

EARNEST APPEALS
OR
QUESTIONS AND
COUNSELS ON
CHRISTIAN DUTY
REV. DR. NEVINS





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By the

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EARNEST APPEALS.

“LOVEST THOU ME?”

WE make a profession of Christianity, and go along from day to day, and perhaps from year to year, supposing that we are Christians, and that all is well with us—that we are equipped for the encounter of death, and prepared to meet our Judge and take our place in heaven; when it may be we are not able to answer, till after long consideration, and then with not a little doubt and misgiving, so simple a question in Christian experience as, “Lovest thou me?” Peradventure the utmost we dare say, after all our reflection and self-research, is, “I really do not know how it is. I hope I love him.” This will never do. The question, “Lovest thou me?” is one which every person making any pretensions to Christianity, ought to be able to answer affirmatively at once. Indeed, we ought not to give our Saviour any occasion to ask the question. It is very much to our discredit—it should make us blush and be ashamed, that our manifestations of love to

him are of so equivocal a character as to leave the very existence of the affection doubtful, and to render it necessary for him to interrogate us in reference to it. There are many less lovely beings than Christ that have not to ask us if we love them. We act in such a manner towards them, that they cannot for a moment doubt the fact of their being dear and precious to us. They do not want our words to assure them; they have our uniform conduct and deportment making the silent, yet most forcible declaration. Has your parent to ask you if you love him, or your child? Have husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and friends, to ask this question of each other? O no! none but Christ has to ask us if we love him. And he has not only to ask the question, but to wait, sometimes a long while, for an answer. We have to consider and go into an examination, and call up our conduct to the bar of judgment, and dissect our very hearts, before we can venture an answer. This is strange. It is not so in other cases. If a relative or a friend, more for the gratification of a renewed expression of our love, than from any doubt of its existence, ask us if we love him, do we keep him waiting for an answer? Do we say, "Well, I must consider. I must examine myself. I hope I do." No, indeed; we are ready with our affirmative. Nor is it a cold *Yes* we return, but we express our surprise at the question: "Love you!" And we assure the person in the most emphatic and ardent language, that we love him, and all our manner shows him that we speak out of the abundance of the heart. But we do not express

surprise that our Saviour should ask us if we love him. We do not wonder at the question from him. We know too well how much reason we give him to doubt our affection.

Why should there be such a difference in favour of the earthly objects of our love? Is not Christ as lovely as those other beings, as deserving of affection, as attractive of love? He is *altogether lovely*? Are they? He possesses infinite loveliness. Nor does that express all. He is essential Love. Nor love at rest, but in motion; nor far off, but near; exerting infinite energy in action, exercising infinite fortitude in suffering; earth the scene, and man the object. It is he who asks, “ Lovest thou me? ” And he of whom he asks it is this man, the intelligent spectator of all this love; aye, its chosen and cherished object.

If Christ was not nearly related to us, as those other beings are, that might be the reason of the difference in their favour. But who is so closely related to us, so intimately joined to us, as Christ? He formed us, and in him we live, move, and have our being. Does not that imply nearness? Is he divine, while we are human? He is human as well as divine, one of the brotherhood of flesh and blood. He came down to earth to take our nature on him, nor went up to heaven again without it. There it is—our humanity allied to divinity, divinity radiant through it, on the throne. Is he not related to us? He says of every one who does the will of his Father, “ The same is my brother and sister and mother.” That alone relates us to him more than all human ties.

But that is not all. Christ is the husband of the church. He is one with it. If we are his disciples, he is the vine and we the branches, he the head and we the members. Yea, "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Does not this express a near and intimate relation? Now it is one so near to us, so joined to us, who asks, "Lovest thou me?"

Have our friends, whom we are so conscious of loving, done more for us than Christ, or made greater sacrifices for us? Are we under greater personal obligations to them?

" Which of all our friends, to save us,
 Could or would have shed his blood?
 But our Jesus died to have us
 Reconciled, in him, to God."

And yet, we know we love those friends; but this Friend—we know not whether we love him or not; we only hope we do.

Do other beings find such difficulty in loving Christ, and are they at such a loss to know when they do love him? O no; his Father testifies, "This is my *beloved* Son, in whom I am well pleased." And he is called also his *well-beloved*, his *dear* Son. All the *angels* of God love and worship him, and delight to ascribe infinite worthiness to him. It is only *men* who find any difficulty in loving Christ. It is only the *human* heart that hesitates and hangs back. Is there any reason for this—any reason why men should be the last to love Christ, and why they should love him least of all who behold his loveliness? I see none; but I think I see

reasons, many and strong and tender, why we should be first and most forward and warmest in our affection to him. How many worlds he passed to alight on this. How many created natures he rejected, when from all of them he chose the *human* to be united to divinity. Others have sinned, yet not their sins bare he, but ours. It may be said of other creatures, "He loved them;" but of men only can it be added, "and gave himself for them." And yet who is so backward to love him as redeemed man? Not tardy merely. O how parsimonious of his love; loving him so little, that often he cannot ascertain if he loves at all. Shame, where is thy blush? and, sorrow, where thy tear?

O how different Christ's love to us, from ours to him. We have not to ask him if he loves us. If any one should ever ask that question of Jesus, he would say, "Behold my hands and my feet." He bears on his very body the marks of his love to us. But what have we to point to as proofs of our love to him? What has it *done* for him; what *suffered*? O, the contrast! His love so strong, ours so weak; his so ardent, ours so cold; his so constant, ours so fickle; his so active, ours so indolent. So high, so deep, so long, so broad his love, its dimensions cannot be comprehended, it passeth knowledge; while ours is so limited and so minute, it eludes research.

"Dear Lord, and shall we ever live
At this poor dying rate;
Our love so faint, so cold to thee,
And thine to us so great?"

DO YOU PRAY IN SECRET ?

I KNOW not how it is with the reader, but I know that many persons are not in the habit of secret prayer. They have no closet, no place of retirement to which they daily resort, and where, when they have shut the door, they pray to their Father which is in secret, and in solitude seek the society of God. I am acquainted with one who for many years neglected this duty, which all religions recognise, and which even nature teaches. Sometimes he read the Bible, and no part of it oftener than the sermon on the mount. Of course, he must have frequently read those words of the great Teacher, in which, taking it for granted that his hearer prays, he tells him what he should do when he prays:—"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet"—the person is supposed to have some place called his closet, to which he is accustomed to retire for prayer—"and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." He read this, but he gave no heed to it. During all this period, he asked nothing, though he received much. God did not neglect him, though he neglected God; and as he prayed none, so he praised none. Sometimes, indeed, he said, "Thank God;" but it was said in so much thoughtlessness, that it was set down profaneness rather than praise. It is true, at that time he would never allow that he was ungrateful; but he was, and now he sees that he was. He lived and moved and had his being *in* God, and yet

was *without* God in the world. Many and precious were the thoughts of God towards him; but in all *his* thoughts, God was not. Not even when he was in trouble did he ask, "Where is God my maker?" I wonder the Lord had not become weary of bestowing his bounty on such a one. It is because he is the Lord, and changes not. But for that, the person of whom I speak would have been consumed long ago. There is nothing he admires more than the long-suffering of God towards him, and he hopes to spend eternity in admiring it, and exchanging thoughts with his fellow-redeemed on this and kindred subjects.

He supposes that he is not the only one who has neglected secret prayer. He fears that this neglect is even now the habit of many. They are *shy* of God. I know not why they should be. He is doing everything to woo and win them, and to secure their confidence. So much has he done, that he asks—and I cannot answer—what he could have done more. He waits on his throne of grace to be gracious to them, but they come not near to him. He even calls to them to come to him, using too the language of most affectionate address, "Son, *my* son;" but they respond not, "Abba, Father." It is strange they should treat this Father so. They treat no other father so. What child does not, in the morning, salute his father; and what father does not expect the salutation of each child, as they come into his presence? Oh, yes, we love our father who is on earth; and we remember with gratitude the favours he does us. And does the Father of our spirits, the giver

of every good gift, deserve no daily notice from us, no affectionate salutation, no grateful recognition of indebtedness to him? - I am certain he expects it, for he says, "A son honoureth his father : if then I be a Father, where is mine honour?" He claims to be a Father ; and O, how well he has established that claim. Truly, he is a Father, and "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth" his. And to the compassion of the father he adds the tender care and untiring mindfulness of the mother. "Can a woman," he asks, "forget her sucking child?" She may, he says, but He will not. How strange it is, that men will not go to the closet to meet and to pray to such a Father.

Surely it is not for want of encouragement. If they have it not in his very nature, yet in his invitations, his promises, and his past acts of unsolicited kindness, they have all they could desire. Nor is it that they have no need of God. Never one of the prayerless will say that. They all know what would become of them but for that overlooking eye, and that supplying hand, and that supporting arm. And do they not know that God has a *heart* too—that he can love with all the fervour of a friend? And can they not imagine that in the interchange of affection between God and the soul of man, there may, and indeed must be, ineffable delight? And who that looks but a little way forward, does not perceive an exigency when, in the utter inadequacy of earthly and human resources for comfort, he will want "the consolations of God?"

Ah, it is a sad as well as strange thing, that so many

enter no closet—seek daily no retirement, either in their houses or elsewhere, where they may be a little while alone with God; where they may look up, and meet the light of his countenance as he looks down on them; where they may confess their sins, and receive assurance of his pardoning love; where they may thank him for mercies past, and humbly ask for more; where they may take counsel of him, tell him of their griefs, and have their tears wiped away, and with him leave the weighty burden of their cares.

I know not whether this excites more my grief or my wonder. I am not so much surprised that men should neglect a manifest duty; but when I think what a *privilege* it is, what a *happiness*, what an *honour*, to be on terms of intimacy, and in habits of intercourse with God, it amazes me that they should forego it. How will such reflect upon themselves hereafter—how execrate their folly. How will they wonder that they could have deliberately done their souls such a wrong. Then it will be too late to redress the wrong. They sought not the Lord while he might be found, they called not upon him while he was near. Yea, though he called, they refused. Now they may call, but he will not answer. If any one who is living in the neglect of secret prayer shall read this, will he not be persuaded to commence the practice the very day he reads it, aye, that same hour, if it be possible? If it be not convenient, let him make it convenient. Let other things give way for this, rather than this for anything. Can he think his heart right in the sight of God, or his con-

dition safe in the prospect of eternity, while he neglects prayer? How dare he live without prayer? Without it, can he have courage to die? At the mercy-seat of God, we may decline to appear; but before his judgment-seat we MUST all stand. How a frequent access to the first would prepare us for final arraignment at the other. How it would familiarize us with the presence of God! How it would serve to break the shock of the entrance into eternity!

Does any one who is not in the habitual and daily practice of secret devotion pretend to be a Christian? It is but pretence. He may believe the *creed* of the Christian, but certainly he does not pursue the *practice*, nor possess the *spirit* of the Christian. Breathing is essential to living, and prayer is the Christian's vital breath. Does he walk with God who never converses with him?

Some spiritualize the direction of Christ, making the closet to mean the heart, and the duty of private devotion to be discharged in mere mental prayer. But Christ did not so trifle. His closet was not his heart: he could not have meant that ours should be. *He* selected the still morning, and sought out the solitary place for prayer. May we be less attentive to the circumstances of time and place? Shall we talk about entering into ourselves, and there *thinking* prayer? Jesus, even in his most retired intercourse with his Father, used his voice. That prayer, "Let this cup pass from me," was *vocal*; and the petition of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," was expressed

in words. Shall we reserve the voice exclusively for our intercourse with men, and not with it also supplicate and bless God?

Is any one inquiring after truth? What place more appropriate for asking, "What is truth?" than the closet? Who so likely to be *taught* of God as they who ask of God? Some men carry that question to the Bible, and press it there, as indeed they should; but they carry it not to the throne of grace, and press it there also. They *read* to know what truth is, but do not *pray* to know it.

Oh, how an hour in the morning, spent with God prepares us pleasantly and profitably to pass the other hours of the day with men; and at night, what so composing as communion with God? In resigning ourselves into the arms of sleep, that image of death, what security like that of prayer? It engages Him who never slumbers nor sleeps to watch over us.

Has any one become remiss in secret devotion? What, tired of God, weary of communion with him? How sad the state of such a soul.

DO YOU PRAY IN YOUR FAMILY?

THERE are families that call not on the name of the Lord. Nor is it a new thing. There were such so long ago as when Jeremiah lived. He takes notice of them. He has a prayer about them. It seems he was divinely inspired to call down the indignation of the Lord upon

such families. "Pour out thy fury," he says, "upon the families that call not on thy name." I would not like to have been a member of one of those families; and much less the head of one of them. It must have been very offensive to the Lord that there were families in which he was not acknowledged and worshipped. And if there were such families among the heathen nations that offended him, how much more must it have displeased him that there should be such families even among his people Israel—families that did not in the family capacity invoke him. I do not know why it should be less offensive now. I do not believe it is. Families are now under as great obligations to God as ever they were.

Some persons ask why we insist on family prayer as a duty. They say we cannot produce any precept enjoining it. That is true enough. But I wonder if that is not a duty, the omission of which is the subject of prophetic denunciation. I wonder if that is not by implication commanded, the neglect of which brings down the wrath of God on those guilty of the neglect. There are some things so manifestly reasonable, and of such self-evident obligation, that they need no law expressly enjoining them. It is not necessary that they should be taught *in so many words*.

But if we have no express precept on the subject, we have pretty good examples in favour of it. I suspect Abraham, who was so careful to instruct his household in the way of the Lord, did not neglect to pray with them. And David, I am quite confident, prayed in his

family. It is said of him on one occasion, that "he returned to bless his household." No doubt, there were both prayer and praise in that family. Certainly Joshua must have prayed in his house. How otherwise could he have fulfilled his resolution that his house as well as himself should serve the Lord? What, resolve that his house should serve the Lord, and not join with them in supplication for the grace to serve him? That is not at all likely.

Now, I would ask if it is not proper and right that every head of a family should adopt the resolution of him who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?" But can there be religion in a house without prayer? Is there not inconsistency in saying, "I and my family will serve God, but we will have no family altar nor offering?" Is not prayer an essential part of the service of God? I wonder if any one ever lived who supposed that family prayer was not more pleasing to God than the omission of it. I wonder if any one ever omitted it for fear of being guilty of will-worship, or through dread that it might for some reason offend God? I wonder if the practice of family prayer ever distressed any conscience? The omission of it has troubled many.

It is admitted, I believe, to be the will of God that we should pray to him *socially*. The Lord's prayer was constructed for social use. The disciples were directed to use it when they should pray together; and it is accordingly in the plural number; not *my* Father, but "*our* Father." Now, is God to be socially worshipped,

and yet not worshipped in that first, most permanent, and most interesting form of society—the form of society instituted by God himself—the family? Is that to be believed? But the Lord's prayer seems not only intended for social, but for *daily* use. "Give us *this day* our daily bread," is one of its petitions. It does not contemplate the morrow. It asks supplies but for one day. Now, if, as it appears from this reasoning, social prayer should be *daily*, where but in the family, the society which is abiding, and which a single roof covers, can it with propriety be daily? Should there be public religious services daily, or daily prayer-meetings for this purpose? Then, how suitable it is that those who together share their daily bread, should together daily ask it.

How reasonable and comely is household religion—family worship. Common blessings, such as families daily share, call for common thanksgivings. Common wants, such as families together feel, call for common supplications. Is it not fit that families, in retiring to rest at night, should together commit themselves to the divine keeping; and in the morning, unite in praising the Lord for having been their protector? It is a clear case, it seems to me. Besides, fathers are directed to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." But can they do this while they pray not with them and for them? I do not know how we are to comply with the apostolical exhortation to pray "everywhere," unless we pray in the family, as well as under other circumstances.

Is any one in doubt whether the practice or omission of family prayer will be the more pleasing subject of retrospect from the dying bed or the eternal world? Parents should not forget, that presently will come the long-deferred and greatly-dreaded season of taking the last look and the last leave of those whom their decease is to make orphans. O, then, what a sweet thought it will be to enter into the dying meditation, that they have been in the daily habit of bowing down with their children in prayer, and commending them to the care and grace of their heavenly Father, and that they may now indulge the confident hope that he will infinitely more than supply the paternal place which they are to leave vacant.

But what need of more argument? I suspect everybody secretly admits the obligation of family prayer. I judge so from the trouble many are at to apologize for the neglect. It tries them not a little to satisfy even themselves with an excuse. The usual plea is *inability*. They have not the *gift*, they say. What gift? Can they not collect their family together night and morning? Have they not so much authority in their own house as that? And then can they not read a portion of Scripture to them; and kneeling down, express their common desires to God? If they cannot frame a prayer at the moment, yet can they not use a form? It requires no great gift to read a prayer in an audible voice. But what if it be hard at first; it will soon be easy if persevered in. The beginning of almost every good habit is difficult. The most of those who make this apology,

presume on their inability. They say they cannot, before they have tried. But until they have tried, they do not know whether they can or not. What if some have tried once, and failed. One failure should not dishearten them, nor two, nor even twenty. Demosthenes tried speaking many times before he became an orator. Besides, how do those who presume on their inability to conduct family worship, know what assistance they might receive from God, if they were to make an humble and faithful experiment ?

If any one shall condescend to read this who does not pray in his family, I advise him to commence immediately. He knows that he will never be sorry for it, if he does ; but he is not so sure that he may not be sorry for it, if he does not. If there were no other reason in favour of the practice, this alone would be sufficient. I think it is Jay who says that a family without prayer is like a house without a roof—it has no protection. Who would like to live in such a house ?

I MUST PRAY MORE.

I HABITUALLY feel this necessity ; but the other day the conviction came to my mind with strange power, and I said, with greater emphasis than ever, *I must pray more*. It struck me with indescribable wonder, that so little time should be employed, and so little energy expended in prayer, even by those who are prompt to acknowledge its dignity as a privilege, and

its efficacy as a means of obtaining good. It is not now as it was in patriarchal times. *We* do not pray as Jacob did. He wrestled until the breaking of the day. Yes, his praying was *wrestling*, and it lasted all night. *We* put forth no such power in prayer, and we do not allow the repose of our nights to be interrupted by it. It is not because our wants are all supplied that we are so feeble and brief in prayer; nor is it that God's bounty is exhausted. We are as poor as creatures ever were, and he as rich and munificent as ever. His hand is not shortened, neither his ear heavy.

Only think how small a portion of each successive day is spent in prayer. I wonder if any Christian ever thought of it without being so dissatisfied as to resolve that he would spend more time in prayer the next day. Just add together the minutes you daily occupy in supplication, and the kindred exercises of devotion, scriptural reading, and meditation, and see to what it will amount. Will the sum total be one hour? What, less than an hour a-day in devotion? not one twenty-fourth part of our time. And is this all which can be afforded? Let us see. How much time has *business*? Could not a little be saved from business for prayer? Do you not give an hour or two more to business every day than it absolutely requires? Then how much time has *sleep* for the refreshment of the body? Might not some little time be redeemed from sleep and spent in prayer, with more profit to the whole man than if it were given to repose? Would not the soul thereby obtain a *rest*, which would most favourably react on

the body? I do not believe that the psalmist suffered anything in the day for the hours of night he spent in communing on his bed with his own heart and with God. I do not believe that even "tired nature" had any reason to complain of that interruption of the repose due to her. I suspect he enjoyed as good health, and was as vigorous through the day, as we, though he rose at midnight to give thanks unto God, and prevented the dawning of the morning with his prayer. Such interruptions of sleep are no loss even to the body. I am sure, and I think no one can doubt, that considerably more time might be afforded for prayer than is actually given to it. If we take none from business and none from sleep, yet could not some be spared from the *table*, or *conversation*, which is not always the most profitable? Perhaps some of us spend more time in barely receiving the body's nourishment than we do in the entire care of the soul! But not to dwell to tediousness on this topic, you have only to look back on a day to perceive how much of it might have been spent in prayer and devotion without interfering with anything which ought not to be interfered with.

Seeing then that we *can* pray more—that time can be afforded for it, I am amazed that we do not pray more. If prayer was nothing but a *duty*, we ought to pray more. We do not pray enough to discharge the mere obligation of prayer. We are *commanded* to pray more than we do, aye, to pray "without ceasing." But prayer, while it is a duty, is rather to be viewed by us in the light of a *privilege*. And oh, it is *such* a privi-

lege! What a favour, that we may petition God and ask of him eternal life, with the confidence that we shall not ask in vain. How strange it is that we no more value and exercise this *privilege* of prayer. It is astonishing that the sense of want, or the desire of happiness, does not carry us oftener to the throne of grace, and that we should ever require to be incited to prayer by the stimulus of conscience. Oh, I wonder that we do not oftener go in unto the King, whose gracious sceptre is ever extended towards us—I wonder we have not more frequent and longer interviews with our heavenly Father. It is strange we do not pray more, when prayer is the *easiest* way of obtaining good. What is so easy as to *ask* for what we want? How could we receive blessings on cheaper terms? Surely it is easier than to labour, and less expensive than to buy. It may be hard to the spirit to ask of men. To beg of them you may be ashamed. But no such feeling should keep you aloof from God. He giveth and upbraideth not.

But prayer is not merely the easiest way of obtaining good; it is the *only* way of obtaining the greatest of all good. The subordinate necessities of life we get by labour or purchase; but the things we most need are given in answer to prayer. The one thing needful is a divine donation. We *ask*, and receive it. Now we labour much. Why do we not pray more? Do we seek a *profitable* employment? None is so profitable as prayer. No labour makes so large a return. If you have an unoccupied hour—and you have many, or might have, by redeeming time—you cannot employ it in any

way that shall tell so favourably on your interests as by filling it up with petitions to God. Yet when we have such an hour, how apt we are to spend it in unprofitable intercourse with our fellows, rather than in communion with God. It is wonderful that we talk so much, when "the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury," and pray so little, when prayer "brings a quick return of blessings in variety."

Is there anything attended by a purer *pleasure* than prayer? One who knew said, "It is *good* for me to draw near to God;" and again, "It is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is *pleasant*, and praise is comely." All the exercises of devotion are as full of pleasure as they are abundant in profit.

But prayer is not only a means of *getting* good, it is such a means of *doing* good, that I wonder our benevolence does not lead us to pray more. We are commanded, "as we have opportunity," to do good unto all men. Now prayer affords us the opportunity of being *universal* benefactors. *Through God* we can reach all men. We can make ourselves felt by all the world, by moving the hand that moves it. In no other way can we reach all. Prayer makes us, in a sense, omnipresent and omnipotent. It prevails with Him who is both.

The *world* needs your intercessions: it lies in wickedness. *Zion* needs them: she languishes because few pray for her peace—few come to her solemn assemblies. Whose *family* needs not the prayers of its every member? Who has not kindred that are out of Christ?

With such a call upon us for prayer so urgent, and from so many quarters, I wonder we pray no more.

I must pray more, for then I shall *do* more—more for God, and more for myself; for I find that when I pray most, I accomplish more in the briefer intervals between my devotions, than when I give all my time to labour or study. I am convinced there is nothing lost by prayer. I am sure nothing helps a student like prayer. His most felicitous hours—his hours of most successful application to study, are those which immediately follow his seasons of most fervent devotion. And no wonder. Shall the collision of created minds with each other produce in them a salutary excitement, and shall not the communion of those minds with the infinite Intelligence much more excite them, and make them capable of wider thought and loftier conceptions?

I must pray more, because other Christians, whose biography I have read, have prayed more than I do.

God is disposed to hear more prayers from me than I offer, and Jesus the Mediator stands ready to present more for me.

If I pray more, I shall sin less.

I *will* pray more. The Lord help me to fulfil this resolution.

I MUST PRAY DIFFERENTLY.

I **FEEL** that I must not only pray more, but *differently*; and that my praying more will not answer any good purpose, unless I also pray differently. I

find that *quality* is to be considered in praying as well as *quantity*; and, indeed, the former more than the latter. We learn from Isaiah, chapter i., that it is possible to make many prayers, or to multiply prayer, as it is in the margin, and yet not be heard. The scribes and Pharisees made long prayers, but their much praying availed them nothing; while the single short petition of the publican was effectual to change his entire prospects for eternity. It was because it was prayer of the *right kind*. It is a great error to suppose that we shall be heard for our much speaking. Let me, however, say, that while length is not by itself any recommendation of prayer, yet we have the highest and best authority for continuing a long time in prayer. We know who it was that, "rising up a great while before day," departed into a solitary place, and there prayed; and of whom it is recorded in another place, that he "continued all night in prayer to God." Certainly they should spend a great deal of time in prayer, who are instructed to "pray without ceasing." It is in the social and public worship of God that long prayers are out of place.

But to return from this digression. I must pray differently; and I will tell you one thing which has led me to think so. I find that I do not pray *effectually*. It may be the experience of others, as well as of myself. I do not obtain what I ask; and that though I ask for the right sort of things. If I asked for temporal good, and did not receive it, I should know how to account for it. I should conclude that I was denied in mercy;

and that my prayer, though not answered in kind, was answered in better kind. But I pray for spiritual blessing—for what is inherently and under all circumstances good, and do not obtain it. How is this? There is no fault in the hearer of prayer—no unfaithfulness in God. The fault must be in the offerer. I do not pray aright. And since there is no use in asking without obtaining, the conclusion is that I must pray differently.

I find, moreover, that I do not pray as they did in old time, whose prayers were so signally answered. When I compare my prayers with those of the patriarchs, especially with that of Jacob—and with the prayers of the prophets, those, for instance, of Elijah and Daniel; when I compare my manner of making suit to the Saviour, with the appeals made to him by the blind men, and by the woman of Canaan; and above all, when I lay my prayers alongside of His, who “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears,” I perceive such a dissimilarity, that I thence conclude I must pray differently.

I find also that I do not urge my suits to God as I do those which I have sometimes occasion to make to men. I am wiser as a child of this world, than I am as one of the children of light. When I want to carry a point with a human power, I find that I take more pains, and am more intent upon it, and use greater vigilance and effort, than when I want to gain something of God. It is clear, then, that I must alter and reform my prayers. I must pray differently.

But in what respects; *how* differently?

1. I must not speak to God at a distance. I must *draw near* to him. Nor that alone. I must stir myself up to *take hold* of him (Isaiah lxiv. 7). Yea, I must take hold of his strength, that I may make peace with him (Isaiah xxvii. 5). I have been satisfied with *approaching* God. I must, as it were, *apprehend* him.

2. I must not only take hold of God in prayer, but I must *hold fast* to him, and not let him go, except he bless me. So Jacob did. There were two important ingredients in his prayer—faith and perseverance. By the one he took hold of God; by the other he held fast to him till the blessing was obtained.

3. I must be *more affected* by the subjects about which I pray. I must join tears to my prayers. Prayers and tears used to go together much more than they do now. Hosea says that Jacob “wept and made supplication.” Hannah wept while she prayed. So did Nehemiah, and David, and Hezekiah; and God, in granting the request of the last mentioned, uses this language: “I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears.” But a greater than all these is here. Jesus offered up prayers “with strong crying and tears.” Some think it *unmanly* to weep. I do not know how that may be; but I know it is not *unchristian*. It is thought by some, that men must have been more addicted to tears than they are now; but it is my opinion that they felt more, and that is the reason they wept more. Now I must feel so as to weep; not by constraint, but in spite of myself. I must be so affected, that God shall see my tears as well as hear my voice; and in order to being so affected, I

must meditate. It was while David mused that the fire burned; and then he spoke with his tongue in the language of prayer. And we know that which melted his heart affected his eye; for in the same psalm, the thirty-ninth, he says, "Hold not thy peace at my tears."

4. There are other accompaniments of prayer which I must not omit. Nehemiah not only wept and prayed, but also *mourned*, and *fasted*, and *made confession*. Why should not I do the same?

5. I must *plead* as well as pray. My prayers must be more of the nature of *arguments*—and I must make greater use than I have ever done of certain pleas. There is one derived from the *character* of God: "For thy *name's sake*, pardon mine iniquity. Have mercy on me *according to thy loving-kindness*." Another is derived from the *promises* of God: "Hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Another is drawn from the past doings of God: "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old." I must also plead Christ more in my prayers. The argument is drawn out to our hands by Paul: "He that spared not his own Son . . . *how shall he not* with him also freely give us all things?"

6. But again, I must *cry* unto the Lord. Crying expresses more than praying. It expresses earnest fervent prayer. This is what they all used to do. They cried to God. The psalmist says, "I cried with my *whole heart*." I must cry with my whole heart—

yea, *mightily*, as even the Ninevites did, else those heathen will rise up in the judgment, and condemn me.

7. I must seek the Lord in prayer, feeling as did Job, when he said, "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!" And this I must do, as Judah is once said to have done, with my "whole desire." Yea, I must *search* for him with all my heart. I must even *pour out my heart* before him, as the psalmist, on one occasion, exhorts. I must "keep not silence, and give him no rest," as Isaiah directs; "night and day praying *exceedingly*," as Paul says he did.

8. And I must pray in the *Holy Ghost*, as Jude exhorts. We need the Spirit to help our infirmities, and to make intercession for us. Nor should we be satisfied with any prayer in which we have not seemed to have his help.

Finally, I must alter and alter my prayers, till I get them right; and I must not think them right until I obtain the spiritual blessings which they ask. If I pray for more grace and do not get it, I must pray differently for it, till I do obtain it.

Oh, if Christians pray differently, as well as more, what heavenly places our closets would be. What interesting meetings prayer-meetings would be. What revivals of religion we should have; how frequent, numerous, and pure. What a multitude of souls would be converted. What joyful tidings we should hear from our missionary stations, and from the heathen world.

And because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, the offering of a different kind of prayer for the Spirit

would do more to put down error than all other means which can be resorted to. The preachers of truth cannot put it down without the aid of the Spirit of truth.

Let us then pray differently. Let us at least *try*. I am sure it is worth the effort. Let every one who reads this, resolve, "I *will* pray differently."

WHY PRAYER IS NOT HEARD.

THERE are some who are not at all interested in this inquiry. They offer no prayer. There is in their case nothing to be heard. They are content with the things which are to be had without asking. Such are in a bad way, and I suspect they sometimes themselves think so. That dependent creatures should habitually and devoutly acknowledge their dependence before God; and that needy creatures, whose necessities return every day, and indeed recur with every moment, should ask God to supply them, is too reasonable a thing for men to neglect it, and yet be at perfect peace with themselves.

But to pass from those who never make the experiment of prayer, we observe that some pray without any expectation or care to be heard. To obtain is not their object. Their end is accomplished in asking. They hear and judge that prayer is a duty owed to God. They therefore pray, that they may discharge this duty; and having prayed, and so done their duty, they are satisfied. Of course such persons obtain nothing. Why should they? If a child of yours should come and ask

you for any thing from a mere sense of duty, you would say, "Very well, you have done your duty, go;" but you would not give him the thing. He did not ask it with any wish to get it. He does not feel his want of it. He meant only to do his duty in asking. It makes very little difference with such what is the matter of their prayer—what petitions they offer. Anything that is of the nature of supplication will do. It is true, they generally pray for the right things, because the prayers they have heard and read petitioned for such, and they fall naturally into that style of prayer. Ask such persons if their prayers are heard, and you astonish them. That is what they never looked for. They never asked anything with the hope of receiving it—never prayed from a sense of want. I have sometimes thought, how many would never pray, if prayer was not a duty. They never pray except when urged to it by conscience. As a privilege, they set no value on it. Now the truth is, when a man is really engaged in prayer, he altogether forgets that it is a duty. He feels that he wants something which God alone can give, and therefore goes and asks it; and feeling that he wants it very much, he is in earnest, asks and asks again, and waits and pleads for it till he gets it. Does any one suppose that the publican smote on his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," from a sense of duty, and not rather from a conviction of sin, and a deep feeling of his need of mercy. And yet how many ask for mercy from a mere sense of duty. They have their reward, but they do not obtain mercy.

Some prayers proceed from a conviction of want, while there is no *sense* of want. The persons judge that they need the things they ask for, but they do not *feel* their need of them. Now, prayers which come from no deeper source than the understanding, are not heard. They must come from the heart. True prayer always originates in the heart. It is the heart's sincere desire. Or, as another has well described it, "It is a sense of want, seeking relief from God."

But there may be a sense of want, and yet no real desire for that which is adapted to the supply of the want. In that case the prayer, not being sustained by a corresponding desire in the heart, is not heard. There is a conflict here. The lips pray one thing and the heart another. The request is, perhaps, to be delivered from all sin, but the desire is to be delivered from all but one or two favourite sins. Now it would be strange if God should grant a man's request to the disregard of his desire—that he should attend to the lips rather than the heart, and answer the prayer according to its terms rather than its meaning.

But sometimes the desire for the thing requested is real, while the mischief is, it is not *paramount*—it is not supreme. This is a common case. The prayer expresses what is desired, but not what is desired on the whole. Many really wish to be religious, and they pray that they may be so, but they do not on the whole desire it. They have a strange wish to be something else which is incompatible with their being religious. Again, some sincerely desire the progress of the gospel, and pray,

“thy kingdom come,” but they desire still more to take their ease, or to keep their money. Perhaps some of this description attend the prayer-meeting. But desire may be sincere and supreme, and yet, not *intense*. Effectual prayer is the expression of intense desire. The examples of successful prayer recorded in the Bible evince this. The woman of Canaan sincerely, supremely, and intensely desired what she asked. Such was the character of Jacob’s desire for a blessing, and of the publican’s for mercy. Where the desire of spiritual blessings is not very strong, it shows that these blessings are not suitably estimated.

A great deal depends on having a petition properly presented. It is all-important to get it into the right hands. A petition frequently fails through inattention to this. If the proper person had been engaged to present and urge it, it would have been granted. This holds true of suits to the throne of the heavenly grace. We must ask in the name of Christ. We must put our petitions into his hands, and engage the great Advocate to present and urge them. Him the Father always hears. Even the prayers of the saints need an incense to be offered along with them to render them acceptable. That incense is Christ’s intercession.

To present a petition is one thing; *to prosecute a suit* is another. Most prayer answers to the former; but successful prayer corresponds to the latter. The children of this world are, in this respect, wise in their generation. When they have a petition to carry, they go with it to the seat of government, and having con-

veyed it by the proper channel to the power which is to decide upon it, they anxiously await the decision ; in the meantime securing all the influence they can, and doing everything possible to insure a favourable result. So should the children of light do. But frequently they just lodge their petition in the court of heaven, and there they let it lie. They do not press their suit. They do not employ other means of furthering it, beyond the simple presenting of it. They do not await the decision on it. The whole of prayer does not consist in *taking hold* of God. The main matter is *holding on*. How many are induced, by the slightest appearance of repulse, to *let go*, as Jacob did not. I have been struck with the manner in which petitions are usually concluded : " And your petitioners will *ever pray*." So " men ought *always* to pray " to God, " and never faint." Payson says, " The promise of God is not to the act, but to the habit of prayer."

Sometimes prayer is not heard, because not offered *in faith*. " He that cometh to God, must believe." Yea, he must " ask in faith, nothing wavering." Sometimes it is for want of a concomitant *submission to the will* of God. He who said, " Let this cup pass from me," added, " Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Often prayer fails, because the direction to pray *everywhere* is neglected. The petition proceeds from the closet ; but is not also offered in the family, in the social meeting, and in the solemn assembly. Sometimes a specific direction is given concerning something to be done in connection with prayer, which being neglected, the

prayer by itself is unavailing. Thus, in order that we may not enter into temptation, we are commanded to "watch and pray." Vain is prayer to secure against temptation, if vigilance be omitted. Prayer is sometimes ineffectual, because too *general*. When we ask many things, it commonly indicates that we are not in earnest for anything. The heart is incapable of being at the same time the subject of many intense desires. The memorials of the children of this world are specific. They are rarely encumbered with more than one petition. Does any one suppose, that when prayer was made of the church for Peter, being in prison, they prayed for everybody and everything first, and only brought in Peter's case at the close?

Petitions have usually numerous signatures. So should there be *union* in prayer among Christians. Social supplication has particular value, in the estimation of God. Special promises are made to it.

Need I say that *allowed sin* vitiates prayer? "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

There is a regard to the *promises* which ought to be had in prayer. Moreover, *confession* of sin out of a broken heart, and *gratitude* for good received, should accompany it. And there is a "praying in the Holy Ghost," which we should aim to understand and realize.

At an earlier stage of these remarks, I might have observed that some prayer is not heard, because it is *said*, rather than prayed. Now, prayer ought to be

prayed. The closet is not the place for recitation. What more common than this expression, "I *must say* my prayers?" *Must* you, indeed? Is this the way you speak of it? Is it a task to which you are going reluctantly to apply yourself? And *say* your prayers too! How this contrasts with the cheerful purpose of the psalmist: "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning *will* I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."

Perhaps one brings his gift to the altar, and forgets that his brother has aught against him; or remembering it, does not go first and seek reconciliation with him, but proceeds to offer his gift, and that is the reason it is not accepted.

Many a Christian hinders his prayer by indulging in that species of unbelief which surmises that what he asks is *too great* a thing for God to bestow on one so unworthy as he is. He forgets that the greatest, aye, the greatest gift, has already been conferred in God's own Son, and the foundation therein laid for the argument, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" God having begun his bounty in such a style of magnificence, consistency requires him now to go on, and do the greatest possible thing for the recipients of his Son.

I MUST PRAISE MORE.

WE ought to *praise* more, as well as pray more. I do not know how it is with others, but I know that

I have a great deal for which to be thankful and to praise God. I feel that it will not do for me to spend all my breath in prayer. I should thus, it is true, acknowledge my dependence on God ; but where would be the acknowledgment of his benefits conferred upon me ? I must spend a part of my breath in praise. O, to be animated from above with that life whose alternate breath is prayer and praise ! God has been very good to me. Yes, he has exercised goodness towards me in all its various forms of pity, forbearance, care, bounty, grace, and mercy ; or to express all in one word, " God is love," and he has been love to me. I do not know why he should have treated me so kindly. I have sought, but can find no reason out of himself. I conclude it is because he " delighteth in mercy." His nature being love, it is *natural* for him to love his creatures, and especially those whom he has called to be his children. O, the goodness of God ! The thought of it sometimes comes over me with very great power, and I am overwhelmed in admiration. Nothing so easily breaks up the fountain of tears within me. Those drops, if I may judge from my own experience, were intended as much to express gratitude as grief. I think I shall be able, without weariness, to spend eternity on the topic of divine love and goodness.

Reader, can you not adopt my language as your own ? Has not God been the same to you ? And shall we not *praise* him ? Shall all our devotion consist in prayer ? Shall we be always thinking of our wants, and never of his benefits—always dwelling on what remains to be

done, and never thinking of what has already been done for us—always uttering desire, and never expressing gratitude—expending all our voice in supplication, and none of it in song? Is this the way to treat a benefactor? No, indeed. It is not *just* so to treat him; neither is it *wise*. It is very bad policy to praise no more than Christians in general do. They would have much more success in prayer, if one half the time they now spend in it were spent in praise. I do not mean that they pray too much, but that they praise too little. I suspect the reason why the Lord did such great things for the psalmist was, that while he was not by any means deficient in prayer, he abounded in praise. The Lord heard his *psalms*; and while he sung of mercy shown, showed him more. And it would be just so with us, if we abounded more in praise and thanksgiving. It displeases God that we should be always dwelling on our wants, as if he had never supplied one of them. How do we know that God is not waiting for us to praise him for a benefit he has already conferred, before he will confer on us that other which we may be now so earnestly desiring of him? It is wonderful how much more prone we are to forget the benefit received, than the benefit wanted; in other words, how much more inclined we are to offer prayer than praise. For *one* who offers genuine praise, there may be found *ten* that pray. Ten lepers lifted up their voices together in the prayer, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us;" but only one of the ten "returned to give glory to God." The rest were satisfied with the benefit—this one only

thought gratefully of the benefactor. His gratitude obtained for him, I doubt not, a greater blessing than ever his prayer had procured ; and praise has often, I believe, in the experience of the people of God, been found more effectual for obtaining blessings than prayer. A person being once cast upon a desolate island, spent a day in fasting and prayer for his deliverance, but no help came. It occurred to him then to keep a day of thanksgiving and praise, and he had no sooner done it than relief was brought to him. You see, as soon as he began to sing of mercy exercised, the exercise of mercy was renewed to him. The Lord heard *the voice of his praise*.

Christian reader, you complain perhaps that your prayer is not heard ; suppose you try the efficacy of praise. Peradventure you will find that the way to obtain new favours, is to praise the Lord for favours received. Perhaps, if you consider his goodness, he will consider your wants. It may be you are a parent, and one child is converted ; but there is another, concerning whom you say, "O that *he* might live before thee." Go now and bless the Lord for the conversion of the first, and it is very likely he will give thee occasion shortly to keep another day of thanksgiving for the salvation of the other. Some of us are sick. Perhaps it is because we did not praise the Lord for health. We forget that benefit. We do not forget our sickness. O no. Nor is there any lack of desire in us to get well. We pray for recovery. And so we should ; but it strikes me that we might get well sooner, were we to

dwell with less grief and despondency on our loss of health, and to contemplate with cheerful and grateful admiration what God has done for our souls ; the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins ; and how he spared not his own Son, that he might spare us ; and gives us now his Spirit, to be in us the earnest of heaven, our eternal home. If we were to think such thoughts, to the forgetfulness of our bodily ailments, I judge it would be better for the whole man, body and soul both, than any other course we can pursue. If the affliction should still continue, we should count it *light*, aye, should rejoice in it, because it is his will, and because he says he means to make it work our good.

There is nothing glorifies God like praise. "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me" (Psalm l. 23). Prayer expresses dependence and desire ; but praise, admiration and gratitude. By it, men testify and tell all abroad that God is good, and thus others are persuaded to "taste and see that the Lord is good." Praise is altogether the superior exercise of the two. Prayer may be purely selfish in its origin, but praise is ingenuous. Praise is the employment of heaven. Angels praise. The spirits of the just made perfect praise. We shall not always pray, but we shall ever praise. Let us anticipate the employment of heaven. Let us exercise ourselves unto praise. Let us learn the song now, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness." But above all, "let the *saints* be joyful in glory : let them sing aloud upon their beds." I charge thee,

my soul, to praise him, and he will never let thee want matter for praise. "While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being."

DO YOU REMEMBER CHRIST?

I KNOW you cannot help thinking of Christ sometimes. His story is too extraordinary to be heard once and never again remembered. There is also much which we daily see and hear, to remind us of him. Doubtless you often *involuntarily* remember him; but do you *voluntarily*, and of choice, remember him? Do you ever, by an exercise of volition, recall the memory of him? He is sometimes intruded into the society of your thoughts, but do you ever invite him there? Do you ever say, "Come, now, let me think of Christ?" I doubt not you do this also. You voluntarily remember—you call to mind his incarnation, his miracles of mercy, his doctrine, his example, his resurrection; but do you particularly remember his *death*? His death was the main circumstance in his history. Do your thoughts, passing from the manger along the track of his sorrowful story, fasten on the cross?

May I ask, moreover, *with what* you remember him? Whether it is a mere intellectual operation, or one in which the heart is conjoined? There are recollections which pass across the mind without ever stirring the most easily excited emotions of the heart. Is your recollection of Christ of this kind; or do you *feel* while

you think of him? Do your affections move in the line of your thoughts, and collect about the same centre? Jesus ought to be remembered with the heart. We should *feel* when we think of him. You say, perhaps, "I do not only mentally, but *cordially* remember Christ." But do you remember him *practically*? Do you *do* anything in remembrance of him? It is customary not only to remember, but to commemorate great benefactors; and that not merely by speaking of their benevolent exploits, but by some appropriate acts. Do you this with respect to Christ, that greatest, best of benefactors?

Perhaps you answer, "I do many things out of regard to the memory of Christ. His precepts generally I endeavour to obey." That is all very well; but do you *that* which he appointed, or requested to be done in remembrance of him, on that "same night in which he was betrayed?" Some do not. Even some who profess respect, and indeed love, for Christ, do not. It is strange, but so it is. They remember Christ in their own way, but not in his way. They do some things in remembrance of him, but not that which he said "*do*." I wonder they do not adopt *his way*. I cannot help suspecting their love when I see they do not. It always appeared to me that such a benefactor as Christ ought to be remembered in his own way—that he deserved to have the privilege of saying how he would be remembered; and that sinners, whom he died to save, should remember him in that way, even though it should not seem to them the most appropriate and reasonable man-

ner of commemorating him. I do not know how it strikes others, but so it always struck me ; and I confess I take the bread and eat it, and I put the cup to my lips, primarily, because he said, "Do this."

The question about the usefulness of visible memorials, and the suitableness of these memorials, I am content that he should settle. I know very well that if there be no natural adaptation in these memorials to do me good, he can connect a blessing with them. It is my part to obey him. It is enough for me that my Saviour inclined to this mode of being remembered, and expressed such a wish : the least I can do is to comply with it. He did not express a great many wishes. It is an easy yoke he calls us to take—a light burden to bear. I cannot help regarding it as unkind, that this one wish of Jesus should not be complied with ; and especially when I consider what a friend he was—what a benefactor. I use the word *benefactor*, but those who are acquainted with the etymology of the word know it does not express all that Christ was. It implies *doing* out of good will to others ; but his benevolence was not satisfied with benefaction : he *suffered*—he *died* for others. Strong as death—stronger than death was his love. And consider, too, the circumstances under which this wish was expressed—*when* it was, and *where*. *All* his wishes, I think, should be complied with ; but this was his *last*. He was going to suffer—he was to die in a few hours : and *such* a death, too ! and for them of whom he made the request, that they might never die. And the request was touching his death. He desired

it might be commemorated as he signified. Oh, to think that such a wish should not be complied with—the tender request of the dying Redeemer not regarded! Who would have believed it? I wonder those words, “This is my body, broken for you,” do not break the heart of every one who refuses.

Men treat no other being so. Out of their own mouths I will judge them. They know the sacred regard they pay to last wishes and dying injunctions; and that, though they are under no particular obligations to the persons expressing them, and though the things desired be often unreasonable, yet, because they are last wishes, dying requests, the individuals expressing them being about to make the awful transition to eternity, how solemnly they charge the memory with them—how punctiliously they comply with them! We feel as if persons in such circumstances had a right to command us. I never knew one such request, if it was practicable, and at all reasonable, that was not complied with. I ought to say, I never knew *but* one. The last request of Jesus Christ—his last solemn injunction on those whom he bled to save, forms the solitary exception. Oh, it is too bad! It were a neglect unpardonable, but for the mediation of the very being who is the object of it. Nothing but his blood can cleanse from the sin of putting away from us the offered emblem of it. I know not how to make any apology for it. Jesus pleaded for his murderers, that they knew not what they did; but those who disregard his dying injunction know what they do.

Excuses, it is true, they make ; but to what do they amount ? Can any doubt that Christ said, "Do this?" Can any doubt that he meant it to be done by all who believe on him ? What reason can be imagined why one redeemed sinner should partake of the emblems of the body and blood of Christ, which does not equally apply to every redeemed sinner ? Should not as many as the body was broken and the blood shed for, partake of the memorials of that transaction ? What propriety is there in limiting the command, "Do this," and not the declaration, "This is my body, broken for you?" If we put it on the ground of right to command, questions any one the right of Christ to issue mandates ? What *duty* plainer—more peremptory ? Do some pay respect to this, who do not obey other commands of Christ ? What if it be so ? Is that a reason why you should add another to your acts of disobedience ?

Do you refrain because it is a solemn transaction ? Far more solemn are death, judgment, and eternity, from which, nevertheless, you cannot refrain. Do you feel yourself to be too unworthy ? But will this neglect make you less unworthy ? A sense of unworthiness is a grand part of the qualification. Are you afraid of sinning, should you in this way remember Christ ? But you are *certain* of sinning by not remembering him. Say you, "I cannot trust myself?" But can you not trust Christ ? If there is danger that you will prove faithless, yet is there any danger that he will ? It is because you are not to be trusted, that you should trust him who is able to keep that which is committed to

him. If you trust him for strength, you are as sure of being supplied as of being pardoned, if you trust him for that. Why should not you remember Christ? He remembers you, yes, *practically* remembers you; nor one thing merely does in remembrance of you, but many. What if he should make excuses for not remembering you?

But perhaps you will cut short the interview by saying, "I am now quite unprepared for this act; hereafter I mean to attend to it." Be it known to you, then, that there are greater things for which you are unprepared, and they are things which you cannot evade or defer, as you can this; and as to that hereafter on which you count, who art thou that boastest of tomorrow?

I DON'T LIKE PROFESSIONS.

THIS is the reason which many give for not acknowledging Christ. They say, when urged upon the point, that they "don't like professions." A strange reason this for not obeying the express command of the divine Saviour. What if they do not like professions, do they equally dislike obeying commands? If so, they had better say, "I don't like obedience to the commands of God." But they profess to be well disposed to obey; it is only to *professing* that they object. Well, then, let them obey all the precepts which they find in the Bible, and we will not trouble them about a profession. Why should we? In that case, they will obey the

precept which enjoins a profession ; they will do the thing appointed in *remembrance* of Christ.

But "I don't like professions." And who does like *mere* professions ? Who ever contended in favour of a man's professing to have what he has not ? Professions are very different from *mere* professions. Suppose a person has what he professes to have, what then ? What is the objection to a profession in that case ? I see none. If a man loves the Lord Jesus, I can see no harm in professing or declaring his attachment to him. It is very natural to declare it. We profess attachment to others—to relatives, friends, benefactors, pastors, civil rulers—why not to Christ ? How does his being the subject of the profession constitute such an objection to it ? Is he the only being to whom we may not profess attachment ?

"Don't like professions ?" Why, yes, they do. Professions of friendship, of patriotism, and of loyalty, they like. Why not of religion ? Why should not religion be professed as well as other things ? Are attachment to the gospel, love to Christ, regard for the authority of Jehovah, and adherence to his government, the only things never to be professed ?

I do not see any objection to professions, but I see propriety and utility in them, even if it were optional with us to make them or not. If it were left to our choice, it strikes me we ought to choose to profess love and obedience to Christ. But suppose it is required, does not that alter the case ? Will these persons say they do not like what God requires ? And does he not

require a profession? His inspired apostle twice exhorts Christians to *hold fast* their profession. Does not that imply that it is made, and *ought* to be made? How is a person to hold on to that of which he has never taken hold? Is not the public confession of Christ required when it is made a condition of salvation? "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9). Does not divine authority require it, when to the doing of it is made one of the most precious promises in the whole Bible?—"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Is not that duty, against the omission of which such a threatening lies as this: "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven?" (Matt. x. 32, 33.) It is very plain that God requires professions, though some men do not like them.

"You don't like professions." Then Joshua, a man that followed the Lord *fully*, falls under your censure, for he professed the service of God. "As for me and my house," said he, "we will serve the Lord." Are we to think the worse of him for this? Some ask what is the *use* of a profession. If they will observe what followed Joshua's profession, they will see the use of it. They will see that it brought out all Israel. "*We* will also serve the Lord," said they; and they entered that day into a covenant to serve him. Nor did their practice belie their profession; for it is recorded that "Is-

rael served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua." So much for a profession. It is agreed on all hands that that professing generation, in piety and devotion to God, surpassed any other during the national existence of Israel.

We read in 1 Tim. ii. 10, of certain things which are said to become "women professing godliness." It would seem from this to be the duty of women to profess godliness. And if of women, of men also, I suppose. What case of *real* subjection to the gospel of Christ do we read of, which was not also a case of "professed subjection" to it? Paul, in 2 Cor. ix. 13, speaks of some who glorified God for the "professed subjection" of others unto the gospel of Christ. It appears, then, that God is glorified by these professions. And I should presume, from certain passages in the Bible, that he is not glorified when a profession is withheld. There were, in primitive times, some who did not like professions. It is no new thing not to like professions. In John xii. 42, 43, we read, that "among the chief rulers many believed on him; but," as they did not like professions, "because of the Pharisees they did not confess him; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." It is no honourable mention which is intended to be made of another, of whom it is said that he was "a disciple of Jesus, but *secretly*, for fear of the Jews" (John xix. 38). Fear made him decline a profession for a time; but at length he came out openly on the side of Christ, and besought Pilate for the body of Jesus.

If they who say they do not like professions, mean that they do not like false, or loud, or ostentatious, or *barely verbal* professions, let them say so, and we will agree with them; but let them not mean this, and say, without qualification, they "don't like professions."

It is truly strange, because some now, as in apostolic times, "profess that they know God, but in works deny him," that others will never profess to know him. Because men have professed friendship, and have proved no friends, therefore they will not only not profess friendship, but they will abstain from certain acts and expressions of friendship, because they involve a profession of it. It is a pity that men who are going to give an account of themselves to God, should reason and act thus.

Well, they must do as they please; but of one thing I am sure—the hour is coming when, however they may now dislike professions, they will like them. They may not now like to confess Christ before men, but they will then like to have Christ confess them before his Father. They may not like to call him now the beloved of their souls; but they will like to have him call them, on that day, the blessed of his Father.

ARE YOU A SABBATH-SCHOOL TEACHER?

I AM a little apprehensive that the title of this article will be read by some who will give no hearing to the article itself. There are those who, being professors of

religion, or at least well disposed thereto, are not Sabbath-school teachers, and yet strongly suspect sometimes that they ought to be. Such are not fond of reading an enumeration of the reasons why they should engage in this benevolent employment, because these reasons are apt to appear more cogent than their objections to it. After such a perusal, they are very prone to feel as if they ought to take hold of this good work; and not being prepared to do that, it is rather more agreeable to them not to have the feeling that they ought. It is uncomfortable to carry about with one a sense of obligation which he is not disposed to discharge.

But I hope my apprehensions will be disappointed; so I proceed to the article. Are you a Sabbath-school teacher? If you are, you are engaged in a good work. Yes, it is good, both as acceptable to God, and as profitable to men. It is good in its direct operation, and good in its reflex action. It is not merely teaching the young idea how to shoot; but, what is still more important, it is teaching the young and tender affection what to fix upon, and where to entwine itself. Nothing hallows the Sabbath more than the benevolent employment of the Sabbath-school teacher. It is more than lawful to do such good on the Sabbath-day. It has great reward. Continue to be a Sabbath-school teacher. Be not weary in this well-doing. Do not think you have served long enough in the capacity of teacher, until you have served life out, or until there shall be no need of one saying to another, "Know the Lord."

What if it be laborious? It is the labour of love, in the very fatigue of which the soul finds refreshment.

But perhaps you are not a Sabbath-school teacher. "No, I am not," methinks I hear one say. "I am not a professor of religion. You cannot expect me to be a teacher." You ought to be both; and your not being the first, is but a poor apology for declining to be the other. The neglect of one obligation is a slim excuse for the neglect of another. You seem to admit, that if you professed religion, it would be your duty to teach in the Sabbath-school. Now, whose fault is it that you do not profess religion? But I see no valid objection to your teaching a class of boys or girls how to read the Word of God, though you be not a professor of religion. I cannot think that any person *gets harm* by thus doing good. Experience has shown that the business of teaching in the Sabbath-school is *twice* blessed—blessing the teacher as well as the taught.

But you are "not good enough," you say. Then you need so much the more the re-action of such an occupation to make you better. The way to *get* good, is to do it. "But I am not a young person." And what if you are not? You need not be very young, in order to be a useful Sabbath-school teacher. We don't want mere *novices* in the Sabbath-school. If you are not young, then you have so much more *experience* to assist you in the work. Do Sabbath-school teachers become *superannuated* so much earlier in life than any other class of benefactors?—so much sooner than ministers and parents? There is a prevailing mistake on this subject.

But you are married, you say. And what if you are! Because you have married a wife or a husband, is that any reason why you should not come into the Sabbath-school. Many people think that as soon as they are married, they are released from the obligation of assisting in the Sabbath-school. But I do not understand this to be one of the immunities of matrimony. As well might they plead that in discharge of the obligation to every species of good-doing. Such might, at least, postpone this apology, till the cares of a family have come upon them. And even then, perhaps the best disposition they could make of their children on the Sabbath, would be to take them to the school. I wonder how many hours of the Sabbath are devoted to the instruction of their children, by those parents who make the necessity of attending to the religious culture of their families an apology for not entering the Sabbath-school; and I wonder if their children could not be attended to in other hours than those usually occupied in Sabbath-school instruction; and thus, while they are not neglected, other children who have no parents that care for their soul, receive a portion of their attention. I think this not impossible. But perhaps the wife pleads that she is no longer her own, and that her husband's wishes are opposed to her continuing a teacher. But has she ceased to be her Lord's by becoming her husband's? Does the husband step into all the rights of a Saviour over his redeemed? If such an objection is made, it is very clear that she has not regarded the direction to marry "only in the Lord."

But perhaps you say, "There are enough others to teach in the Sabbath-school." There would not be enough—there would not be any—if all were like you. But it is a mistake; there are not enough others. You are wanted. Some five or six children, of whom Christ has said, "Suffer them to come to me," will grow up without either learning or religion, unless you become a teacher. Are all the children in the place where you live gathered into the Sabbath-school? Are there none that still wander on the Lord's day, illiterate and irreligious? Is there a competent number of teachers in the existing schools, so that more would rather be in the way than otherwise? I do not know how it is where you live; but where I live there are boys and girls enough, aye, too many, who go to no Sabbath-school. It is only for a teacher to go out on the Sabbath, and he readily collects a class of children willing to attend; and where I reside, there are not teachers enough for the scholars already collected. Some classes are without a teacher; and presently the children stay away, because, they say, they come to the school, and there is no one to attend to them. He who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," knows this; and he knows who of "his sacramental host" might take charge of these children, and do not. They say, every communion-season, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord replies, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." And there the matter ends.

But I hear one say, "I *was* once a teacher;" and do

you not blush to own that you became weary in this species of well-doing?" "But I think I taught long enough." How long did you teach? Till there were no more to learn? Till you could teach no longer? Are you dead? If not, you are resting from your labours rather prematurely. This excuse resembles one which I heard of, as from a lady of wealth, who having for several years been a subscriber to the Bible Society, at length ordered her name to be struck off, alleging that she thought she had done her part towards disseminating the Bible. The world was not supplied; O no, not even the country; and her means were not exhausted. But she had done her part. Had she done *what she could*? The woman whom Jesus commended had "done what she could." But this is a digression.

But one says, "I want the Sabbath for myself; for rest and for improvement." And who does not? Are you busily employed all the week? So are some of our most faithful teachers. You ought to be "diligent in business" during the days of the week. "Six days shalt thou labour." "But is there any *rest* in Sabbath-school teaching?" The soul finds some of its sweetest rest in the works of mercy, and often its richest improvement in the care to improve others.

But perhaps you say, though with some diffidence you express this objection, that you belong to a circle in society whose members are not accustomed to teach in the Sabbath-school. Do you mean, that you are *above* the business? You must be exceedingly *elevated* in life to be above the business of gratuitously com-

municating the knowledge of God to the young and ignorant. You must be exalted above the very throne of God itself, if you are above caring for poor children. "But I should have to mingle with those beneath me in rank." Ah, I supposed that Christianity has destroyed the distinction of rank, not indeed by depressing any, but by elevating all. Should Christians, all cleansed by the same blood and Spirit, treat other Christians as common?

"But I am not qualified to teach." If you are not in reality, you should undertake teaching for the sake of learning. The best way to learn anything, is to teach it. If you only think yourself not qualified, your very humility goes far towards qualifying you.

"O, it is too laborious! There is so much self-denial in it." And do I hear a disciple of Christ complaining of labour and self-denial, when these are among the very conditions of discipleship? Is the disciple above his master? Can you follow Christ without going where he went? And went he not about doing good? Pleased he himself?

Ah, I know what is the reason of this deficiency of Sabbath-school teachers, and I will speak it out. It is owing to a deplorable want of Christian benevolence in them who profess to be Christ's followers. They lack the love that is necessary to engage one in this labour of love. They have no *heart* for the work.

DO YOU ATTEND THE MONTHLY PRAYER-MEETING!

I WOULD like to have this piece *read*, though I know very well that many of those I ask to read it, could themselves write a better article on the same subject. I am a little afraid that some who do *not* attend the monthly prayer-meeting, will read the *heading* of the article and then turn to something else, presumed to be more interesting. As that, however, will look very much like a desire to evade the light, and an unwillingness to hear why we should attend the meeting, I hope they will, through dread of that imputation, conclude to read the whole article. I cannot doubt they have their reasons for not attending, and I promise that if they will have them printed, I will carefully read them, provided they will read my reasons in favour of attendance.

I put a *question*. I put it not to every body. I ask it not of the *world*, for the world is the *object* of the meeting, and cannot be expected therefore to join in it. I put it to the professor of religion—the reputed disciple of Christ. I ask him if he attends the monthly prayer-meeting, in which are offered up supplications for the success of missions, the spread of the gospel, and the conversion of the world to God? *All* the members of the church do not attend it. The *half* do not. No; the meeting has not yet secured the *majority* of the church. Even “the sacramental host” are not as yet in favour of the conversion of the world, if attendance on the monthly prayer-meeting may be made the test, as I think with the utmost propriety it may; for surely he cannot

have much of a desire for the world's conversion who will not meet once a month to express it in concert with other Christians. And this, I suppose, is the principal reason why the world is not converted, because the prayer-meetings of the church bear testimony that even *she* is not heartily in favour of it. O when will the question, "Shall the world be converted?" be put to the church, and carried in the *affirmative*? There will be joy in heaven when that result is reported there; and then the work of the world's conversion will go rapidly forward, and nations be born in a day.

Many professors can say they *do* attend. I am glad so many can say it. You attend, but let me ask, do you *love* to attend? O, if you leave your *hearts* at home, that is bad. - We want the heart at the monthly meeting. It spoils all, if we have not the heart there to send up to heaven its sincere desires. "Prayer," you know, "is the heart's sincere desire." You attend, but do you attend *habitually*, or is it only *occasionally* that you go? Do you attend *twelve* times a year, if Providence interpose no obstacle? It is a *monthly* meeting. It is intended that Christians should meet and pray together at least once a month. There are professors of religion who attend the meeting sometimes, perhaps on an average once in *three* months, and they think that is doing tolerably well. But what if others should do so. Then it would be no *monthly* meeting, but a *quarterly* meeting; and such it should be now to suit the practice of too many of the church. But I think once a month, or twelve times a year, is not too often for Christians to

meet together to pray, "Our Father—thy kingdom come." As a Christian, I *feel* that it is not too often; and I think, if I was a heathen, and knew all that is involved in being a heathen, I should feel like being prayed for by Christians at least once a month. O, it is not too often, either for us who pray, or for those for whom we pray. Then, fellow-Christians, let us attend every month, bringing along with us each one a heart touched with gratitude, melted into pity, fervent with love, full of faith, and as sure as we live, we shall bless and be blessed.

"But they say it is not an interesting meeting." I don't know why it should be uninteresting to *Christians*. Is it because it is a *prayer-meeting*; or because it is a prayer-meeting *for others*? Does it lack interest because there is no *preaching*, and the very prayers are not for ourselves? Will the disciple of Jesus make this confession? Will he acknowledge that it takes away the interest of a meeting, when its character is so devotional, and its object so benevolent? It has been asked, "How shall we contrive to make the monthly meeting interesting to the people?" It is only the people themselves that can make it interesting. Let them come to it. Let the members of the church appear in their places on that evening. Let conscience bring them, if inclination does not; and let him who is to preside in the meeting be cheered by the aspect of a full assembly, and the interest of the monthly meeting is secured without the laying down of rules and observance of minute directions. Who ever found a well attended meeting for prayer uninteresting?

But one says, It sometimes rains, and I cannot attend. I know it sometimes rains; but do you never go out in the rain for any purpose? O, Christian, if for any thing you ever go through the rain, go through the rain to the monthly meeting. I suspect the rain does not hinder you from fulfilling an important engagement with a fellow-creature. Now I know that you have not specifically engaged to meet God at the monthly meeting; but there are *vows* on you which, I am sure, include this. Are you not one of those who say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" waiting for his answer? His answer comprehends many things, and among them is this. Indeed, I think the duty of attending the monthly meeting is included in the general obligation to "go into all the world" and "teach all nations;" and you consented to it when you made the *full surrender*. Therefore let not trifles detain you at home on the evening of the church's meeting for prayer for the world. But if by necessity detained—if you go not, because on such a night you would go out for no purpose whatever, you can spend the hour in the closet praying for the world. That you will not fail to do. The closet is accessible in all weather. If you cannot go out to the prayer-meeting, yet you can "enter into thy closet," and there your prayer will be as grateful to God as the united prayers of your brethren at the prayer-meeting.

**WHY ALL CHRISTIANS SHOULD ATTEND THE
MONTHLY PRAYER-MEETING.**

It is a fact well known and deeply deplored, that some professors of religion never attend the monthly prayer-meeting. Perhaps they never attend any of the prayer-meetings of the church. It is not for me to say that such persons have no religion, though I must go so far as to say that I do not see how they can have a great deal. Nor does their religion appear to be of the *kind* contemplated in the New Testament. They may be Christians, but I am certain they are not *primitive* Christians. I do not, for my part, see how those who never met with their fellow-disciples for social prayer, can be acquitted of contemning that gracious promise of Christ, "If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." What an encouragement to *prayer-meetings* is conveyed in those words, "if two of you shall agree!" How can they be supposed to love the presence of the Saviour who are not desirous to meet him "where two or three are gathered together in his name." If such disciples had existed at that time, of course they would not have attended the meetings for prayer which preceded the memorable day of Pentecost. They would not have gone to the "upper room." Perhaps they would have made some excuse for their absence; perhaps not. One might have said that he could not bear the air of a crowded room. Another, that he did not see why he could not pray as well at home. There were no

such despisers of the prayer-meeting among the primitive disciples. They all frequented the upper room, "and *all* continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." O that it were so now! Fellow-disciples of the blessed Jesus, listen to a few plain reasons why we should all attend the monthly prayer-meeting.

1. It is a meeting of Christians. Should you not meet with Christians? God has made you *social* beings; and Christians are the best company. Should you not cultivate that kind of society on earth, with which you are to be associated for ever in heaven? The same class of persons—they that feared the Lord—used to meet together in the days of Malachi; and the Lord noted it down. Come then to the prayer-meeting.

2. It is a meeting of Christians for religious worship. The meeting is a *sacred* assembly. It invites not merely to mutual intercourse, but to intercourse with God and heaven. In it we meet one with another, that we may together meet the Lord; and if he kept a book of remembrance for them who feared him, and who met for *conference* with each other, will he not much more for those who meet for *communion* with himself?

3. It is the most interesting kind of religious meeting. It is a *prayer*-meeting. Its exercises consist in prayer, interspersed with praise. The song of gratitude and the supplication of blessing ascend alternately. O it is good to be there. What Christian but loves the prayer-meeting?

4. It is the most interesting of all prayer-meetings.

I had rather be absent from any other than from this. Think of the object—its unity, its grandeur, its benevolence—a world lying in wickedness—the speedy conversion of that world to God. In the monthly meeting, Christians meet to express together to their God this one great benevolent desire. And ought not you to be there?

But what gives the greatest interest to the meeting is, that Christ himself in substance established it. Yes, he has taught us *so* to pray. His disciples asked him how they should pray, and he answered, that they should *pray socially for the conversion of the world*, namely, that they should meet under circumstances which would justify the use of the plural number, “Our Father,” &c.: and thus met, that they should pray together, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Now, is not this just what we do in the monthly prayer-meeting? We put in practice that lesson of Christ on prayer. That is the amount of it. The missionary meeting has then the sanction of the Master, however some of his professed disciples may regard it. Is it so? Then I ask not, will you come to the meeting, but how can you stay away?

5. It is good to draw near to God in prayer for a guilty and dying world. Christians find it so. If they benefit no others, yet they benefit themselves. God bestows blessing on them while they implore blessing for others.

6. It is kind to the poor heathen thus to meet once a month and pray that they may possess the same gos-

pel of the grace of God which has brought salvation to us. If we were in their situation, and knew what it was to be in such a situation, we should wish Christians to pray for us. And shall not we, being Christians, pray for them? The golden rule requires it. The love of Christ constrains to it. How shall we not pray for them? How shall I be able to answer for it, I say not to God, but to my poor pagan brother that I shall meet before the bar of our common Judge, if I let him go into eternity without even praying that the light of the gospel may illuminate his dark mind? How shall I be able to bear his reproachful recognition of me as a Christian? I will take care not to lie under the accusation. I will pray for him.

7. Nothing so cheers the hearts of our missionaries, and nothing so encourages them in their work, as when they hear of well attended prayer-meetings. So they tell us; and they write back that nothing they meet with on the field of their labours depresses and discourages them so much as the intelligence they receive from home, that Christians neglect the monthly meeting, and few of the churches meet to pray for them. They know that they cannot succeed without God, and they know that it is prayer which engages God to work effectually with them. O, if we could but send them word by the next ships that go, that Christians in crowds come up to the missionary prayer-meeting, and the place of the monthly meeting is thronged, they would be able, I have no doubt, to send us word back, perhaps by those very ships returning, that the heathen in crowds gather

around them inquiring the way of salvation, and that many have gone even unto Christ, and become partakers of his grace. But in vain shall we expect to hear very cheering intelligence from them, while the intelligence they receive from us is no more cheering. O it is base treatment of our missionary brethren and sisters, as well as gross dereliction of the duty imposed by the Saviour's last command, not to meet and pray for them.

But why should I multiply reasons? Will you not attend henceforth? If, after all, you will not, I can only say I am sorry—sorry on two accounts—sorry for the heathen, and sorry for you.

HOW CAME IT TO PASS?

THAT three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, how came it to pass? The truth as it is in Jesus was preached, and the power of God accompanied and made the truth effectual. But had not the meeting for prayer, of which mention is made in Acts i. 14, a close and influential connection with the glorious results of that day and that discourse? Undoubtedly it had. But what was there in that meeting of the hundred and twenty disciples, to exert an influence to the conversion of three thousand individuals? Whence had it that power? I answer, it was a *prayer-meeting*, *professedly* and *mainly* a prayer-meeting. If it had been a meeting for *preaching*, it would not have exerted the

influence it did, even though prayer had preceded and followed the sermon. It was a prayer-meeting, a meeting of Christians to express their dependence on God; unitedly to call on him for his blessing; to plead the promise, and to wait for the fulfilment of it. Those are the *efficient* meetings, in which Christians meet and agree to ask of God. I wonder they do not value them more. To the prayer-meeting Christians come to exercise the high privilege of intercession for others; to do good and to communicate; to act the "more blessed" part; whereas, to meetings of another kind, they go for the less benevolent purpose of receiving good. Yet Christians value no meetings so little as prayer-meetings. And, O shame, no prayer-meeting do they value so little as that which Christ himself may be said to have established in saying, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come"—the monthly meeting. Though it occur but once a month, and though our Saviour, in the prayer he has given us, has expressly instructed us to *pray socially for the conversion of the world*, yet how attended! I pity the heathen, that so few are disposed to meet to pray for them. For the church, I blush that it should be so.

But the influence of that meeting of a hundred and twenty was not owing entirely to its being a prayer-meeting. Many meetings for prayer are held, and no such effects follow. There must have been something *peculiar* about that prayer-meeting to account for its efficacy. There was *much* by which it was distinguished

from ordinary prayer-meetings. The mention of some of these peculiarities may be of service. It may provoke imitation in some churches.

1. *All* the church attended that prayer-meeting. "These *all* continued," &c. There were but a hundred and twenty disciples, and they were all present. Not a member of the church was absent, unless providentially detained. How different is it now! Now, if so many as a hundred and twenty can be collected in a prayer-meeting, yet they represent perhaps a church of five or six hundred communicants, and all the rest are with one accord absent. They who meet may *agree* among themselves to ask for an outpouring of the Spirit, but it is, after all, but the agreement of a *minority* of the church. The majority, by their absence, *dissent* from the request.

2. As *all* attended, of course the *men* attended as well as the women. Yes, every *male* member of the church was present; and I suppose the males were more than one-half of the whole number. They did not leave it to the women to sustain the prayer-meetings. That prayer-meeting had not the aspect of many a modern prayer-meeting, in which almost all are of the weaker sex.

3. The most *distinguished* members of the church attended, as well as the most obscure. There were all the apostles, and "Mary the mother of Jesus," and "his brethren." None of them felt above being at a prayer-meeting. How is it now? Let that question answer itself.

4. They were all agreed, "of one accord," as it is said.

Not merely agreed as touching what they should ask, namely, the fulfilment of "the promise of the Father," but of *one mind* generally—aye, and of *one heart*. They thought and felt alike. They all loved one another. They observed the new commandment. Such cordial union among Christians has great power with God. It does not always exist in our prayer-meetings.

5. They *persevered* in prayer. "These all *continued* in prayer. First they stirred themselves up to take *hold* on God, and then they said, "We will not let thee go, except thou bless us." They met often for prayer, and all met, and they lingered long at the throne of grace. There were not some who came to the meeting *once* for a wonder, or only *occasionally*. No; "these all *continued*," &c. It is not so now. But how long did they continue asking? Until they obtained; and then they did but pass from the note of prayer to that of praise. They sought the Lord until he came. It is time we all should do it. They were together—*holding meeting*—when the Spirit descended.

I think, if *all* our church members would *habitually* attend the prayer-meetings, *men* as well as women, *rich* as well as poor, and be "of one accord" in heart as well as in judgment, and would *continue* in prayer, they would not wait in vain for "the promise of the Father." O for such prayer-meetings! But now they are despised by many. How often we hear it said, *It is nothing but a prayer-meeting*. Nothing but! I should like, for my part, to know what *surpasses* a prayer-meeting. And often on what unworthy conditions do those *called*

Christians suspend their attendance. They must know who is to conduct the meeting, who will probably lead in prayer, and from whom a word of exhortation may be expected; and if the meeting is not likely to be to their mind, they will not attend it. This thing ought not so to be.

WHY THE WORLD IS NOT CONVERTED.

THE world *is not* converted. The melancholy fact stares us in the face. Yet the world *is to be* converted. That delightful truth shines conspicuous on the pages of the Bible. Why is it not already converted? It *ought to have* been converted ere this. Eighteen centuries ago it *was* well-nigh converted. But *now* the world is far, very far from being converted. It "lieth in wickedness." What is the meaning of it? *Why* is it not converted? Whose is the fault? Look not up to heaven with the inquiry, as if the reason was to be found there, among the mysteries of the eternal Mind. Look elsewhere. The fact we deplore results not from any lack of benevolent disposition in God. No; "God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What could he have *felt* or *done* more? The *object* of his love, the world; its *gift*, his Son! Could it have been more comprehensive, or more munificent? Nor is the reason found in any deficiency in the atonement made by Christ, for he is the propitiation "for the sins of the *whole world*," the Lamb of

God who "taketh away the sin of the *world*." Nor is it owing to any limitation in the commission of the Holy Spirit; for of him it is testified, that when he should come he should "reprove *the world* of sin:" and the commission to the *human* agents of the work was as extensive, "Go ye into *all the world*—preach the gospel to *every creature*—teach *all nations*." And the promise of the presence and power of Christ to be with them is also without restriction. See what goes before, and what comes after that great commission. The words which precede it are, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The words which follow are, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." You must look somewhere else than *upward* for the reason why the world is not converted. Look *beneath, around, within*.

I propose to assign a few reasons why the world is not converted.

1. The *world* does not wish to be converted. That which is to be the subject of conversion is a foe to it. It resists the influence that would convert it to God. What means that language, "My Spirit shall not always *strive* with man?" *Striving* implies opposition offered. The opposition is made by the *will*. The universal will of man resists the work of the Spirit of God. And that thing, the will, is a tremendous obstacle opposed to conversion. It is more than a match for all the motives you can bring to bear upon it. It wont move for motives. The Lord alone can master it. O, if the world had of itself been willing to be converted, it should long

ere this have been brought back to God. It is but to be willing, and the thing is done.

2. The *devil*, who in the Bible is called "the god of this world," is opposed to its conversion. Now, it must be very much in the way of the world's conversion, that not only itself, but its god is opposed to it. The will is a powerful foe of itself; but when the will is in league with Satan, who is called *the adversary*, by way of eminence, what an enemy the combination must produce. The devil and the heart, what a formidable alliance. Satan is *sincere* in his opposition to the conversion of the world; that is, he is *really* opposed to it. He does not merely pretend to be. And he is in *earnest*. His *heart* is in the work of opposing the world's conversion—and *he does all he can* to prevent it. The *friends* of the conversion of the world do *not all they can* to promote it. Would that they did. But Satan does all he can to prevent it. Ah, why cannot we do as much for Christ as his enemies do against him? Why don't Christians do all *they can*? Satan does all he can, and that is a great deal; for he was one of those angels "that excel in strength," and though by his fall he lost all holiness, he lost no *power*. He is as potent as ever, possessed of very great energy, and he exerts it all in the enterprise of opposing God in the conversion of the world. And he does not stand still and exert his power, but goeth "to and fro in the earth." Yea, "as a roaring lion, *walketh about, seeking* whom he may devour." He does not *wait* for his prey, but *hunts* for it. Yet he has not always the lion look, for sometimes "Satan

himself is transformed into an angel of light ;” nor does he always *roar*. He can let his voice down to the softest whisper, which the ear he breathes it into alone can hear ; and Satan does not act alone. He is assisted by myriads of kindred spirits. They were *many*, we are told, that possessed one man—yes, a *legion*. How many they must be in all ; and all engaged in the same opposition—aye, and multitudes of *men* are even now in league with them, engaged in the devils’ work as heartily as if they were of that race. Is not this a strong reason why the world is not converted ? Have I not given *two* such reasons ? But I have a stronger.

3. The *church* is not heartily in favour of the world’s conversion. And when I affirm this of the church, I refer not to those who rest in the form of godliness, and have but a nominal life. No wonder the unconverted, though they may be members of the visible church, should not be concerned for the conversion of others. But I mean that real Christians, who have themselves been converted, are not heartily in favour of it. Yes, the converted part of the world are not heartily in favour of the conversion of the great remainder. And this is the *principal* reason why it is not converted. What if the world is not in favour of it, and Satan is not ? It was never intended that the world should be converted by their instrumentality, but in spite of their opposition. But that the church, to whom is given the commission, to whom is committed the instrumentality which God blesses for conversion, and to whom even Christ looks with expectation, should not enter into the

work with all her soul and strength, how strange and how lamentable! I know that Christians say they are in favour of it, and I will not question their sincerity, but I wish they gave such proof of being sincere and in earnest as Satan and his allies do. Actions have a tongue, and they speak louder than words. Satan's actions declare unequivocally that he is a foe to the world's conversion. Do our actions proclaim as unequivocally that we are its friends? *We* say we desire the world's conversion; but what say our *prayers*, our *contributions*, our *efforts*, our *conduct*? *We talk* as if we desired it, but do we *pray*, do we *contribute*, do we *labour*, do we *live* as if we desired it? In this matter our unsupported word will not be received as proof.

Why, if we who love the Lord are heartily in favour of the world's becoming his, are we so *divided among ourselves*? The enemies of the world's conversion are united. Yes, *they* forget their private differences when the cause of Jesus is to be attacked, and one heart animates the whole infernal host. But the friends of the great enterprise are divided, and much of their force is spent in skirmishes among themselves, while the common enemy in the meantime is permitted to make an almost unresisted progress. It is a pity, a great pity. It ought not to be so. The great aggressive enterprise of the world's conversion demands all our resources, and yet we are expending them in mutual assaults. When will it be otherwise? When will Christians agree on a *truce* among themselves, and march in one mighty

phalanx against the world, to the service to which the Captain of salvation calls them? When shall it once be? I do not know, but I do know that when it takes place, the *first* of the *thousand* years will not be far off.

Fellow-soldiers of the cross, what are we about? Let us *form*. Let us put on our complete armour; some of us are not in full panoply. And let us sing together one of the songs of Zion, and to that music let us march on to the conquest of the world for Jesus. He is already in the field, let us hasten to his support. Let us go to his help against the mighty. Let us leave *all*, even our mutual dissensions, suspicions, and jealousies, and follow him—and presently the world shall be converted.

THE CONVERSION OF THE CHURCH.

WE hear a great deal nowadays about the conversion of the world. It is in almost every Christian's mouth; and we cannot be too familiar with the phrase—we cannot be too diligent to promote the thing. It ought to have our daily thoughts, prayers, and efforts. It deserves our hearts. It is the great object of Christianity. But there is another community besides the world, which I think needs to undergo a measure of the same process that the world so much needs. It is the *church*. While the conversion of the world is made so prominent, I think we ought not to overlook the *conversion of the church*, especially since this comes first in order.

Everything, we know, begins at the house of God,

both in judgment and mercy. But what do I mean by the conversion of the church? Is not the church converted already? Suppose I admit that; may she not need a new conversion? Regeneration is but once, but conversion may be many times. Peter had been converted when Christ said to him, "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." There is no doubt the church might be converted again, and that without any injury to her.

But why do I think the church needs conversion? I might give several reasons, but I will assign only one. It is founded on Matthew xviii. 3, "Except ye be converted, and *become as little children.*" Here we see the effect of conversion is to make the subjects of it as little children; and hence St. John addresses the primitive Christians as little children. Now, my reason for thinking the church needs conversion is, that there does not seem to be much of the little child about the church of the present day. There is a great deal more of "the old man" about it, I am afraid. I think, if John were living now, he would not be apt to address the members of the church generally as "little children." No, indeed. I question whether, if he were even addressing an assembly of the ministers and officers of many of our churches, he would not be apt to apply other terms than "little children," as a preface to his exhortation, "love one another," which I am sure he would not forget.

Little children are *humble*, but humility is not a remarkable characteristic of the church of the present

day. I don't think that the scholars of modern times have got the lesson of lowliness very perfectly from their Master. I fear, if the Master were to come in upon us now, he would be likely to chide many in all our schools.

How *confiding* little children are, and how ready to believe, on the bare word of one in whom they have reason to feel confidence; and especially, if he be a father. But not so the church. "Thus saith the Lord" does not satisfy her sons now. They must have better reasons for believing than that. They must hear first what he has to say, and then see if they can get a confirmation of it from any quarter, before they will believe it. How unceremoniously many of these children treat some of the things which their Father very evidently says, because they do not strike them as in accordance with reason, justice, or common sense.

How *docile* the little child is. Mary, who "sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word," was such a child. Never a *why* or a *how* asked she of him. I cannot say so much for the church of our day. *Simplicity* also characterizes little children. How open and artless they are, how free from guile. Such was Nathanael. Whether this trait of character be conspicuous in the church now, let the reader say.

Little children are moreover characterized by *love*, and their charity "thinketh no evil." How unsuspecting they are. But too much of the charity of the present day, so far from thinking no evil, thinketh no *good*. It suspects everybody. It "hopeth" nothing.

Indeed *love*, and her sister *peace*, which used to lead the graces, are become as *wall-flowers* with many, into such neglect have they fallen. They seem to be quite out of the question with many. Some good men appear to think, that contending for the faith is the end of the commandment and the fulfilling of the law. But it is not. It is a duty, an important duty; one too little regarded by many; one never to be sneered at as by some it is. I acknowledge, some treat it as if it were nothing. I only say, it is not everything. There is *walking in love*, and *following peace*, which, as well as *contending for the faith*, are unrepealed laws of Christ's house. I believe they can all be done, and that each is best done when the others are not neglected. I am sure *truth* never lost anything by being spoken *in love*. I am of opinion, that a principal reason why we are not more of one mind is, that we are not more of one heart. How soon they who feel heart to heart, begin to see eye to eye. The way to think alike, is first to feel alike; and if the feeling be love, the thought will be truth. I wish, therefore, for the sake of sound doctrine, that the brethren could love one another. What if we see error in each other to condemn, can we not find anything amiable to love? I would the experiment might be made. Let us not cease to contend for the faith, not merely for its own sake, but for love's sake, because "faith worketh by love." But in the conflict, let us be careful to shield love. It is a victory for truth scarcely worth gaining, if charity be left bleeding on the field of battle.

You see why I think the church wants converting. It is to bring her back to humility, and simplicity, and love. I wish she would attend to this matter. She need not relax her efforts for the world. She has time enough to turn a few reflex acts on herself. The object of the church is to make the world like herself. But let her in the meantime make herself more like what the world ought to be. It is scarcely desirable that the world should be as the church in general now is. Let her become a better model for the world's imitation. Her voice is heard for Christ ; but let her "hold forth the word of life" in her *conduct*, as well as by her voice. Let her light shine. Let her good works be manifest. Let her heaven-breathed spirit breathe abroad the same spirit.

The work of the conversion of the world goes on slowly ; but it makes as much progress as the work of the conversion of the church does. No more sinners are converted, because no more Christians are converted. The world will continue to lie in wickedness, while "the ways of Zion mourn" as they do. Does any one wonder that iniquity abounds, when the love of so many has waxed cold ? We are sending the light of truth abroad when we have but little of the warmth of love at home.

We are often asked what we are doing for the conversion of the world. We ought to be doing a great deal—all we can. But I would ask, what are we doing for the conversion of the church ? What to promote holiness nearer home, among our fellow-Christians and

in our own hearts? Let us not forget the world; but, at the same time, let us remember Zion.

INQUIRING SAINTS.

I WAS asked, the other day, whether I had had any recent meeting for inquirers. I replied that I had not; that there were few inquiring sinners in the congregation, and I judged the reason to be, that there were few inquiring *saints*. "Inquiring saints! that is a *new* phrase. We always supposed that *inquiring* belonged exclusively to sinners." It is not so. Do we not read in Ezekiel, xxxvi. 37, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be *inquired* of by the house of Israel, to do it for them?"—*by the house of Israel*, that is, by his people, by the church. You see that God requires and expects his covenanted people to inquire. It is true that saints do not make the same inquiry that sinners do. The latter ask what they must do to be saved, whereas the inquiry of Christians is, "Wilt thou not revive us again?" It is a blessed state of things when the people of God are inquiring. It is good for themselves, and it has a most benign influence on others. When the people of God inquire, presently the impenitent begin to inquire. That question, "Wilt thou not revive us?" is soon followed by the other, "What must I do to be saved?" Yes, when saints become anxious, it is not long ere sinners become anxious. The inquiry of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" was preceded by

the inquiry of the one hundred and twenty, who "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Generally, I suppose, that is the *order*. First saints inquire, and *then* sinners. And whenever, in any congregation, religion does not flourish, one principal reason of it is, that the saints are not inquiring. *They* do not attend *their* inquiry-meeting appointed for them. The saints' inquiry-meeting is the prayer-meeting. In that, Christians meet together to inquire of the Lord "to do it for them," that is, to fulfil the promise about the new heart and the new spirit, of which he had been speaking. Now, when this meeting is crowded and interesting, when the inquiry among Christians is general, and earnest, and importunate, the sinners' inquiry-meeting usually becomes crowded and interesting.

O that I could make my voice to be heard by all the dear people of God in the land on this subject. I would say, "You wonder and lament that sinners do not inquire. But are *you* inquiring? You wonder that they do not *feel*. But do *you* feel? Can you expect a heart of *stone* to feel when a heart of *flesh* does not? You are surprised that sinners can sleep. It is because you sleep alongside of them. Do you but awake, and bestir yourselves, and look up and cry to God, and you will see how soon they will begin to be roused, and to look about them, and to ask the meaning of your solicitude." O that the saints would but inquire! That is what I want to see.

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DETACHED THOUGHTS.

It is not every broken heart which constitutes the sacrifice of God. It depends on what has broken it—whether the experience of misfortune, or the sense of sin—the sorrow of the world, or the sorrow of God. Both break the heart, but it is a different fracture in one case from what it is in the other. God values the latter; and hearts so broken he mends and makes whole.

Some sinners repent with an *unbroken* heart. They are *sorry*, and yet go on, as did Pilate and Herod.

A sinner must *come to himself*, as did the prodigal, before ever he will come to Christ.

The consummation of madness is to do what, at the time of doing it, we intend to be afterwards sorry for; the deliberate and intentional making of work for repentance.

When a Christian backslides, it is as if the prodigal son had re-acted his folly, and left his father's house a second time.

There is a mighty difference between feeling, "I have done wrong," and feeling, "I have sinned against the Lord."

Some sinners lay down their burden elsewhere than at the feet of Jesus.

Ministers should aim in preaching to puncture the heart, rather than tickle the ear.

He who waits for repentance, waits for what cannot be had so long as it is waited for. It is absurd for a man to wait for that which he has himself to do.

Human friends can weep with us when we weep, but Jesus is a friend who, when he has wept with us, can wipe away all our tears. And when the vale of tears terminates in the valley of the shadow of death, and other friends are compelled to retire and leave us to go alone, Jesus is the friend who can and will enter and go all the way through with us.

It is better for us that Christ should be in heaven than on earth. We need him more there than here. We want an advocate *at court*.

When a family party are going home, it is common for one to go before to make all ready for the rest, and to welcome them. "I go to prepare a place for you," says Christ to his disciples.

Procrastination has been called a thief—the thief of time. I wish it were no worse than a thief. It is a murderer; and that which it kills is not time merely, but the immortal soul.

Surely the subject of religion must be the most important of all subjects, since it is presently to become, and ever after to continue to be, the only and all-absorbing subject.

The obstacle in the way of the sinner's conversion possesses all the *force and invincibility* of an *inability*, with all the *freeness and criminality* of an indisposition.

In vain will sinners call upon the rocks and mountains to hide them. Nature will not interpose to screen the enemies of her God.

What strange *servants* some Christians are—always at work for themselves, and never doing anything for

him whom they call their Master. And what *subjects*—ever desiring to take the reins of government into their own hands.

It is one of the worst of errors, that there is another path of safety besides that of *duty*.

The man who lives in vain, lives *worse* than in vain. He who lives to *no* purpose, lives to a *bad* purpose.

The danger of the impenitent is regularly and rapidly increasing, like his who is in the midst of a burning building, or under the power of a fatal disease.

How many indulge a hope which they dare not examine!

If the mere delay of hope, hope deferred, makes the heart sick, what will the death of hope, its final and total disappointment, despair, do to it?

The *brightest blaze of intelligence* is of incalculably less value than the *smallest spark of charity*.

The sublimest thoughts are conceived by the intellect when it is excited by pious emotion.

There are many shining lights, which are not also burning lights.

Those may hope to be saved at the eleventh hour who, when called at that hour, can plead that it is their first call; who can say, when asked why they stand idle, "Because no man hath hired us."

Some never begin to pray till God hath ceased to hear.

The Christian's feeling himself weak, makes him strong.

Genuine benevolence is not stationary, but *peripatetic*. It *goeth* about doing good.

Preparation for meeting God ought to be made first, not only because it is most important, but because it may be needed first. We may want nothing so much as religion. It is the only thing that is necessary, *certainly, exceedingly, indispensably, and immediately.*

Some things, which could not otherwise be read in the book of nature, are legible enough in it when the lamp of revelation is held up to it.

It is easier to do a great deal of mischief than to accomplish a little good.

No man will ever fully find out what he is by a mere *survey* of himself. He must *explore*, if he would know himself.

When a man wants nothing, he asks for everything.

TRAVELLING ON THE SABBATH.

How few men act from principle! How few have any *rule* by which they uniformly regulate their conduct! Fewer still act from *Christian* principle—regard a rule derived from revelation. It makes my very heart bleed to think how few, even of civilized and evangelized men, *regard divine authority.* And yet it is the disregard of this which constitutes the sinner and the rebel. Some disregard one expression of it, and some another. He who, whatever respect he may profess for God, *practically* disregards *any* expression of divine authority, is a revolter, a rebel—is up in heart, if not in arms, against God—is engaged in a controversy with Jehovah.

What has led me into this train of reflection is the general disregard that I observe with respect to the sanctification of the Sabbath. He who made us, and who by constantly preserving us when otherwise we should relapse into non-existence, may be said to be continually renewing the creation of us, and has beyond all question a right to control us, did long ago, from Sinai, distinctly express his will with regard to the manner in which the *seventh* portion of time should be spent, and how it should be distinguished from the other six portions. He reminded his creatures of it, and declared it to be his will that it should be kept holy; that six days we should labour, and therein do *all* our work, leaving *none* of it to be done on the seventh, because the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. It is his *rest*, and therefore should be ours also. In it he has signified it to be his will that we should not do *any work*; neither we, nor those who are subject to us as children or as servants, nor even those transiently domesticated with us—the strangers within our gates. Nor should man alone rest, but the *beast* also. Then he condescends to give a reason for this enactment, in which all mankind, whenever and wherever they live, are equally interested—a reason which was valid from the creation of the world, and will hold good as long as the world lasts; “for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; *wherefore* the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it.”

Now, God has never revoked this expression of his

will. He has never repealed this law. If he has, *when* did he it, and where is the record of its repeal? He has not taken off the blessing which he laid on the Sabbath. He has not obliterated the distinction which he put on the seventh portion of time. He has not said, "You need no longer remember the Sabbath to keep it holy; seven days you may labour; my example of six days of work, followed by one of cessation and rest, you may now cease to imitate." He has not said anything like it. The law is in force, therefore, even until now.

Well, here is the law of God, with the reason of it. Now for the practice of men. How poorly they compare. There are indeed few who do not remember the Sabbath-day, and in some manner distinguish it from the other days of the week. But the law is, that they should remember it *to keep it holy*—that they should distinguish it by hallowing it as a day of rest. This they do not. They keep it no more holy than any other day, though they do differently on that day from what they do on others. They do not the same work on that day which they do on the other days; but they do *some* work. Such as *necessity requires*, and such as *mercy dictates*, they may do. The law of nature teaches that, and the example of the Lord of the Sabbath sanctions and confirms the lesson. But they do other work than such as these call them to. The Sabbath is with them as *secular* a day as any other, though the manner of their worldliness on that day may be unlike what it is on the other days. What is more purely secular than

visiting and travelling; yet what more common on the day which the Lord has blessed and hallowed? These; I know, are not considered as falling under the denomination of *work*; but they do fall under it. They are as certainly included among the things forbidden to be done on the Sabbath, as are ploughing and sowing. The former are no more sacred, no less secular, than are the latter.

I have been struck with the *indiscriminate* manner in which travellers use the seven days of the week. One would suppose that the law had made an exception in favour of travelling—forbidding every other species of secular employment on the day of rest, but allowing men to journey on it. They that would not do any other labour on the Sabbath, will, nevertheless, without compunction travel on that day. The farmer who would not toil in his field, the merchant who would not sell an article out of his store, the mechanic who would not labour at his trade, and the mistress of the family who scrupulously avoids certain household occupations on the Sabbath, will yet, all of them, without any relents, travel on the Sabbath, and that whether the object of their journey be business or pleasure; it makes no difference. They would not on the Sabbath do other work appropriate to the six days. That would shock them. But to commence, continue, or finish a journey on the Sabbath, offends not their consciences in the least. I am acquainted with many persons who would not for the world travel to a place on Saturday, accomplish their business, the object of their journey, on Sun-

day, and return on Monday; but these same persons will, for a very little of the world, and without any hesitation, go to the place on Friday, do their business on Saturday, and return on Sunday. Now, I would do the one just as soon as I would the other, and should consider that I desecrated the Sabbath by travelling to or from the place of business on it, just as much as by accomplishing the object of the journey on it.

I would ask the candid traveller, if anything can *secularize* the Sabbath more completely, if anything can more effectually *nullify* it, than ordinary travelling? If a man may lawfully travel on the Sabbath, except in a case of stern necessity, such as would justify any species of work, I know not what he may not lawfully do on that day. What is more absurd than that it should be lawful and proper *to journey* on the day set apart and sanctified for *rest*? Surely journeying does not comport well with rest. But they say that travelling is not work, and therefore not included in the prohibition. I deny the fact. It is often hard and wearisome work. And what though it be not work to the passenger? is it not work to those who are employed in conveying him? If he does not labour, yet others must labour in order to enable him to travel; and is he not equally responsible for the work which he renders necessary on the Sabbath, as for that which he does with his own hands? But what though no human being is employed to forward him on his journey? he deprives the beast of his day of rest. And is it nothing to withhold from the poor animal the privilege of the Sabbath—to compel

him to work on the day on which God has directed that he should be permitted to rest?

According to this theory, that it is lawful to journey on the Sabbath, a man may so arrange it as never to be under obligation to keep a Sabbath. He has only to set apart that day of the week for travelling; he has only to keep in *motion* on the day of rest; that is all. Moreover, he who gets his living by travelling, or by the journeying of others, has, on this supposition, a manifest advantage, if such it may be called, over his neighbours. He has seven days for profit, while they have only six. The day-labourer and the poor mechanic may not use the seventh day as they do the other days of the week. *They* must make a distinction between them. But those who travel for their pleasure, or whose business calls them abroad, and those who accommodate them with conveyances, may use the seven days indiscriminately. Is this equal?

I think it must be evident to every unprejudiced mind, that to travel on the Sabbath is to use it as any other day. It is to make no distinction between it and Monday or Saturday. It disregards the peculiarity of the day altogether. Yet I suppose there is as much journeying on the Sabbath as there is on any other day of the week. With very few exceptions, the steamboats ply and the stages run as usual; and both, I am informed, are as full if not more crowded, on the Sabbath than on any other day; and private carriages are as numerous on the great thoroughfares, and in the vicinity of cities more so, on the Sabbath. And the re-

gisters of the watering-places show as many arrivals and departures on Sunday as on Monday. Yes, men make as free with the Lord's day as they do with their own days. So little regard is paid to divine authority. So little do men care for God. And, they tell me, all sorts of men travel on the Sabbath—even many professors of religion. That I would suppose. I never heard of anything so bad that some professor of religion had not done it. It was one of the professors of religion who bartered away and betrayed our blessed Lord and Saviour. And some ministers of the gospel, I am told, do the work of travelling on the Sabbath. Now we have some ministers who have farms. I suppose it would be accounted dreadful, should they plough or reap on the Sabbath. Yet these might plough as innocently as those may travel. But these breakers of the Sabbath, and indeed almost all of this class of transgressors are the readiest persons I ever met with at making excuses for their conduct. I propose in my next to consider some of their apologies. They will be found very curious.

APOLOGIES FOR TRAVELLING ON THE SABBATH.

SOME of those who do the *work* of journeying on the Sabbath, do not condescend to make any apology for it. They care neither for the day, nor for Him who hallowed it. With these we have nothing to do. Our business is with those who, admitting the general obli-

gation of the Sabbath, and knowing or suspecting Sunday travelling to be a sin, offer apologies which they hope may justify the act in their case, or else go far towards extenuating the criminality of it. I propose to submit to the judgment of my readers some of the *excuses* for this sin, as I cannot help calling the breach of the fourth commandment, which from time to time I have heard alleged.

I would premise that I know of no sin which men are so *sorry* for before it is done, and so ready to apologize for afterwards. I cannot tell how many persons, about to travel on the Sabbath, have answered me that they were very *sorry* to do it; and yet they have immediately gone and done it. They have repented and then sinned—just like Herod, who was sorry to put John the Baptist to death, and then immediately sent an executioner to bring his head. It does not diminish the criminality of an act that it is perpetrated with some degree of regret—and yet the presence of such a regret is considered by many as quite a tolerable excuse.

One gentleman who was sorry to travel on the Sabbath, added, I recollect, that it was *against his principles* to make such a use of the day. I wondered then that he should do it—that he should deliberately practise in opposition to his principles. But I was still more surprised that he should think to excuse his practice by alleging its contrariety to his principles. What are principles for but to regulate practice; and if they have not fixedness and force enough for this, of what use are they? A man's principles may as well be in

favour of Sabbath-breaking as his practice; and certainly it constitutes a better apology for a practice, that it is in conformity to one's principles, than that it is at variance with them.

Another gave pretty much the same reason for his conduct in different words:—"It is not my *habit*," said he, "to travel on the Sabbath." It was only his *act*. He did not uniformly do it. He only occasionally did it. A man must be at a loss for reasons who alleges an apology for travelling one Sabbath, that he does not travel other Sabbaths. The habit of obedience forms no excuse for the act of disobedience.

An intelligent lady, who was intending to travel on the Sabbath, volunteered this exculpation of herself. She said she had travelled one Sabbath already since she left home, and she supposed it was no worse to travel on another. What then? are not two sins worse than one?

Another, and she was a lady too, said she could read good books by the way: "And you know," said she, "that we can have as good thoughts in one place as in another." I assented, but could not help thinking that the persons employed in conveying her might not find their situation as favourable to devout reading and meditation. This, I suppose, did not occur to her.

Another person said that he would never *commence* a journey on the Sabbath; but when once set out, he could see no harm in proceeding. But I, for my part, could not see the mighty difference between setting out on the Sabbath, and going on on the Sabbath. My per-

ceptions were so obtuse that I could not discern the one to be travelling, and the other to be equivalent to rest.

I heard, among other excuses, this :—Sunday was the only day of the week on which the stage run to the place to which the person wished to go, and therefore he was compelled to travel on Sunday. Compelled? Why go to the place at all? Why not procure a private conveyance on another day of the week? What if it should be more expensive? Doing right pays so well, that one can afford to be at some expense to do it.

Again, I was frequently met with this apology for journeying on the Sabbath :—“The stage was going on, and if I had laid by on the Sabbath, I should have lost my seat, and might have had to wait on the road perhaps for a whole week before I could regain it.” This apology satisfied many. They thought it quite reasonable that the person should proceed under those circumstances. But it did not satisfy me. It occurred to me, that if he had honoured the Sabbath, and committed his way to the Lord, he might not have been detained on the road beyond the day of rest. But what if he had been? Are we under no obligation to obey a command of God, if we foresee that obedience to it may be attended with some inconvenience? Better the detention of many days than the transgression of a precept of the decalogue.

One person told me that he meant to start very early in the morning, for he wished to occupy as little of the

Sabbath in travelling as possible. Another proposed to lie by all the middle of the day, and proceed in the evening, and he was sure there could be no harm in that. Ah, thought I, and has not Sunday a morning and an evening appropriate to itself as well as any other day of the week? Is the morning of Sunday all one with Saturday, and the evening no more sacred than Monday? Did God hallow only the middle of the day? And is the day of rest shorter by several hours than any other day? I never could see how one part of the Sabbath should be entitled to more religious respect than another part. It seems to me a man may as properly travel on the noon of the Sabbath, as in the morning or evening.

One person was very particular to tell me what he meant to do after he had travelled a part of the Lord's day. He expected, by ten or eleven o'clock, to come across a church, and he intended to go in and worship. That, he supposed, would set all right again.

Another, a grave looking personage, was travelling on the Sabbath to reach an ecclesiastical meeting in season. Another, in order to fulfil an appointment he had made to preach. These were ministers. They pleaded the necessity of the case; but I could see no necessity in it. I thought the necessity of keeping God's commandments a much clearer and stronger case of necessity. The business of the meeting could go on without that clergyman, or it might have been deferred a day in waiting for him, or he might have left home a day earlier. The appointment to preach should

not have been made ; or, if made, should have been broken.

There was one apologist who had not heard from home for a good while, and he was anxious to learn about his family. Something in their circumstances might require his presence. I could not sustain even that apology, for I thought the Lord could take care of his family without him as well as with him, and I did not believe they would be likely to suffer by his resting on the Sabbath out of respect to God's commandment, and spending the day in imploring the divine blessing on them.

Another apologist chanced to reach on Saturday night an indifferent public-house. He pleaded, therefore, that it was necessary for him to proceed on the next day until he should arrive at better accommodations. But I could not help thinking that his being comfortably accommodated was not, on the whole, so important as obedience to the decalogue.

One person thought he asked an unanswerable question, when he begged to know why it was not as well to be on the road as to be lying by at a country tavern. It occurred to me, that if his horses had possessed the faculty of Balaam's beast, they could have readily told him the difference, and why the latter part of the alternative was preferable.

There was still another person who was sure his excuse would be sustained. He was one of a party who were determined to proceed on the Sabbath in spite of his reluctance, and he had no choice but to go on with

them. Ah, had he no choice? Would they have forced him to go on? Could he not have separated from such a party; or might he not, if he had been determined, have prevailed on them to rest on the Lord's day? Suppose he had said mildly, yet firmly, "My conscience forbids me to journey on the Sabbath. You can go, but you must leave me. I am sorry to interfere with your wishes, but I cannot offend God." Is it not ten to one such a remonstrance would have been successful? I cannot help suspecting that the person was *willing* to be compelled in this case.

But many said that this strict keeping of the Sabbath was an old *puritanical* notion, and this seemed to ease their consciences somewhat. I remarked that I thought it older than puritanism. A *Sinaitical* notion I judged it to be, rather than puritanical.

Many Sunday travellers I met with begged me not to tell their pious relatives that they had travelled on the Sabbath. They thought, if these knew it, they would not think so well of them, and they would be likely to hear of it again. No one asked me not to tell God. They did not seem to care how it affected them in his estimation. It never occurred to them that they might hear from the Lord of the Sabbath on the subject.

I do not know any purpose which such apologies for Sabbath-breaking serve, since they satisfy neither God nor his people, but one, and that is not a very valuable one. They serve only, as far as I can see, to delude those who offer them.

I love to be fair. I have objected against Roman

Catholics, that they reduce the number of the commandments to *nine*. I here record my acknowledgment that some of us Protestants have really but nine. The Catholics omit the *second*; some of our Protestants, the *fourth*.

" I HAVE DONE GIVING."

A GENTLEMAN of high respectability, and a member of the church, made this remark, when informed that an application was about to be made to him in behalf of some charitable object. " I have done giving," said he. When I heard of his remark, it awakened in my mind a train of reflection, which I have thought it might not be amiss to communicate.

" Done giving!" Has he indeed? Why, has he given all? Has he nothing left to give? Has this disciple done what his Master did? Was he rich, and has he become poor for the sake of others, that they, through his poverty, might be rich? O no; he is rich still. He has the greatest abundance; more than enough to support him in elegance, and to enable him to leave an ample inheritance to his children. What if he has a great deal? He has not only not impoverished himself, but is probably richer now, through the favour of Providence, than he would have been had he never given anything. Now if, by honouring the Lord with his substance, his barns, instead of being emptied, have been filled with plenty, he had better continue this mode

of honouring him. He should rather increase than arrest his liberality.

“Done giving!” Why? Is there no more need of giving? Is every want abundantly supplied? Is the whole population of our country furnished with the means of grace? Is the world evangelized? Have missionaries visited every shore? Is the Bible translated into every language, and distributed in every land, a copy in every family, and every member of every family taught to read it? Are the accommodations for widows and orphans as ample as they should be? Is there a house of refuge for every class of the human family that needs one; or have the poor ceased from the land? O no; there are no such good reasons as these for ceasing to give. Why, then, has he done giving? Is it because others do not give as they ought? But what is that to him? Will he make the practice of others his rule of conduct, rather than the precept of Jesus Christ? If others do not give, so much the more should he. Will he add another name to the list of niggards?

Does he feel worse for having given away so much? Has it made him unhappy? Is his experience different from that of the Lord Jesus, who said, “It is more *blessed* to give than to receive?”

Has he who thinks he will give no more been led to that conclusion by having found that what has been given hitherto has done no good? And is it so, that no good has been done by all the Bibles published, and all the tracts distributed, and all the missionaries sent abroad into our own land and into the world; and all

the schools established, and all the children taught to read, and all the civilization introduced, and all the asylums opened, and all the poverty relieved? Has no good been done? Good, great good has been done by what has been given; but still more will be done by what shall be given hereafter. Bibles can now be printed at a cheaper rate than heretofore, and the conductors of our charitable operations have learned by experience that economy which can be learned in no other way. And yet, at this time, when a trifle goes so far in doing good, here is a man who says, "I have done giving?" If I had his ear for a moment, I would ask him if he has done *receiving*—if God has done giving to him. I would ask him, moreover, if he has done *spending*, or done *hoarding*, or done *wasting*. Now, if he has not, he surely should not stop giving. When he ceases to waste, to hoard, and to spend, except for the merest necessaries, then he may stop giving, but never till then.

"Done giving"—that is, done lending to the Lord; done sowing and watering; done offering the sacrifices with which God is well pleased; done making the widow's heart leap for joy, and bringing on himself the blessing of them that were ready to perish. Well, I am sorry—sorry for the sake of the poor, and the sick, and the orphan, and the ignorant, and the heathen. But no less sorry am I for the man's own sake. Poor man—poor with all his affluence; for there is really no one more poor than he who, with the ability to give, has not the inclination. He has it in his power to give, but

not in his heart. He is enriched with abundance, but not with liberality.

"Done giving;" well, then, if he will not *give* his money, he must *keep* it. And yet, how short the time he can keep it! Had he not better freely give away some of it, than to wait for it all to be torn from him? The thought that he has *given* will be at least as agreeable a meditation in his dying moments as the reflection that he *spent*, or that he *laid up*.

I hope that gentleman who said, "I have done giving," will recall his resolution, and, taking revenge on himself for having made it, give more liberally than ever.

" I WILL GIVE LIBERALLY."

It is a good resolution, founded on good reasons, some of which I will state, in the hope that others may be induced to come to a similar determination.

I will give liberally for the following reasons, namely,

1. Because the objects for which I am called upon to give are great and noble. It is the cause of letters and religion, of man and God, for which my donations are wanted. The interests of time and eternity both are involved in it. Now, it is a shame to give calculatingly and sparingly to such a cause and for such objects. If one gives at all, he should give liberally. Nothing can justify a person's putting in only two mites but its being all his living.

2. Liberal donations are needed. The cause not only *deserves* them, but *requires* them. It takes a great deal

to keep the present operations a-going; and we must every year extend the works. Do you not know that we have the world to go over, and that the millennium is drawing nearer? Look, the morning of that day is getting bright. We can almost see the sun peering above the horizon.

3. My means either enable me now to give liberally, or, by economy and self-denial, may be so increased as to enable me to give liberally. I will give liberally so long as I do not resort to economy and self-denial; and if I do resort to them, that will enable me to give liberally.

4. I will give liberally, because I have *received* liberally. God has given liberally. He has not only filled my cup, but made it run over. He has given me "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." I will imitate him in my gifts to others, and especially in my donations to his cause.

5. I am liberal in my *expenditures*, and therefore I will be in my *donations*. Why should I *spend* much and *give* little? It is not because spending is more blessed. No, it is giving that is said to be more blessed. The conduct of a man whose expenditures are large and his donations small is literally *monstrous*. I will not act so out of all proportion. If I must retrench, I will retrench from my expenditures, and not from my benefactions.

6. The time for giving is short, and therefore I will give liberally while I have the opportunity of giving at all. Soon I shall be compelled to have done giving.

7. A blessing is promised to liberal giving, and I want it. The liberal soul shall be made fat; therefore I will be liberal. “ And he that watereth shall be watered also himself;” then I will water. “ There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth;” therefore I will scatter, and not sparingly, but bountifully; for “ he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”

8. I will give liberally, because it is not a clear gift; it is a *loan*. “ He that has pity upon the poor *lendeth* unto the Lord”—lendeth to the best of paymasters, on the best security, and at the highest rate of interest; for he renders *double, aye, a hundred fold in this life*, to say nothing of the life to come. I will lend him liberally.

9. I will give liberally, because *the times are hard* where the gospel is not.

10. I will give liberally, because there are many who would, but cannot; and many that can, but will not. It is so much the more necessary, therefore, that they should who are both able and inclined. I used to say, “ I will not give liberally, because others do not. There is a richer man than I am who does not give so much as I do.” But now, from the same premises, I draw the opposite conclusion. Because others do not give liberally, I will.

11. I have sometimes tried giving liberally, and I do not believe I have ever lost anything by it. I have seen others try it, and they did not seem to lose anything by it; and, on the whole, I think a man is in no great

danger of losing who puts liberally into the treasury of the Lord and possessor of all things, and the giver of every good and perfect gift.

12. And finally, when I ask myself if I shall ever be sorry for giving liberally, I hear from within a prompt and most decided negative, "No, never."

Wherefore I conclude that I will give liberally. It is a good resolution, I am certain; and now I will take care that I do not spoil it all by putting an illiberal construction on liberally. I will understand it as meaning *freely, cheerfully, largely*, whether the lexicographers say so or not; or, in other words, as meaning *what I ought to give, and a little more*. I will tell you how I will do. An object being presented to me, when I have ascertained what *justice* requires me to give, I will add something, lest, through insidious selfishness, I may have underrated my ability; and that, if I err, I may be sure to err on the right side. Then I will add a little to my donation out of *generosity*. And when I have counted out what justice requires, and what generosity of her free will offers, then I will think of Him who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich; and I say not that I will add a little more, but, how can I keep back anything?

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

“THE CALLS ARE SO MANY.”

THIS is one of the most common complaints of those who are called upon to contribute to charitable objects; “The calls are so many,” they say. Now, let us inquire into this matter.

1. Are there really so many? Reckon them up. Perhaps they are not, after all, so many as you imagine. Anything which annoys us at intervals, is apt to be considered as coming oftener than it really does. When a man has rent to pay, how frequently quarter-day seems to come round. But it is not so with him who is the receiver. The calls are not, in fact, so many as you imagine. I asked a wealthy lady once, who thought she gave a great deal away in charity, to keep an accurate account for one year of all she gave away, particularly to the religious charities—which are those that are most complained of; and I predicted that she would find, at the close of the year, that her donations had been less than she imagined. She did so, and at the end of the year came to me and said she was perfectly ashamed to find that she had spent so much and given so little. She found that the calls were *not* “so very many.”

2. If the calls are so many, yet do not make that a reason for refusing them all. I fear that some do. But surely, that the calls are so many is no reason that you should not comply with some of them. It is only a reason why you should not comply with *all*. Meet one half of them generously, if you cannot meet them all.

You acknowledge that there ought to be some calls, when you complain that they are so many.

3. If the calls are many, are they more than the *wants*? Ought they not to be as many? Would you have the calls fewer than the wants? That would never do; then some wants would never be supplied. Besides, you should consider who makes or permits the wants, and therefore the calls, to be so many, lest your complaint cast a reflection on God. If the calls are so many, *too* many, and we must dispense with some, which shall they be? Widows and orphans, and the poor generally, you dare not, as you fear God, except from your charities. Will you refuse the call of the Bible agent, or the tract agent? Will you withhold from foreign missions, or from home missions, or from both! Or will you say, "We will contribute to send out and support missionaries both at home and abroad, but we will not aid in their *education*? Let them get that as they can. Let them make their way through the academy, the college, and the theological seminary as they can. And let Sunday-schools establish and support themselves; and temperance agents see, since they are so much in favour of abstinence, if they cannot get along without the staff of life." For my part, I do not know what calls to except, and therefore I judge the safer way to be to receive none.

4. If the calls are many, the expenditures are more; and we not only spend, but waste, in more ways than we give.

5. If the calls you receive are so many, suppose, in

order to avoid them, that you *make* some. Turn agent for some society, and you shall see how much more pleasant it is to make calls than to receive them. We will excuse you from contributing, if you will solicit. But that you would not like at all. “You cannot bear begging. It is the most unpleasant thing in the world to apply to people for money.” Very well; if you decline this branch of the alternative, then do not complain of the other. If you will not make the calls, you must sit still and receive them. It is the easier part; and you ought to be good-natured when you receive one of these calls—aye, and even grateful to the man who comes to you, that he affords you another opportunity of offering one of the sacrifices with which God is well pleased, without going out of your way to do it. Others must go about to do good, but you can *sit still* and do good.

6. If the calls are so many, this importunity will not last long. Not more than seventy or eighty years does it ever continue. If it is an annoyance, you can bear it a few years. In eternity you will never receive these or any other calls. I knew several rich men whose last calls were made on them in 1833.

Do these calls pester you? They bless others. Yonder is a poor woman reading the Bible which your money paid for. And there is another weeping over a tract which she owes to your donation. And there is a third blessing the good people that support domestic missions: and there is a heathen mother, who perhaps would have immolated her child, if your contribution

had not helped to send her the gospel. Do you hear that young man? How well he preaches. You assisted to educate him. Dear friend, do not complain, but welcome every call; treat all the agents with civility, and do as much as you any way can for the various benevolent objects; for "the time is short," and all the regret which your liberality will occasion you, I will consent to suffer.

" I CAN'T AFFORD IT."

THIS is another of the common excuses for not giving. A person being applied to in behalf of this or that good object, says, "I approve the object. It ought to be encouraged, and I am sorry I cannot aid it. But so it is. The calls on me are so many, and my means are so limited, I cannot afford it." Now, it may be he is mistaken. Perhaps he can afford it. The heart is very deceitful. But admitting that he cannot afford it, as is often the case, yet does this excuse him? Is the want of ability a sufficient apology? By no means. There is another thing to be considered—the cause of his inability. *Why* can he not afford it? We must go back one step, and inquire how it comes to pass that he is so destitute of means as to be unable to give to this and that good object. What if he *has* not the ability, provided he *might* have it? Now, as it regards the cause of the inability.

1. Perhaps he does not *earn* as much as he might. In that case, his not being able to afford it is no excuse.

All he has to do is to earn a little more, and then he can afford it. Let only his idle hours be fewer—let him but work a little longer, or a little harder, and there will be no difficulty. And why should not a man earn to *give*, as well as earn to eat, drink, and put on? Are these last more blessed than giving? Why should you not put forth a little extra effort, if it be necessary, to enable you to promote the cause of humanity and religion? We see that this man is the author of his inability, and therefore it is no excuse. He *could* afford it, if he would but take certain simple and obvious measures to do so.

2. Perhaps the case may be that he does not *save* as much as he might. He is not *idle*, but he is prodigal. He earns enough, but he does not economically use it. Now, a penny saved is equal to a penny earned; and it is all one to the treasury of charity whether that which it receives comes of economy or of industry. The person of whom I now speak *earns* it, but he does not *save* it. Hence his inability. His income is more than sufficient for the comfortable subsistence of himself and those dependent on him, yet he is so inconsiderate in his expenditures, *wastes* so much, that he has nothing left to give. Now, I would ask if it is not worth while to practise economy for the sake of being able to exercise liberality; to *save* for the sake of having something to give to the cause of the Lord? Is it not worth all the care which economy requires?

3. But perhaps I have not suggested the true cause of the inability. If, however, the apologist will allow

me the liberty of a little survey and criticism, I think I can ascertain why he cannot afford it. And first, I will scan his person. Oh, I see why you cannot afford it. You *wear* your money. You have got so much of your earnings or income on your person, that it is no wonder that you cannot afford to give. Why, there is one article worn over the shoulders that cost one hundred dollars, or more. Now, I do not say, *take it off*; but I do say, that while it is *on*, you have no right to plead, "I cannot afford it," for you wear a proof that you can afford it. Next, I will enter the house. The size and situation of it is perhaps unnecessarily expensive; and then the furniture. Here the wonder ceases—the mystery is explained. I see plainly enough why you cannot afford it.

Now, again I say, I am not one of those who would have you sell off your furniture and move out of the house you occupy, for God has given us "richly all things to enjoy;" but while you live in the manner you do, pray do not plead that you cannot afford it when one asks you to give to the cause of some charity. Now the table is set. The service is very fine. Distant China has contributed of its porcelain, and Potosi of the product of its mines to enrich it. What a display of silver. I see why you cannot afford it. You have melted the dollars by which you could have afforded it into plate. Now, either send that back to the mint again, or else do not send away the agent for that Christian Institution empty-handed. The dinner is spread. Many and rich are the dishes. I do not com-

plain. Only, when you have such a table before you, dare not to say that you cannot afford the money which shall purchase and send a little of the bread of life to the destitute and perishing. Then follows the—*wines*, I should say. “ Well, what is the harm? Even the temperance pledge excepts wine.” Be it so. Only do not say again, “ I cannot afford it,” to him who comes to plead before you the cause of the orphan, the ignorant, the unevangelized. Or, if you excuse yourself, tell the whole truth; say, “ For my *wine*, I cannot afford it.” There drives up a carriage. It is in fine style; one servant on the box, and one behind; a noble span. Yet the gentleman and lady who ride in that carriage, when one comes and tells them of the poor heathen who are groping their way in the dark to eternity, haughtily, perhaps, reply that they have nothing to give. Oh no, they cannot *give*, for they must ride in state. But here is another, who dresses and lives very plainly; yet *he* cannot afford it. Why, what is the matter? Oh, his money is in the stocks, and he cannot touch the principal; and there are his children, for whom he must make a liberal provision.

Friend, hear me; you *can* afford it if you will. If you have not the ability, you can acquire it. You can *earn* more; or you can *save* more. You can *spend* less. You can afford it out of your furniture, your dress, your table, your equipage; or perhaps *over and above* it all. You *can* afford it, and you *ought* to afford it. You *must* afford it. Come, now, and resolve that you *will*. Say no more, “ I cannot afford it,” but, “ I will

afford it." You can afford to indulge yourself when you wish—to take your pleasure—to gratify your children. And can you not afford to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to send the balm of life abroad into a diseased and dying world? It is very strange! Are you a Christian? As for me, "I cannot afford *not to give*;" there is so much gain in giving, so much loss in not giving, that if I cannot afford anything else, I must afford this. Some say they are too poor to give; but I am too poor *not to give*; and, moreover, I can no longer afford to give so little as heretofore I have given. Indeed, I must *sow* more bountifully, for I want to *reap* also bountifully. This parsimony in the use of *seed-money* is poor policy.

AN EXAMPLE OF LIBERALITY.

I AM going to give an example of liberality. But where do you think I am going to take it from, and what persons hold up as an example of liberality? Not Christians—though they were, in the apostolic age of Christianity, notable examples of liberality, many disciples literally doing as did their Master, impoverishing themselves for his cause; and though since that time there have been others, and are now not a few of a kindred spirit. The example I propose to give is taken from the history of the Jews. Some will wonder that I go to the Jews for an example of liberality. But I wish, for my part, that Christians were only as

generous as the Jews once were, whatever they may be now.

The case to which I refer is related in Exodus, chapter xxxv. The tabernacle was to be erected and furnished; and for this purpose various and very precious materials were requisite. He who gave his people bread and water by miracle, could have miraculously furnished all that was necessary for the tabernacle, just as he can now convert the heathen without the help of men and means. But he did not choose to do it, as now he does not choose to save the world without employing human instrumentality. God does not everything which he is able to do. Some people seem to think that they are under no obligation to attempt anything which God can do without them.

The plan adopted for obtaining the materials was this—Moses, in a full assembly of the people, gave the following notice: “This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass,” &c. This was all the agency that was employed for the collection of all those costly materials. How in contrast stands this to our necessarily numerous, expensive, and laborious agencies. Here was a simple notice given—a bare statement made that such and such things were wanted. Nor were the people called on to give on the spot, or to pledge their donations. They were not taken unawares, and hurried into an exercise of liberality. Time was given them

for consideration. After the notice, the congregation was dismissed. Nor was it made the absolute *duty* of the people to give. A command was indeed issued on the subject, but individuals were left free to give or not as they pleased: "Whosoever is of a *willing* heart, let him bring it." And it appears from Exodus xxv. 2, where the subject is first introduced, that Moses was not to receive any offering that was not given willingly and cheerfully: "Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart, ye shall take my offering."

By the way, may not this be a rule which should be regarded now—not to receive an offering into the Lord's treasury, if there be any evidence of its being reluctantly given? If nothing was to be received for the work of the tabernacle but what was given with the heart, why should heartless donations be accepted for the edification and extension of the church? It has occurred to me, that perhaps one reason why the means which our benevolent societies employ effect no more—why our Bibles and tracts, and the labours of our missionaries, are not more extensively blessed, is, that these operations are not sustained and carried on by purely free-will offerings. A great deal that goes to sustain them is grudgingly given. I know it may be said that if we reject all but free-will offerings, our means will not suffice. If that should be the case, yet I doubt not less money, cheerfully contributed, would accomplish more than a larger amount drawn out of the pockets of an unwilling and complaining people. But I do not believe that the sum total of receipts would be less. Was there any de-

iciency in the offerings contributed for the tabernacle? So far from it, there was a superabundance. The artisans came and told Moses, saying, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work." Accordingly, Moses forbade any more offerings being brought. "So the people were restrained from bringing, for the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and *too much*." The liberality went far beyond the necessity. Christians give now no such examples of liberality for the church. *Now* much less than enough is received; and that, though the notice is oft repeated, and though more than a mere notice is given—though warm and earnest appeals are made, and the greatest urgency used; and though new arguments are employed, such as could not have been used with these Jews. What a foundation for argument and appeal is laid in the love and death of Christ! What convincing force, what persuasive efficacy ought there not to be to the mind and heart of every follower of Jesus, in the logic of that passage which Paul used so successfully with the Corinthians: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." The Jews did not know that; yet how liberally they gave—*more than enough!* But now, with all our knowledge, *less* than enough is received; and that, though after the public application and appeal are made, the people are *waited on*, and the application and appeal are renewed in private. Moses sent no one round, from tent to tent, to gather the con-

tributions of the people. No; these Jews brought them. But, ah, how little do Christians now *bring* to the treasury of the Lord! How small a proportion of the money used for the work of the Lord is *brought!* No; it has to be sent after. The benevolence of the church now *complies*; it does not *offer*. It does, to be sure, *stand still* and do some good; but it does not *go about* doing good. All the labour and trouble connected with giving is declined. It is considered now-a-days to be a very good excuse for not giving to a well-known object of benevolence, if the person can say that he has not been called on to give. Not called on! Did your Master wait to be called on? Did his charity defer its action until application was made to it? Formerly it was held that the disciple should be as his Master. In other days Christ was regarded as the *model*, and that Christianity was not thought anything of which did not include an imitation of Christ.

Would it not be considered as a very unwise proceeding on the part of an agent now, should he, after stating an object, immediately dismiss the people, and leave it entirely optional with them to give or not? Would he be likely to hear from all of them again? But Moses did so. He dismissed them; "and all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses." But the very next verse says "they came and brought the Lord's offering." There was nothing lost to the cause by this arrangement: "They came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted." They all did it cheerfully.

But some may say, "It is no wonder they gave; what use had they in the wilderness for their money and substance?" But observe what articles they contributed—*gold and silver, and precious stones*, which men value, whether they have any particular use for them or not. Nor these only, but their *personal ornaments*, "bracelets, and ear-rings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold." You see they gave things which are valued under all circumstances. Nor could it be said that they gave generously because they were in prosperous business. Some persons say they are always willing to give freely when they are making money. Now, the Israelites were not making money, nor were they passing through a gold country, yet they gave liberally—far beyond the liberality of prosperous Christians generally. Nor was it a single donation they made. We read in the thirty-sixth chapter, "and they brought yet unto him free-offerings *every morning*." They kept it up from day to day; and how long they would have gone on, if not restrained from giving more, no one can tell. I wonder when we shall have to restrain Christians from giving. What a different state of things we find now! We talk about "stubborn Jews, that unbelieving race," but there was one generation of them, at least, that were not near as *obstinate* in holding on to their money and substance as the present race of Christians.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF LIBERALITY.

THE first example was taken from the history of the Jews. The one I am now to give is taken from the records of Christianity. And yet it is not in any history of the modern church that I find it. They are not the Christians of the present day that I am going to hold up as a model of bountifulness. The reader will find the account in the eighth and ninth chapters of the second epistle to the Corinthians. It relates to the Christians of Macedonia. Paul, wishing to excite the Corinthians to the exercise of liberality, tells them what their brethren of Macedonia had done—how liberally they had given. The account is very remarkable in several respects.

1. These Macedonian Christians gave, though they were *very poor*—in “deep poverty.” 2 Cor. viii. 2. They had the best of all excuses for not giving. *They* might, with the greatest propriety, have pleaded poverty. I do not see, for my part, how they gave at all. But somehow or other they made out to give, and to give liberally. Their poverty does not seem to have stood in their way in the least. It is even said that “their deep poverty *abounded* unto the riches of their liberality.” Now, if their deep poverty so abounded, it occurs to me to ask, what would not their *great riches* have done, had they been as wealthy as some *American* Christians? The truth is, as the proverb says, “When there is a will, there is always a way.” Having it in their hearts to give, they contrived by dint of some ingenuity, and

not a little self-denial, to get it into their power to give. Such liberal souls had they, that it made their very poverty abound unto the riches of their liberality.

2. They gave not only to the full extent of their ability, but even beyond it. "For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power," they gave. So testifies the apostle. The Christians of our day do not give *more* than they are able. I wish it could be said that they give according to their ability. *Now*, the idea of giving as much as one can, is almost laughed at. But it was no cause of laughter in former times. "But how did they contrive to give *beyond* their power?" one will ask. "This looks a little contradictory." Well, I suppose it means, that they gave beyond what, on the usual principles of computation, would have been judged to be their ability; and that on the score of justice, and even of generosity, they might have been let off for less.

"What improvident persons!" some will say. "How they must have neglected their families! Are we not told to provide for our own; and that he who does not, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel?" Yes, we are told so. But for all that, it does not appear that these Macedonians were censured as worse than infidels. They were even commended, as Christians whose example was worthy of all imitation.

3. They gave *willingly*, verse 3. They did not give beyond their disposition, though they did beyond their ability. They had it in their hearts to give even more. It was done, "not grudgingly, or of necessity." No one

said, as is sometimes said now, "Well, I suppose I *must* give you something." Nor was their willingness the effect of any appeals made to them. They were "willing *of themselves*," the apostle testifies. It was entirely spontaneous. The apostles had not to entreat them to give; but they had earnestly to entreat the apostles to receive their gift. "Praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift." It is not so now. Now, the *begging* is too much on the other side.

4. They gave altogether beyond the apostles' expectations. "Not as we hoped," says Paul. Our agents are not often so agreeably disappointed. Their fears are more apt to be realized, than their hopes exceeded.

5. But I see how it was they came to give so liberally. It was owing to "the grace of God bestowed" on them, as it is said in verse 1. That always makes people liberal. Grace is a generous principle. There is nothing opens the heart like it. Under the influence of this grace, they "first gave their own selves to the Lord." Now, when a man has given away *himself*, it is easy to give what only appertains to him. The great matter is to give the *person*; the *property* follows as a matter of course. Indeed, it is included in the first gift. I suppose the reason that some give no more property to the Lord's cause is, that they have not given themselves to him. They have not begun right.

6. I suppose also that these Macedonians were influenced to the exercise of liberality by the consideration which Paul uses with the Corinthians in verse 9: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though

he was rich," &c. They thought that the disciples ought to do like their Master. I conclude, moreover, that they held the doctrine, that giving is *sowing*, and that men reap in proportion to what they sow; and since they wished to reap bountifully, they sowed bountifully. They knew, too, that God was able to make all grace abound towards them; that they, always having all sufficiency in all things, might abound to every good work. 2 Cor. ix. 8. They were not at all concerned about the consequences of their liberality.

It should not be forgotten, that they gave for the benefit of people a great way off—the poor saints at Jerusalem. They might have said that they had objects enough at home, and where was the necessity of going abroad for them. But it seems *distance* had not that weight with them that it has with some now. The wants of the poor saints at Jerusalem touched their hearts, and they contributed for their relief, though they were poor, very poor themselves. I don't know but I might have made it with propriety a distinct head, that they seem to have been even poorer than those for whom they gave; for theirs was *deep* poverty. When *we* give to evangelize poor souls in heathen lands, we do not give to those who are as well off as we are. We have no such objects at home as they are. Finally, what a noble example of liberality is here; how worthy of imitation by Christians in every land! We need much that the spirit of these men of Macedonia should come over and help us.

MORE ABOUT LIBERALITY.

IN my opinion, there is nothing which lays the Church more open to infidel attack and contempt; than its parsimony to the cause of Christ. Professors of religion, in general, give nothing in comparison to what they ought to give. Some *literally* give nothing, or somewhere in that immediate neighbourhood. I shall not inquire whether such persons are really Christian men. One might almost question whether they are *human*.

I have used the word *give*; I must correct my language. *Deliver up*, I ought to say, when speaking of Christians who have so often acknowledged themselves as not their own, but *themselves* and *theirs* to be the Lord's. Not a farthing, or not much more, will some of these deliver up of all that their Lord has given them in trust. What stewards we Christians are! We act as if we were undisputed owners and sovereign proprietors of all, when we know, and, if pressed, acknowledge it is no such thing. The infidels know that we profess to be but stewards, and that in our devotional hours we write on everything we have, "This is the Lord's;" and they naturally expect to see some correspondence between our profession and practice; and when they perceive that in this instance it is but bare profession, and that we do not mean anything by it, they are very apt to conclude that this is true of our religion generally. Moreover, these shrewd characters see common humanity constraining men of the world to greater liberality than the love of Christ constrains his reputed

disciples to exercise; and that, though they hear Christians continually saying that there is no principle which has such power to carry men out to deeds and sacrifices of benevolence as the love of Christ. What must they conclude from this? Either that there is no such principle, or that Christians do not feel the force of it.

Again, infidels hear us speak of giving, as *lending* to the Lord. Now, they do not believe any such thing; but since we do, they are astonished that we do not lend more liberally to such a paymaster, and on such security. *They* are in the habit of lending liberally and they wonder Christians do not. They hear us also repeating and admiring that sentiment, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Must they not think us insincere in our commendations of this sentiment, or else that we have very faint aspirations after the more blessed part, when they look on and see with how much more complacency and good-humour we receive a great deal than give a little?

But about the parsimony of Christians. I do not hesitate to say, having well considered the import of my words, that men are not so *mean*—I must use the word—to any cause, as Christians, in general, are to Christ's cause. They give more sparingly to it than to any other. Just think of all our Bible Societies throughout the world receiving a comparative pittance to send the Bible to all lands. There is one fact for you. More has been given to carry a political election in a single limited district; and some professors of religion will give more to promote such an object than to help on

the conversion of the world. I should not wonder if this article were read by some who have done so this very year.

Many persons never give until they have done everything else; and when any pressure occurs, it is the first thing they stop doing. They go on spending, not only for necessaries and comforts, but even for luxuries, never minding the pressure. They only stop giving; commencing retrenchment with their donations, and generally ending it with them. They are liberal still for everything but charity. You could never suppose, to look at their dress, equipage, furniture, table, &c., that the times were any way hard. No, they forget that, till they are called on to give; then they feel the pressure of the times.

The manner in which some persons give is worthy of no very commendatory notice. They say, when applied to, "Well, I suppose I must give you something." Mark the word *must*, where *will* ought to be; and *give*, where *contribute*, or, strictly speaking, *yield up*, should have been; and you—give *you*. It is no such thing. The man is no beggar. He is not asking anything for himself. He has himself given to the same object; and more than money—his time and thought, his cares and efforts. Nay, perhaps he has given his own person to the service which he asks others to aid by their pecuniary contributions. Christians, so called, talk of giving to support missionaries, as if they laid the missionaries under some obligation to them. Preposterous! How it sounds to hear a British Christian indulge such a re-

mark in reference to the richly-gifted and profoundly-learned Martyn, who, when he might have shone at home, went into the sickly East to hold up the light of life in those dark places. To call men who give themselves to the work of the Lord, and to labour and die for their fellow-men, the protegés, beneficiaries, and obligated dependents of us who live and luxuriate at home, is really too bad—men who, when the alternative is to go or send, consent to the weightier branch of the alternative, and go; that they should be looked upon as inferior to us, who choose the lighter part of the alternative, and only send, I say it is too bad. “I must give you something.” Really!

I do not wonder, for my part, that God does not give “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven,” to the present generation of saints. Their souls are not sufficiently expanded to receive it. It will require a race of Christians of *great hearts* to take possession of the world in the name of Jesus—Christians who shall be constrained by his love, and who shall feel the full force of the consideration presented in 2 Cor. viii. 9. Many Christians now think they feel it; but is it feeling the force of that consideration, for a man who has an income of some thousands a year, to give some surplus fraction annually to support missions, or to circulate the Bible? I do not say, that because Christ impoverished himself, therefore all his followers ought literally to do the same; but I say they ought to come nearer to it than they do. If, being rich, they should not become poor, as he did,

yet surely they ought to be more free with their riches. If the Master gave his whole *principal*, certainly the disciples might give their *interest*. That would not be too closely imitating him. If he *emptied* himself, they at least might forego further accumulation. They need not become poor; but why should they be so solicitous to become more rich? That is being as unlike the model as possible.

A TRACT EFFORT.

A MEETING was held some time ago to raise the sum of one thousand dollars in aid of the American Tract Society's foreign operations. The notice was general in the churches; and to many individuals repeated in the shape of a printed request sent to them on the day of the meeting. The evening came, and it was one of the finest we ever saw; not a cloud, and the moon shining forth in her fullest splendour, emulating, to her utmost, the light of the orb of day. We had not, however, a very large meeting.

Few, even of our church-members, can be persuaded to adopt that sentiment of the Saviour, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Many are unable to conceal the sceptical smile when it is gravely advanced and urged as an argument for liberality. More blessed to give! There is nothing in them that responds to that sentiment. Yet Jesus said it seriously. He meant what he said; and some of his dear followers know in their hearts that it is so. They experience the superior

blessedness of giving. Far more delightful to them is the feeling when they communicate, than the feeling when they receive; and giving leaves an impression of pleasure on the soul which no other act does or can. To be capable of communicating—what a privilege! they exclaim. It is to be like God, who gives all things, but receives nothing save the gratitude and praise of his innumerable pensioners and dependents. These persons give now as they pray, almost forgetting it is a duty, so occupied are their souls with a feeling that it is a privilege.

But we met to promote a *foreign* object, and that made against us with some. The *distance* of the heathen from us was even pleaded by one as an argument against contributing. They are so *far off*. So far off; my thoughts dwelt on these words, and I reflected thus:—“They are not so far off from us, as angels are from men; yet angels come over the distance to minister to men. No part of earth is so far from any other part, as earth from heaven; yet, did not the benevolence of the Son of God bring him across that long interval of space? How have we his spirit, if our benevolence cannot carry us the length and breadth of this little continuous earth? What if the object *be* foreign! Earth was more foreign to heaven. The man that argues against missions as foreign, is not perhaps aware that his argument assails the mission of the Son of God, and would prove the incarnation to have been an unwise measure. But is it foreign? What, one spot of earth foreign to another, and man an alien to man?

Christianity teaches a different lesson—that earth is but one great habitation, and men but one extended brotherhood. O, shall we who have been visited by a benefactor from the skies, think any part of earth too distant for our charity to explore? Jesus thought it not so when he said, “Go ye into all the world.” If the argument of distance had prevailed with others, we had never heard of Jesus. Was not Britain *far off*? Yet Christian missionaries visited it. I wonder that this circumstance should be forgotten. Was that a *Quixotic* enterprise which resulted in the conversion of our ancestors? If not, how is that *Quixotic* which undertakes the conversion of a nation now in heathenism? Too distant! There was something formidable in distance once. But what is distance now? With the star and the compass, and the sail and the steam, and man’s skill to construct, and courage to dare, and fortitude to endure, what, I ask, is distance? Diminished almost to being annihilated. Whither has not man gone for his own objects? Whither shall he not go for Christ’s? Shall curiosity, the love of science, the passion for adventure, the lust of gain, carry men further than the love of Christ shall constrain them to go? O, never. There is no force in the objection.

It was, notwithstanding all, a good meeting. Those who were present gave liberally, and, with the help of the ladies, we shall more than make up the sum we proposed. I know some think these women ought not to labour with us in the gospel. But why not *these*, as well as “those women” which laboured with Paul in

the gospel, of whom he makes such respectful mention in his Epistle to the Philippians? Was it proper then to use their aid, and not now? May they not do what they can for Christ, as well as their sister whom Christ commended for having done what she could? Were they not women whom Christ sent on the first errand he wanted done after his resurrection? "Go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." May not such as went on that errand, go on that greater errand, "Go ye and teach all nations?" May they not at least promote the going of others? What, are women the followers of Jesus Christ, and may they not, as their Master did, go *about* doing good?

THE WORLD SHOULD HAVE THE BIBLE.

THERE are a great many reasons why the world should have the Bible. The reasons are so numerous, substantial, and urgent, that I wonder any should have doubts about it. And I wonder that we who have the Bible, and think so much of it, and have such means of multiplying and circulating copies of it, do not resolve at once to attempt, within a reasonable period, to give it to the world, since the world can only have it by the gift of those in whose possession it now is. If it is time that they had it, *high* time, as I suppose no one will deny, it is time we had at least resolved to try to let them have it. I wonder the great national societies hesitate to *resolve to try* to fill the world with Bibles

within a given period. No individual or society knows what it can do till a trial is made ; we can never foresee our ability to accomplish a great enterprise. They must always be undertaken in faith. I consider it quite as hazardous to predict that the world God has created and upholds, cannot be put in possession of his word in some twenty or thirty years, as to predict that it can. This may seem a short time for us to fill the world with Bibles, but it is a long time for them to be without Bibles. I think it is always best to resolve on that which ought to be done, and which greatly needs to be done, especially when one knows that the thing is to be done within some period, and when the resolution is but to make the attempt, and even that is done only in reliance on divine help. A man may resolve on a great deal when he is authorized to rely, and does actually rely on God to aid him in executing it. He may take on him a great weight of responsibility when he has such support. *One* can do all things, through Christ strengthening him ; and cannot some hundreds of thousands of Christians fill the world with Bibles, through the same ?

Why should not the efforts of the friends of Christ extend as far as do those of the foes of Christ ? There is Satan and his associates. They would grasp the whole world. When the Lord asked Satan whence he came, he answered, " From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." He had been over the whole ground. And shall not we go over the whole ground ? Shall we not go as far seeking

whom we may save, as he "seeking whom he may devour?" I know that he is a very powerful being and we are weak; but he is not almighty, whereas though we are not, our glorious Ally is.

I know, too, that the foes of Christ are *united*, and herein have a great advantage, while the friends of Christ are anything but united. That desire which the Saviour expressed, "that they all may be one," remains to be accomplished: and while that is the case, no wonder the *world* does not believe that God has sent him (John xvii. 21). Christ does not seem to have expected that the world would believe, until his disciples were one. *Now*, they are not one, nor even two, but many. These friends have so many disputes to settle among themselves, that I do not know when they will be ready to proceed against the common foe. No other being ever had such divided friends as Christ. I do not say that all their controversies are unimportant, but I say they are none of them as important as the Lord's controversy with the earth.

But there is another more touching reason why the whole world should have the Bible as soon as possible. My mind has recently laid great stress upon it, and it was for the sake of presenting it that I undertook this article. Every part of earth is a vale of tears, and man is universally a mourner. Affliction is, or is to be, the lot of all. "Man is born to trouble," and no one can alienate this birthright. Now, the Bible is the mourner's own and only book. There is nothing will do for him but this. Other books have been tried and found

wanting. They do not go to the heart like God's. They do not wipe away a tear. But the Bible tells us of a hand that wipes away all tears from our eyes. And it is the very hand that made us. What a picture the Bible presents! One everlasting arm underneath a man to support him, and the hand of the other wiping away his tears as they flow. Was ever anything like it? That picture ought to be exhibited everywhere. I have read what Howe, and Watts, and Flavel, and Baxter, and Cecil, and I do not know how many others, have written for mourners, and it is all very well; but what is it all to what I have read in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, "HE DOTHT NOT AFFLICT WILLINGLY?" Ah, there is more than half the human race that think he does afflict willingly. The cholera is regarded by the Hindoos as the cruel sport of one of their goddesses. O, how it would lighten the sorrows of these mourners, did they but know that it is no one of a plurality of gods, but the Lord, that afflicts them, and that he does it not willingly. Can we not in a quarter of a century give them this information? But this is only one of I know not how many similar passages. There is another that goes even beyond this: "In all their afflictions, he was afflicted." Here is sympathy for you, divine sympathy. Dost thou feel? He feels too. Does not the pitier always suffer as well as the pitied? Well, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth." Such ideas as these never crossed a pagan mind. It never even occurred to him that God is a *father*.

I have thought how one of us in our affliction would like to be without the Bible, and what we would not give under such circumstances to obtain it; whether we would not give more to have it for ourselves, than we now give that the other members of the great family of mourners may have it. I think we should increase our subscription to the Bible Society. We would not like to go along the vale of tears, and through the valley of the shadow of death, into which the former sometimes so suddenly sinks, without the twenty-third psalm in our possession.

WHAT STRANGE BEINGS WE ARE!

How unreasonable; how inconsistent with ourselves; even we who are Christians. God does the very thing we ask him to do, and yet we complain of him, or grieve immoderately and almost inconsolably, because he does it. We ask that his will may be done; which implies that our will, if it be in contrariety to his, should not be done; and this we sometimes in so many words express: "Not as we will, but as thou wilt." Well, God does his will, the very thing we wanted him to do; and yet we complain that he does not our will, the thing we deprecated his doing. We complain that he hears our prayer, and grants us the desire of our heart. Was ever complaint so unreasonable? If, when we asked him to do his will, he had done ours, there would have been some semblance of reason for our complaint. Will

we say that we never meant in our hearts what the terms of our petition expressed—that we never really desired his will should be done? Will any one acknowledge that he has uniformly been a hypocrite in the use of the Lord's prayer? Certainly, then, he ought not to complain that God has detected and chastised his hypocrisy. But if he was sincere—if he desired what he asked for, then if he complains, he complains that God has gratified his desire. How perverse it is in a creature to say to God, time after time, when craving good or deprecating evil, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;" and then, because it is as God wills, and not as he wills, to think hard of God.

Every one who prays, "Thy will be done," is aware that the will of God does not always coincide with the inclinations of his creatures. It were wonderful if it should—wonderful indeed, if the will of an omniscient and infinitely perfect being should uniformly fall in with the capricious desires and inclinations of those who are finite, fallible, and sinful. Our own inclinations do not agree with each other. We are the subjects of conflicting desires; the will of God could not coincide with our inclinations without coinciding with contraries. Well, the prayer, "Thy will be done," which we all consent to use, recognizing this want of coincidence, begs that in all such cases God will cause his will to be done rather than ours. It is a most reasonable request; no wonder God should comply with it. And yet we complain that in such cases of disagreement he does not carry out our inclinations instead of his own will. It

is well, in view of such perverseness, that we have to do with a God of infinite patience. How very slow to anger our God is.

But I have not stated the case yet in all its strength. Complaint against God would be altogether unreasonable if he caused only *his* will to be done. But while he causes his own, he causes our will also to be done; for it is our will, as we have told him over and over again, that his will should be done. Why should he not gratify the inclination of ours, that his will should be done, as well as any other inclination which we have; for example, the inclination to retain a certain earthly enjoyment? He cannot gratify our every inclination, for the gratification of one would be the denial of another. He must make a selection. It is not his fault that we have warring inclinations. He did not make us so; it is one of the inventions we have sought out. It belongs to us as marred by ourselves. Will it be said that God selects the less worthy inclination to gratify. I think not. What worthier inclination can we have than that God's will should be done?

Is it the pain of having an inclination crossed, of which we complain? But let us complain of ourselves, that we have inclinations which need to be crossed. And besides, would it give us no pain were we to discover that, in a particular instance, God submitted his own will to our inclination, and suffered us to be gratified in a certain respect when his judgment was

Fellow-Christians, we must give up the use of that petition, "Thy will be done," or else act more consistently. It will not do to be daily asking a thing, and daily lamenting that the thing is granted. If we would have *our* will done, let us alter the petition, and say, "*Our* will be done." Let us be sincere, if we are nothing else. Let us tell the Lord the very desires we have, however wrong they may be. That is better, certainly, than to have such desires and tell him the contrary.

But I would by no means advise the alteration. I think we had much better keep to the old form, and pray as the Lord taught his disciples. Yes, let us go on to say, "*Thy* will be done." It is our heavenly Father whom we address. Surely his children need not fear to have his will done. Let us consent with our whole heart that his will should be done, and towards us as well as towards others? and not merely in some things, but in all things; for why should not *all* his will be done, as well as any part of it? If we do so, by and by we shall have no inclinations contrary to his will. We shall be incapable of cross or disappointment. Every thing being as he would have it, would be also as we would have it.

If now a part of his will be hidden until events disclose it, yet in other respects it is already revealed. We know, for instance, that it is our Father's *good pleasure* to give us the kingdom; and that it is our divine Saviour's will that we should be with him where he is, that we may behold his glory. For the present let this suffice us. We shall be satisfied, when we awake in his

likeness. In this expectation we should be satisfied now. Let us suffer God to reign, and let us not aspire to be his counsellors. He taketh no counsel of any.

WHAT VERY STRANGE BEINGS WE ARE.

Yes ; what *very* strange beings we are ! We who are sinners expect to be treated with more deference than the innocent and holy. *Their* will is not done ; nor do they desire it should be. We, who are of earth, expect privileges, as we in our ignorance account them, which they of heaven never think of claiming—the privilege, if not of holding the reins of government, yet of directing how they should be held ; and of having things move on according to our inclinations. But should men, who are “of yesterday and know nothing,” rule, when angels, of an intellectual growth of thousands of years, cast their crowns at Jehovah’s feet and decline everything but the most entire subjection ?

But this is not all. We, who are the sons of God but by adoption, expect to be treated better than even God’s only begotten Son. Did not he suffer ? And is it a mystery that we should ? Was he “acquainted with grief,” and shall we deem it strange and inexplicable that we should have experience of the same ? Why should we marvel that the cup we deprecate does not pass from our lips, when a far more bitter cup did not pass from him ? Shall we conclude that God is not a

hearer of prayer, because a prayer of ours is not answered in kind, when he whom the Father always hears, prayed, "Let this cup pass from me," and it was not done? Ah, you say, what a dark and mysterious providence this is! But that was darker and more mysterious, which left the Son of God to be betrayed and crucified by his enemies. And what if his sufferings were to accomplish an immensely important object; how few, it may be supposed, of the intelligent minds that looked on, were aware of that. Besides, *may* not your sufferings be intended to accomplish an important object? *Are* they not certainly so meant? Do we not read of chastening, that "it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them who are exercised thereby;" and of affliction, that it "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" Doubtless our sufferings are in their place as indispensable as were those of Christ.

Again, how reasonable and fit it is that the followers of a suffering Saviour should themselves suffer—that they should drink of the cup of which he drank, and be baptized with the baptism wherewith he was baptized! How could we be like him without suffering? The Master was made "perfect through sufferings." How suitable that the disciples should not be made perfect until after they "have suffered a while!" He went through suffering to his dominion and glory. Why should we expect to reign with him, except we also suffer with him? Have we not always known that the cross is the condition of the crown? "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Jesus was never known to

smile on earth. But we reckon it strange and quite unaccountable, if we may not smile perpetually. He wept, while we regard each tear we shed as a mystery. What bereavement have any of God's adopted children ever suffered, the sense of which was so keen as that under which the only-begotten Son cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

We wonder that God does not hear every prayer we offer to him for every sort of thing, for health, for success in worldly matters, for exemption from bereavement, &c., never reflecting that if he did so, he would cease to be the Governor of the world, except in name. He would be but our agent. He would reign in subordination to us. We should rule all things by the sway of our prayers. And where would be the difference between being on the throne ourselves, and directing him who occupies it? Who would care to hold the reins of government, if he might by the expression of his desire control the being in whose hands they are? What a world this would soon become, if every prayer, every expression of desire offered to God even by his own children, were answered according to the term of it. The voices of them in heaven who say, "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," would be hushed at once. O, shall God be infinitely wise and intelligent, and not employ his boundless wisdom and knowledge in managing the affairs of his creatures? Shall his omniscience of all things in all periods exert no influence on his determinations? Shall he, to gratify us, hear a prayer which we would never offer if we saw

what he sees, or what we ourselves may discover in the progress of a few short years? What strange beings we are to expect or desire such a thing.

Are we the only persons whose happiness is to be regarded by God in his dispensations? What if an event affect us with sorrow? The same event may affect others with joy, and God may be receiving their praises while he hears our complaints. Are we alone to be considered, and not they? We grieve, perhaps, because one very dear to us has been taken from earth to heaven. We prayed importunately that it might be otherwise, but we were not heard. We know not what to make of it, and are on the point of murmuring. But was not thy friend's happiness to be taken into the account, as well as thine? Is the event so very mournful a one in the aspect of it which he contemplates? Does *he* grieve that he has made the exchange? If thy loss were equivalent to his gain, it would be unkind to complain of the dispensation. But what is the loss to thee in comparison with the gain to him? Is not thy friend satisfied with what God has done? And shall you indulge discontent? If you cannot but grieve, yet you should be willing to shed many tears for the sake of having all his wiped away. Can a soul too soon cease from sin and sorrow? Can heaven be entered prematurely? Do you not read and believe that it is better, far better, to depart and be with Christ?

How very inconsistent we are! If God, wearied with our discontent and complainings, should say, "Well, since you desire it, be it according to your mind," is

there one Christian who would not instantly respond, "Nay, rather be it according to thine?" Who would exercise the fearful privilege of ordering a single event which is to affect him? And shall we contend for a privilege which we would not exercise if we had it? Shall we claim to choose in a case in which, if the right of choice were given us, we should immediately give it back into the hands of God?

"SHOULD IT BE ACCORDING TO THY MIND?"

THIS question Elihu asked of Job. Things were not according to the mind of Job; and he complained, and was unhappy that they were not. He wanted them to be according to his mind. Perhaps it is so with you. But should it be according to thy mind, when there is another mind in the universe which is exercised and employed about the affairs of mortals; and that mind infinite, while yours is finite—infallible, while yours is liable to a thousand errors and mistakes, in which you have often been detected, even by yourself—possessed of all knowledge, too, while you "are of yesterday, and know nothing?" Should it not be rather according to his mind? Should the inferior mind dispose and direct things?

If there were but one such mind, the demand would not be quite so unreasonable. But should it be according to thy mind, when, upon the same principle, it

should be according to the mind of others, your fellow-creatures, as wise and good as you, as much entitled and as well qualified to govern as you, whose minds nevertheless are in opposition to yours, so that it could not be according to theirs and yours also? Many of your views and wishes are at war with theirs. The gratification of your desires would often be incompatible with the gratification of theirs. Now, should one creature rule all other creatures, and the Creator too? Is it not better to let the supreme mind direct for all; when, moreover, this creature, who would rule all others, does not and cannot rule his own spirit? Methinks he who aspires to command and control others, should begin with commanding and controlling himself.

But what still more unfits him to order things is, that his mind not only is at variance with other minds, but does not agree with itself. Sometimes it inclines to one thing, and again it inclines to the opposite. Nothing—not even the inconstant wind—is so changeable as this mind, which would have things to be according to it. Should such a changeable mind rule, rather than He who is “in one mind,” and whom none can turn—“the Father of lights, with whom is no variability, neither shadow of turning”?

But not only does this mind disagree with itself at *different* times, but often at the very same moment it is at war with itself; forming plans and cherishing inclinations which are opposite to each other; so that it could not accomplish one of its purposes without defeating another, and could not gratify itself in one re-

spect without denying itself in another. Should it be according to a mind, according to which it *could* not be? We often have a mind to an end, when we have no mind to the means necessary to secure that end. Who has not a mind to be saved? But many have no mind to the way of being saved. Self-gratification is the thing men plead for, which implies that they have no mind to self-denial; and yet, if they would be saved, they must deny themselves. In order to have things according to their mind hereafter, they must consent that they should not be according to their mind now. Things cannot be according to their mind in time and in eternity both. How merciful it is in God not to let things be to our mind in this present brief life.

Should it be according to thy mind, when thou dost not always know thy own mind? In such a case, would you not have another to choose for you? Should one who has to hesitate and debate matters with himself before he decides, have the direction of affairs in his hands. How long it sometimes takes you to make up your mind. What shall be done in the meantime? Must the course of nature and providence be arrested, and the whole current of events stand still, till you have concluded what is best to be done?

Have you not sometimes had things according to your mind, and afterwards regretted that they were so? And would you run the risk of similar regrets hereafter? Have you not sometimes also had things contrary to your mind, and subsequently rejoiced that they were so? Have you never found crosses to be blessings in

disguise? May not the present cross cover a blessing? And will you complain of a blessing, in whatever garb it may come?

Let God be heard before he is condemned. We concede this privilege to men. We consent to hear their reasons, before we censure their acts. God has appointed a day for the explanation of all things; and he may reveal the reasons of his conduct towards us even before the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment. It is uncertain whether we shall justify men, after we have heard their reasons; but do you not believe, that if you knew the reasons of all God's proceedings in providence, you would approve and sanction them all, and that your mind would be in accordance with his? Why, then, not acquiesce in it now? Other beings, better and greater than you, do so. They decline having things according to their mind. And should not you? Eli said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." And even Christ would not have it according to his mind. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," was his conclusion, when the bitterest of all cups was at his lips.

Are you one of those who love God? Surely, then, it ought to satisfy you, when God assures you that under his government "all things work together for good to them that love him." Will you not let him choose what the things shall be, when he pledges himself that the result of them all shall be your good? Is it certain, if the things to befall you were chosen by you, that they would all conduce to your good? He

says that he will withhold *no good thing* from them that walk uprightly. Is not this guarantee enough? "How shall he not," says one of his inspired apostles, with Christ "also freely give us all things?" "All things are yours." And will you complain that death is in the catalogue, or that tribulation and distress are among the things in all which "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us?"

HOW INCONSISTENT WE ARE.

How many examples of inconsistency one may give, without going beyond the pale of the church, into the wide domain of the world! We Christians consecrate ourselves to God, for his use and glory. Who is a Christian that has not done this; and what Christian has not done it often, and perhaps *recorded* the solemn act of self-consecration? Well, having done it repeatedly, and not by constraint, but willingly; and having thus not only acknowledged God's right to use us, and to glorify himself in and by us, but asked him to do it, we afterwards complain that he does it. We object to the use to which he puts us, though we never stipulated any particular use to which he should put us, but left him free to use us as should seem good to him. Yet now, when we see what he is going to do with us, though in consenting that he should do with us according to his pleasure, we consented to that very thing, we demur, and would dictate what use he should make

of us, and how glorify himself by us. Do I not justly denominate this inconsistency? May not God do what he will with his own, when it is his own on so many accounts, and by so perfect a right—his own not only by creation, by preservation, and by purchase, but by our consent and covenant with him, and oft expressed desire that it should be his; and when, moreover, he engages that, in using us according to his will and for his glory, he will not fail to secure our highest interests, our best good, our eternal well-being? *We* do what we will with our own, though it be our own in a very subordinate sense, and though we use it exclusively for our pleasure or profit; and we concede the same right to our fellow-creatures. What if we were to say to a fellow-man, “This is yours; you made it; you daily renew your labour on it, to keep it in repair; you also paid a price for it. I surrender it up to you. I desire it should be yours. You are much better qualified to use it properly than I am;” and then afterwards object to his using it as his own: how unreasonable it would be in us; how we should contradict ourselves. And is it not as unreasonable to hold similar language to God, and then complain of him?

We also consecrate to God our families, wife and children and all. We say, “These also are thine, Lord. Use them likewise for thy glory. We consecrate them to thee.” Well, being consecrated, he uses them as sacred to him; and presently, having no further use for one of them on earth, and wanting him in heaven to fill a place there, he takes the person thither, changes his

residence and society, promotes him, brings him nearer to court. Having some time before justified and begun to sanctify the individual, he at once perfects the work of holiness in him, and beatifies, glorifies him—frees him from all sin, sorrow, pain, and dread, and wipes away his last tear. The subject of all this is in an ecstasy of joy and gratitude for what has been done to him, and would not for worlds leave the choice spot which he now occupies. Well, and what then? Why, we object and complain and think it hard, and almost weep dry the fountain of tears, and refuse to be comforted; and that though it was God who took that member of the family, and though he took but his own, and took it to himself, and though we are so soon ourselves to follow to the same abode, and though it was always understood and agreed upon that God should take each just when he pleased. It was one of the articles of the covenant we entered into with him. He claimed and we conceded the right. We received that creature with the express understanding that we were to give him up when called for. We always knew it was not a gift outright, but a loan. And now shall we complain of the recall of the loan?

O how easy it is to convince the judgment—to silence the mind; but the *heart*, the unmanageable heart, *feels* on as before. Our arguments go not down to that deep seat of emotion. *There* is still the void, the tumult, the ache, the longing. Only God can reason with the heart. At no bidding but his will it ever be still and satisfied.

Again, we consecrate our *property* to God. We say, "We being thine, all ours is also thine. Thine be it. Take and use it." But let God touch it, to take any part of it away, and how distressed and well-nigh desperate it makes some who profess to be Christians; and how unlike a thing sacred, and by our act made sacred to God, we use it. "Holiness to the Lord," we inscribe on all our property, and then utterly disregarding the label, we use it *exclusively for ourselves*.

So also we devote *life* to God. But he must not on any account take it. How we tremble when we apprehend that he is going to receive what we offer to him. O death, can it be that thou hast lost thy sting? Blessed Jesus, how reluctant thy disciples are to have thee come and take them to thyself! Forgive us—we know not what we do.

Once more, what strange, inconsistent beings we are. If it be one characteristic of the righteous man, that he "swaereth to his own hurt, and changeth not," how much more essential to rectitude must it not be to comply with the terms of the oath which we have sworn, not to man, but to God; and when the tendency of the oath is not our hurt, but our greatest and most lasting good. As Christians, we have sworn to God. We have taken the sacrament, and that often, and not without deliberation. Many oaths are on us. And now shall we change? Shall we draw back? Shall we refuse to perform, or, as the case may be, to submit, because of some trifling inconvenience, some transient

evil, which God can and will make to conduce to our ultimate and eternal good.

THE PITY OF THE LORD.

THERE is a great deal of the Bible which seems not to be believed even by those who profess and suppose that they believe it all. And this is true, if I mistake not, of what some would call the *best* parts of the Bible—those parts, for example, which speak of the kind feelings of God towards his creatures, and especially towards those of them who fear him. I suspect that even Christians read them with a sort of incredulity. They seem to them almost too good to be true. But why should not God feel towards us as he says he does? Is he not our Father? Has he not nourished and brought us up as children? Why should it be thought a thing incredible with us, that God should feel as a Father does towards his children? I never read that 103d Psalm but I stop at the thirteenth verse, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;” and I read it a second time, and I find myself asking, not merely in admiration, but with some degree of unbelief, “Can it be that the Lord pities us, and pities us like as a father his children? I know the Lord is *good* to all. How can he who is love be other than benevolent? It were contrary to his nature not to be. But pity expresses more than goodness—more than benevolence. There is an unmovedness in mere

goodness ; but in pity, the heart melts, and the eye weeps, and the whole soul is moved as from its seat. And this is especially true of a parent's pity. Can it be possible that God pities after that manner?" O yes, it is possible ; and it has passed out of the limits of possibilities into the circle of facts. The Lord pitieth them that fear him—pitieth, as a father, *you*, who fear him. His feelings towards you are fully up to those which you can conceive, or from experience know to be those of the most tender parent towards his children. Yes, God pities you. That nature which is love, feels and exercises compassion towards you in your sorrows and trials. That great heart is affected by your misery and griefs, as our hearts are when at the sight of suffering we weep. Yes, Christians, God is sorry for you. O what a thought this for an hour of trial ; what a sentiment this to bear suffering with. What if thou dost suffer ? Is it not enough that God pities thee ? We should be willing to suffer, if he will sympathize. We should never know what divine sympathy is, if we did not suffer. This one consideration, that God pities, is worth more than all philosophy.

There is much that is interesting and lovely in pity, *whoever* be the object of it. There is, however, a peculiar tenderness which belongs to the pity felt for suffering *children*. Nothing goes so keenly to the heart as the child's tear and tale of sorrow. And is the pity of the Lord like this ? Yes. It is not said that he pities as man pities man, or as one pities children, or even as a parent pities children, but as a father pities *his* chil-

dren, so the Lord pities. "Like as a father"—like as one who most affectionately loves, pities the dear object of his love, his child, his own child, when that child is sick, and he looks upon his altered countenance, and with a weeping eye watches over him day and night, and hears his moans, and is imploringly appealed to by him for relief which it is not in his power to give—like as he pities, so the Lord pities; so inexpressibly feels he towards them that fear him. Such deep and undefinable emotions as a parent's heart is occupied with, when he says, "My poor child," so the Lord pities. Can it be? It is even so. Well, then, come want, come sickness, come sorrow, if such pity may come with it. The relief exceeds the suffering. The support is greater than the burden. It not only bears up, but lifts up the soul.

But *how* does a father pity? Does he pity so as never to chastise? Oh, no. "What son is he whom his father chasteneth not?" He chastens out of pity. But he so pities, that he is infinitely far from taking delight in the smallest sufferings of his children, even when it becomes his duty for their good to inflict them. It hurts him more to chastise, than them to be chastised. In all their afflictions he is afflicted, and more afflicted than they. Have you never corrected a child, and gone away and wept in pure pity for him? Have you never denied him something, and found it a greater self-denial? Is such your heart towards your children? Such is God's towards his. "He doth not afflict willingly."

Again, a father so pities, that he would spare or relieve his child, if he could; that is, if he had the power, or having the power, it were proper he should exercise it. A parent sometimes has the power to relieve, and does not exert it. The principle of benevolence within him which proposes the greatest good of his child for the longest period, forbids that he should yield to the impulse of compassion which calls for the rendering of immediate relief. He pities his child too much to relieve him. So the Lord pities. He has always the power to relieve; and often he exerts it. He always would if it were, in view of all considerations, proper and benevolent that he should. He who for thee spared not his own Son, would spare thee every sorrow thou hast, and would relieve thine every pain; but "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth."

A father so pities his children that he would, if he could, even suffer in their stead. More than one father has said, "Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!" And is the pity of the Lord like a father's in this particular too? Yes; so the Lord pities—so he has pitied. He *could* suffer in the stead of those he pitied—and he *did*. "Surely, he *hath* borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." He has even died for us. O what pity!

A father so pities his children, that to promote their comfort and happiness, he will spare no pains and no expense. How freely the most avaricious parent will spend, if the necessities of a child require it. The wants and sorrows of his child can open even his heart. Such

is the pity of the Lord. He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. Having one Son, his only-begotten, he gave even him for us.

Let the child of God derive from these considerations inexpressible consolation. O think that he, in all thy sorrows, pities thee. Yes, thy God feels for thee. Thy sufferings go to his heart. There is one in heaven who, from that exaltation, looks down upon thee; and the eye that watches over you wept for you once, and would, if it had tears, weep for you again. He knoweth your frame. He remembereth that you are dust. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. It was he who, when his disciples had nothing to say for themselves, made that kind apology for them, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He can be touched with the feeling of all your infirmities. You may cast all your cares on him, for he careth for you. All through this vale of tears, you may rest assured of his sympathy; and when the vale of tears declines into the valley of the shadow of death, not his sympathy only will you have, but his inspiriting presence and his timely succour. And after that, what will not his bounty be whose pity has been so great? When there is no longer any occasion for pity—when misery is no more, and sighing has ceased, and God's hand has for the last time passed across your weeping eyes, and wiped away the final tear, what then will be the riches of his munificence? What then will he not *do* for you, having so *felt* for you? You know a father feels a peculiar affection for a child that has been afflicted, and

that has cost him a great deal. How will our compassionate Redeemer cherish and caress those who have come out of great tribulation, and for whom he went through so much more himself. What must be the glory of that place to which he will take them, after he shall have made them perfect through sufferings. What exalted honours, what ecstatic joys must he not have in reserve for them whom he came down here to weep with, and now takes up thither to rejoice with himself. And now that they have ceased to sin, and are perfectly conformed to his image, what will not be his *complacency* in them, when his pity towards them is so great in this imperfect state, in which their suffering is always mingled with sin.

Well, then, since we are the objects of such pity, let us be its subjects too. Let us pity, as we are pitied. Cared for ourselves, let us care for others. Let their cause reach our hearts, as ours reached God's. Let us, for whom so many tears have been shed, be not sparing of our tears for others' woes. Nor let us give to misery merely the tear, but speak the word of consolation, and reach out the hand of help.

FIVE NEGATIVES.

IT is known that two negatives, in English, are equivalent to an affirmative. They destroy each other. But it is not so in Greek. They *strengthen* the negation; and a third negative makes it stronger still, and so a

fourth, and a fifth. How strong *five* negatives must make a negation! But do five ever occur? Whether they ever occur in the Greek classics, I do not know; but in the Greek of the New Testament, there is an instance of the kind. And what is that? Are the five negatives used to strengthen any threatening? No: they are connected with a *promise*, one of the "exceeding great and precious promises" which are given unto us. The case occurs in Heb. xiii. 5:—"For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." There five negatives are employed. We translate but two of them; but there they all are, as any one may see who looks into his Greek Testament. Now, they need not all have been there. They are not all necessary to express the simple idea that God will never forsake his people. There must have been *design* in multiplying negatives so. I do not believe the phraseology was accidental, and I think it not difficult to guess the design. God meant to be believed in that thing. He would secure the confidence of his children in that particular. He knew how prone they were to doubt his constancy, how strongly inclined to that form of unbelief, and how liable to be harassed by the dread of being forsaken by him; and he would therefore make assurance more than doubly sure. So, instead of saying simply, "I will not leave thee," which alone would have been enough, he adds, "nor forsake thee;" and instead of leaving it thus, "I will not leave thee, I will not forsake thee," he uses language equivalent to the following:—"I will not, I will not leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake

thee." There is a stanza which very faithfully, as well as beautifully, expresses it:—

" The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never—no, never—no, never forsake."

How earnest God appears to be in this matter. How unworthy it is in his children, after such an assurance as this, to suspect that he will forsake them! He *cannot*. It is *impossible* for God to lie. Here one who was never known to break his word, assures his people, each of them individually, and five times over in a single sentence, of his continued presence with them. Under similar circumstances, what *man* of reputed veracity would be discredited? And shall not the God of truth be believed in a like case?

HOW TO DISPOSE OF CARE.

THERE is such a thing as *care*. Who does not know it by experience? Who has not *felt* it at his heart? How heavily it presses there, and it *pierces* too. It is a *burden*; and it has also a *sting*. Nothing is more unfriendly to happiness than care. It is hard being happy with a load on the heart. The objects of care are almost innumerable. What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed, are only a few of its anxious interrogations, and they are among the least important of them. These concern ourselves; but care often forgets self, in its solicitude for others.

Parents, especially mothers, know what I mean by this. But I need not attempt to explain a word that expresses what we all feel.

There is a care both for ourselves and others which God himself has cast upon us, and of which it were sinful to attempt to make any other disposition than he has made of it. But over and above this, there is a large amount of solicitude and anxiety which we lay upon ourselves, and which is unnecessary, useless, and injurious. This is the care that is unfavourable to happiness. The other is friendly to it. It is very desirable to get rid of it, since it does us harm, and does no one good. Nothing is more hostile to the successful care of the soul than the pressure and poignancy of the care of which I speak. "Careful and troubled about many things," we intermit or entirely overlook the care of the "one thing needful." But what shall we do with it—how get rid of it—since to bear it is so painful to our feelings, and often so ruinous to our better interests? *Divide* it with others we may, to some little extent. There is such a thing as sympathy; there is such an operation as *unburdening* the mind to a fellow-creature; and I will not deny that there is some relief in it. Yet the very etymology of the word *sympathy*, evinces that it is no remedy. It is, after all, a *suffering together*. A great deal of what constitutes sympathy, is grief that we can but grieve—sorrow that we cannot succour. Mixing tears does indeed diminish their bitterness; but weeping with those that weep, does not wipe away their tears. They weep on; and the only

difference is, that we weep with them, and our tears may be said to dilute theirs.

There is a better way of disposing of care than to cast it on our fellow-creatures. Indeed, what fellow-creatures can we find who have not enough of their own to bear, without receiving an additional burden from us? What friend has not himself surplus care to dispose of?

There are some who cast off care without reference to what becomes of it. They sing, "Begone, dull care." These are the reckless. Care may go at their bidding; but the worst of it is, it is sure to return again, and it comes back a heavier burden, duller than ever. This is not the way to dispose of care. Yet there is a way whereby all excess of anxiety may be effectually removed, and the heart be left with all its tender affection, and yet with no more solicitude than such as the blessed in heaven might feel without diminution of happiness. *It is to cast care on God.* That is the true and only effectual way to dispose of care. He *can* take the burden, however huge and heavy. You do not doubt that; but you ask, "*Will* he? *May* I cast it on him; I, such a one as I, cast my cares, the whole multitude and burden of them, on such a being as God? I know the government of the mighty universe, and the providence which extends to the minute equally as to the magnificent—reaching low as to the fall of the sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of the head—does not distract or burden him. I know he can take a larger charge, and not feel it. But will he? Will such great-

ness stoop to such littleness—such holiness come down to such vileness? Yes, it will, for condescension is one characteristic of greatness; and “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” But why do I reason? Does not the Holy Ghost say by David, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee;” and by Peter, “Casting all your care upon him;” and by Paul, “Be careful for nothing?” And does not Immanuel himself say, “Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?” No longer ask if you may, but use your privilege. Here is your authority. The Lord says you may do it; nay, more, commands you to do it. It is your duty, as well as your privilege. So far is it from being presumption to cast your care on God, it is a sin not to do it.

This is the way to dispose of care; and it is no matter how much there is of it. God will take it all. It is no burden to him. Many have made this disposition of their cares, and all testify how willingly he took and bore them; and if at times they took back the burden, yet willingly he received it again, when again it was cast upon him.

There is a reason given by Peter for casting care on God, that is inexpressibly touching. He says, “Casting all your care on him;” and then follows no flourish of rhetoric, no parade of reasons, but this—O, how happily selected, I would say, but that he wrote by inspiration, which does everything felicitously—“for he careth for you.” Why should you care for yourself, since God cares for you? Ah, here is a topic not for

the meditation of an hour merely, but of an eternity. *He careth for you.* Can it be? O why should he? What a thought to carry through this vale of tears, and to go down with into the deeper valley of death, that God cares for me! He concerns himself about me. Let the scholar look at the original. The English is good enough, but the Greek is still more interesting. God has me on his heart. Some poor saints think nobody cares for them. But God does. Is not that enough? He that regards the cry of the raven, and gives all the fowls of heaven their food, and decks the lilies of the field, doth *much more* care for you. He concerns himself for his *creatures*; will he not much more for his *children*? Are ye not of much more value, whom no less a price could redeem than the blood of his Son? Let this suffice for you.

I know not anything that goes so soon and surely to my heart, as the sight of a poor sobbing or sorrowfully looking child, an orphan, or worse than parentless, whom no one seems to care for. But if I weep at such a sight, it dries up my tears to think that there is, after all, one who cares for the poor child—even he who said, “Suffer little children to come unto me.” O, come, let us cast our care on God. Let us go to Jesus for rest. In him we shall find sympathy such as man can feel, with support such as only God can afford. There we shall meet with such pity as at first weeps with the sufferer, and then wipes away his tears. Surely he who bore our *sins* will not refuse our *cares*. “Surely he *hath* borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

DO YOU ENJOY RELIGION?

I DO not ask you if you *possess* religion, but do you *enjoy* it? Does it make you happy? The question is not whether, being, as you hope, a religious person, you are also happy; but is it your religion which makes you happy? Are you happy, because religious? A person may acknowledge God, and have joy, and yet not "joy in God." Perhaps you will say it *helps* to make you happy; that is, religion and certain other things together make you happy. But this answer is not satisfactory. Religion must more than help to make you happy. If it only helps, it does no more than many other things. *They* help. In that case religion might be needful to happiness, even as money is reckoned by many to be; but it could not be pronounced to be *the one thing needful*. Religion ought to make you happy, without the aid of anything else. You should enjoy it, though you had nothing else to enjoy. Habakkuk says, "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." He regarded religion as able alone to make him happy. And are we not commanded to be happy in religion alone—to "rejoice in the Lord," and that "evermore?" Should we be commanded to be happy in it, if it needed some assistance to make us happy?

Religion is both exactly *adapted* and entirely *ade-*

quate to make its subjects happy. It supplies the soul with a portion; and what does the soul want to make it happy, but a suitable and sufficient portion? This the religious man has. THE LORD is his portion. Is not that a portion to make him happy? Is it not *good* enough, and *large* enough? If the world can make one happy, as some suppose, cannot much more the Maker of all worlds, and the owner of the universe? This portion is infinite, so that it can never be exhausted; and it is eternal, so that it can never fail. And while religion gives us a portion, what a Protector, what a Provider, what a Comforter it affords us! The best of Fathers, and the Friend that is more constant than a brother. Then what present good it yields, and what promises it makes of greater good to come! What a prospect it holds out! O, what hopes it inspires! The Christian has all these to rejoice in—Christ Jesus, the “exceeding great and precious promises,” the first-fruits of the Spirit, and the hope of glory. Can any one say what is wanting in religion to make one happy?

Religion *has* made many happy. Peter, in his first general epistle, within the compass of only three verses, speaks of Christians as not only rejoicing, but rejoicing “greatly,” yea, “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” He speaks of it not as a *duty* or as a *privilege*, but as a *fact*. They did so. And what they so rejoiced in was Jesus Christ, and the prospect of the incorruptible inheritance, both which Christians have the same warrant to rejoice in now. Now, if religion made these happy, why should it not make others happy? Why

should one enjoy it, and another not enjoy it, if both possess it? It was intended to make all its subjects happy—very happy.

I ask, then, does it make you happy? Do you *enjoy* religion? Now, do not evade the question. What is to become of us, if religion does not make us happy? If we do not enjoy it here, how shall we enjoy it hereafter? Barely to possess it hereafter would not satisfy, even if such a thing could be. How can a religion which does not make us happy on earth, make us happy in heaven? The religion of heaven is the same in *kind* with that of earth. The only difference is in *degree*. The religion of earth is communicated from heaven. It must be of the same nature with it.

Besides, if our religion does not make us happy, how do we do our duty? We are commanded to rejoice. It is a part of *practical* Christianity to be happy. It is obedience to a precept. It belongs to the character of the *doer* of the word. Moreover, how are we to have satisfactory evidence that we possess true religion, if we have not joy in it? Suppose we had not *love*, would we be Christians then? No, certainly; for without charity a man is nothing. But why can we not be Christians without love? Because it is the fruit of the Spirit. And is not *joy* also the fruit of the Spirit? If love is the first named of the nine, joy is the second. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," &c. (Gal. xxii. 23). And these are not said to be the *fruits* of the Spirit. It is not the plural form that is used. They are not distinct productions. They are all one cluster—"the *fruit* of

the Spirit." Now, since we have not love, we conclude we have not the Spirit; why should we not conclude the same if we have not joy? I know it may be said that there are many things to interfere with Christian joy. But while these may and do diminish it and interrupt it, they do not therefore annihilate it. There was much to interfere in the case of those to whom Peter wrote. They were "in heaviness through manifold temptations." Nevertheless, they rejoiced "greatly."

You see now why I ask you if you *enjoy* religion. You perceive that it is no insignificant question. Many profess to have religion, but are conscious that they do not enjoy it. They hope they are religious, but know they are not happy. They trust that God is their portion, but they have no joy in him. Indeed, some are astonished that we should speak of religion as a thing to be enjoyed. They regard it rather as a thing to be *endured*—as a sort of *penance*, a system of *privation*. And in so far as it is not suffering, it is toil—a something composed of *penance* and *task*. When they betake themselves to anything of a religious nature, they feel that they *must*. A sort of dire necessity constrains them. Such a religion may prepare a person for hell, but how it is to qualify him for heaven, I see not. And a religion which does not qualify a person for heaven certainly does not answer the purpose.

Many persons *lament* that their religion does not make them happy, and they wonder why it is. I suspect it is because they depend no more upon it to make them happy. They look for enjoyment too much to other

sources. Perhaps, however, the reason they have so little enjoyment in religion is, that they have so little religion to enjoy. Now those who appear to have so little, should seriously inquire if they have any.

But some say, "Religion *sometimes* makes us happy." But why only sometimes? why not always? The command is, "Rejoice in the Lord *always*;" and the same reason exists for being happy in religion at all times, as at any time. If you rejoice in the world, no wonder if your joy is often interrupted; but if God is your God, and he is evermore the same, why should you not rejoice in him evermore? But does not the Lord sometimes call to sorrow? True, but even then he does not call *from* joy. Joy and sorrow are perfectly compatible. Were they not coincident in the experience of Paul? "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," he says. If there exists causes of sorrow which operate, that does not annihilate the causes of joy. They should operate too. If you seem to have nothing else to rejoice in, yet there are your sorrows; rejoice in them: well may you, if they work for you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Did not Paul "glory in tribulations *also*?"

Let not the reader rest satisfied until he *enjoys* religion. How are we to die by a religion which we do not enjoy? What can one enjoy when the world is receding, if he cannot enjoy God?

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

How are we to know whether, being *nominally* Christians, we are also *really* Christians? It is important to know if we possess the *thing* signified by Christianity. The mere *name* and fame of the thing will be of little use to us.

Now, the Bible tells us what Christians are. If, then, *we* are what the book says Christians are, we are Christians. Everybody admits this, that a *scriptural* Christian is without doubt a *real* one. But some seem to hesitate about admitting the converse of the proposition, that if we are *not* what the Bible says Christians are, we are not Christians. The reason they hesitate can only be that they perceive or fear the latter conclusion makes against themselves; for the one is as clearly and certainly true as the other. What use could there be in statements declaring what Christians are, if individuals may be Christians without being what Christians are thus declared to be? Indeed, what *truth* would there be in such statements? That is no characteristic of a class which does not belong to all the individuals of the class. The declaration, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature," is neither useful nor true, if some are in Christ who are not new creatures. The same may be said of the assertion, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," if a solitary individual is pardoned and freed from condemnation who still walks after the flesh. There is neither sense nor sincerity in it; nor

in this other passage, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," if some are Christ's who have never put the flesh and its lusts to that kind of death.

It must be admitted, that if we are not what the Bible says Christians are, we are not Christians in fact. We may as well admit it first as last. Christ says we are to be judged by his word, not by any favourite author of ours, Blair or Paley, or whoever he may be; not by any sermon we may have heard from this or that minister; not by the standard that may have been set up in some conversation with an eminent divine; not by the opinion entertained in the circle in which we move; nor by what seems to stand to our reason. There will be no spreading out of these when the Judge shall sit. The Bible will be the only book of law and authority opened then.

I know very well there is nothing *new* in what I am saying. Any body can say it, and say it as well. Every body knows it already. But it is one of the *old* things that we need to be often reminded of. I know nothing we are more prone to forget than these *common-place* truths. It is what we know best, and most firmly believe, that we fail most to consider and lay to heart. The most *familiar* truths have always been the truths by men most disregarded.

But let us hear what the Bible says Christians are, for I did not intend so long an introduction. Well, the Bible says, among other things, that they are *the light of the world*. The blessed Jesus himself is the

speaker, and he is addressing his disciples, and he says to them, "YE ARE the light of the world." Observe, he does not say, "Ye *may* be, if you are careful to live up to your privileges;" or, "Ye *ought to be*—it is your duty;" or, "Ye *shall be*, by and by, when you have made greater progress in religion;" but he speaks of it as a present *matter of fact*, "Ye *are* the light of the world." So it seems that Christians *shine*. We talk of a shining Christian, meaning to distinguish such a one from Christians in general. But there is no Christian who is not a shining one. Every Christian emits light. Paul testifies of the Christians of Philippi, that they shone as lights in the world. They were what Christ said his disciples were. And must not Christians of our cities and villages be the same?

It also appears that Christians are not merely *receivers*. They *give out*—they *communicate*. That is their character. They do not live merely or mainly for themselves. A candle is not lighted for its own convenience, but for the benefit of others, that it may give light unto all that are in the house. Some people think it is enough, if they personally *enjoy* religion. But that is not the case. No *man* liveth to himself—much more does no *Christian*.

There are *two* objects for which Christians shine. One is to *discover themselves*, that the world may know what Christians are, and so be led to emulate the character. This our Saviour contemplates when he says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

We are to emit light for others to see by; and it is that they may see our *good works*. All Christians perform good works. They are all of them *doers*. They are the most *practical* men in the world, though regarded by many as visionaries. There are, to be sure, *speculators* and theorists enough in the church, but real Christians are *working-men*. But what is the use in our good works being seen? Why is it not enough that they be *done*? Does not humility dictate that they should be concealed, rather than exposed? The thing is impracticable. "A city that is set on a hill, *cannot* be hid." Were the thing possible, the attempt at concealment might be proper enough, if there were no others to be influenced by the sight of our good works. Whether a candle in an *uninhabited* house be on a candlestick or under a bushel, is a matter of little consequence; but not so if there be people in the house. The Christian's good works are to be visible; not that he may be applauded for them, but that men may thence be led to glorify God. Now, a question. Do *we* shine? And by the light which we evolve, do observers see our good works? Have we any good works for them to see? And are they such good works as, seeing, they will instinctively refer to the grace of God as their cause, and so be led to glorify him? We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that we should *show forth* the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

I would not have any one suppose that a Christian is to make an effort to let his good works be seen—to be

ostentatious of them. No, he is only to *let* his light shine. He is active in *doing* good works, but quite passive in *showing* them. A luminous body makes no effort in emitting light. Indeed, it cannot help shining. A Christian has only, in all his intercourse with men, to act out the Christian spirit, and be governed by the fear of God and the principles of his holy religion, and the thing is done. The light is emitted, and the good works are seen. And this is the way, under God, to commend truth to the conscience, to reach the hearts of men, and make converts to God. Yes, this is the way. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they may speak against you as evil-doers, they may by *your good works which they shall behold*, glorify God in the day of visitation." Another question. Is this what *we* are doing—shining so that men, knowing we profess the religion of Jesus, see, in looking at us, how pure, lovely, excellent, and divine a religion it is, and are led to say, "Verily it must be from God, and we must embrace it too—we will be Christians?"

The other object for which Christians shine, is to *enlighten others*. But on this I cannot now enlarge. Only this I would observe. See how *far* Christians shine. They do not merely illumine some little sphere. They are the light of *the world*. Their influence reaches to the ends of the earth.

Would we make good our Saviour's assertion with respect to ourselves, would we be the light of the world, let us *first* take heed that the light which is in us be not darkness; and let us *next* have a care that our light

make discovery to others of good works. Let us *do* them. Then, as for those who see us, it is their fault, not ours, if they are not converted. And as for those who are too far off to see us, it only remains that we *carry* them the light, or *send* it to them.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

HERE is something else which Christians are. *All* that they are cannot be told in a single sentence. It requires many. Some content themselves with a *partial* representation of the Christian character. But the proper plan is to bring together all the Bible has to say about it, and then aptly to arrange the parts so as to present a full and perfect delineation. Many seem to think that every definition of religion in the Bible is intended to exhaust the subject. It is a great mistake, and one which, I fear, is fatal to many.

Christians are the light of the world, as has been already said. But this is not all they are, they are also "the salt of the earth," and the same individuals are both these; they do not merely *shine* for the benefit of the world—they act upon it in another, more immediate, and more energetic manner: they are not merely light to it, but salt to it also. They *preserve* it.

Here let me remark what a *useful* people Christians are. What are more useful, I may say indispensable, than light and salt? How could we get along at all without them? Well, Christians are *these* to the moral

world. They enlighten it. They discover moral excellence to it. Yea, they preserve it from perishing. The world would not *keep* but for Christians. They are the salt of the earth. How soon Sodom was destroyed after Lot left it. He was the salt of Sodom. That one good man saved the city while he remained in it; and if there had been nine more, they might all have remained, and Sodom should have been spared. Well may I say, how useful Christians are to their fellow-creatures. And I may add, how *variously* useful they are. If they were merely light to the world, they could be very useful, but they are also salt to it.

Moreover, what a *disinterested* people Christians are. It is not to themselves mainly that they are so useful, but to others. Not a man of them liveth to himself. Light shines not for its own advantage, and salt exists wholly for the benefit of other substances; and how completely it spends itself on them, and loses itself in them. Such are Christians. They please not themselves. They seek not their own. This is what we are, if we are Christians.

And now I have another grave reflection to make. How different Christians are from the residue of men! How very unlike them! *Others* are not the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. No, they are the world—the persons that require the light—the dark objects. They are the earth, which needs the salt for its preservation. They are the corrupt mass. Now, light is very unlike the objects it illumines, and salt very unlike the substance it preserves or seasons.

If it were not, it would not at all answer the purpose intended by its application. Well, just as unlike other men, unregenerate men, the men of the world, are Christians—as unlike as are light and the world, or salt and the earth. But some say this is *figurative* language. What if it is? Figures *mean* something. They mean as much as *literal* phraseology. And the meaning of figures is as easily gained as that of any other kind of language. But St. John speaks on this subject without a figure, and he employs one of the strongest and most striking expressions I have ever read. To many ears, it does not sound at all charitable. He says, speaking in the name of Christians, “We know that *we are of God*, and the whole world lieth *in wickedness*,” or, to translate the original more literally, and to make the contrast still more striking, *in the wicked one*. This is his account of the difference between Christians and others. Christians are of God; all other men are in the wicked one. Nor is it wonderful that Christians are so very different from others, when we consider that they become such by being *created* anew in Christ Jesus. Such a work of God upon them must needs make them very unlike those who are not the subjects of it. Creation makes a vast difference in things. The first creation did. The second does also. The new creature differs widely from the mere creature. The Christian is eminently distinguished from the man.

Christians are exhorted not to be conformed to the world. It would seem impossible that *real* Christians

should be conformed to it. It would appear to be as contrary to their nature to be conformed to the world, as for light to resemble darkness, or salt any insipid or corrupt substance.

But the world say they do not see the mighty difference between Christians and other men. Perhaps it is because they do not look at the right persons. It is no wonder they do not see a mighty difference between some professors of religion and the rest of mankind, for no such difference exists. It is not to be seen. It is not every professor that is a true Christian. There are some that pass for Christians, of whom it may be said, that the light which is in them is darkness. Such are not the lights of the world. They need themselves illumination more than any others, for the darkness which is in them is *great*. Again, there are those in whom, according to the case supposed by our Saviour, the salt has lost its savour—its *saline* quality. Yes, there are *insipid* Christians. That such should not manifest the difference which exists between real Christians and others, is surely not to be wondered at. These differ from others rather in being worse than better than they. What is so worthless as salt which has lost its savour? “It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” Just so it is with graceless professors of religion. They serve no good turn, but many an ill one.

But some are not entirely without the *saline* principle, yet have it in great weakness. They are, if I may so speak, only a little *brackish* with it. Let such give

diligence to grow in grace. And let us all see to it that we have salt in ourselves, that we may be in this respect also what Christ says his disciples are, "the salt of the earth."

THE DISTANCE OF DEATH.

How far from any human being is death? This is not equivalent to asking when he will actually die. That may not be for years to come. But all that time how far off is death from him? Not far, only a step. "There is but a *step* between me and death." Death is always at just the same distance from every man, though all do not die at the same time, and some live to a much greater age than others. Death is as contiguous to childhood and youth, as it is to manhood and old age. Facts are every day proving it. From no subject of human life, and from no point or period of it, is death ever at a greater distance than may be measured by a step. David said what I have quoted of himself. It is just as true of all men, unless some are protected, as Hezekiah was, by a promise of God that he should live a number of years. David said it in a moment of panic. He might have said it in his calmest hour. It is no piece of extravagance; it is a sober reality. It is plain matter of fact, that all we who live, live at precisely this little distance from death, and no more. David said it in view of a particular danger. But there are a thousand dangers besetting every man, any one of which could justify the language. We sometimes *seem* to be

nearer death than at other times; and we are actually sometimes nearer dying. Every hour brings us nearer dying, but not nearer death, for that is never but "*a step*" off. That is always close at our side—our companion through life. The whole course of life is in the closest proximity to death. We are not merely tending *towards* a brink, over which ultimately we are to plunge, but we are all the time travelling *on* that brink. We are not journeying towards a precipice which may be more or less distant from us, but our whole way winds along the frightful edge of the precipice. Our danger does not commence just before we actually die, but it attends us all the way of life. It is true, some escape it for a long time, but there is not a point in the path which has not been so dangerous as to prove fatal to some travellers.

It is this, if I mistake not, which makes our condition here so fearful—this perpetual insecurity—this ever-present and imminent peril. It is not the certainty of the fact in regard to death that is so very appalling to the soul. It is the uncertainty of the time. It is not that ultimately we *must* die, but that presently we *may*. It is the thought of being necessarily always so near that great evil—always immediately adjacent to the judgment—always close upon the confines of eternity, and always within a little of our everlasting abode—the journey from every point of our path so short—a single stage, a single step. Now here, anon there—this hour with men, the next with God: to-day only candidates for immortality, to-morrow its incumbents—to-

day on trial for eternity ; to-morrow tried, and the case decided irreversibly and for ever : on earth to-day, to-morrow in heaven or in hell—nor yet the interval always so great as a day. I do not think the fearfulness of man's condition in view of these considerations, is capable of being exaggerated. No language can overstate it. If the change awaiting us were gradually brought about, it would not be so fearful. If one by one the mysterious ligaments of life were sundered, and one by one the objects of earth faded from our view, and the novelties of eternity were slowly and separately unfolded to our vision ; if the summons of death designated a distant day for our appearing at the bar of God, and our way thither was long and difficult, dying would not constitute so formidable a prospect as now it does. But the fact is, the change is as sudden as it is great. The familiar scenes of the one world all vanish at once, and the unimagined realities of the other all at once burst on the beholder. The summons requires immediate attendance, and the way is but a step. There is no doubt about this. There are not two minds on the subject. Every one, when asked what his life is, answers in similar language, "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away." No one contends for the power or right to boast of to-morrow. All see that the Son of man cometh at such an hour as men think not. The frequent sudden precipitation into the grave and the eternal world, of persons of all ages, and of every condition of body, evinces that between them and death there

was but *a step*. And how should there be more between us and death? The reasons which determine God in the dispensations of life and death are perhaps more inscrutable than those which govern any other part of his conduct. There is no class of facts out of which it is so perfectly impossible to construct a theory, as those which relate to human mortality.

So, then, death is but a step off, and we cannot move him further from us. He will keep just at that distance, though he may long maintain it. He will be ever threatening us—his weapon ever uplifted and over us, though he cannot strike until the word is given him from another. Is it so? Is death but a step removed—so near as that? Then, if there be anything in death which requires preparation—and is there not?—how important that from the earliest dawn of reason it should be made; so that we may be ever prepared for that which is ever so near—always in panoply to meet an enemy always at hand. How absurd to put off preparation for death, when one cannot put off death itself. Is the reader prepared to die? He has entertained less momentous questions than this. Is he in readiness to take the step which separates him from all that is final and formidable in death? Will he not seriously institute and faithfully prosecute this inquiry?

But if death is so near, there are other things even more formidable than death, which cannot be far off. *Judgment* is near, if death is. Yes, "The Judge standeth before the door." How near to every accountable being is the place and period of his final reckoning! To-

morrow he may have to answer for the deeds of to-day ; or to-day, of yesterday's. How many accounts are closed every day—how many cases decided daily at that court of ultimate adjudication! And are we so near the awful interview, the tremendous audit? And does it not affect us at all? Are we so well prepared for it, or so careless of being prepared for it?

Retribution ensues immediately on judgment. That also is but the distance of "a step." Now, if that retribution were temporal and mutable, the thought would be alarming. But it is eternal and irreversible. Ah, then, if these things be so, how near to some is *perdition*! It is the verge of that dark and fathomless abyss on which they so securely tread. What a risk they run. The prize ought to be great which is sought at such a peril. So near to *hell*! What a position to occupy! But if the sinner will repent, and behold the Lamb of God, and yield his heart to the Lord, then he shall be as near to *heaven*. There shall be but a step between him and it. Some are as near as all that to heaven. It is not a day's journey there. It is but to take a step, and, follower of Jesus, thou art where no night is, and no sound of moaning is heard, and every tear is wiped away. So near to heaven! How frequent then and fond should be your thoughts of it. *All* so near! Then "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" How carefully and circumspectly ought they to walk whose path lies along such a brink.

And since the end of all our opportunities is as near

as death, whatever our minds meditate, or our hands find to do, for our own souls, for the good of others, or for the glory of God, let us do it with our might.

WHY SO LOATH TO DIE ?

I FIND within me a strange reluctance to die ; and I perceive in others indications of a similar unwillingness. Indeed, it is rare to meet with one who does not participate in this general and great aversion to dying. Now I do not wonder that some are unwilling to die. Nature revolts at death. It is the object of her strongest antipathy. It is not strange, therefore, that mere *natural* men should be averse to it. Some have nothing to die for. How can it be expected that they should be willing to die ? They have nothing beyond the grave to go to. Their possessions all lie on this side of it. They have their portion in this life—their good things here. Do you wonder they are reluctant to leave them ? To such to die is loss. Death is not theirs, as it is the Christian's ; but on the other hand, they are death's. Jesus is not precious to them. How should they be “willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord ?” What Paul esteemed “far better” than life—dying in order to be with Christ—has for them no charm whatever.

But that the spiritual man, the disciple and friend of Jesus, the child and heir of God, should be so strongly averse to death, deserves to be considered strange. We

might indeed expect that there should remain some of the reluctance of nature to death, even in the subjects of grace, for Christianity does not destroy nature ; but that this reluctance should be so strong, and often so predominant, that grace should not create a desire for death stronger than nature's aversion to it, is what surprises us.

I am sure it ought not to be as it is. Certainly every Christian ought to be able to say with Paul, " Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." However averse to being " unclothed," he should yet be willing to be " clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Life required an exercise of patience in the saints of old, which seems to have no existence now. Job says, " All the days of my appointed time will I *wait*, till my change come." *Then* Christian submission was exercised in *living*. *Now*, to be resigned to *death* is the desideratum. Grace had then to make its subjects willing to live. Now it has to make them willing to die.

How shall we account for this reluctance ? What if nature in us be strong, is not grace stronger ? Has it subdued our sins, calmed our agitations, allayed our fears, and can it not master this one aversion ! Have we made experiment of what grace can do with the fear of death ?

Is it because of the *pain* of dying that we shrink from it ? But how know we that to die is so very painful ? In half the cases of death at least, it does not appear to be so. How many sicknesses we are subject to, whose

progress is attended with far more pain. How many surgical operations which men readily submit to, are beyond all doubt productive of more suffering.

Is this world so bright and beautiful that we are loath to leave it on that account? But is not heaven fairer and brighter far? Here there is night; but there, none. Here deformity alternates with beauty; but there, all is loveliness. Here the alloy prevails; there, there is no mixture, all is pure. Can it be possible that earth has charms and attractions equal to those of heaven—this earth, which the curse has lighted on, comparable in point of beauty and loveliness to that heaven where God manifests himself, and which Jesus has gone to prepare as the fit habitation and eternal home of his redeemed? Is it conceivable? Even the saints who lived under a darker dispensation esteemed the heavenly a better country. Is it the *separations* which death makes, that render us so averse to die? True, it separates, but it *unites* also. It takes us, I know *from* many we love, but it takes us *to* as many we love. Leave we a family behind? But do we not go to one larger, more harmonious, happier? Are we parted from friends by death; and are we not joined to friends by the same? If we lose a father, do we not find a better Father; and if we leave a dear brother, do we not go to one who “is not ashamed to call us brethren?” More than half of some families have gone already to heaven. Why should we be so much more desirous of continuing with the part on earth, than of going to the portion in heaven? Do those you part from need your

care and services more than those to whom you go? But is it not safe going, and leaving them in charge of God? Is it not he now who cares for them and watches over them, provides for them and defends them? And will he not do it when you are dead and gone? Ah, the parent clings to life, and looks imploringly on death when he thinks of his loved little ones. What will become of them, he asks? What would become of them now, if they had only you to care for them? It is not your eye that keeps watch over them; nor your arm that is put underneath and round about them; nor your hand from whose opening palm their wants are supplied. It is God's. And what he does by you now, cannot he do without you? Cannot he find other agents and instruments when you are laid aside? Does he not say of the widows and fatherless children, "Leave them to me?" And will he not be faithful to the trust which he solicits?

Do not children desire to see the face of their father? And are not we children of God? After so many years of daily converse and communion with him, and after receiving so many tokens of his paternal regard, should you not be willing to go now and see him face to face, whose unseen hand has led, sustained, and supplied you hitherto? It is unnatural in us not to be willing to go to God. We readily go to those we love.

Has *home* no charm? What man is he, to whom it has not a charm? Who has been long absent from it, and does not languish with desire to reach it? But where is home—thy Father's house? It is not here.

It is beyond the flood. Earth is not home. Heaven is home. Living is not being at home. Dying is going home. We must die to reach our Father's house. And yet we are reluctant to die.

Do you dread the *way*? Do you tremble at the thought of the valley of the shadow of death? What, when you are sure of such company as that of Jesus? Will you fear with him at your side? Do not talk of the cold arms of death. Think rather of the warm embrace of Jesus. Does he not say he will come for you? "If I go . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself." Angels may minister to the saints on common occasions, but when a Christian dies, Jesus himself attends.

"But death has a *sting*." You mean he *had* one. To those who believe in Jesus, no sting of death remains.

Fear you the *consequences* of dying? Does the thought of the presence into which you are to go appal you? But you have often been into that presence in prayer; you have appeared already before God on his mercy-seat, and then you have wished the veil away. Why then so unwilling that death should withdraw it? Were you not gladdened by those transient glimpses of his glory which you saw? And dread you now the full and fixed gaze of his glory? Have you not often sighed for those brighter views, and those nearer and clearer discoveries which death will afford you?

Surely, it cannot be the *judgment* you fear. What, when you are "accepted in the Beloved?" If accepted

in yourself, you should not fear; how much less when accepted in him. If God would honour your own righteousness, had you a righteousness of your own, will he not much more honour Christ's righteousness, now become yours? What if you cannot answer for yourself? Cannot he answer for you? But who is the judge? Is it not Jesus, your advocate? Will your advocate condemn you? Are you afraid to meet your Saviour? He that summons you to judgment, is the same that said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Would you live always? I know you would not. But you would live longer, perhaps you say, for the sake of being useful to others. But who knows that you may not be more useful in heaven? Who can say but your death may do more good than your life? Besides, if God can dispense with your services, should you not be willing to have them arrested?

Do you not desire to be freed from all sin? But know you not that only he "that is dead is freed from sin?" If you cannot be perfectly holy until you die, ought you to be so unwilling to die? Is your desire of perfect holiness sincere, while you are so averse to the condition of it?

HEAVEN'S ATTRACTIONS.

I HAVE been thinking of the attractions of heaven—what there is in heaven to draw souls to it. I thought of *the place*. Heaven *has* place. Christ says to his disciples, "I go to prepare a *place* for you." It is a

part of the consolation with which he comforts them, that heaven is a place, and not a mere state. What a place it must be. Selected out of all the locations of the universe—the chosen spot of space. We see, even on earth, places of great beauty, and we can conceive of spots far more delightful than any we see. But what comparison can these bear to heaven, where everything exceeds whatever eye has seen, or imagination conceived? The earthly paradise must have been a charming spot. But what is that to the heavenly? What the paradise assigned to the first Adam, who was of the earth, earthy, compared with that purchased by the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven? It is a “purchased possession.” The price it cost the purchaser, every one knows. Now, having purchased it, he has gone to prepare it—to set it in order—to lay out his skill upon it. O what a place Jesus will make, has already made heaven. The place should attract us.

Then I thought of the freedom of the place from the evils of earth. Not only what *is* in heaven, should attract us to it, but what is *not* there. And what is not there? There is no *night* there. Who does not want to go where no night is? No night, no *natural* night—none of its darkness, its damps, its dreariness; and no *moral* night—no ignorance—no error—no misery—no sin. These all belong to the night; and there is no night in heaven. And why no night there? What shines there so perpetually? It is not any natural luminary. It is a *moral* radiance that lights up heaven. “The glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the

light thereof." No need have they there of other light. This shines everywhere, and on all. All light is sweet, but no light is like this.

And not only no night there, "but no more *curse*." Christ redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. And "no more *death*." The last enemy is overcome at last. Each, as he enters the place, shouts victoriously, "O death, O grave!" "Neither *sorrow*." It is *here*. O yes, it is here—around, within. We hear it; we see it; and at length we feel it. But it is not there. "Nor *crying*"—no expression of grief. "Neither shall there be any more *pain*; for the former things are passed away." And what becomes of *tears*? Are they left to dry up? Nay, God *wipes* them away. And this is a sure sign they will never return. What shall cause weeping when he wipes away tears?

I have not said that there is no *sin* in heaven. I have not thought that necessary. If sin was there, night would be there, and the curse and death, and all the other evils—the train of sin. These are not there; therefore sin is not. No, "we shall be *like* him; for we shall see him as he is."

What *is* there, then, since these are not? *Day* is there; and there is the *blessing* that maketh rich; and there is *life*, immortality; and since no sorrow, *joy*—"fulness of joy—joy unspeakable," and *smiles* where tears were: and there they *rest*, not from their labours only, but from cares and doubts and fears. And *glory* is there, an "exceeding and eternal weight."

Then I thought of the *society*. It is composed of the

elite of the universe. The various orders of angels who kept their first estate—as humble as they are high—not ashamed of men. Why should they be, when the Lord of angels is not ashamed to call us brethren? The excellent of the earth also—all the *choice* spirits of every age and nation; the first man; the first martyr; the translated patriarch; the survivor of the deluge; the friend of God, and his juniors, Isaac and Israel; Moses the lawgiver, and Joshua the leader of the host; the pious kings; the prophets; the evangelists and apostles, Paul, John; the martyrs; the reformers; the Puritan fathers; Swartz, Brainerd, Martyn, Carey, Morrison, and others of that noble band of missionaries who have spent their lives in the service of Christ.

Is that all? Where is he who used to lisp “father, mother”—thy child? Passing out of your hands, passed he not into those of Jesus? Yes, you suffered him. If any other than Jesus had said, “Suffer them to come to me,” you would have said, No. Death does not quench those recently struck sparks of intelligence. Jesus is not going to lose one of those little brilliants. All shall be in his crown.

Perhaps thou hast a brother or a sister there; that should draw you towards heaven. Perhaps a *mother*—she whose eye wept while it watched over thee, until at length it grew dim, and closed. Took she not in her cold hand thine, while yet her heart was warm, and said she not, “I am going to Jesus. Follow me there?” Perhaps one nearer, dearer than child, than brother, than mother—the nearest, dearest is there. Shall I say

who? Christian female, thy husband. Christian father, the young mother of thy babes. *He* is not—*she* is not; for God took them. Has heaven no attractions?

Heaven is gaining in attractions every day. True, the principal attractions continue the same. But the lesser ones multiply. Some have attractions there now, which they had not but a few months ago. Earth is losing. How fast it has been losing of late. But earth's losses are heaven's gains. They who have left so many dwelling-places of earth desolate, have gone to their Father's house in heaven. What if they shall not return to us? We shall go to them. That is better.

But the principal attractions I have not yet mentioned. There is our Father, our heavenly Father, whom we have so often addressed as such in prayer: he that nourished and brought us up, and has borne us on; he that has watched over us with an eye that never sleeps, and provided for us with a hand that never tires; and who can pity too. We have never seen our heavenly Father. But there he reveals himself. There he smiles; and the nations of the saved walk in the light of his countenance.

And there is he, to depart and be with whom Paul desired, as being "far better" than to live. There is his glorified humanity. If not having seen, we love him; and in him, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, what will be the love and the joy when "we shall see him as he is?" There is he.

Heaven *has* attractions, many and strong—and yet

who would think it? How few feel and obey the heavenly attraction. How much more powerfully earth acts upon us. How unwilling we are to leave it even for heaven.

THE HEAVENLY RECOGNITION.

THE question is often asked, "Do you think we shall know each other in heaven? Some are very curious to be informed on this subject. It is a point they seem more anxious to know than some other more important points. I am afraid we shall not *all* know each other in heaven. I am afraid we shall not all be there to know and be known. Let us first try to get to heaven. It is more important that we should be there, than that we should know what other persons are there. Let us repent with a broken heart, and believe in Christ for a title to heaven; and "let us follow holiness," that we may be furnished with a fitness for heaven: and being ourselves "accepted in the Beloved," and sanctified through the Spirit, let us try to get as many others to heaven as we can; and let us leave the subject of mutual recognition in heaven for subsequent consideration. By the time we have done what I recommend, we shall be close upon the celestial confines—perhaps within heaven's limits * * * *

[The article is unfinished. The beloved author here laid down his pen; and instead of resuming it, was called—who can question?—to realize the scenes he had been describing.]

