hand—the blind leading the blind—and both fell into the ditch. It is with propriety that we designate those times as the dark ages, for the moral light is scant, and on every hand appears the sad effects of ecclesiastical arrogance and clerical dogmatism. The people, looking up to their pastors, were fed with monkish legends and marvellous tales of the miraculous efficacy of rags and bones—the relics of reputed saints. With those blind teachers, penance and purgatory were the only remedy for sin, and the only way to paradise. Thus, while the hearts of men hungered for the life-giving truth, in the Church it was not

found; the sheep were scattered, and the body of Christ lay in the sepulchre rigid with the chill of death.

The discovery of the Bible by Martin Luther in the library at Erfurth was the dawn of a new epoch for the Church. The Reformers went back to the simplicity of doctrine taught by the apostles, and soon the symptoms of returning life appear. By searching the Scriptures they found that salvation is "not by works of righteousness which we have done," but the remission of sin is the gift of Divine grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. They were conscious that the day-star from on high shone in their hearts, for the unclouded heavens were now above them, and realising the fact that God was on their side, they boldly threw down the gage of battle, and with mighty wrestlings they trampled the formalities of superstition beneath their feet. They insisted on the right of every man to read the holy oracles, and maintained that conscience must submit, not to the dic-

tates of fallible men, but only to the precepts of the living God.

The speech of Luther before the Diet of Worms was a noble defence of the rights of conscience. "I cannot submit my faith," said the intrepid reformer, "either to the Pope or to the councils, because it is as clear as noonday that they have often fallen into error, and even into glaring inconsistencies with themselves. If, then, I am not convinced by proof from holy Scripture, or by cogent reasons, if I am not satisfied by the very texts I have cited, and if my judgment is not in this way brought into subjection to God's word, I neither can nor will retract anything; for it cannot be right for a Christian to speak against his conscience. I stand here and can say no more. God help me. Amen."

That these men knew the way of salvation, and had found the healing stream of living waters, is abundantly manifest from their works. They testify that we are justified, not by legal

observances, but through faith in Christ. A few quotations will suffice to prove the correctness of this observation.

Luther, writing to his friend Spenlein, says: "I should be glad to know what is the state of your soul. Is it not tired of its own righteousness, does it not breathe freely at last, and does it not confide in the righteousness of Christ? In our days pride seduces many, and especially those who labour with all their might to become righteous, not understanding the righteousness of God which is freely given to us in Christ Jesus. They wish to stand before Him on their own merits. But that cannot be. When you were living with me you were in the error and so was I. I am yet struggling unceasingly against it, and I have not yet entirely triumphed over it. Oh, my dear brother, learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing unto Him a new song, to despair of yourself, and to say to Him, 'Thou, Lord Jesus Christ, art my righteousness, and I am Thy sin. Thou hast

taken what was mine, and hast given what was Thine.' Beware, my dear George, of pretending to such purity as no longer to confess yourself a sinner, for Christ dwells only with sinners. He came down from heaven, where He was dwelling among the righteous, in order to live also among sinners. Meditate carefully upon this love of Christ, and you will taste all its unspeakable consolation. If our labours and afflictions could give peace to the conscience, why should Christ have died? You will not find peace save in Him, by despairing of yourself and of your works, and in learning with what love He opens His arms to you, taking all your sins upon Himself, and giving thee all His righteousness." Again: "The great and good Jehovah sent His only Son to us, that we may believe on Him; and whoever does believe on Him is free from the law of sin, and becomes a child of God. He gave them, says St. John, power to become the sons of God, namely, to those who should believe on His name." In

another place he says: "Let us never desert the pure doctrine of the gospel. We are persuaded that the substance of our religion consists in faith, which is the gift of the Spirit, and comes by hearing the word of God. A previous and perfect mortification of sin is not required for this purpose; though there must be a previous conviction of sin and of its malignity, to humble and prepare us for the faith of Christ. Then follows the gospel, which gives life and strength; and through that life and strength we must contend against the evil principle which remains in the flesh, and must aim at no less than the obtaining of a perfect victory over it. But we are to use the greatest possible care never to attribute our justification before God to any sort of works whatever, but to faith alone in the heart, by which man believeth unto righteousness."

In the writings of Zwingli we find a clear apprehension of the same soul-quicken-
ing truth. "Christ, very man and very God, has purchased

for us a never-ending redemption. For since it was the eternal Son of God who died for us, His passion is therefore an eternal sacrifice and everlastingly effectual to heal; it satisfies the Divine justice for ever in behalf of all who rely upon it with firm and unshaken confidence. Wherever sin is, death of necessity follows. Christ was without sin, and guile was not found in His mouth, and yet He died. This death He suffered in our stead. He was willing to die that He might restore us to life, and as He had no sins of His own, the all-merciful Father laid ours upon Him." "Since eternal salvation proceeds solely from the merits and death of Jesus Christ, it follows that the merit of our own works is mere folly and vanity, not to say impiety and senseless impudence. If we could have been saved by our own works, it would not have been necessary for Christ to die. All who ever come to God, come to Him through the death of Christ. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ is assured

that all that cometh from God is necessarily good. If therefore the gospel is of God, it is good. And what other power besides could implant righteousness, truth, and love, amongst men? O God most gracious, with what charity Thou hast embraced us Thine enemies! With what lofty and unfailing hopes hast Thou filled us, who deserved to feel nothing but despair, and to what glory hast Thou called us in Thy Son! Thou willest, by this unspeakable love, to constrain us to return Thee love for love."*

The English Reformers taught the same doctrine. Bishop Jewell, in his Apology, writing of faith and assurance, says: "Now concerning the assurance or certainty of salvation the Scriptures are full. St. Paul saith, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The Spirit of God beareth witness to our spirit that we are the children of God. I know that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor powers, nor principalities, nor things pre-

* D'Aubigne's "History of the Reformation."

sent, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any creature else, shall be able to remove me from that love that God beareth towards me in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. viii.)

“Tertullian saith: ‘That we might be certified that we be the children of God, He hath sent the Holy Ghost into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.’

“Clemens Alexandrinus saith: ‘Indeed hope is as it were the blood of faith; in which faith hope is contained, even as faith is contained in the soul. And when hope is gone, then is all the lively power of faith dissolved, as if the blood were shed out of the body.’

“Cyprian saith: ‘Dost thou stagger and stand in doubt of thy salvation? That were as much as not to know God; that were as much as, with the sin of unbelief, to offend Christ, the Master of believers; that were as much as, being in the Church, in the house of faith, to have no faith.’

“Augustine saith: ‘Presume thou not of

thine own working, but of the grace of Christ. For the apostle saith, Ye are saved by grace. Here therefore is not presumption, but faith. To proclaim that which thou hast received is not pride, it is devotion.'

“Ambrose saith: ‘I will not glory for that I am a just man, but for that I am redeemed, therefore will I glory. Not for that I am void of sin, but for that my sins are forgiven me. I will not glory for that I have done good to any man, nor for that any man hath done good to me, but for that Christ is my advocate with the Father, and for that Christ’s blood was shed for me.’

“Bernard saith: ‘What safe rest or surety can the weak soul find but in the wounds of our Saviour? As He is mightier to save, so dwell I there with more safety, etc. I have committed a great sin, my conscience is troubled, yet shall it not be shaken down, because I will remember my Lord’s wounds: for He was wounded for our sins.’”

Richard Hooker, in one of his sermons, says: "The life of God is nothing else but a spiritual and Divine kind of being which men by regeneration attain unto, Christ and His Spirit dwelling in them, and, as the soul of their souls, moving them unto such, both inward and outward actions, as in the sight of God are acceptable."

John Goodwin, in chap. xv. of his "Redemption Redeemed," writes: "So the Lord Christ, having a little before His ascension commissioned His apostles thus, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature,' He immediately subjoineth, 'he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned' (Mark xvi. 15, 16). That believing which our Saviour here requires, and unto which He promiseth salvation, is doubtless no other faith or believing, but a true and unfeigned belief of that gospel of His which His apostles, in words immediately preceding, were enjoined to preach

unto the world. See further upon the same account, John xi. 27, Acts viii. 37, 38, Rom. x. 9, with very many other texts of like pregnant and unquestionable import. From all which it fully appeareth, that a true and unfeigned admission or reception of the gospel, as it cometh from God and is declared by Him in the writings of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, into the heart and soul of a man, translates him from death to life, makes him a child of light, a son of God, an heir of salvation, etc. And what faith or belief, can it reasonably be imagined, should have this mighty and blessed influence upon the creature man, to turn him from darkness unto light, from death unto life, from Satan unto God, but only the true and unfeigned belief of those glorious mysteries which were brought out of the breast and bosom of God by His Son Jesus Christ at His coming into the world?"

This is the doctrine of the best and the most judicious authors, as well ancient as modern.

“It is,” saith “Calvin,” the righteousness of faith, if we believe that Christ died and was raised from the dead.”

Peter Martyr saith: “Our faith is nothing else but an assent or firm persuasion of the words of God. From whence it appears that our faith proceeds from the faithfulness of God. For when our experience teacheth us that He is faithful, we readily believe Him; and that belief which we give to His words is presently attended with hope. Again, faith may be defined to be a firm and constant assent of the mind to the words of God, inspired by the Holy Ghost for the salvation of those that believe. In this definition there is none of the four causes wanting: the word of God is the material cause; the act of consenting the formal; the Holy Ghost the efficient; our salvation the final.”

“That faith,” saith Melancthon, “which justifieth, is not only a notice of the history, but it is to assent to the promise of God, wherein re-

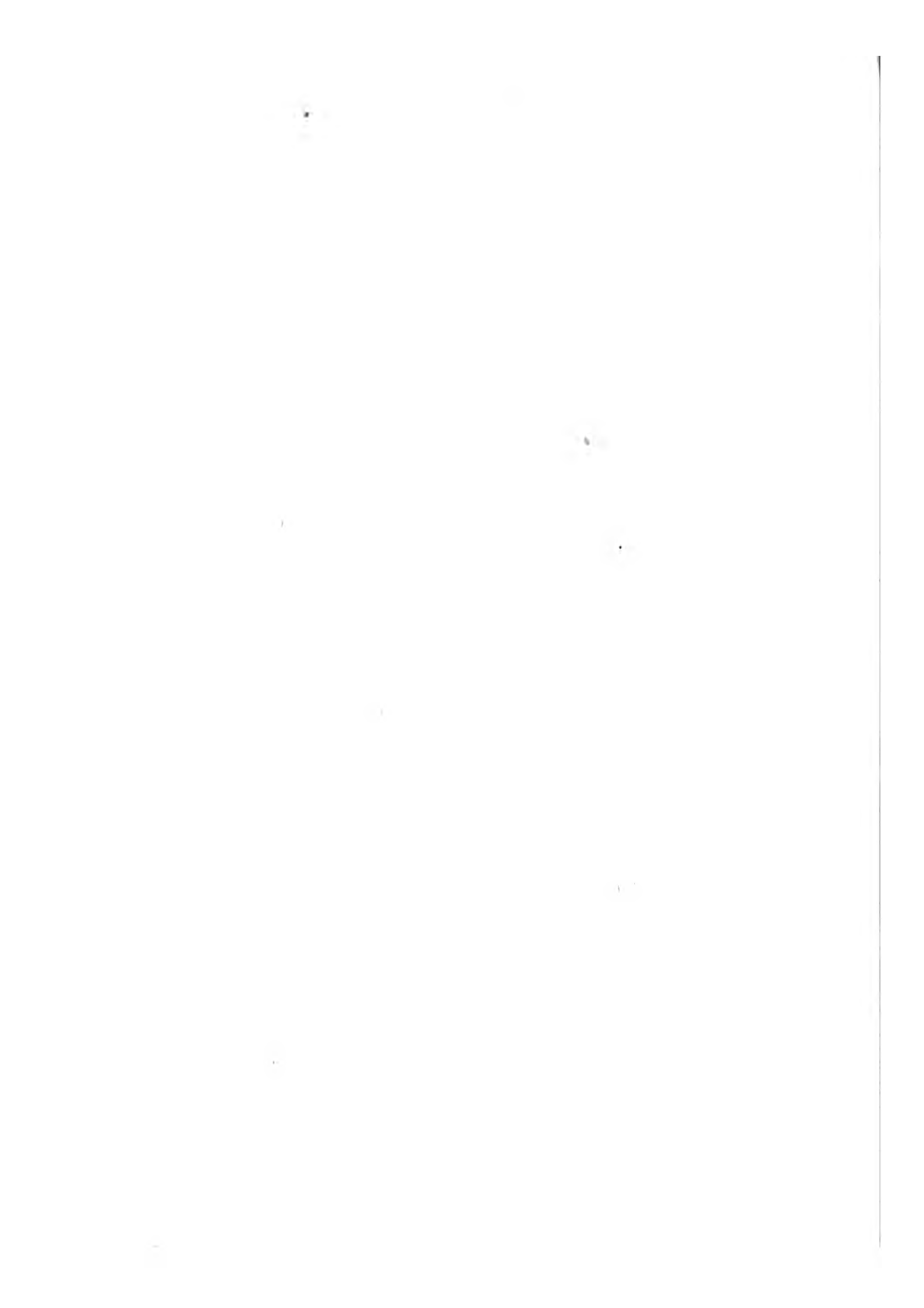
mission of sins and justification are freely offered for Christ's sake."

Zanchius saith: "Faith is a virtue given unto us by God, by which we are persuaded that whatsoever was heretofore propounded by the prophets and apostles in the name of God, and is now preached unto us out of their writings, is the word of God, and believe and profess this whole word, as well the law as the gospel, as the certain word of God."

"If thou," saith Tyndal the martyr, "believest the promises of God, the truth of God justifieth thee, *i.e.*, He forgiveth thee thy sins, and taketh thee into favour."



*ON THE
WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.*





VI.

ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE cardinal facts of the gospel may be stated in a few words. First, we notice the incarnation of the Son of God. "The Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us." On the design of His incarnation it is said that He "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii. 6); that "he died for us" (Rom. v. 8); that "he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 2); and that through his blood the ungodly are justified (Rom. v. 9).

Then we have the statement of many witnesses that He rose again from the dead. "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto

witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts x. 40, 41). "To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3).

The fact that Jesus rose again, and that He is gone up into heaven, is attested by the evidence of these holy men, and not by that alone, but also by the advent of the Holy Spirit. We know that Christ is now at the right hand of God, because He hath sent the *Paraklétos* to convict the world of sin, and to sanctify the obedient believer.

§ 1. *The Promise of the Spirit.*

The Lord Jesus, before leaving His disciples, gave to them the promise of another Comforter. He was going to the cross and the sepulchre, and then, having laid down His life, He would take it up again and go to the Father; and

after His ascension, through His intercession before the throne of God, the Holy Spirit would be shed forth upon them. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 16, 17).

In the prospect of parting with their beloved Master their hearts were filled with sorrow, and to comfort them in their distress He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John xvi. 7).

They needed the gift of the Holy Spirit in order to qualify them for the great work of evangelising the world, and hence they were commanded to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on

high." Let them, therefore, devoutly wait upon God, wait the advent of the Spirit, for the risen Lord has said, "Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you;" and "John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts i. 5).

§ 2. *The Promise Fulfilled.*

In the history of the infant Church the supernatural element is most conspicuous. Look at those devout men and women as they wait patiently upon God. A week has now passed away, and yet "they continue with one accord in prayer and supplication." One may wonder if Thomas began to waver and ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" But after putting his finger in the print of the nails, it was impossible even for him to doubt; and hence we read that "they were *all* with one accord in one place," expecting to receive the baptism of the Spirit, and devoutly

waiting for the promised anointing of the Father.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come” (the most memorable day that ever dawned, save one), “suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them” (Acts ii. 1-3).

The thunder, the whirlwind, and the tongue-like flames were the outward symbols of an invisible agent, the chariot in which God came down. For He was pleased on this occasion to use these impressive signs as the harbinger of His presence, and hence they are only a subordinate feature in this remarkable event—the visible manifestation of the invisible Spirit. It was the unseen quickening influence of the Holy Spirit that filled the disciples with joy, and qualified them to go forth and preach the gospel, and through the Spirit’s power the

humble fishermen of Galilee became fitting instruments to build up the Church of the living God.

But suppose that all this were a delusion, surely it were an easy matter for the Jewish rulers to confound the folly of a few unlettered and obscure persons. Let the Nazarenes therefore be brought before the council, and let men of high social position speak against the delusion and vote against it. And if this is not sufficient to repress the fanaticism, let the poor bewildered fanatics be whipped and cast into prison. But strange to say, the fetters and the bolted doors, and the guards of the common prison cannot hold these men, for at midnight an unseen visitor glides past the keepers, and the doors are thrown open and the prisoners unbound, and early in the morning they are found in the temple teaching the people.

Let the council therefore consider again upon this matter, and if there is any wisdom in them,

let them decide to recognise an irrepressible fact, and let the men alone, for what is merely human will soon pass into oblivion, but what is of God cannot be overthrown.

From a brief account of the institution of the Christian religion it will appear impossible that there should be any delusion or collusion in connection with its origin.

It appears from certain facts stated in the New Testament, that those prophecies which have the most pointed reference to the Christ were misunderstood by the generality of the Jewish people. They knew the place of His birth and almost the time of His advent; in fact, at that time they were on the tiptoe of expectation, but when He came they failed to recognise Him.

It is also manifest that only a few out of the many could read the symbolism of the Mosaic ritual, or comprehend the design of a dispensation that was doomed to pass away: a veil was upon their hearts. Yet in a few instances

the eye of faith was open, and men like good old Simeon could look beyond the shadows to "the consolation of Israel," and these waited in hope for the coming of the Lord's Christ. But the most prevalent opinions of the Prince-Messiah were that He would be a mighty temporal Sovereign, greater than Cæsar, and that He would overthrow His enemies and establish the most glorious kingdom of the world. And when we consider the natural blindness of the human heart, there is nothing marvellous in this. The disease is as extensive as the race, for it is with the utmost difficulty that the most enlightened can rise above the secular and temporal to the spiritual and eternal.

The apostles, we think, were the most privileged of mortals. They sat at the feet of the great Teacher, they heard His marvellous sayings, they saw the miracles He performed, they beheld His glory, and confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of God, who alone had the words of eternal life, and yet they were slow to

comprehend the design of His coming and the nature of His kingdom. While the light of the new dispensation was gradually dawning upon them, the darkness lingered, and hence we perceive the blending of light and shadow in those who had the most familiar intercourse with Christ. The popular notion of an earthly potentate prevailed amongst the disciples even after the Resurrection, for they ask, on one occasion, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6.) But this shadow of darkness was totally dissipated after receiving the baptism of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The change which then took place was truly astonishing. A handful of peasants were suddenly endowed with an eloquence that was irresistible. Having received the anointing of the Spirit, at the command of the risen Saviour they went forth to preach the word of life in the city and to the people that rejected Him. They were called of God to be the witnesses of

His resurrection, and they testified of that fact when stripes and imprisonment awaited them, and when life was in peril. They had seen and conversed with the risen Christ, and Thomas the doubter had put his finger in the print of the nails, and thrust his hand in the wounded side, and hence they stated, in the most emphatic manner, that the crucified Jesus had risen again, and that He was the long-promised Prince-Messiah. They were exposed to the rage of the rulers, they were beaten with stripes, they were shut up in prison, they were led forth to death, but none of them ever confessed that the story was a fiction, or that the disciples at any time had agreed to palm a delusion upon the people. On the contrary, they declare that Jesus is now at the right hand of God, and that all power is given to Him in heaven and earth.

The evidence by which this fact was attested cannot be gainsayed, as we have not only their own personal testimony, but through the gift of the Holy Spirit signs and wonders were

wrought by them in the name of Jesus. Such a miracle, for instance, as healing the lame man at the gate of the temple* is not accomplished by mere religious frenzy, and they appealed to such marvellous results of their ministry as a decisive proof that the work was of God.

“ This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear ” (Acts ii. 32, 33).

“ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him ” (Acts v. 30-32).

* Acts iii. 7, 8.

But besides the demonstration of the Spirit, they had another irrefragable argument, an argument which, while it came with peculiar force to the Jewish mind, also justified the apostles from the charge of delusion. They were not the victims of a disordered imagination, for the holy prophets had written long ago of these things; and hence we find that they appealed to the sacred oracles to prove that the Man which was slain and hanged on a tree was the Anointed of God, and that the doctrines which they preached in His name, and the blessings they enjoyed through Him, were only the accomplishment of ancient prophecy. This was the ground selected by the apostles when reasoning with their countrymen; and as their principles of interpretation were admitted by the Jewish doctors themselves, the position was never successfully assailed; but the Christian teachers, perceiving the design of prophecy by the light of the Spirit, publicly convinced the Jews, "showing

by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts xviii. 28).

It is said that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established;" and to attest the fact that the Lord Jesus, "having by himself purged our sins," is now risen again, and "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," there is the testimony of apostles, the testimony of the Spirit, and the testimony of prophecy.

The apostles had a special work to do, and to qualify them for that work they were endowed with extraordinary gifts, such as the power of speaking other languages, and of healing all manner of diseases. When these special gifts were no longer necessary they were not bestowed; but although such visible manifestations of the Spirit's agency ceased, yet His presence with the Church was none the less real, for Christ promised that He should abide with them for ever (John xiv. 16). And hence, to the latest generations, any one

may know, if they will obey the words of Christ, that the Holy Spirit is yet given to regenerate and sanctify the soul of the believer.

We will now direct our attention to these ordinary operations of the Spirit of God.

§ 3. *The Author of Spiritual Life.*

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to regenerate the soul, and this birth unto righteousness is the beginning of a new spiritual life. The apostle, describing the happy condition of those who have felt the quickening of the Spirit, says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 1, 2).

The law awakens the sinner's conscience and makes him sensible of guilt, and it condemns the transgressor to die for his crimes; and because it produces these effects it is called the law of sin and death. But the

blood of Christ frees us from the condemnation of the broken law, and as in Him we have life, He can by His Spirit break the power of sin and deliver us from its pollution. If therefore we come in humility to Him, confessing our sins, He will listen to our prayer, and by the energy of His Spirit life will be imparted to the soul. For the Holy Spirit reveals in us a sense of God's forgiving love, and whispers to the heart of the believer, "I am thy salvation," and thus realising the fulness of mercy there is in Christ, we know that we have passed from death unto life, and can rejoice in our new-found liberty; for in our conscience we feel that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

We learn from this passage that the religion of Christ is not the submission of the understanding to certain doctrinal formulæ, nor is it the careful observance of rites and ceremonies imposed by the venerable authority

of other days; but it is the Spirit of God moving upon and within the soul, inspiring it with newness of life, filling it with light and joy, and diffusing through the inner man a thrilling sense of the unutterable love of God; for "the love of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us" (Rom. v. 5).

The principle of spiritual life develops itself in the form of love—love to God and love to men. We manifest our love to God by loving our fellow-men, for this is the law of Christ and the vital element of His religion. If therefore we love them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us, it is an evidence that we are the children of God; and while we continue in this love we know that we have eternal life abiding within us. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love"

(1 John iv. 7, 8). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John iv. 20.)

§ 4. *The Spirit Works in Harmony with Natural Laws.*

1. We recognise the principle of progress as a well-defined law of our spiritual nature, a law which distinguishes man from the brute creation, and which plainly indicates his relation to the Infinite. Man cannot be stationary, as it is the high behest of Nature that he must grow; and thus the good will grow better and the bad will grow worse.

What we term character is the outer form of the inner life. An impenetrable veil is drawn over the human heart, and wrapt in mystery one hides himself from the gaze of his most intimate friends; and yet in some measure the man is known to us, for moral principles must

develop themselves, and the looks, and words, and actions are a revelation of the I within. When the heart is consecrated to God, and the gospel is the light and law of the conscience, the man is inwardly pure and his character righteous. Righteousness is the *habit* of a soul that is right in its relation to God. What is spoken of in some Churches as sanctification is simply the development of spiritual life and the growth of the soul in holiness. At the time of regeneration the man is made anew in Christ Jesus ; this is the beginning of his spiritual life, and such a one is a babe in Christ. We know that the natural man grows from infancy to maturity by the use of food and exercise, and in spiritual growth these two things are indispensable. God has provided suitable nourishment for the newly-born child in its mother's breast, food which its delicate organs can easily digest and assimilate, and by which it will grow and increase in strength. And thus also, in the unadulterated doctrines of the gospel, we find

the wholesome nursing-food of the soul, and by feeding the spiritual nature with the sincere milk of the word it will grow thereby (1 Pet. ii. 2). And further, we observe, that as the waste of the body is repaired with daily food, so the spiritual life must be daily sustained by the promises of God and the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle reminded the Hebrews that they neglected their duties in this respect (Heb. v. 12-14). They had started long ago in the Christian race, but had made no progress, for after the lapse of years, they were yet in the rudiments of the gospel. Like the Welsh fasting girl, they were living without food, and their existence was a sickly expiring condition. But this moral dwarfishness was the result of their own negligence, and deserving of the severest censure.

There is ample provision for the soul's requirements in the oracles of God—milk for the babe and meat for the adult, and by constant

application to these Divine truths the soul will renew its strength and advance to maturity. It is therefore the duty of the young Christian to use the milk, that he may be skilful in the doctrine of righteousness; and if this duty is attended to, knowledge will increase, and with the increase of knowledge the conscience or moral sensibility will become exceedingly acute, and will readily distinguish between the good and evil, the true and false.

In the gospel, and in the gospel alone, we find this provision for the soul's growth, the suitable aliment for an immortal spirit; and therefore it is necessary to diligently study God's holy word, as by eating this spiritual food, and the exercise of godliness, we attain the vigour of Christian manhood. Then the moral powers are fully developed when experience is ripe, and such a man is a father in the Christian family, a man qualified to instruct and govern the younger members of the household of faith. Maturity in grace we regard as an essential

qualification in a teacher of the Christian Church, as such are able to speak to edification, and will seek only the welfare of others and the glory of God. If a man is destitute of these practical and experimental qualifications, he may dig for his bread if he will, but let him not usurp the office of minister to the flock of Christ.

2. Imitation and Habit.

In the development of the power of imitation we recognise another law of our spiritual nature, a law which in its operation directs and controls the principle of progress. Look at the little prattler before you, not yet two years old ; but young as he is, he has already begun his work of mimicry, and often charms the tears into our eyes by his clever and engaging imitations. The character of the parent is the pattern or type which he naturally strives to copy. And thus, through infancy and youth, imitation is the most dominant faculty, shaping the character after

the likeness of other models, and consolidating itself into the law of habit.

The gospel of Christ accords with this law of our nature, and by the gospel alone can the human spirit attain the highest perfection of manhood. We may search the annals of our race, but shall fail to find a man comparable with Christ, a man to whom we may point and say, "This is the model man." There is a moral excellence in Christ that we seek in vain elsewhere. He is altogether lovely, for His character is luminous with the beauty of holiness, and in Him we discern the glorious image of the invisible God.

Under the old dispensation Moses was permitted to behold the similitude of the Eternal, and spoke, as it were, face to face with Him. As the mediator of a covenant between God and His people, he was the mouth-piece of God, and delivered to the people the holy law; but while speaking to the congregation he had to veil his face. Hence we learn that

while the glory of God was manifest in that dispensation it was under a veil. But that veil was done away in Christ. In Jesus we see the perfection of manhood and the glory of the Lord Jehovah. In the fulness of time the eternal Logos was found in fashion as a man. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, but knew no sin. He took our nature upon Him, in order to die the just for the unjust, to redeem us from the condemnation and pollution of sin. And now, through the regenerating and sanctifying influence of His Spirit, we may become like unto Him, for if we take up our cross, and crucify the flesh, we have a fellowship in His sufferings, and die unto sin: then also we rise with our Lord in newness of life, and become partakers of His glory. The eyes of the understanding are now enlightened, and the awakened soul gazes steadfastly upon the Holy One; and by looking to Him we are transformed into His image, by constantly beholding His perfec-

tions, and living in daily fellowship with Him. "As he is so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). Day by day, as we read the sacred oracles, we are ravished with the beauty there is in Him, and "with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

This is a moral transfiguration, a change from the sensual to the spiritual, from the earthly to the heavenly. In Jesus we have complete deliverance from the bondage of sin, and by imitating His example, and living in fellowship with Him, we are fashioned after the likeness of God; and daily as we increase in knowledge and grace, we advance in glory, and "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. iv. 15).

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revela-

tion of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. i. 13-16).

"The 'Holy One' was a frequent appellation of God among the Jews. Here then we have an argument for personal holiness, on the ground that we are bound, as obedient children, to follow the example of our Heavenly Father, who hath called us to the imitation of His own holiness: a truth this which the apostle then proceeds to confirm from certain words of Scripture, in which, as Calvin observes, we have what was a frequent exhortation of God to His chosen people of old, whom, as surrounded on all sides by the profane heathen nations, from whose pernicious example they were ever in danger of suffering, He thus calls to Himself, as though He would say, "It is

with Me that ye have to die; ye are *Mine*: keep yourselves, then, from the pollutions of the heathen." *

§ 5. *Through the Spirit we have Fellowship with God.*

The design of the Christian religion is to elevate the human spirit into a state of fellowship with God. The pardon of sin which is given through Christ, and the moral purity imparted by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, are not the ultimate blessings which the gospel bestows, but are means to that end; they restore us to the image of God, that we may live in daily communion with Him, for "the pure in heart shall see God."

There is much of the supernatural surrounding the Christian, for he dwells in the immediate presence of God, and lives in daily intercourse with Him. Under the old dispensation the unseen King had His throne between the cherubim, and there manifested His glory,

* Bloomfield.

but now in the heart that is dedicated to Him, and made holy through the blood of sprinkling, He deigns to dwell; and thus the eternal God is manifest to us by the presence of His Spirit, and by the revelation within us of His unutterable love we know that we have fellowship with Him. "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1 John iii. 24).

As the branch is united to the vine, and lives and bears fruit by its connection with the parent stem, so the believer is grafted into Christ the true vine, and derives his spiritual life and the fruits of holiness from this mystical union. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, neither can we except we abide in Christ. Whatever is pure and holy in man is derived from Him, for we have nothing of ourselves, and without Him we can do nothing. Jesus is the source of life, of holiness, and of spiritual joy; and if severed from

Him we are branches withered and dead. But if we abide in Him and obey His words, if our life is regulated by His doctrine, then have we liberty of access to the Father, and may ask for what we need with the confidence of children, and it will be granted. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7).

There are those who walk this earth, who have daily communion with the Unseen, who are as conscious of the existence of God as of their own existence. It is not by any technical argument that they would attempt to establish this truth, for being a matter of personal consciousness it needs not the support of the skilful debater. Whoever is living in fellowship with God has the most indubitable proof of His existence, for he is conscious of the fact, and knows that the truth is built upon immovable foundations. If one can rightly apprehend this blessed truth it will make his spirit jubi-

lant with praise, for the believer is seated in heavenly places in Christ, and finds peace and joy in God. He knows that the intercourse between heaven and earth is open, for he is daily asking and receiving; and as he can specify many instances of a gracious answer to his prayer, he can daily rejoice in God. We do not bewilder ourselves with unprofitable speculations, but as we are constantly receiving blessing upon blessing, and grace upon grace, we have confidence toward God. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John iii. 22).

§ 6. *The Direct Testimony of the Spirit.*

The apostle has written largely on the spiritual blessings which the Christian believer enjoys; and from his statements we learn that the truths of godliness can never be discovered by the wisdom of the world, and that Divine knowledge is communicated to the soul by

Divine agencies. (By Divine knowledge we mean those saving truths—the soul-quickenings of the everlasting gospel—which pertain to the life of God in the soul, from the beginning of that spiritual life in grace to its consummation in glory.) Take, for example, the justification of a sinner. The act of justification is God's work, for He has engaged to accept the sinner as righteous on the condition that he forsakes his sin and believes in our Lord Jesus Christ. If, therefore, a knowledge of pardon is given at all, it must be made known to the soul by some supernatural method. But allowing that the mode and the agency must be supernatural, it will not on that account be inconsistent with reason, and may admit of a rational explanation.

Such an explanation of the mystery is given by Paul. In the first place he quotes a passage from the prophecy of Isaiah. The prophet, when referring to the spiritual blessings which God would provide for men in His gospel, said,

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor. ii. 9).

But those very truths, of which the prophet saw an outline only, were received by the apostle in all their fulness, and therefore he adds to the words of prophecy, “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

And then, to show how the mysteries of God may be revealed unto us, he illustrates the profound truth by an apt comparison. “What but the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man? so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” As none can tell the thoughts and purposes that lie hid in the human bosom but a man’s own spirit, so the counsels of God are only known by the Holy Spirit. But he that believes in Christ has received the gift of the Spirit, and by His Divine teaching we

“know the things which are freely given us of God.”

This we maintain is the solution of the problem, and a rational explanation of a supernatural fact. When the ungodly are justified, in that moment the Holy Spirit renews the soul, and the operation of the Spirit upon our hearts, and His testimony of peace to the conscience, is an intimation direct from heaven assuring us of our acceptance with God. And is it not explicitly stated by the inspired writers that the Holy Spirit is given to make known unto us the fact of our adoption as the children of God? Consider these words, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. iv. 6).

If therefore we have the confidence of children, and can look to God as our Father, it is an evidence that we have received the Holy Spirit. But besides this filial trust, and the love which flows from the quickening of the

Spirit, there is also a direct testimony to our own spirits, for there is a mutual recognition of the new relationship between the obedient child and the reconciled Father. It is true that we know of our acceptance with God from the peace of conscience we enjoy, but it is not on that evidence alone that we decide that we are truly Christians, for "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16).

We observe, on this passage, that it is our privilege to receive a communication direct from God, assuring us of our acceptance with Him, and that the redeemed soul may constantly enjoy this testimony of the Spirit. Indeed "it is a matter of such solemn importance to every Christian soul, that God in His mercy has pleased not to leave it to conjecture or inductive reasoning, but attests it by His own Spirit in the soul of the person whom He adopts through Christ Jesus. It is the grand and most observable case in which the inter-

course is kept up between heaven and earth ; and the genuine believer in Christ Jesus is not left to the quibbles of polemic divines or critics, but receives the thing, and the testimony of it, immediately from God Himself." *

§ 7. *The True Priesthood.*

The privileges of the Christian believer were dimly shadowed forth in the old dispensation. If we go back to the days of Solomon and Moses, where on the face of the earth can we find such an elaborate system of worship as that instituted by the Hebrew legislator, which reached its zenith when the monarch renowned for wisdom sat upon the throne of Israel. Other temples, it is true, may be seen in Egypt and elsewhere, but where, at that time, can you find a ritual so splendid, or a symbolism so strange? It is only at Jerusalem that we meet with the God-written law, and the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat, and the cherubim

* Dr. A. Clarke.

with outspread wings, and the visible glory of the invisible God hid away from mortal gaze beyond the triple coloured veil.

Once each year the high priest was permitted to enter into the presence of the Most High, to sprinkle the mercy-seat with blood, and make atonement for the sins of the people. But that exclusive system of worship was worn out long ago, and has now passed away. Yet before the old garment was laid aside it was needful that an inspired writer should come forward to explain the meaning of those vanishing symbols. And this he has done in an Epistle to the Hebrews.

We are exhorted by the apostle to come with boldness to the throne of grace, because we have a merciful and faithful High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; and we are informed that through the sprinkling of His blood it is our privilege to enter even into the holiest of all, by a new and living way; for the veil is rent asunder, and the kingdom of

God is open to all believers. The pure in heart have found the shrine where God is manifest, and where He deigns to dwell; and dost thou seek the favoured spot? then *put off thy shoes*,—put away thy sin,—for on the portals of that temple is written the inscription, “Without holiness no man can see the Lord.”

The Christian is truly a priest, one that God Himself has anointed; a priest like those of the tribe of Levi or the seed of Aaron—to minister before the Lord in a carnal ordinance—he is not. Nor indeed is such a priesthood now necessary, for the childhood of the human race is gone for ever, and the priestly pedagogue in his long robes and mitre may gather up his symbols and vanish—*his work is done*. But the true priesthood remains; and this, as Peter informs us, is a royal priesthood, that show forth His goodness, who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. These are truly consecrated to God, for they have an unction of the Holy One abiding upon them, and they

bring to the altar a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God. A man who is wholly devoted to the service of God may draw near in the full assurance of faith to where the Shekinah is manifest, and he shall "dwell in the secret place of the Most High." This may seem a hard saying to many in this generation, but the regenerated soul can understand it, for his citizenship is in heaven, and of him it is said, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv. 15).

If we wish to possess a correct knowledge of the Christian religion, we may see it to the best advantage in those who received it direct from Christ. Look at the character of these men, and at their work, for you will find nothing in the history of the world comparable to this. You may despise these unlettered peasants as weak and foolish, but in spite of you and your vain philosophy they will do their God-commissioned work, and the world will listen to their message, for they speak of what the human

spirit needs, and their words pierce the hearts of men. Turn aside with me from the noise and bustle of the loud-voiced multitude, and I will show you a secret thing. Yonder is a man alone upon his knees, and listen! for you may hear him pleading for the Church; and how singular is the language which he employs, as in his peculiar way of expressing himself he prays "that they may *know* the love of Christ, which *passeth knowledge*, and be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 19).

We ask you to consider these words, and if the language is strange to you it is an evidence that you are a stranger to the Christian religion, as to be filled with all the fulness of God is a privilege that each believer has the right to claim.

The living priesthood of the new covenant differs from the lately exhibited mummy of a remote age, and the true service of God differs from such childish mummeries. If we desire to grow to the stature of moral manhood we

must imitate the conduct of the heroes of olden time. We read of the faith of Abel, and Noah, and Enoch, and Abraham, long before the Levitical ordinances were instituted; and as these men are the great exemplars of the race, if it was possible for them to do without a ritual, surely we may dispense with it in these later days; hence we learn that it is the duty of a Christian teacher not to make a baby show of Aaron's robes, but to take away the veil from the face of Moses.

A religion of words and forms is a thing of no value, as, unless the soul is quickened by the indwelling of the Spirit, and we feel the throbbing of a higher life through the inner man, our profession of godliness is less than nothing, and vanity. But he who has received an unction from heaven, and has this anointing of the Father abiding upon him, is a true priest. To him the heavens are open, and God is ever present. This man will solve the problem of his existence by working and suffering for God,

“enduring as seeing him who is invisible.” This is the noble man that God Himself will honour when the accidental distinctions of earthly rank have vanished like the pageantry of a dream.

From every section of the Church we hear the cry, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we.” Cease your vain jangling, ye jarring sects, and seek the true credentials for your work, the baptism that comes from heaven ; and show by your life-work of thorough devotedness to God that you possess the principles of a pure and undefiled religion.

ON THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.





VII.

ON THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

§ I. *The Stewards of the Manifold Grace of God.*

THE effects which are produced upon the un-renewed mind by the agency of the Spirit are described as follows: "And when he, the Comforter, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John xvi. 8-11). These words were intended originally to apply to the Jews, but they are also capable of a more general application. In this wider and more

important sense we learn from the passage that it is the specific work of the Spirit to show the unregenerate the evil of sin and convince them of guilt, and to show the only way by which sin can be forgiven and the heart purified, and also to show the condemnation of those who reject or neglect this great salvation.

To produce these effects upon the unrenewed mind, the Spirit employs human instrumentality. Those who have been enlightened by the Spirit, and led into all truth, are the Noahs of their age, whose faith and works convince or condemn an unbelieving and gainsaying world.

From the instances of conversion recorded in the New Testament, we remark that the Holy Spirit is given in the first place to the obedient believers in Christ, and then through their agency is communicated to the world. The promise, "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts i. 5), was given to disciples, and not to unbelievers; and Christ, when speaking of the Spirit of truth,

distinctly asserted, " Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him " (John xiv. 17).

The worldly and profane are blinded by sensuality, and thus wilfully closing their eyes against the light, they cannot receive the same knowledge of Divine truth which is imparted by the Spirit to them that obey God. The apostle declares that " the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned " (1 Cor. ii. 14). The man that uses not the nobler powers of his mind, but who lives as though he were merely an animal, cannot relish the truths which are revealed by the Spirit, and is heedless about understanding them, for his soul is depraved and carnal; the higher faculties remaining undeveloped, are buried in the flesh, and wanting spiritual discernment, he is totally blind to spiritual realities.

But an unction from the Holy One abides on them that believe in Jesus, and by this anointing they know the things that are freely given to them of God. The Lord Jesus has committed to such regenerated souls the treasures of His heavenly kingdom. They are called with a high and holy calling, for being made free from sin, they become living witnesses for the truth, and having "tasted the Divine promise and the powers of the world to come," they are qualified to communicate the knowledge of salvation to others, and henceforth they live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

The first Christian Church was a model Church. We notice, respecting this Church, that they had received a great commission and a gracious promise. They were commanded to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. But before they entered upon their great work, they must tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with

power from on high, and in a few days they would receive the baptism of the Spirit. And now, having received this commission and this promise, they meet together to pray; for the historian states that they "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."

Hence we learn, that in order to become an efficient missionary Church, there must be special meetings when all the members of the Church shall come together to pray. If a part of the Church ignore the duty of prayer, and only attend public worship to hear the discourse of a favourite minister, that Church cannot do its aggressive work; but, like the iron and clay mixed together in the image, it will be partly strong and partly broken. If prayer is altogether neglected, that Church, as a natural consequence of that neglect, will soon become extinct.

We notice further, that the model Church was united. There was no discord amongst them; no hatred, no strife, nothing in fact to

interrupt the harmony of their fellowship; they were of one heart and one mind. Hence we learn, that in order to become an efficient missionary Church, unity is essential.

In the model Church we also notice that they continued to pray until they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was the supernatural agency of the Spirit that made them an efficient missionary Church, and their unparalleled success is accounted for by the fact, which is frequently mentioned, that the disciples were full of the Holy Spirit, and the hand of the Lord was with them.

We infer from these facts that only through the agency of the Spirit can the Church succeed in her mission, and that the Holy Spirit is given to the Church in answer to united, persevering, believing prayer. The godless philosopher may speak contemptuously of the efficacy of prayer, but however mysterious it may seem to him, we know it is not a strange thing for God to hear and

answer the earnest supplications of His children. Let the Church plead with Him, and at Pentecost the baptism of fire will be given.

Observe, further, that the disciples, after receiving the gift of the Spirit, go out into the city, and speak with power of the wonderful works of God. Many who listen to them are pierced to the heart, and say “to Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” And Peter replies, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts ii. 37, 38).

We notice in this instance that the charge of guilt is brought home by the ministry of the apostles, and thus the operation of the Spirit upon the unrenewed mind, in convincing of sin, of righteousness, and condemnation, is connected with their testimony; and, further, only to the humble and penitent who are earnestly seeking mercy, is it said, “Ye shall

receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Hence it is manifest that the Holy Spirit is first given to the obedient believer, and that the ordinary mode of the Spirit's operation upon the unregenerate, is by and through the true members of the holy Catholic Church. Those, therefore, who are grafted into the living vine, who enjoy fellowship with Christ, are, without controversy, "the stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. iv. 10).

§ 2. *The Responsibility of the Believer.*

We will now select a few passages of Scripture that refer expressly to the believer's responsibility, and to God's ordinary method of saving men.

1. In that memorable discourse which the Lord delivered to His disciples on the Mount, He said to them, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick ;

and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 14-16).

As the earth is enlightened by the sun, or as a burning lamp illuminates a house, so the minds of men are enlightened with true religion through the instrumentality of its faithful representatives. It is therefore necessary that the Christian believer live holy, and that he adorn the doctrine he believes by the faithful discharge of his duties, and men will take knowledge of his consistent character, and be led to glorify God through his devoted life.

2. At the feast of tabernacles, on the last day of the feast, it was the custom for a priest to draw water out of the pool of Siloam in a vessel of gold, and taking it in the temple, it was carried in procession round the altar of burnt-offerings, the people during the time

reciting Isaiah xii. 3, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation;" and finally it was poured over the sacrifice upon the altar.

It was during this ceremony that Jesus stood in the temple, in a place where all could see Him, and cried aloud, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But," adds the Evangelist, "this spake he of the Spirit, *which they that believe on him* should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified") (John vii. 37-39).

This is a gracious promise of blessings in abundance that would accompany the gift of the Spirit, and the Donor of these spiritual blessings designs that they should be freely communicated to others. Like the river that waters the thirsty land, and covers the barren wilderness with fruitfulness and beauty, such is the moral influence of those who receive the

promised anointing of the Holy Spirit. "When a man turns to the Lord, he is like a fountain filled with living water, and rivers flow from him to men of all nations and tribes." (Quoted by Bloomfield.)

3. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul inquires, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor. iii. 1-3).

The credentials of the apostle were the Corinthians themselves, who had been converted by his instrumentality. And as he cherished a great affection for them, they are represented as being graven on his heart, for they were endeared to him as the fruit of his

ministry. Yet their salvation was of God, as they were the epistles of Christ, having His laws inscribed upon the fleshy tables of the heart by the Spirit of the living God. And because of their constant obedience to him, their faith and love was published abroad; and like an inscription written upon a monument, was read and known of all men.

§ 3. *The Conversion of Sinners.*

We do not dispute the possibility of the Holy Spirit working upon the human mind without the intervention of human instrumentality. Such an instance may occur, but we should class it with such miracles as the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. In this case the man was struck with light from heaven, and suddenly arrested in his career of crime. But although he was convinced of guilt by the special interposition of Christ, yet the good Ananias must do his appointed work. "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, that appeared unto thee

in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, *and be filled with the Holy Ghost*" (Acts ix. 17). Thus in an instance, which is clearly miraculous, it appears that the human instrumentality is not overlooked, and that God honours the ordinary method even in extraordinary cases.

We do not attempt to explain the mystery of regeneration; how the great change from sin to holiness is wrought in us, we do not know, further than that it is wrought by the almighty energy of the Spirit when we believe in Jesus. It is our purpose to show that the ordinary method in which the Spirit's influence is imparted to convince the unsaved, is through the instrumentality of the obedient believer.

It may be when one is hearing the Scriptures expounded, that light may almost imperceptibly dawn upon the mind, and gradually increase, as the advancing morning brightens into day. It was thus, we think, that the Lord opened Lydia's heart (Acts xvi. 14). Or a few words

may pierce the soul, like a sharp arrow from the hands of the mighty, and the keen weapon remains there, bleeding away the life and making sin exceedingly bitter; day or night there is no rest, for the wound rankles, until by-and-by the sinner turns in penitence to the hand that has smitten, and which alone can heal.

Sometimes, when other methods fail, Providence hedges up the way with thorns; affliction seizes upon the frail body, and as the days and nights drag slowly along, "He openeth the ear to discipline." Many that have forgotten God in health and prosperity have remembered Him in their affliction, and have been anxious to hear again the neglected instruction of other days, and have sought in prayer the pardon of past sin, and the renewal of their soul by the quickening Spirit.

Or, perhaps, when one was musing in solitude the door of the past was flung open, and the haunted memory betrayed her secrets. As he

meditates in silence, he sees again the faces that vanished in the darkness long ago; and the loved ones that were dear to him, that have slept peacefully under the green sod these many years, stand round him once more. Yes, in your life, my courteous reader, there may be such a plaintive undertone. A few memorable words linger with you, perhaps it is only a broken sentence or two, but they are the last words of one you loved, and they are too precious to be forgotten. And now there is one little spot on the earth more sacred to you than the rest, and whenever you think of the sleepers there, the heart is stirred to its depths, and the eye is wet with tears. Thus there are scenes which you recall, and words which you remember, that will never, no never, fade from the mind, and often in your musings the sainted dead of long ago seem to call to you, with mystic voices from that far-off land.

The Holy Spirit may thus or otherwise suggest to or influence the mind, in order to

lead the sinner to think of God and of his everlasting destiny, and by considering of these things he will be led to pray with the contrite publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

§ 4. *The Truth may be Hindered by Unrighteousness.*

If a Church is pure, a praying and a working Church, the Spirit of God will move upon that Church, and the ministration of the word of life will result in the salvation of the ungodly. But if otherwise—if imperfect Christian characters abound, or if there is confusion or disunion in the Church—the operations of the Holy Spirit will be effectually hindered. This has been the fruitful source of lukewarmness and declension from the early days of Christianity until now. The letters of Paul to the Corinthians sharply reprimand the irregularities of that Church; and by one example we may learn how impurity and disorder militate against prosperity.

The apostle writes: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened" (1 Cor. v. 6, 7). And again, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. xiv. 23-25).

A confused medley of words that no one could understand would send the unbeliever away, however well disposed, worse than when he came, and through such foolish indiscretions the good way would be evil spoken of. But let one speak out the truth, in words that were suitable to the company before him, and which

every one could clearly comprehend, and the hearer would be made sensible of guilt, and in deep self-abasement would humbly plead with God for mercy; and thus, by the manifestation of God's saving power, it would be confessed that God was with them of a truth.

It is necessary, in order that the Church may perform its aggressive work, that she should be pure and united; and she does not succeed in her mission because of discord, for in every age the Christian religion has been wounded amongst her friends. From heaven, and unworldly as she is, too often have her professed adherents used her name merely as a cloke for their selfishness. The humble, the liberal, and the self-denying religion of Christ has been represented by the ambitious, the covetous, and the sensual, and this mal-representation has despoiled her of beauty, and shorn her of strength.

It is related of Thomas Aquinas, surnamed the Angelical Doctor, who was highly esteemed

by Pope Innocent IV., that one day, on going into the Pope's chamber, when they were reckoning large sums of money, the Pope addressed himself to Aquinas, saying, "You see that the Church is no longer in an age in which she can say, Silver and gold have I none." "It is true, holy father," replied the Angelical Doctor, "nor can she now say to the lame man, Rise up and walk."

§ 5. *The Hope of the Future.*

The Christian religion is opposed to all other systems of worship, and can brook no rival. This is the only true religion, and it is the deadly opponent of error, and seeks to destroy it with the weapons of truth and righteousness. We look at the millions of the human family that are yet grovelling under the dominion of ignorance and superstition, and which for centuries have been groaning under an intolerable burden of impostures and lies; and we ask with much anxiety, are these evils incurable?

Must we read the destiny of the future in the darkness of the past? Or will the true religion ultimately prevail, and the crown be put on the head of Him whose right it is to reign? We believe that Christianity will become the religion of the whole human family, for the following reasons:—

1. This was the design of its Author.

This is the only religion that proclaims God's unspeakable love to the world, the only religion which is adapted to the necessities of the human spirit, the only religion which provides an effectual remedy for sin, the only religion which can bind the human family in the bonds of holy brotherhood. It is the religion promulgated by the Divine Logos, and He has commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

2. Its success has been predicted.

“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost

parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psa. ii. 8). "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psa. lxxii. 8). "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi. 9). "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. vii. 13, 14).

In the Apocalypse, John saw an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and immediately another angel followed saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen (Rev. xiv. 6-8). Thus let the heralds of the cross go

forth, and preach the living and life-giving word, and mystical Babylon will fall.

3. It has already achieved many signal victories.

It swept away the Druidism of our own country, and overturned the altars and destroyed the temples of Pagan Rome; and in modern times it has vanquished the idolatry of Madagascar, and the superstition and cannibalism of the South Sea Islands. Hence, from the triumphs of this religion in the past, we feel assured that it will ultimately prevail.

The great Peacemaker one day will sway His sceptre over the scattered nations, and they will dwell together in love, and there will be one fold and one Shepherd. The religion of the despised Nazarene will go forth through every land, like the virgin-spring, unlocking the fetters of the soul-bound, releasing the wasted nations from the embrace of death, touching the human spirit everywhere into life and beauty, swelling every heart with gladness,

and filling the whole earth with the melody of song. In that day, in the mountain of the Lord, a feast will be prepared, and all nations shall flow unto it. The feuds of ages will be forgotten, for love will dwell in every heart, and in every language the messengers of peace will proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Let the Church regain its ancient simplicity—the faith that realises the nearness of God, the prayer and supplication that take hold upon Divine strength, the love that consecrates all to the Master, the spirituality of mind that comes from daily communion with the skies, the zeal that fears no danger, and the loyalty that is faithful unto death: upon this sacrifice the fire from heaven will fall. Let the disciples of Christ be true to Christian principles, and even in these days the Holy Spirit will be abundantly imparted; and the Church, girt with the might of God, will go on her

mission of love and mercy, "terrible as an army with banners." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. x. 4).

ON IMMORTALITY.



VIII.

ON IMMORTALITY.

§ 1. *The Doctrine of the Eternal Logos.*

1. The Materialists refuted.

The Sadducees, the Materialists of old, had wilfully closed their eyes against the truths of the spiritual world, and yet they professed to accept the writings of Moses. But they read the Scriptures superficially, for although they admitted a revelation, with the strangest inconsistency they said "there was no resurrection, or angel, or spirit" (Acts xxiii. 8); and they defended these peculiar notions with a great display of argument. They excelled in that sort of logic which consists in arguing by

insinuation from imagined difficulties against the doctrines of revelation; and, admitting their hypothesis, the most important articles of religion would appear useless and absurd.

These philosophical doubters came to Jesus with a knotty question; one, no doubt, with which they had puzzled many an adversary. And it seems that they thought this singular circumstance of a woman having seven husbands would embarrass the great Teacher, and shake down the whole fabric of revelation. But how soon does the flimsy objection vanish, and how readily were these profound reasoners put to silence. They were clever enough in other matters, no doubt, but their intellect was obtuse when reading the Scriptures, for although they made great pretensions to knowledge, they were exceedingly shallow.

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but

are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. xxii. 29-32).

The *far-seeing* advocates of materialism were placed in an awkward position by this reply, for instead of confuting Jesus, as they expected, they themselves were effectually vanquished. But the introduction of this subject was not unprofitable, as it was the cause of Christ showing that the future life will be altogether different from the present, for then we shall be as the angels of God. The following facts are also clearly stated.

1. That God is the inheritance of the good. "I am the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob."

2. That the possession of the inheritance implies conscious existence. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

3. That the departed spirits of good men enjoy this possession. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob had not existed among mortals for hundreds of years, yet they are living with God, "for all live unto him" (Luke xx. 38).

4. That the conscious existence of departed spirits is a decisive proof of the general resurrection.*

These are facts which cannot be controverted, and they give the most crushing reply to all the fertile objections of a blind materialism.

* "Rabbi Abbin saith, The Lord said unto Moses, Find me out ten righteous persons among the people, and I will not destroy thy people. Then said Moses, Behold here am I, Aaron, Eleazer, Ithamar, Phineas, Caleb, and Joshua. But God said, Here are but seven, where are the other three? When Moses knew not what to do, he said, O Eternal God, do those live that are dead? Yes, saith God. Then said Moses, If those that are dead do live, remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."—*Shemoth Rabba*, fol. 159. "So the immortality of the soul was not unknown to the ancient Jews."—*Dr. A. Clarke*.

2. The disciples comforted.

The Eternal Logos was familiar with what lies beyond the veil. He lived with the Father, and saw His glory in the ages before the world was (John xvii. 5). Knowing of His speedy departure hence, He spoke to His disciples in the confidence of friendship, and imparted to them a knowledge of the world from which He came and to which He would shortly return. In order to comfort them, He said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also" (John xiv. 1-3).

The Redeemer was going to offer His life as a sacrifice for sin; and as the high priest of old entered the holy of holies with the blood of atonement, and sprinkled the mercy-seat, even

so our great High Priest, having made an atonement, would pass within the veil, and before the Eternal Majesty would show the print of the nails in His hands and in His feet, and the spear-wound in His side. But inasmuch as our Lord is gone up into heaven, and ever liveth to make intercession for us, we have the blessed assurance that when we depart this life He will receive us to Himself. Away beyond the dim shadows of this mortal life lies the eternal city of God, a city where the inhabitants never say, "I am sick," and where death can never enter. The Christian is a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, an heir of glory; and in that land there is prepared for him his everlasting home. And relying upon the words of Jesus, he can fearlessly advance to meet the last enemy, for he knows that in the hour and article of death he will put off the clay tabernacle, and his ransomed spirit will rise to join the host of the glorified before the throne of God. To the Christian, death is a

rapid transition from life to death, from death to life. It is the birth-hour of the spirit, and henceforth we live with immortals.

§ 2. *An Eye-witness.*

The testimony of an eye-witness can never be successfully refuted. What one has seen and heard must be admitted as true. The Apostle Paul was qualified for his great work by special revelations from God; he was "an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father" (Gal. i. 1). Before his conversion he was a Pharisee, and we are told that his opinions on the human spirit, on the state after death, and on the resurrection of the dead, were those of a Pharisee (Acts xxiii. 6-8).

But as an apostle of Jesus Christ he has delivered to us the substance of what he saw and heard. He had been miraculously transported to the third heaven, and to Paradise, whether in the body or out of the body he

could not tell, but if out of the body he was conscious, and could see and hear; and received while in that state communications which in themselves were inexpressibly sublime, and which it was impossible to utter in human language (2 Cor. xii. 2-4). Paul had seen the mysterious bourne of departed spirits, and therefore when he spoke of the future state he could say, with the most absolute certainty, that "to die is gain" (Phil. i. 21), and that "to depart and to be with Christ is far better" (Phil. i. 23).

§ 3. *The Reasoning of Paul.*

What the apostle has written upon the future state is founded upon Christian experience, and in most instances is an appeal to the consciousness of the believer. The facts to which he refers may be briefly stated thus:—

The Christian has entered upon a new spiritual life, a life that is produced and sustained by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. The believer in

Christ is conscious that his sins are forgiven, and that he has this spiritual life. He has also the testimony of the Spirit, which is given not only as the seal of adoption into the family of God, but also as the pledge of the future inheritance.

The Spirit of God moves upon the soul of the believer, quickening it, and imparting to it moral purity, and inspiring it with the blessed hope of life eternal; and without this supernatural element, religion is like an Egyptian mummy, fit only for a museum or a sepulchre. As the apostle so frequently insists upon these supernatural facts, we will select a few passages from his writings that explain the import of a believer's privilege, and which show how this becomes to those who possess it the strongest and most positive evidence of the future state.

I. In writing to the Corinthians, the apostle refers to the building up of the soul in godliness, and observes, "Now he which stablisheth us with you, and hath anointed us, is God; who

hath also sealed us, and hath given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts " (2 Cor. i. 21, 22).

Observe that—

1. God hath anointed us ;
2. He hath also sealed us ; and
3. He hath given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

1. The anointing of the Spirit.

It was usual in olden time, when any person was appointed to a sacred office, such as prophet, priest, or king, to pour oil upon his head, to signify that he was set apart to the service of God. And, undoubtedly, the costly preparation used on the occasion* was understood to be an emblem of the gifts and graces of the Divine Spirit, without which it was not possible to rightly perform the duties of those important offices.

So the Christian believer, being separated from the world and consecrated to God, is instituted into the duties and privileges of our

* Exod. xxx. 23-25.

holy religion by "an unction of the Holy One" (1 John ii. 20). "And the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 John ii. 27).

2. The sealing of the Spirit.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit confirms and establishes the believer, for God Himself by this anointing seals the consecrated soul as His own. It has been customary from remote antiquity for men to put a mark upon their property, to distinguish it from what belongs to others. An instrument with a device engraven thereon is stamped upon a wafer, or wax, or lead, or heated iron, and thus the exact impress of the seal is made upon that which is stamped, and the right of possession is undisputed. The gift of the Spirit to bear witness with our spirit is the stamp or seal of God, by which we know that we are adopted

into His family and are assured of our acceptance with Him through Christ. Henceforth we belong to God, and by the indwelling of His Spirit we are attested to be His, and can draw near to Him with confidence, and say, Abba Father.

The apostle, writing of this subject to the Church at Ephesus, says, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13).

The Holy Spirit was promised aforetime by the prophets, and the promise was repeated to the disciples by the Lord; and in those who heard the gospel, and, believing, were saved, the promise of God was ratified, for they were sealed with the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit of truth (John xiv. 17), who leads into all truth (chap. xvi. 13), and teaches all things (chap. xiv. 16), makes the impression of his own eternal purity and truth in the souls of those

who believe, and thus they bear the seal of God Almighty." *

3. The earnest of the future inheritance.

The anointing and the sealing of the Spirit impart to the believer the assurance of his adoption ; and this also is the earnest of the future inheritance. The word used by the apostle signifies a pledge given to assure the fulfilment of a promise or contract ; or a part of the price agreed upon between buyer and seller which is paid beforehand to confirm the bargain.

The indwelling of the Spirit is the pledge of eternal glory. We know by our adoption into the family of God that we shall one day see His face ; for by the sealing of the Spirit God has put His mark upon us, and given to us the pledge that He will receive us to Himself. The Spirit bearing witness with our spirit is our title to the inheritance ; for "if children, then heirs."

* Dr. A. Clarke.

“ Now he that hath wrought us to this very thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit ” (2 Cor. v. 5). The change wrought in the believer’s soul is the work of God, a truly noble and a Godlike work, worthy of His adorable name. He gave His only begotten Son to die for us. He sent forth His Spirit to renew and sanctify us, and now in the obedient believer the work of the Son and of the Spirit is become manifest, and by Divine grace he is prepared for glory, for his spirit is moulded into the image of God, and has the stamp of holiness impressed upon it. As, therefore, we are sanctified by the Spirit, we are “ made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,” and hence we know that when we quit this life we shall immediately enter into the fulness of joy, and dwell in the presence of God for ever.

My brother, if thou art delivered from the condemnation and pollution of sin, know this, that the hand of the Invisible has been upon

thee, and that in a peculiar sense thou art the workmanship of God, His best and noblest work; and inasmuch as thy manhood is perfected after the pattern of God, the high honour shall be given thee of living in the palace of the great King, and ministering before His throne.

But the sealing of the Spirit is also the security deposited in our hearts, by which we are assured that God, who has given unto us eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, will fulfil His promise. We know by indisputable facts that eternal glory is awaiting us, and therefore that the stroke of death will not destroy the man. The sealing of the Spirit is the direct testimony of God to the soul, assuring us of our citizenship, and therefore we confidently affirm that when absent from the body we shall be present with the Lord. This is not a mere conjecture, for we do not bewilder ourselves with only guessing at our destiny, but by the Spirit's witness — this heaven in the

soul—we have ample security that we shall live with God for ever. The presence of the Divine Comforter inspires within a living hope, and this hope is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, cast within the veil. We are sailing over the sea of life to the desired haven, we have already by faith seen the land afar off, and hence we know whither we are bound. The word of God is our chart and our compass, faith is our telescope, and hope is our anchor. Again and again the tempest may play around us, and the white-crested billows dash over us, and threaten to devour us; we shall outlive it all, and drop anchor by-and-by in the harbour of the Eternal City. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. i. 3, 4).

To those that are sealed by the Spirit, the

darkness and gloom that hung o'er the grave is for ever scattered, and they fear not to meet the last enemy, for they know that God will give them the victory. A man like Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, when in the article of death can see the heavens open, and the risen Lord standing at the right hand of God, and he hastens to join "a great multitude that no man can number, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14).

II. The law of the spiritual life.

In reasoning on immortality the apostle asserts that the law of the spiritual life is directly opposite to that of our natural life, and a man of ripe Christian experience must of necessity be acquainted with this fact. Such a fact, to one that will look at it with honest eyes, is an argument that is incontrovertible, and happily the apostle has given an admirable description of it in his own inimitable language: "For which cause we faint not, but

though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 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. 16-18).

This is the testimony of a man who is conscious that his soul has been quickened by the Spirit of God, and who has the keen spiritual vision which can detect the realities that lie beyond the ken of ordinary mortals. From his own consciousness he testifies that although persecution, and distress, and disease, the manifold afflictions of this evil world, may ravage and lay waste the outward man, yet the inward man, incorruptible, waxes stronger and stronger day by day, being renewed with Divine grace.

The body flourishes for a time, and then, by

a law inevitable, death mars its beauty and the grave receives the mouldering dust. But the spiritual life is incorruptible, and when the frail vessel that held it for a time crumbles into ruin, the man, begotten of God and perfected by the work of the Spirit, rises above the wreck to enjoy the fruition of God in the eternal world.

This is the hope and the confidence of the Christian, a hope that brightens day by day. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1).

We do not throw out this statement at random, but clearly apprehend the fact of which we speak; and there is not the shadow of doubt cast upon it. He that is born of the Spirit has within the assurance of immortality, for the life of the regenerated soul is incorruptible, and such that no blast of death can destroy. "Therefore we are always confident,

knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 6-8). The believer, we assert, is conscious of these facts, namely, of the indwelling of the Spirit, which is the pledge and foretaste of the future inheritance, and of the incorruptible nature of spiritual life; and hence he has the most indubitable proof of immortality.

§ 4. *The Testimony of Dying Saints.*

We have selected the following sayings from the last moments of good men, in order to show how the Christian religion supports the mind in the extremity of suffering, and also to show how a Christian can meet the last enemy, even when he appears in the most terrible and appalling form, not only without fear, but with a feeling of holy triumph and the certainty of victory.

“ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep ” (Acts vii. 59, 60).

Ignatius to Polycarp : “ Watch as a Divine wrestler ; thy prize is immortality and eternal life. Let not those who seem experienced Christians, and are yet unsound in the faith, stagger thee : stand firm as an anvil continually struck. It is the character of a great wrestler to be mangled, and yet to conquer.”

The Proconsul to Polycarp : “ Have pity on thy great age. Swear by the fortune of Cæsar ; repent ; say, Take away the Atheists.” Polycarp, gazing at the heathen multitude around him, and waving his hand to them, “ Take away the Atheists.” Proconsul : “ Swear, and I will release thee : reproach Christ.” Polycarp : “ Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He hath never wronged me ; and how can I

blaspheme my King who hath saved me ?” Proconsul : “ I have wild beasts, and I will expose you to them, unless you repent.” Polycarp : “ Call them : our minds are not to be changed from the better to the worse ; but it is a good thing to be changed from the miseries of this world to the blessedness of the just.” Proconsul : “ Since you despise the wild beasts, I will tame your spirit by fire, unless you repent.” Polycarp : “ You threaten me with fire, which burns for a moment, and will be soon extinct ; but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay ? Do what you please.”

Rusticus, the prefect, to Justin Martyr : “ Hear thou, who hast the character of an orator, and imaginest thyself to be in the possession of truth. If I scourge thee from head to foot, thinkest thou that thou shalt go to heaven ?” Justin : “ Although I suffer what you threaten, yet I expect to enjoy the portion of

all true Christians, as I know that the Divine grace and favour is laid up for all such, and shall be so while the world endures." Rusticus: "Do you think that you shall go to heaven, and receive a reward?" Justin: "I not only think so, but I know it, and have a certainty of it, which excludes all doubt."

Chrysostom: "I always told you that this life is a road in which joys and sorrows both pass swiftly away. The visible scene of things before us is like a fair: we buy and sell, and sometimes recreate ourselves. Are we better than the patriarchs? Do we excel the prophets and apostles, that we should live for ever? As for the doctrine of Christ, it began not with me, nor shall it die with me. Did not Moses die? and did not Joshua succeed him? Paul was beheaded, and left he not Timothy, Titus, Apollos, and many more behind him?"

Bernard: "I consider three things, in which all my hope consists: the love of adop-

tion, the truth of the promise, and the power of performance. Let my foolish heart murmur as much as it please, and say, Who art thou, and how great is that glory, or by what merits dost thou expect to obtain it? I will confidently answer, I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He hath adopted me in love; that He is true in promise; that He is powerful to fulfil it, for He can do what He pleaseth. This is the threefold cord, which is not easily broken, which being let down to us from our heavenly country to earth, I pray that we may firmly hold, and may He Himself lift us up, and draw us completely to the glory of God, who is blessed for ever."

Bishops to John Huſs: "O cursed Judas, who having forsaken the council of peace, art entered into that of the Jews, we take this chalice from thee, in which is the blood of Jesus Christ." Huss: "I trust in the mercy of God I shall drink of it this very day in His kingdom." Having stripped him, and put

a paper coronet on his head, on which they had painted three devils and inscribed ARCH-HERETIC, one of the bishops said, "We now devote thy soul to the infernal devils." "But I," said Huss, "commend my spirit into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ: unto Thee I commit my spirit, which Thou hast redeemed."

Vidus Bressius: "If God's Spirit saith true, I shall straight rest from my labours; my soul is even taking her wings to fly to her resting-place."

Sanromanus: "Work your pleasures on my body, which you have in chains, your captive; but my soul is even already in heaven, through faith and hope; and upon that Cæsar himself hath no power."

Hugh Stallour to John Pike, his fellow-martyr: "Yet a little while, and we shall see one another before the throne and face of God."

Guy de Bres: "The ringing of my chain

hath been sweet music in mine ears, my prison an excellent school, wherein God's Spirit hath been my teacher. All my former discourses were as a blind man's of colours in comparison of my present feeling. Oh, what a precious comforter is a good conscience."

Luther: "Thee, O Christ, have I taught, Thee have I trusted, Thee have I loved: into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Ridley to Latimer: "Be of good heart, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame, or enable us to abide it." To which Latimer replied, "Be of good comfort, for we shall this day light such a candle in England as I trust, by God's grace, will never be put out."

Saunders, burnt at Coventry: "Welcome the Cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life."

Bradford: "I am going before you to my God and your God; to my Father and your Father; to my Christ and your Christ; to my home and your home."

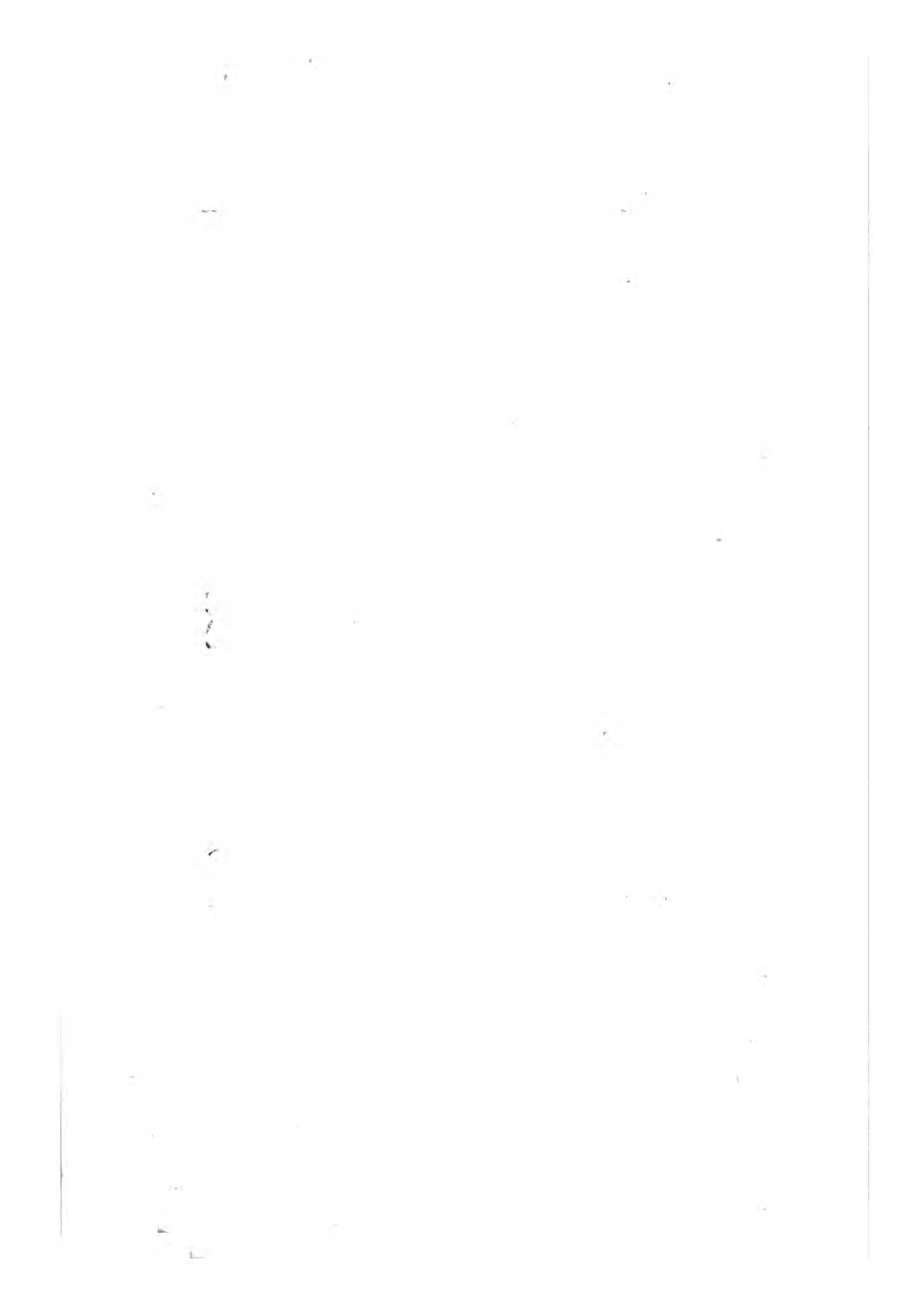
Dr. Payson to some of the young men of his congregation: "Death comes every night and stands by my bedside in the form of terrible convulsions, every one of which threatens to separate the soul from the body. These continue to grow worse and worse, until every bone is almost dislocated with pain, leaving me with the certainty that I shall have it all to endure again the next night. Yet, while my body is thus tortured, the soul is perfectly happy and peaceful, more happy than I can possibly express to you. I lie here, and feel these convulsions extending higher and higher, but my soul is filled with joy unspeakable. I seem to swim in a flood of glory which God pours down upon me. And I know that my happiness is but begun, and I cannot doubt but that it will last for ever. And, now, is this all a delusion? Is it a delusion that can fill the soul to overflowing joy in such circumstances? If so, it is surely a delusion better than any reality. But no, it is not a delusion; I feel

that it is not. I do not merely know that I shall enjoy all this—I enjoy it now. My young friends, were I master of the whole world, what could it do for me like this? Were all its wealth at my feet, and all its inhabitants striving to make me happy, what could they do for me? Nothing, nothing! Now, all this happiness I trace back to the religion which I have preached, and to the time when that great change took place in my heart which I have often told you is necessary to salvation; and I now tell you again, that without this change, you cannot, no you cannot, see the kingdom of God.”

My brother, art thou saying, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his”? and hast thou surrendered thy heart, thy life, thy all to God, and art thou trusting alone in the merits of Christ? Then do not fear, though the silent river rolls at thy feet, and the chillness of death is passing over thee. A painful struggle it may be, but in a

little while the heavens will open, and as these earthly things fade from view, the glory of the spiritual will burst upon thee. Be of good courage, it is the Master calling thee. Arise, shake off thy mortal fetters, and ascend to the palace of God. This is thy coronation day, and upon thy head, even thine, shall be placed a crown of everlasting glory: away from the din and smoke of battle, thou shalt rest thyself in peace and safety in our Father's house.

*ON THE
HINDRANCES TO CONVERSION.*





IX.

ON THE HINDRANCES TO CONVERSION.

§ I. *Hindrances Arising from Perversions of the Intellect.*

IT was admitted, even by the enemies of the Lord Jesus, that He was a just person and an innocent man : for such was the blamelessness of His character that none of them could convince Him of sin, and yet they persecuted Him with the most unrelenting animosity.

He sought by word and deed to allay their prejudice and disarm their resentment. He endeavoured to convince them of His Divine mission, to induce them to open their hearts to the truth, and to lead them into the liberty

of the gospel, but His efforts were unavailing; and disappointed in their expectations of a temporal sovereign, coming to them in the pomp of earthly royalty, they despised the pretensions of the carpenter's Son. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

Those discourses that were delivered in order to explain His character, and vindicate Himself against the misrepresentations of malice, in which also He designed to show the merciful purpose of God in sending His only begotten Son into the world, were listened to with visible manifestations of rage, ending mostly in attempts at personal violence. Their bigotry and prejudice so far perverted their understandings, that they were incapable of reasoning rightly on the subject, and hence an exposure of the fallacies that deceived them,—a rational appeal to the venerable authority of Moses and the prophets—an invitation to examine with candour the evidence laid before them,—instead of curing, seemed only to aggra-

vate the symptoms of their mental disease. (John viii. 59; x. 33-39.) They resolutely shut their eyes against the light of life until the bad passions of a depraved heart generated the most inveterate malice, and maddened with fury against the supposed Impostor—in the distressing issue of this fight against the spiritual and holy—they crucified the Lord of life and glory.

But the verdict of the Jews is not the verdict of posterity. The whole scene is laid before us in the most lifelike manner by impartial witnesses, and we cannot but express a righteous indignation against the diabolical malice of these Scribes and Pharisees. The chief actors in this artful conspiracy are now pointed to as the worst specimens of incarnate wickedness; while the Innocent Sufferer, who committed His cause to Him that judgeth righteously, has won for Himself the highest throne in the universe, and a name that is above every name.

In the perversions of the intellect we discover the cause of Jesus being put to death, and on the same principle we account for the fact that some in these days are hostile to the Christian religion. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and the unregenerate soul is so blind to spiritual truth, that it will call light darkness, and darkness light. Hence men who lack spiritual discernment, and who have only the slightest knowledge of the design of the gospel—who have never patiently investigated its evidences, and know as little of Christianity as the Jews knew of its Founder,—will utter the most extravagant nonsense against it, and brand it as a deceiver of the people. We need not go far to discover the reason of this antipathy, as the Scribes of old are the progenitors of this degenerate brood, and the intellectual opposers of this age are, like their sires of yore, the bondmen of the sensual. They cannot say that they oppose this religion because it is a foe

to civil government; as it must be admitted that Christianity is loyal to the powers that be, and is the strongest bulwark of a nation. Neither does this religion excite their hatred because it destroys the peace of families; for we have seen it enter many a home made desolate by sin, and under its benign sway it has fostered the bliss of another Paradise. Nor does our holy Christianity deserve the contempt of these adversaries because it stultifies the man and blights his growth; for we find, in looking for the best models of manhood, that this religion has produced the noblest specimens. If this religion bears upon its forehead the mark of God; if the evidence in support of its truth is such as will satisfy a candid inquirer after a fair examination; if it is in harmony with the highest dictates of reason, and is adapted to the deeper instincts of our nature; if it comes to bless and not to curse, to build up and not to destroy, to love and not to hate; why do men

so bitterly oppose it? They contend with it because the unrenewed mind is full of prejudice against the spiritual, and is at war with the holy. "Men love darkness rather than light," and therefore hug their sins and fight against God.

§ 2. *Hindrances arising from Perversions of the Heart.*

1. The worship of Mammon.

The inner man craves for something that is more satisfying than the vain follies of this vanishing life, nor is it possible to repress entirely the instinctive yearning of the spirit for the supreme good. The solemnity of our existence will now and again confront us, and in those meditative moods our thoughts wander to the future, to the destiny that awaits us; and we feel the importance of knowing the way of salvation, and what we must do to inherit eternal life. As on a misty day we have caught a glimpse of the blue

heavens, through a rift in the clouds, so there are times when eternity breaks in upon the most sensual and worldly; and then the man, for a moment beholding his folly, turns away from his brutal happiness with loathing, and inquires after that which endures to eternity. It is not without a conflict that a man becomes selfish and sordid, for the awakened conscience, unsatisfied with the temporal and fleeting, demands that the soul consider of its future destiny. We have an illustration of this in the rich young ruler that came to Christ. "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark x. 17.)

In the character of this young man there are many pleasing features. He came running to Christ: this was an evidence of his earnestness. He came and knelt before Him: this was an evidence of his humility. He came

with a question that perplexed him, and modestly proposed it to One that he knew was wiser than himself: this was an evidence of his candour. And then he had read the Divine law with conscientious diligence, for the Lord said, "Thou knowest the commandments." It appears, too, that what he knew he had carefully practised. He had no reproaches of conscience for known duties neglected, as he could say, "All these have I observed from my youth." But yet he is unsatisfied, and confesses that there is something deficient: thus we see him kneeling before Christ, and laying bare his heart, as he inquires with the utmost frankness, "What lack I yet?" This we regard as an evidence of his sincerity. It is as though he said, "I have read, and have tried to understand the law of God, and my life has been brought into subjection to that law, but still I find no rest; for my spirit is torn with doubts and anxiety, and I wish to know the truth. Tell me what it is

that I need, as I am ready to do anything, if only I can have peace with God and a hope of heaven."

How slyly evil insinuates itself into the heart, and conceals itself from the unsuspecting mind, and how little does a man know of himself; for even while he professes to reverence God, and is striving to honour His laws, an idol is set up within that robs the Creator of His glory; and the obedience in which he trusted, perhaps, and about which he speaks with becoming modesty, degenerates into a barren formality.

The searching glance of Christ could detect at once the hindrance to his conversion, and beholding the interesting features of his character, He loved him; and then, like a skilful physician, He probes to the root of the disease, and exposes the sin that is deceiving him; and further, He tests his sincerity by the most heart-searching requisition, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give

to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come and follow me.”

When the young man heard these words, they caused a sharp contest between his sense of duty and the love of riches ; but soon the expression of his countenance altered, the earnest wistful gaze passed away, and disappointment with its clouds of sadness hung over him, as the struggle had now ended in defeat, and “ he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”

During this interview the rich ruler was passing the crisis of life, and had he denied himself, taken up his cross and followed the Saviour, he had now found rest to his troubled soul, and the Lord would have given him an honourable position in His kingdom ; but he allows his only chance of life to slip from him, because he cannot give up all for Christ. The great hindrance to his salvation was his wealth ; and perhaps he would seek to excuse himself by saying, “ Why is this emi-

ment Teacher so harsh in His requirements? I am willing to do almost anything, but I cannot sell all that I have and give it to the poor. I consider such a demand unreasonable." Yet, were it possible for him to deliberately weigh the subject, he would see clearly that it is better, far better, to part with all, even to the last penny, than to make wealth an idol. "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

We see, in the instance before us, that it is in the nature of riches to cause men to trust in them, and to seek their happiness from them. But who among the rich can be persuaded of this? and where can we find one that thinks the possession of wealth endangers the soul? God requires the full surrender of the heart, and nothing less than this will suffice; but it is extremely difficult for a rich man to comply with this demand, because he worships his money, and finds the darling lust as useful as

a right hand, or as pleasant as a right eye. But before one can become a disciple of Christ, the soul must renounce its idolatry; whatever may be the cost, the sacrifice must be made; to hesitate is dangerous, to refuse is endless ruin. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matt. v. 29). Many that profess a readiness to obey the words of Christ are in heart the slaves of Mammon. In vain you offer to them the durable blessings of eternity, the lust of riches cankers every good desire, and the lordly tyrant holds his zealous devotee in willing bonds. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John ii. 15).

"Beware of covetousness," said Christ, on one occasion to His disciples, and He assigns as the reason of this caution, that a man's

life does not depend upon the superfluities of wealth, neither is an increase of riches any guarantee for length of days. But little notice is taken of these words by this adulterous generation, for on every hand men are so fully engrossed with the pursuits of business or pleasure, that they have no time or inclination to think about religion. As spiritual realities are invisible to mortal eye, and appear as foolishness to the natural man, we frequently hear the question put, "What necessity is there to make so much ado about what is unknown and far away?" and hence, like the men in the parable, one goes to his farm, and another to his merchandise. How eagerly they strive for the possession of riches, not knowing that the man of wealth stands in slippery places, and that riches, even when honestly acquired, too frequently prove a snare and a curse. It is truly observed of these mammon-worshippers that, as their possessions increase, the soul dwarfs, until by-and-by the nobility of man-

hood is lost in selfishness and avarice, or drowned in the pleasures that riches command; and as these sordid and brutal passions wax stronger, the probabilities of salvation lessen, until eventually any one may predict, without the gift of prophecy, that the man of broad acres, and untold quantities of gold, will live a worldling and die a fool.

“The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully,” and we listen with profound attention, expecting him to sing a hymn of praise to God; but we are grievously disappointed, for although this man has received liberally from the hand of Providence, he is blind to that fact, and the Giver of all good is entirely forgotten. Yet, as it is natural to communicate the joy we feel, perhaps he will say, “I will stretch out my hand to the poor, and out of my abundance I will cause the widow and the fatherless to rejoice.” But again we are disappointed, for this man is a complete stranger to any noble or generous

impulse; his intense selfishness has hardened his heart, and there is no compassion left in him. We see him standing on the hill-top as the sun goes down, and looking over the rich landscape that he calls his own. Below are the ripe corn-fields, where the reapers reap, and yonder are the garners where the fruits are stored, most of them already full, and therefore he asks himself, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" The question no doubt puzzled him for some time, but at length, after he has considered the matter, he says, "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke xii. 18, 19). Thus he thought only of sensual delight, the pleasure of a brute, and reckoned upon many years to come, not aware that his end was nigh.

We remember one day, when strolling along

the fields, our attention was arrested by the singing of a little bird. When passing near the tree on which it was perched, we thought how happy the little creature seems. But having walked only some hundred paces thence, on looking upward, lo! a hawk was poised in the air. We stood a few moments to watch his movements, and soon, with a swoop of the wing, as straight as an arrow he flew to the tiny songster, and the melody was hushed in the stillness of death. In a few hours we passed that way again, and the feathers lying on the grass told of the havoc which had been made by that bird of prey.

Thus also was this rich farmer nestling himself in the midst of plenty, and while in the gladness of his heart he is singing of peace and safety, behold, above him hovers the angel of death, flapping his dark wings, and ready, at the bidding of God, to swoop down upon his defenceless body. Unconscious that an enemy is near, you can see how carefully he deliberates,

and with what consummate prudence he lays down his plan. He looks to the future, and a bright vision of prosperity flits before him, and then, good easy man, you hear him whisper to himself, "I will be merry." But his mirth is short in its duration, for soon a weariness comes over him and he must needs lie down to rest. Apparently he had made his calculations with the utmost care; but one thing has been omitted, and he will wake out of his delusions, and will be made sensible of that fact when it is too late to rectify his error. For, on that selfsame night, when his eyes are sealed in sleep, in the awful stillness of the midnight hour, an invisible foe enters his chamber and stands by his bed; a cold hand is laid upon him, which seems to freeze his blood; he awakes in terror out of a frightful dream, and hears the unwelcome visitor saying, "My name is Death. Vain man, thy heart has long been doting on the pleasures of sin, and through thy insensibility to spiritual and eternal things

thou hast neglected thy soul and forgotten thy God; but I am sent to end thy mirth, and hurry thy spirit to His dread tribunal. Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee; and in a little while hence thy hoarded treasure will be scattered to the winds; and thy pampered body, thou selfish, brutish thing, will be nothing but a few handfuls of dust, dishonoured and forgotten in the grave." Learn, from the doom of this man, that the acquisition of wealth for mere selfish purposes is a curse, and that if, in thoughtless levity, we neglect the great duties of life, like a thief in the night Death approaches, and soon his peremptory summons will put an end to our folly. "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire" (Jas. v. 1-3).

2. The Dominion of Lust.

We observe that an awakened conscience admits the truth of the gospel without questioning, but at the same time the slave of sin resists its influence and abandons himself to the dominion of fleshly lusts. We have a notable illustration of this fact in the Roman governor, Felix. It was the hap of Felix, while procurator of Judæa, to have under his custody the greatest man of that age. Perhaps the curiosity of the governor was excited by what he had heard of his singular prisoner, and hence he sought to gratify himself by having a special interview with him. "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ" (Acts xxiv. 24.)

The apostle has now an opportunity of explaining to these high personages the peculiarities of the Christian religion, and he insists particularly upon certain moral duties. "He

reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Thus does our holy Christianity grapple with the consciences of men. It speaks with authority on these moral questions, and teaches the duty of "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," and of living "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" and even while it is speaking to us, we recognise its voice to be none other than the voice of God. In this fact, that the conscience bows to the authority of the gospel, and to that alone, we have the most decisive proof that this religion is of God. The instance before us is an illustration of this significant fact.

The discourse of the apostle was judiciously suited to the occasion, as this Felix was a flagrant transgressor of the moral law. Paul therefore discussed the principles of righteousness, the uprightness of character that will do justly between man and man, and the rectitude of soul that will give to God His due. Such

moral excellence is the glory of a man, and is indispensable in a ruler; but of this virtue Felix was destitute.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, says that whilst Felix was procurator of Judæa “he acted in a very arbitrary manner, and scrupled at no kind of injustice;” and that “in the practice of all kinds of lust, crime, and cruelty, he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave.” Josephus has also recorded an instance of abominable villainy of which he was guilty. “Jonathan, the high priest, often admonished Felix to correct his administration; for that otherwise he himself was in danger of the ill-will of the people, since he had desired the emperor to make him procurator of Judæa.” But Felix, not being able to bear these frequent remonstrances, “by a large sum of money corrupted an intimate friend of Jonathan’s, who got him to be assassinated.” *

Furthermore, in the narrative before us, it is

* Lardner, vol. i. p. 27.

said that he hoped money would be given him of Paul, that he might liberate him. He would know that Paul was a respectable character, and that he had opulent friends, and possibly he was aware that the apostle had recently been entrusted with a large sum for the relief of the poor, and hence might suppose that the same persons would give liberally for the enlargement of their leader, and that he had now a good opportunity of enriching himself. But Paul preferred imprisonment to liberty on such terms, and Felix therefore, on leaving his office, to gratify the Jews, left him in bonds. Hence we may see that Felix was totally destitute of right moral principles. It appears that he was not under the control of justice and humanity, but of avarice, injustice, and revenge, and to this unscrupulous character the apostle spoke of the purity and rectitude of the gospel of Christ.

Paul introduced the next division of his subject with admirable delicacy. He reasoned of

temperance,—that is, self-control, having the mastery over one's appetite and passions, and not allowing the brute to run away with the man. "I keep' under my body and bring it into subjection." In applying it to the characters before him, the apostle would speak particularly of continence, or chastity, for these two had broken through the most sacred institutions of society, and trampled upon the holiest feelings of our nature. Drusilla, it is said, was the most beautiful woman of her time, but at the solicitation of Felix she had renounced her religion, and forsaken her husband, to live with him. While Paul was speaking on the faith in Christ to this profligate princess and her unprincipled paramour, he reproved them for their sin by showing that the religion of Christ is opposed to such impurity and sensuality.

Perhaps these persons of elevated rank might transgress certain moral laws with impunity, as there was no court in which proceedings

could be taken against them; but there is another Judge and another tribunal to which the high and low are alike amenable, and therefore, in words of solemn import, he reasoned with them of the coming judgment. He reminded them of the invisible Majesty who sits in the heavens, whose laws they had openly violated, and he told them that they were accountable to Him, and that the day of retribution was drawing near, when the Judge of all the earth would summon them to His bar. In his reasoning he makes no allusion to what is merely probable, but he speaks of what is absolutely certain. The day will come "in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The Judge will descend in power and great glory, attended by His holy angels. He will appear seated on His great white throne, and from His face the heavens and the earth shall

flee away. The trumpet will sound, louder than erst it sounded when God came down on Sinai, for its vibrations will shake the whole earth and the heavens; and the graves will be opened, and the dead, small and great, will stand before God. The books will then be opened, and from what is written in the books judgment will be given according to every man's work.

Mark the effect of this address. While Paul is speaking, the conscience is aroused, and while he warns of the coming day, this inward monitor reverberates the truth through the chambers of his soul. The slave of sinful pleasure is startled out of his moral stupor by an horrific vision of God's judgment-seat; and so deep are his convictions of sin, and so violent are the emotions of his mind, that even his body is agitated, for he literally shakes from head to foot. Why does this heathen tremble? Why does his face turn pale, and why does he shake like a palsied man? Why? It is

the undissembled homage of his conscience to God. It is an awakened soul acknowledging the truth of the gospel. Suddenly, as it were, the face of eternity is unveiled, and the realities of another world become palpable facts. The man feels the hand of the Invisible upon him, and the sins of his past life are brought to remembrance, and he is pointed to the dread hereafter. The sight is more than he can bear, for his guilty soul shrinks from viewing it with more than mortal fear; and, in sympathy with his troubled soul, his body also shivers with preternatural excitement.

Mark the conduct of Felix under these Divine impressions. He does not say, "I will have nothing to do with religion," but he was unwilling to renounce his sins, and therefore, to soothe his troubled conscience, he proposes to defer thinking of this matter till a future opportunity. This was a dangerous delusion, inasmuch as sinning against knowledge will weaken and destroy moral sensibility, and

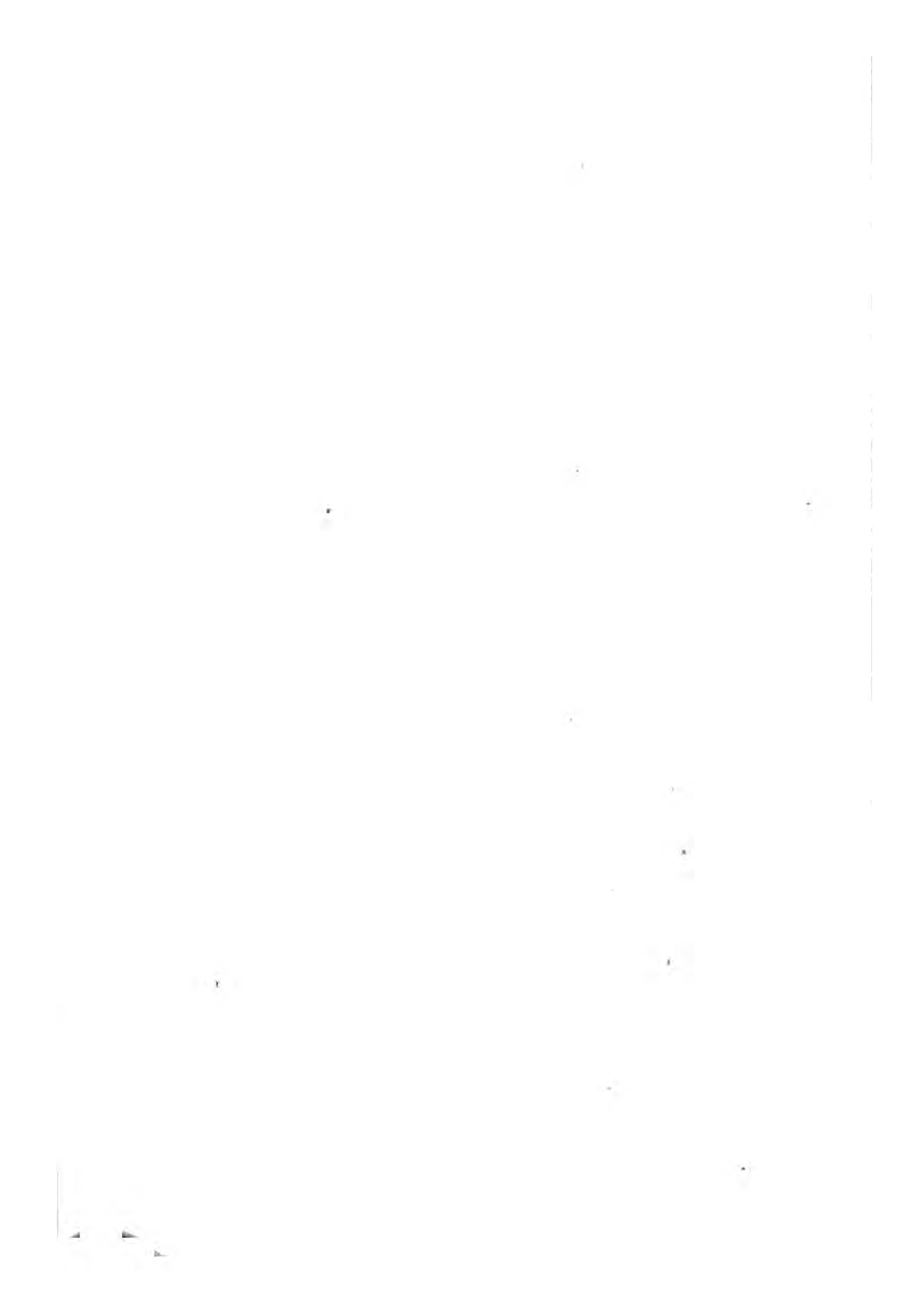
evil habits persisted in grow stronger and stronger, making the work of repentance more difficult and inopportune. In this procrastination there is also presumption. No man knoweth if he will ever hear the voice of mercy again, or when the Spirit of God, grieved at his hardness and impenitence, will depart from him, or when the summons of death may come. Life is so uncertain, that before to-morrow's sun shall rise your doom may be sealed.

We learn from this narrative that the gospel opens a door of hope to the vilest characters, and freely offers redemption to the chief of sinners. For such as Felix there is mercy provided, and Jesus is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.

We learn also the necessity of completing the work of repentance. Conviction of sin must be accompanied by a reformation of life. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him

return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. lv. 7). "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise, and call upon thy God." Awake, thou immortal spirit, and put away thy deadly stupor. Behold, the door of mercy is open: struggle with all thy might to enter in, for upon the effort of to-day depends thy everlasting destiny.

*ON THE
CONDEMNATION OF THE WICKED.*





X.

ON THE CONDEMNATION OF THE WICKED.

§ I. *Moral Agency.*

THAT man is responsible to God, and that there is a day of judgment approaching, when all men must appear before the righteous Judge, is sufficiently manifest to those who think. Intimations of these facts may be gathered from various sources. The seeing eye can discern everywhere the operation of inexorable laws—laws which proclaim in stern language that justice will mete to every man his due. “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,” is true in all times, all the world over. Suppose that instead of sowing

good seed in your garden, you had sown it over with thorns and thistles and nettles, would nature rectify your folly? Not at all. She would bring you an abundant harvest of the kind you had sown, and would exact the penalty of your errors to the uttermost farthing.

On these principles, which commend themselves to our reason, we are shaping our destiny. On this fact it is our duty to reflect, in order that we be faithful stewards, earnest in doing our life-work; diligent and watchful, always at our post, and ready at any time for the coming of our Lord. If we are good servants, and act wisely, it will be well with us; but if not, we cannot ignore our responsibility. Look, for instance, at the foolish man who buried his talent.

“Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid

thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxv. 24-30).

This man had one talent given to him by his lord, and also the opportunity of improving it. Why then did he neglect to use what he knew was only lent to him, and resolve to bury what belonged to another? Was it probable that his unreasonable conduct would pass un-

rebuked? If so, why those misgivings that appal him as he looks to the future? and why does he think it necessary to find a plausible excuse? and why does he flatter himself with the idea of casting upon another the blame of his wrong-doing?

This feeling of responsibility is deeply rooted in our nature, and, despite the sophistry of infidel principles, it awakens a terrible suspicion that after all a day may come when inquisition will be made. The uneasiness which the transgressor, however hardened, cannot help but feel sometimes is caused by the shadow of God's judgment throne falling across his spirit; and he is hereby reminded that the day is coming when he must stand before the great Taskmaster, and what has been done, or left undone, will be taken account of, and a just award be given.

This coming day we say is inevitable, whether we are prepared or not. Let the unfaithful servant therefore make ready his

apology, and repeat, if he dare, his insulting language to the face of his Maker. Has he considered what he means to say for himself? Let him carefully weigh the words before he utters them, for, be assured, his mouth will be stopped, and to his own confusion, from his own confession, will the sentence of condemnation be read.

It is reiterated again and again, in the word of God, that "God is no respecter of persons," and that "every man shall bear his own burden." The unfaithful steward must give an account of himself, of his buried talents, of his neglected opportunities of doing good, of the most precious gifts lavished upon him in vain. And the Lord, the righteous Judge, will determine his case on these reasonable principles: "From thy own deeds, from thy own life, and out of thy own mouth do I condemn thee." This is the mortal sting of the punishment: "Thou hast accomplished thy own ruin, thou hast destroyed thyself."

In that great and terrible day, when the judgment throne is set, the All-knowing Judge will bring to light the secrets of men, and nothing will escape His notice: every sin, whether of omission or commission, will be detected and exposed, and the vast assembly, to a man, will acknowledge the sentence just.

§ 2. *The Duration of Future Punishment.*

Whatever difference of opinion may arise on the punishment of the wicked in a future state, the ultimate appeal must be to facts, and he who desires to know the truth must candidly examine the facts that are laid before him. - If those important items are omitted, and a mere guess or a fiction of the fancy is substituted, the argument is altogether visionary, and the flighty reasoner will fall ere long from his airy habitation, and stumble painfully against what he refused to see.

We know nothing of the doom of the finally impenitent but by revelation, and from that

source alone we derive the evidence upon which our conclusions are founded.

The first important fact which demands attention is stated by Jude in his Epistle, i. 6: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Hence we learn that an order of beings, not human, have, at some period in the past, sinned against the Lord God Omnipotent, and that, to punish them for their crimes, they are now bound in chains of darkness, awaiting the great judgment day. Furthermore, the duration of their punishment is described by the Judge in this language: "Everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41).

There is no intimation that the term *αἰώνιον* is used in an accommodated sense in this instance, and therefore no secondary meaning can be applied. It must be taken in its primary and original signification, which expresses, as

far as language can express, our idea of the ages that never have an end. It is a fact, which to us appears significant, that the term which is used to express the duration of punishment, which is the doom of these apostate angels, is as forcible as any which the Greek language supplies. This may be seen in the fact that the same term is employed to denote the Eternity of God Himself: “ του αιωνιου θεου—The everlasting God ” (Rom. xvi. 26) ;* “ Απο του αιωνος

* Gen. xxi. 33. “ This is the first place in Scripture in which *olam* occurs as an attribute of God, and here it is evidently designed to point out His eternal duration : that it can mean no limited time is self-evident, because nothing of this kind can be attributed to God. The Septuagint render the words θεος αιωνιος—The everlasting God. From this application of both the Hebrew and Greek words, we learn that *olam* and *αιων* originally signified eternal, or duration without end. *Olam* signifies *He was hidden, concealed, or kept secret* : and *αιων*, according to Aristotle, is compounded of *αι*, *always*, and *ων*, *being*, *αιων εστιν, απο του αιει ειναι*. Hence we see that no words can more forcibly express the grand characteristics of eternity than these. It is that duration which is *concealed, hidden, or kept secret*, from all created beings ;

εως του αιωνος συει—From everlasting to everlasting thou art God” (Psa. xc. 1,2). By which we understand that, from the limitless ages of the past to the limitless ages of the future, He is unchangeably the same, the Self-Existent, the Eternal God. This term, which is so properly used to denote the perpetual existence of the Lord Jehovah, is employed in such a manner that it must mean eternity, and nothing less, when describing the doom of the fallen spirits.

Again, it appears, from the sentence of the Judge, that fallen spirits of the human race, that go down to the grave and into eternity polluted by sin, are consigned to the same endless perdition as Satan and his angels: for He will say to those on the left hand, “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

which is *always existing*, still *running on*, but never *running out*; an *interminable, incessant, and immeasurable duration*: it is *that* in the *whole of which* God alone can be said to *exist*, and *that* which the eternal mind alone can comprehend.”—*Dr. A. Clarke.*

Further, we find that the same term which is applied to the duration of misery inflicted upon the wicked is also applied to the duration of bliss bestowed upon the heirs of glory, *και απελευσονται ουτοι εις κολασιν αιωνιον, οι δε δικαιοι εις ζωη αιωνιον*. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. xxv. 46). On the one hand there is punishment everlasting (*κολασιν αιωνιον*), and on the other life eternal (*ζωην αιωνιον*). The small critic, that seeks to bolster up his groundless notions by forced interpretations of Scripture, cannot quibble with one part of this passage without affecting the other. If it be admitted that the righteous will receive everlasting life, then, as the same term is employed in both parts of the passage, the sentence of the wicked will consign them to the abodes of endless woe.

The words recorded in this passage were spoken by Christ, who is the appointed Judge (Acts xvii. 31). The secrets of the nether

world were known to Him, and these facts have been proclaimed in our hearing, in order that we may take timely warning, and escape from the wrath to come. The Lord Jesus came to teach us what to do and what to shun, and He pronounces that hell is a terrible reality, a place of torment prepared for Satan and his angels; and this is the doom of the stubborn transgressor, the awful issue of a life that has been spent in sinning against God.

§ 3. *Reflections on Duty and Destiny.*

The sacred Scriptures contain a revelation of the will of God, and by prayerfully studying them we may learn our duty and destiny. The great God has given us our existence in order that we should glorify Him in our bodies and in our spirits, which are His. Soon this state of trial will end, but in the narrow limits of time we are doing a work, the effect of which we shall feel through endless ages.

We read in the Gospel of Luke that "There

was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments," etc. (Chap. xvi. 19-31.)

This man is not represented as a monster of wickedness, but he was one of those who receive liberally from the hand of God, and yet forget the Giver, and abuse His gifts. It is probable that he desired to appear righteous in the sight of others, and no doubt thought it was discreditable to a respectable man to make no profession of religion. But whatever the opinion of others might be, or whatever delusion might fill his own mind, he was as

destitute of true godliness as an African savage. In the man's conduct, as sketched by the great Teacher, we see the danger of living in the neglect of duty, though not chargeable with the commission of crime; and by his doom the rich are solemnly warned not to use their wealth to pamper appetite and gratify pride, but as a trust from God, to be employed in His service. We learn from this narrative :—

That we have a perfect rule of life in the holy Scriptures (Luke xvi. 31).

That our future destiny depends upon how, in this life, we discharge our duty to God and to our fellow-men.

That selfishness, however respectable, leads to certain damnation.

That at the end of our mortal existence we immediately enter upon an unalterable state of blessedness or misery.

It is plainly stated by Christ that there is a place of torment in the deep abyss, where wicked spirits are punished for their crimes.

The ungodly may cavil at this fact, but in the hour of death they will find that the fatal stroke which sends the body to the grave will also send the soul to its doom. The material organisation may dissolve, but the spirit will live even then, for this man could feel the pangs of a guilty conscience, and the painful torment of the quenchless fire, when his body lay cold in the grave. Hence it appears that death may reduce the fine texture of the brain to dust, but it has no power over the mind, and cannot blot out the memory. "Ay, there's the rub." We are writing in a book day by day, and must close the volume with our life; but on those pages we shall look again and again, and read it all in the light of eternity, and not be able to erase a single line. Be wise, and consider this.

How terrible it must be to the man who has had his portion in this life, when, without ceremony, death stalks into his mansion and rudely seizes upon his victim. Well may he

shudder as he thinks of his buried talent and his wasted life. But it is now too late, for ever too late. Another Sabbath will never dawn for him, nor will he hear the voice of love again, for the day of grace is past, the door of mercy is shut, and the king of terrors must now drag the reluctant mortal from the midst of his carnal delights, and compel him to appear, with all his sins upon his head, in the presence of his Judge. "The rich man died and was buried," no doubt with great pomp, "and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." May the reader never know the unutterable misery of this man's portion!

It were better to be poor, to work hard for a scanty pittance; nay, it were better even to be a beggar in rags, dependent upon charity for a morsel of bread, to die in a ditch, and be buried in a pauper's grave, if in death the angels carry one to Abraham's bosom; than to live in luxury, and neglect the great salvation, and, dying, be lost to all eternity.

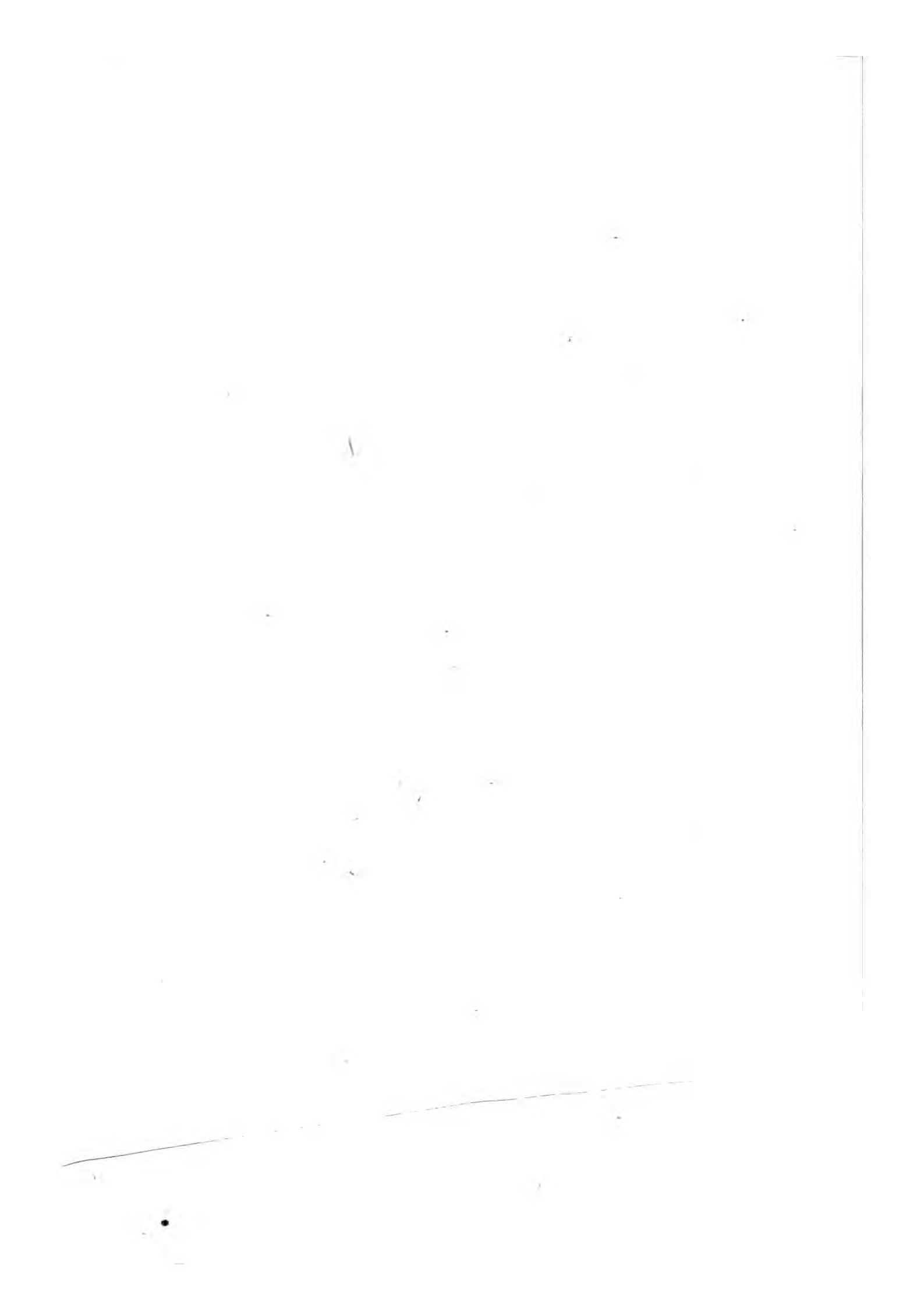
It is an evil and bitter thing to neglect our duties and sin against God ; as by-and-by a retribution fearful to contemplate will overtake the wilful offender. Do not imagine that future punishment is all a delusion, and that you can destroy hell with your lofty talking, or with a stroke of your pen. Notwithstanding all you may say, the fact is there, and cannot be explained away. Consider the instances on record, which were written for our admonition. Think of the punishment of the apostate angels for whom "Tophet was ordained of old." Then turn to the antediluvians, and behold Divine justice punishing their sin by bringing a flood of waters, and sweeping them from the face of the earth. And see how the anger of the Lord was kindled against Sodom and Gomorrah for their great wickedness, and how He rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon them, and buried the smoking ruins of those cities under the waters of the Dead Sea. Remember, also, the words of Christ, "If thy hand offend thee,

cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 43, 44).

Immortal spirit, glancing for a moment on this page, I entreat thee to reflect upon thy duty and destiny. Do not trifle with the gospel of Christ, or, with the indifferent, neglect the great salvation, for only by this canst thou be delivered from the pollution of sin and from eternal perdition. God is calling to thee, entreating thee to turn from thy sins, before they plunge thee headlong into ruin. He has given His only begotten Son to die for thee, to make atonement for thy sin, and now He expostulates with thee. Oh, listen to this declaration: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xxxiii.

11.) Canst thou spurn from thee this offer of mercy, and treat with contempt the noblest sacrifice of love? Canst thou slight this gracious invitation, and refuse to enter the ark which God Himself has provided? Then remember that thou art sealing thy own fate, and heaven will do no more for thee. O man, think of thy immortality. A talent has been lent to thee, and thou hast a great work to do. If there is anything noble in life, if there is anything true and real, I entreat thee to lay aside the husks and think on these things. Be diligent in thy business, for eternity is drawing nigh. The shadows even now are falling around thee, and the night cometh when no man can work.

CONCLUSION.





XI.

CONCLUSION.

Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum.

1. The gospel is the only remedy for sin, but it is an effectual remedy. The Lord Jesus, by the grace of God, has tasted death for every man, and by the energy of His Spirit He can break the power of sin, and deliver the captive from his bonds. This is illustrated and confirmed by the consciousness of the believer, who is able to testify that the gospel is the power of God ~~unto salvation.~~

2. The gospel satisfies the craving after happiness, inasmuch as it fills the heart of

the believer with Divine peace and spiritual joy and unutterable love.

3. The gospel reveals unto us the perfections of the Godhead, and in exalting the human spirit to hold fellowship with the Eternal, it provides in the most ample manner for the soul's progress and growth.

4. The gospel opens a door into eternity, and by irrefutable facts demonstrates the existence of the future state.

In fact, the gospel is adapted, in every sense of the word, to meet the necessities of the human spirit.

We will now take the liberty of introducing into the Royal Observatory, at Greenwich, a countryman, who knows nothing of the telescope and its revelations, and we will ask Mr. Dunkin, the author of "The Midnight Sky," to explain to him the fact that the stars are visible by day. In the most obliging manner that gentleman observes: "Arcturus was the first star observed with a telescope in day-

light. This feat was announced in 1635 by a M. Morin. It appears, however, that little notice was taken of the occurrence till the year 1669, when the Abbé Picard published the results of an observation of Arcturus, made when the sun was seventeen degrees above the horizon. This discovery created a sensation among astronomers, who were glean- ing quite a harvest among the stars by the use of the telescope lately invented. Owing, however, to the small object-glasses of the first telescopes, which were only toys compared with the magnificent reflectors and refractors of modern days, the astronomer of the seven- teenth century was unable to see more than the principal celestial objects. We have still preserved, on the walls of the Royal Obser- vatory, the transit instrument used by Dr. Halley at that place, with an object-glass, no larger than that of many modern ship spy- glasses. If we compare Dr. Halley's small object-glass with one lately constructed for

Mr. Newall, by Messrs. Cooke, with a clear aperture of twenty-five inches, or with the six-foot speculum in the reflecting telescope of the Earl of Rosse, we shall not be surprised that the astronomers of the seventeenth century appeared somewhat elated at having seen a star in broad daylight. This is now no uncommon occurrence. In the winter days we frequently observe at noon-day, not only such bright stars as Arcturus, Vega, and others, but occasionally some as small as the fourth and fifth magnitude; and on one occasion, when the atmosphere was more than usually pure, a star of the sixth magnitude was observed within two hours of noon.”*

While these observations were being made, did you notice upon the face of our countryman the expression of wonder and doubt? Perhaps it appears incredible to his dull understanding that the stars should be visible

* “The Midnight Sky.”

by day, and in your anxiety to convince him of the fact, you invite him to look through the telescope and satisfy himself. But to your astonishment he refuses to listen to you, and, as the assertion seems to him preposterous, he retires, muttering that much learning hath made you mad. But does the scepticism of this man disprove the fact. Not at all. It will prove that he is ignorant of the fact, but the fact is there, whether he believes you or not.

So we testify of spiritual and eternal realities, and are conscious that the witness is true. But some one under the delusion of materialism may reject our testimony, and treat the subject as if it deserved the most sovereign contempt. Do not suppose, my friend, that your denial has destroyed the universe, excepting your own little system, for the night will come, and the vast infinity will look down upon you, and the facts of which we have spoken will be admitted then.

UNWIN BROTHERS,
PRINTERS BY WATER POWER,
CHILWORTH, SURREY.



