

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON

SEP 05 2008

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BX8955 .A6 1842 v.3
Presbyterian Church in the
U.S.A. Board of Publication.
Series of tracts on the
doctrines, order, and polity
of the
Presbyterian church in the
United States

A SERIES
OF
TRACTS
ON THE
DOCTRINES, ORDER, AND POLITY
OF THE
✓
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
EMBRACING
SEVERAL ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

VOL. III.

PHILADELPHIA :
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

17

THE EVIDENCES

OF A

GRACIOUS STATE.

BY THE

REV: CORNELIUS C. CUYLER, D.D.

Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.



PHILADELPHIA :

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1844, by ALEXANDER
W. MITCHELL, M. D. in the office of the Clerk of the District Court for the
Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Printed by
WM. S. MARTIEN.

Stereotyped by
S. DOUGLAS WYETH,
No. 7 Pear St. Philadelphia.

EVIDENCES OF A GRACIOUS STATE.

IN the account which the Apostle Paul gives of the institution of the Lord's Supper in 1st Cor. xi. he exhorts the members of that Church as follows:—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." The reason of the exhortation he gives in these words;—"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." In order therefore to the comfortable, and profitable enjoyment of this sacred ordinance, it is not only necessary that a man should know something of the state of his own heart, but that it should be right with God. For lack of this the Apostle tells these Corinthians, that "many among them were weak and sickly, and many slept." It appears from this that the work of self-examination is very important, and can scarcely be conducted with too much fidelity and diligence.

There are two leading points to which it should be specially directed. 1. The life, or reality, of our religion. 2. Its present state in our souls. Correctness with respect to the first of these is essential to our safety; the second is highly important to our comfort and usefulness. Building on the true foundation, though it be with "hay, wood, and stubble," we may be saved, "yet so as by fire." 1 Cor. iii. But "If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do?" Ps. xi. 3. "If we build not upon Christ Jesus, "the foundation which God hath laid in Zion," Isa. xxviii. 16, all is lost. This is a point in the investigation of which all the children of men have a very deep interest, and with respect to which most men at times feel some degree of anxiety. There are very few who have not at times felt this, and been willing to make great sacrifices to have their doubts on the subject resolved. There are however others who have sought to quiet their apprehensions by taking it for granted, that although a good degree of assurance was enjoyed by the Apostles and others of the early Christians, yet it was a special privilege conferred upon them, and therefore need not now be sought for, or expected by the followers of Christ. That such a sentiment would lead men to be satisfied with low attainments in divine things will scarcely admit of a doubt. But it may well be doubted

whether God has tied them up to such a condition. If the people of God, even under the darker dispensation of the Old Testament, understood their election of God, it might surely be expected that their privileges would not be abridged under that gospel by which life and immortality have been brought to light. Paul "knew whom he had believed," not by a special revelation made to him of the fact, but by the application of those tests or rules which had been laid down in the Scriptures for the purpose. These tests have been left on record to enable the people of God to "examine themselves," and ascertain "whether they be in the faith." Hence Paul says to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves how that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates?" This, and many other similar exhortations, are not of private interpretation. They are designed to furnish the professed followers of Christ of every age and country, with a rule of duty of great importance to their comfort and welfare. It surely is the will of God that we should know upon what foundation we are building our hope, and he has furnished us with the most ample rules to do so.

Will you then, my dear reader, whoever you may be, into whose hands these pages may fall, accompany me prayerfully in an investigation which may involve your eternal welfare? If the subject has not yet engaged your serious attention, it cannot be safely delayed much longer. If you have thought of it with interest, and satisfied yourself of your state, but been mistaken with respect to it, it may assist you in correcting your mistake in season; or if you have been truly converted to God, it may serve to confirm and strengthen your hope and enable you to travel Zionward with the greater alacrity and delight; or, if you should become convinced of your spiritual destitution and danger, it may by God's blessing lead you "to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." To this you have the greatest encouragement, especially if the Holy Spirit should be striving with you, which you will believe to be the case if you should feel any uneasiness of mind on account of your sinful and exposed condition; any special interest in reading the Scriptures or in the preaching of the gospel; any unusual tenderness of conscience or fear of sinning; or any unwonted drawings to the mercy-seat. But at all events, let me entreat you to accompany me in this important investigation. It surely behoves you to have some definite knowledge of your state and prospects. You

have an inheritance in eternity and will soon be put into possession of it, either with "the saints in light," or where "the wages of sin, which is death," will be all that will be left to you. But how, you ask, shall I know what my state and prospects are? Your present state and character, if you remain as you are, constitute the elements of your futurity.

1. *One of the distinguishing traits by which the people of God are characterized both in heaven, and on earth, is supreme love to God.* In a state of nature we are "carnal," and Paul says, Rom. viii. 7. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." When God new creates us by his Spirit, he *slays this enmity*, and implants a principle of love in its stead, which leads to new obedience—Hence the Apostle John says, 1 John iv. 19: "We love him because he first loved us." And again 1 John iv. 8: "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." The new creation brings us back to the love and obedience of God from which we have departed by the fall. Hence it is said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength." This is a well established principle, confirmed by the experience of every child of grace. No matter how much they may complain of the coldness of their hearts, and the smallness of their love, they with one heart, and one voice avow, that they feel differently towards him than they once did, and would for no consideration return to their former state, even although they feel afraid to hope or acknowledge that they do love him; while there are seasons when they are constrained to cry out with Asaph in the 73d Psalm, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

But you ask, how shall I *know* that I love him? How do you know that you love any being or object? Mainly by your feelings towards them. You will think of them often with interest, and pleasurable feelings—you will chide yourself, as if for neglect, when you have not recently thought of them—you will love to converse about them with those who know or appreciate them—you will long for their return when absent—it will afford you pleasure to hear from them. It will pain you to have done any thing which may have grieved or offended them. It will rejoice you that their interest, or fame, or comfort is promoted, while every thing which would derogate from either of these, would cause you pain and regret. And if you knew of any thing

which would afford them pleasure and satisfaction, you would delight in doing it.

It surely cannot be so difficult as you may have imagined to apply this to the subject before us. Do you think of God often and with pleasure? When any thing has for a season withdrawn your thoughts from him, does the neglect, though involuntary, pain you, and when untrammelled, do they, like the needle to its pole, return to him with alacrity and delight? Do you love to converse about your God and Saviour, with those who know and love him? Does your heart often long for the return of the visits of his love and grace, so as with the psalmist to cry out, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so my soul panteth after thee, O God"—Ps. xlii. 1. Do you love the messages which he sends you in his word, written and preached? Does the recollection of your neglect of duty, or the transgression of his commandments, fill you with shame and regret? Does it rejoice your heart when his name is honoured, his work revived, and his cause and glory are promoted? Does it fill you with pain and regret when men make void his law, blaspheme his name, and especially when his cause languishes, and the Saviour is wounded in the house of his friends, by their untender, and inconsistent walk and conversation? Are you anxious to know and do his will, and do you delight in his service? Do you love to meditate on his name, attributes, works, and ways? Are you pleased to be in his hands, and have your lot and person disposed of according to his will? These are no equivocal marks of love to him, and if these are ascertainable, then is it practicable to ascertain whether we love him. Have *you* these marks upon you?

2. Another evidence of a gracious state is, *The love of God's people because they are his people.* This distinction is a necessary one in this investigation, because many of them sustain relations to us and possess qualities independently of religion, which may command not only our respect, but a very high degree of esteem and love. And if we mistake these for *Christian love*, we might practise a fatal deception upon ourselves to the ruin of our souls. For example—Christians may be our near relatives, and of course all the partialities arising from the social relations and sympathies may render it difficult for us to determine whether the regard which we feel for them springs from these sources, or from what is peculiar to them as *Christians*. So also Christians may possess many of those amiable qualities which cast a charm over the lives of all who exhibit them, so that we can scarcely avoid loving them.

In such cases it will be difficult to analyze the nature of our feelings, and determine their real character. But in general it will not be difficult to pass out of the circle of these relations, and influences, and derive our tests and proofs from sources which are not liable to such exceptions and abatements. To most Christians there belong traits of character which are peculiar to them as *Christians*, and in most cases their prominent natural traits become materially modified by the intervention of divine grace. In general, however, it may be ascertained what it is in our fellow-creatures, on account of which we respect and love them. It is scarcely necessary to prove that the affection of which I am speaking is frequently and strongly enjoined, and highly commended in the Scriptures, and given as one of the most decisive evidences of an interest in, and union to, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Saviour's own language on the subject. John xiii. 34, 35, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Hence the beloved disciple used the following language—1 John iv. 7, 8, 11, "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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." In the following quotation he brings it home to the point in hand. 1 John iii. 14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." It is perhaps impossible to state the point more clearly than the Apostle has done it in these words.

The question which remains to be resolved is, how shall we ascertain whether we do love the people of God as such? Here again I would ask, how do you know whether you love any person? Is it not from the feelings you entertain for them, and the conduct which springs therefrom? We think often and with interest of those whom we love. We love and seek their company and conversation. We love to commune with them about our common Saviour, his personal excellencies, his mediatorial work, his kingdom and grace, his great love to us, and what he has done for our souls. We shall take a decided interest in whatever concerns their welfare, especially the welfare of their souls, sympathizing with them in their joys and sorrows. We shall feel that they have peculiar claims upon our sympa-

thies, prayers, and help in time of need. It will afford us joy to minister to their comfort in seasons of sickness and distress. We shall willingly make sacrifices to promote their welfare. We shall deal tenderly with their reputation and good name, bear with their foibles and faults, and make proper allowance for their infirmities and sins, as "Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father." No real Christian will ever be found blazoning the faults of his brethren. He will feel much more inclined to weep over them. They will seek each other's good, and never envy, but rejoice in each other's prosperity. They feel that they belong to one common family, of which Christ is the head, and they, brethren and members in common. And hence when Christians meet, no matter from whence they come, or by what name they may be called, make them mutually sensible that they *are* Christians, and give them a common language by which they can communicate with each other, and they will at once love and converse as brethren. They have a common bond of union in Christ their living Head. Of this every Christian is sensible, when he has intercourse with those who know and love the Lord. It is unnatural for Christians not to love one another, as it is for children of the same earthly parents. Some are naturally more lovely and affectionate than others, and they receive and exercise more affection. It is so also in the relations of grace. Grace implants in us no new affections, but it sanctifies and directs those which belong to our common nature. This remark will enable us to apply the principle to the subject before us. True religion is eminently social in its nature; and if it does not make its professors affectionate, and social, it must arise from a defect either in our nature or in our religion. It is as true in religion as in nature that *like loves and seeks like*. This is a binding and operative law, and religion has sanctified it. Wonder not, therefore, that the Holy Ghost should have said, 1 John iv. 20, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." My dear friend, how is it with you? You can find no more ready and safe test of Christian character than this. Do not fail then, I beseech you, to apply this measuring line to your own experience. In what estimation do you hold those who give you good evidence of their attachment to Christ? Are they the partners of your heart's affection, and the dear and

chosen companions of your life? Surely you *may* ascertain such a fact! Can you be satisfied to be ignorant about it? And much more can you be satisfied to know yourself to be destitute of this evidence of an interest in Christ? Never, never will you enter the society of heaven, if you have no decided love for the people of God, and relish for their fellowship, employments, and enjoyments on earth.

3. I proceed to the consideration of a third particular, of a kindred character: I mean *love for the word of God*. The Scriptures contain a portraiture of God's character, perfections, and ways, and especially as he has made himself known as a Saviour. It might, therefore, be expected that all who love him would be delighted with such a revelation of him. We accordingly find numerous instances recorded in the Scriptures, which abundantly prove their strong attachment to, and high and holy delight in the oracles of God. Take the following examples as sufficient illustrations of the point. "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should have perished in mine affliction. O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." Such are the divinely attested testimonies which the people of God have borne on this subject; and in this, religious experience, in every age and country, has agreed. No sooner are the minds of men waked up to feel an interest in the subject of religion, than the Scriptures become exceedingly precious. There is much in them to gratify curiosity and taste, and to furnish delightful employment to a cultivated mind. They abound in the most important and interesting historical facts and details. The statesman, the philosopher, the orator, and the poet, may enlarge their stock of knowledge, and gratify and improve their favourite propensities and tastes, and the moralist may obtain lessons of instruction which he can derive from no other source. But these are not the reasons why the anxious mind and the sanctified heart resort to the Bible as their book of books, and which constrain them to cry out, "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. It is sweeter also

than honey, and the honey-comb." The reason is found in this. The truths contained in the Scriptures are divinely accommodated to the state and wants of man, and when his heart becomes quickened by the Holy Spirit, he feels that God speaks to him by the word, and he is constrained like young Samuel to say, "Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth;" or like the woman of Samaria, when she conversed with the Saviour, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" When in addition to this searching operation, by which the conscience is quickened and the heart affected, we love the truth which thus affects us, and love to read the book which contains it, or in other words, when there is an agreement between the instructions of the Spirit in the word, and the work of the Spirit in the heart, leading us to read the word with pleasure and delight, we may be sure that a change of a radical nature has passed upon our souls, affording evidence that we have been born of God.

This is so much the case, that it would be a difficult thing to find a soul that had been brought under the decided influence of divine grace, which does not feel an unwonted degree of love for the volume in which God has made known his truth and grace to us. As soon as the Spirit begins to move upon their hearts, they are attracted to the sacred volume. They read it, they love it, they make it the man of their counsel, and the guide of their life. It becomes "a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their path." They sing with the poet,

"May this blest volume ever lie,
Close to my heart, and near mine eye;
Till life's last hour my soul engage,
And be my chosen heritage."

Be assured, that a Christian is a lover and a reader of his Bible. It his soul's store-house, from which she draws her supplies. It is his spiritual armoury, from whence he derives the weapons of his warfare. There too he finds those exceeding great and precious promises which sustain his soul in her spiritual conflicts, ministering to him strong consolation in the refuge to which he has fled; and in the darkest hours of his pilgrimage, he finds them to be a lamp to his feet. Is this your chosen volume? Do you love it, read it, and meditate on it with satisfaction and delight?

4. *It is characteristic of Christians to love the worship of God, and take delight in the ordinances of religion.* Whatever it may be that attracts them to the mercy-seat.

or the house of prayer, thither they go, and there they love to resort. This has been known to be the case ever since "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." As soon as Noah left the ark, he built an altar unto the Lord; and wherever Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob pitched their tents, there also they built their altar and offered up their sacrifices, and performed other acts of worship. David says in the cxxii. Psalm, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." And in the lxiii. Psalm, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry, and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." And again in the cxviii. Psalm, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. God is the Lord, which hath showed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar." Asaph is equally explicit and full in the lxxxiv. Psalm, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God! For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

So have the people of God, in all ages, felt on this important and interesting subject. While they have felt it to be their duty to wait upon God in the ordinances of his appointment because he has commanded them to do so, they have at the same time found it to be an unspeakable privilege, and consequently they have loved to do it—and the reason is a very obvious one—they were born in Zion—there, ordinarily, the Spirit meets them with the word, and new-creates them in Christ Jesus. There he feeds and nourishes their souls, and trains them up for eternal life. There they meet and love their brethren, and learn to love them more. There they receive the engrafted word, which is able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. There they have sweet and holy fellowship with each other. There, their blessed Saviour is set forth as crucified and slain for their redemption. There Christ comes and meets them according to his promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And there they often find this declaration of John verified to their own experience; "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." There are few living Chris-

tians who cannot recall seasons, connected with the closet, the social circle, and the Church, of which they could not say, with Jacob at Bethel, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

There are very few of Christ's followers, who forsake the assembling of themselves together, and yet manifest a healthy state of religious feeling or practice; while there are few who love and frequent the ordinances of religion, who are not manifestly seen to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He who loves the worship of God will commonly come to it, as the hunted, panting hart to the water-brooks, and will enjoy it with strong appetite, and high relish. It follows as a matter of course, that they who have no relish for those appliances which God has provided to advance his people in the divine life, and fit them for usefulness and heaven, are either unacquainted with their state and wants as sinners, or else their spiritual senses must be vitiated and sickly. As soon as sinners begin to reflect and feel, they begin to pray and seek. They inquire after the footsteps of the flock. The first evidence that Paul gave of his conversion was prayer. He then joined himself to the people of God, and walked with them in the divine ordinances. No man can live a life of faith without living in the divine communion. And no man can live in the divine communion, who does not love the communion and worship of God. And if he does love them, he will improve every opportunity to enjoy them. To have neglected them will always cause him pain and regret. Let no man therefore flatter himself that he knows any thing about true religion who does not decidedly love the worship and ordinances of God, and seek to enjoy them whenever he can find or make an opportunity for the purpose.

And now, my dear reader, how is it with you? Do you feel this love for the worship and ordinances of God? If you do, it influences your conduct—you improve your opportunities and you have satisfaction in doing so. You are not a neglecter of the mercy-seat nor of the worship and ordinances of God's house. If these are your delight, they furnish a good evidence, and a solid ground of hope. May the Lord multiply them a hundred-fold unto you. But if you are destitute of this evidence of your acceptance, what reason have you to hope that you know any thing of the grace of God? Is it possible, think you, to love God and not love his worship and ordinances in which he is wont to make himself known? See well then to this ground of your hope.

5. The next point of evidence to which I would direct your attention, with a view of enabling you to form a just estimate of your state and character, is, *whether you are possessed of a spirit of cordial, willing, and unreserved obedience to all the known commandments of God.* This is laid down very strongly and fully in the word of God as a test of Christian character, the absence of which should lead any man to doubt the soundness of his hope. "Behold," said Samuel to Saul, when he had offered sacrifices in his absence contrary to the law, "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Sam. xv. 22. Hence also David says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Upon the same principle also Christ says, "Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit," Matt. vii. 16, 18. His meaning evidently is, that when the heart has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, men will lead new and holy lives to the glory of God. In another place the Saviour says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." John xiv. 23, 24. The first word Paul says when he is brought to receive Christ as a Saviour, is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. And when the apostle James would distinguish between a living and a dead faith, he says, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works," James ii. 18. That is, the manner of my life shall prove that I am a true disciple of Christ. This appears to be the uniform doctrine of the Bible on the subject.

True obedience is made up of the following ingredients. It springs from a principle of love; it has a supreme regard to the will of God; and it aims at his glory. The obedience which God requires must obviously be such as he can approve; and he can approve of no homage which is not voluntary, cordial, and affectionate. Even an earthly parent would not be satisfied with the conduct of a child who would grudge him the service which he might render. Hence Paul says, "God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. ix. 7. Hence also he commends the Romans when he says of hem, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of

sin ; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Upon the same principle *the ways of wisdom, or true religion, are said to be pleasantness, and the Saviour's yoke easy, and his burden light.* Every thing in which our hearts are interested is easy and pleasant to us, and every thing of a contrary character is irksome, and unpleasant. It is equally necessary that what we do by way of obedience, should be according to the will of God. We have no right to choose and prescribe how we shall serve God. In that case he would say to us, "Who hath required this at your hands?" He has made his will known to us, and if we would please him, we must "walk in the way of his commandments." This made David so anxious to know the will of God, and caused him so much delight in the study of it. The Saviour settles this point authoritatively when he says, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The history of Paul is a lively comment on this. Before his conversion, he undertook to serve God by persecuting the church, and he tells us that he was both sincere, and zealous, in doing it. But did his *intention* to do God service by it render his conduct right in itself, or acceptable to God? So far from it that he afterwards accounted himself a miracle of grace in that he was saved at last. To be *sincerely* wrong is one of the most dangerous positions we can occupy. We cannot *obey* God unless we do *his* will, and hence we should know what his will is. The natural pride of the heart however, is not only fond of relying upon its own works for acceptance with God, but of choosing the mode in which it will serve him. The Syrian general who came to the prophet to be healed of his leprosy, was no doubt very desirous of being cured, but having formed some notions in his own mind as to the manner in which it should be effected, was outraged when the prophet told him to dip himself seven times in Jordan. He had expected a parade of rites and ceremonies, and hence when this simple mode was prescribed he went away in a rage. "Are not Abana and Pharpar better than all the waters in Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" This spirit of pride and self-will has often interfered with the simplicity of God's appointments, transforming his churches into idolatrous temples, or picture galleries, and making his ordinances like any thing else rather than his institutions. He neither approves nor tolerates any thing of this kind. He accepts of no service which he has not himself prescribed, both as to form and sub-

stance. Our devices vitiate every thing to which we apply them.

Nor will he accept of our obedience, be it ever so correct in form, unless it aims supremely at his glory. God is his own supreme end in all his works and ways, and he requires it of us, "whether *we* eat or drink, or whatsoever *we* do, to do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. We can be influenced by no higher motive, and God will be satisfied with no other. The subject may be illustrated by the quotation just made. One man eats to gratify his taste, another to satisfy the cravings of nature, and another, to sustain life and enable him to fulfil its duties. One man refrains from worldly labours, and frequents the house of God on the Sabbath, because it is the custom of the community in which he resides, or because he has been in the habit of doing so: or because it gratifies his tastes; while another comes in obedience to the command of God, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and loves his courts and worship, and feels that he who renders praise, glorifies the most High God. It is not difficult to distinguish between the various motives by which they are respectively actuated, or which state of mind is agreeable to God. Parents are always best pleased with their children when they not only obey their commands but have a high regard to their honour. And God himself says, "If then I be a father, where is my honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" Mal. i. 6. If then we have no such regard for God as to prefer, desire, and seek his glory, above and before all other objects, we do not regard him as we ought, nor give him that glory which is his due, nor need we hope for his divine approbation; nor will our obedience be an evidence to ourselves "that we have passed from death unto life." When however we obey God from a spirit of love, make his revealed will the rule and measure of our obedience, and aim supremely at the divine glory, we shall at the same time enjoy the approbation of God, and have scriptural evidence of our regeneration. And it was upon this account that Christ said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John vii. 17. And if men would consecrate themselves to the divine service, they would be relieved from many of those doubts and perplexities concerning their spiritual state by which they are so often and grievously troubled.

6. The next evidence to which I would direct your attention, as indicative of a gracious state is *a cordial submis-*

sion to the will of God. This respects, and may be applied to, several particulars,—such as the acquiescence of our understandings in the truth of his revealed will as our only and infallible rule of faith and practice; the subjection of our hearts and lives to his holy law as our rule of conduct; the renunciation of our own righteousness and the acceptance of, and trust in the righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of our justification, and acceptance with God; and finally, a sweet, and cordial acquiescence in the will of God, as indicated by the dealings of his providence with us.

The points of greatest difficulty, and which are calculated to try our hearts the most severely, are those which relate to the justification of a sinner before God, and those dispensations of divine providence which deprive us of those earthly blessings which we the most highly value. And these are they to which I would especially direct your attention. As a sinner in the sight of God, you have transgressed his holy and righteous law, and are justly liable to its awful penalty, which consists in spiritual death, everlasting exclusion from the divine communion, and the endless infliction of God's wrath. This doom cannot be avoided but by a perfect satisfaction to the divine law and justice, on account of which God may be just in the remission of the penalty. Such satisfaction you cannot render, nor can any creature render it for you. Hence it is written, "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. iii. 20. For it is not possible, that the blood of bulls, and of goats should take away sin." Heb. x. 4. You are then shut up to divine help, if such can be found, and it has been found. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 3, 4. But in order to our justification, we must be made sensible of our utterly lost and helpless condition, renounce our own righteousness, and cast ourselves, like helpless beggars, upon the righteousness of Christ, and embrace and appropriate it, and *it alone* as the only ground of our justification in the sight of God. This we must do or perish, and when we cordially do this, we shall be justified freely through the redemption which there is in Christ; and then there will spring up in the soul a sweet and holy peace and serenity, which the world can neither give nor take away. And, my dear friend, whoever you may be, if you have done this you

are a child of grace, and an heir of heaven. Have you done it? Be encouraged and comforted. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Rom. viii. 34.

The other point to which I alluded was a *cordial submission to the will of God under those dispensations of providence which deprive us of those earthly blessings which we the most highly value*. That men do meet with trials of this description all are sensible. That they are variously affected by them is equally manifest. Some bear them like Stoics; others are filled with discontent, complaints, and murmurings, and are like the sea, when its troubled waters cast up mire and dirt. While others bow under them with a meek, humble, patient and resigned spirit, and say with Job, when deprived of nearly every earthly good, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." Job i. 21. Nor are we left in ignorance as to how the Lord would have us behave ourselves under such dispensations, for he has said, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." Ps. xlv. 8, 10.

This divine requisition the renewed and sanctified heart meets with humble submission, and holy resignation to the divine will, under a deep conviction that it is a sacred duty to be subject to "the high and mighty Ruler of the Universe," and under a firm persuasion of mind that what he does is ever best. Grace transforms the rebel into a child, and to the eye of faith the moral government of God wears the aspect of a kind and paternal administration, planned and directed by infinite wisdom, and this produces an assured confidence that all its results will not only be right, but good, and therefore insure the happiness of all its obedient subjects. This led Paul to say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Phil. iv. 11. From this the general principle is deduced that, "all things work together for good, to them that love God; to them that are the called according to his purpose." Rom. viii. 28. When all things are fair and prosperous, it is *comparatively* easy to be submissive to the will of another; yet even then the carnal mind is chafed by a sense of dependence. But nothing except divine grace in exercise, will enable the heart of man cordially to adopt the sentiments and language of the prophet in the circumstances which he describes,—“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall

yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Hab. iii. 17, 18. To be thus exercised is the duty of all God's intelligent creatures, but it is a privilege to which none ever attain but by the indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit. Paul learned this lesson not of Gamaliel but of Christ. Happy is the man who has been effectually taught it. For while his soul will be blessed in its enjoyment, it will furnish him with an abiding evidence of his adoption into the family of God, who deals with him as with a child. See Heb. xii. 5, 11. And now let me affectionately ask you, how is your heart affected by *the chastenings of the Lord*? When you have suffered disappointments, losses, sicknesses, and bereavements, how have you felt? how has your heart been exercised? how have you behaved yourself? Were you submissive? Did you feel and acknowledge the hand of God, and justify his ways? Did you say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed; because his compassions fail not?" Did you say with David, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Ps. xxxix. 9. And when you reviewed the Lord's dealings with you, did you say with thankfulness, "It was good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Ps. cxix. 67, 71. So should you feel, and thus should your heart be exercised when the Lord chastens you, and when thus exercised, bless God for such an evidence of his paternal love and faithfulness. Then will he enable you to "glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.

7. Another sterling Christian grace, and which is strongly indicative of a gracious state, is *humility*. "Humility," says one, "is a most excellent grace of the Spirit, evidences the subject of it to be a child of God, and is accompanied with contentment, peace, and submission to the will of God. The sense of the weakness of our understandings which is the effect of humility, is a temper of soul that prepares it for faith, partly as it puts us on a serious consideration of those things which are revealed to us in the word; partly as it stops all curious inquiries into those things which are unsearchable; and principally as it graciously entitles to the promise, 'God giveth grace to the humble.' 1 Peter v. 5.

This our Saviour makes a necessary qualification in all those who shall enter into his kingdom: Matt. viii. 13, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And since pride arises out of ignorance, the gospel, to cause in us a lowly sense of our unworthiness, discovers the sinfulness, nakedness, and misery of human nature, divested of its primitive righteousness. We have the example of our Saviour, in whom there is an union of all divine and human perfections, debasing himself in the form of a servant, to instruct us to be meek, and lowly." Matt. xi. 29.—(Cruden's Concordance, word, "Humble.") With this grace of the Spirit the heathen philosophers were unacquainted. They had not even a word by which they could express it. They supposed it to mean a mean and debased state of mind, than which nothing can be further from the truth, for it is perfectly consistent with the highest style of character. True humility consists in not attributing to ourselves any excellence or good which we have not—in not overrating any thing we do—in not taking an immoderate delight in ourselves—in not assuming more of the praise of a quality or action than belongs to us—in an inward and deep sense of our many imperfections and sins—in ascribing all we have and are to the grace of God—in ascribing to others fully the good properties and excellencies which belong to them, even in preference to ourselves, according to the exhortation of the Apostle—"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Phil. ii. 3.

This grace of the Spirit is an essential ingredient in the Christian character, and if it were more generally cultivated, and exercised with more diligence, it would greatly add to the comfort and usefulness of the individual Christian, promote and extend the influence of brotherly love, and save Christians from many grievous falls to which they are so liable in consequence of its absence. There is both force and truth in the proverb of the wise man on the subject—"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." When a man walks proudly, with his head uplifted toward heaven, he sees not the stumbling-blocks, snares, and pit-falls, which often lie scattered thickly along the pathway of life, so that frequently before he is aware of it, he finds himself prostrated in the dust, with his bones broken, and his person covered with defilement. Have the seeds of this beautiful and savoury plant been sown in your heart? Have you cultivated them with sedulous care? Is it bringing

forth fruit, or at least some of the fragrant blossoms, whose sweetness bears witness that you have been planted in the courts of the Lord? It is the first lesson which we learn in the school of Christ; the first fruit of a broken heart. Dear friend, if you have none of it, you are a stranger to Christ—you have yet to learn which are the first principles of his religion.

8. *Prayer, sincere, fervent, importunate, and habitual, is one of the marks by which every true disciple of Christ is known.*

“Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give;
Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray, they live.”

When the Lord would convince Ananias that Paul was a new creature, he had only to say to him, “Behold, he prayeth,” to lead him to go to him without the least hesitation, and call him “brother.” The work of the Spirit opens an immediate communication between God and the soul, which never ceases while grace is in exercise, till the prayers of time are merged in the praises of eternity. To say that a Christian does not pray, is to say, that he has lost the exercise of faith, or that he has so polluted his conscience, that he dares no longer look to the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat; or that his soul has become so besotted as to be incapable of feeling its wants. The man who lives without prayer, is in a state in which it would be presumption in him to profess hope in Christ, or to think well of his state.

Prayer is an employment in which the people of God of every age and country have delighted. It is a privilege which Christ has purchased for them. They draw near through the rent veil of his flesh. His righteousness gives them the freedom of the mercy-seat. They are full of wants which God only can supply, and he has promised to do so, when they ask in the name of Christ, in humble reliance on his merits, for audience and acceptance, and through the gracious aid of the Spirit, helping their infirmities. To suppose that they do not pray, is to suppose them ignorant of their wants, their dependence, and their privileges, and insensible of their obligations to God, for his unspeakable gift, as well as strangers to the blessedness of holding communion with God as a reconciled Father. Christians of every age and country have been characterized by the value which they have set upon a throne of grace, the habitual steadiness with which they have resorted to it, and the holy

satisfaction and pleasure which they have derived from it. This is so well established a fact in the history of true religion, that the reality of any man's piety would be justly called in question whose experience and practice did not accord with it. The question, however, is not, whether you are in the habit of observing the form of prayer; but whether, in the observance of the outward forms of worship, you do actually and truly pray. Do the warm thoughts and earnest desires of your heart accompany your words? Have you in fact and in truth, felt your need of what you professedly asked in words? Have you ever felt as if you were importuning for a blessing which you needed; and as if God were listening to your request? Have you ever felt as if your very life, your salvation depended upon your being heard, and answered? Has it ever been to you, or is it habitually, as if you have had access to, or enjoyed communion with God in prayer? This is prayer. This is communion with God in prayer. "They that *thus* wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." Isa. xl. 31. The man who thus holds intercourse with God need not doubt its reality. Is it thus with you?

9. *The religion of Christ is a religion of self-denial.* And self-denial is both a duty and an evidence. This is Christ's language with respect to it. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke ix. 23. This is one of the tests to which the Saviour puts all his disciples. What is self-denial? It consists in a renunciation of all those pleasures, profits, views, connections, or practices, that are prejudicial to the true interests of the soul. The understanding must be so far denied as not to lean upon it, independent of divine instruction—Prov. iii. 5, 6. The will must be denied, so far as it opposes the will of God—Eph. v. 17. The affections must be denied when they become inordinate. Col. iii. 5. The gratification of the members of the body must be denied when out of their due course. Rom. vi. 12, 13. We must deny ourselves the honours of the world, and the praise of men, when they become a snare. Heb. xi. 24, 26. Worldly emoluments must be given up, when to be obtained in an unlawful way, or when standing in opposition to religion, and usefulness. Matt. iv. 20—22. Friends and relatives must be abandoned, so far as they oppose the truth, and would influence us also against it. Gen. xii. 1. Our own righteousness must also be renounced so far as it opposes

itself to the righteousness of Christ. Phil. iii. 8, 9. Life itself must be laid down if called for in the cause of Christ, and for the glory of God. Matt. xvi. 24, 25. In a word, every thing that is sinful, however pleasant, or apparently advantageous, must be denied, since without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Heb. xii. 24. (Buck's Theological Dictionary, Art. Self-denial.) Such is self-denial, and such the reasons why we should practise it. The Saviour, as you have heard, not only commands it, but makes it a test of our allegiance to him as our Lord and Master. What sacrifices of worldly ease, or profit, or honour, or reputation, or friendship, or other gratification, have you ever made for Christ and his cause? Have you never been reluctant? Have you never declined making it? And what if he should have declined undertaking your hopeless cause? And what if he shall not find this mark of discipleship on you at last? Will he, notwithstanding, receive you? Have you no fear on the subject? Put it there as soon as you can, and brand it deep.

I might go on and indicate and elucidate many other marks by which Christian character is exemplified and proved, for they are very numerous, and many of them are very striking. I might for instance have spoken of faith, and its characteristic marks, and exercises; of repentance, both with respect to its nature, its fruits, and its importance; of tenderness of conscience, as an evidence of the presence, and influence of the Holy Spirit; of deadness to the world, as an evidence of having been crucified with Christ; of spirituality of mind, as an evidence of being under a divine influence; of hatred of sin, as a proof that we have become acquainted with its true nature, and the necessity of being delivered from its curse and power. Upon each, and all of them, and many others, the mind might dwell with profit, and they might have been brought to bear on the great matter in hand, an exhibition of the state of the heart as it is in the sight of God, so as to enable you to prove your own self, and facilitate self-knowledge on one of the most important points which can engage the attention, or interest the heart of a dying sinner—the *state and prospects of his soul in an endless eternity*. I prefer another method, viz:

10. To direct your attention for a moment to the fact, that although the Christian character is made up of a number of parts, or graces, each of which may be considered separately with profit, and contribute their proportion in the formation of the character, as well as the evidence by which we judge of it, yet still the character itself is *one*, and is calculated to make a right impression as a whole, so that we

may form a proper judgment of it. The Scriptures warrant this when they say, "Therefore if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new *creature*: old things are passed away; behold *all* things are become new." This character is made up of all the graces of the Spirit. It is not a single star—it is a constellation, composed of many stars. The regeneration, and sanctification of the soul, affect every faculty and power which belong to it. We find new principles, and these induce a new course of action. The objects of affection are all changed. Those which we once hated and avoided, are now loved, pursued, and enjoyed, and the contrary—God and his word, worship, ordinances, and people, have changed places with the world, and the things of the world—and where we found it difficult to define our true position, by attending to a single object, we may find the impression which the aggregate change makes, so strong, as to be convincing and satisfactory. While under these circumstances it may be difficult to find any one of the Christian graces so fully developed as to make it a perfectly reliable ground of evidence, there may be such a change wrought in the whole character as to make it manifest to all, that nothing remains as it was before. He reads new books—he seeks and walks with new companions—he converses on new subjects, and in a different manner—the objects of his affection, and aversion have been changed. In a word, a new bias and impulse have been given to his soul. He is sensible of a change, but whether it is *the change*, is the point about which he hesitates. And yet he can account for it upon no other principle, but that his heart has been divinely influenced. It cannot be the work of Satan, for it is altogether opposed to his kingdom and interests. It would be dividing him against himself. Very much however ought to depend on the judgment which we form, upon the extent, and tendency of the changes which we may observe, and more upon their continuance. If they are the result of a divine change, they will abide, and develop themselves more and more, proving the truth of the proverb, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. Such a state of things is more encouraging, and hopeful, than any single testimony which we could bring to bear upon the subject.

Let it however be observed, and constantly borne in mind, that the Christian character is a constellation of the divine graces; and that although one or more of them may have an advanced growth beyond the others, yet that all of them

exist in the renewed heart, and will appear whenever an occasion offers to call them forth. For example—if a man love God, whenever he is brought into communication with his word, worship, ordinances, or people, he will feel that he loves them also. This will be found to be the case with the others also. And then as they are more full drawn out and exercised on their appropriate objects, will the soul be better satisfied of its holy calling and be strengthened, and confirmed in the divine life.

And now, my dear reader, after journeying together thus far, we have arrived at the point where, for the present, we must part. It has been my earnest endeavour and prayer, to make our intercourse with each other profitable. I have sought to bring under your observation some of the evidences, the existence of which in you, would go to prove that *you* “have passed from death unto life.” I have endeavoured to draw them from “the testimony of the Lord, which is sure.” Will you now seek to apply them to the state and exercises of your heart? If you are a child of God, your comfort and usefulness, are intimately concerned in knowing it. If you are not, your safety is involved in it. And such are the nature and pressing importance of the interests which are to be affected by the results of the examination, that you cannot be too diligent or faithful in conducting it. You will find it neither an easy nor a light work, and you will need the guidance, and aid of the Holy Spirit in prosecuting it to a proper issue. Follow the example of the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know mine heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. It is a question of life and death. You are now inquiring where you are to spend your eternity. May you be divinely guided in the investigation, and may the result enable you to say with Paul, “I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

THE END.