



TAKING UP  
THE CROSS

LIBRARY

OF THE

Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

BT 1101 .W26 1855

Waterbury, J. B. 1799-1876.

Taking up the cross, or, Wh...  
should I not make a

A DONATION

FROM

*C. A. A.*

Received

1893

# TAKING UP THE CROSS

OR

WHY SHOULD I NOT MAKE A PROFESSION  
OF RELIGION?

BY

REV. J. B. WATERBURY, D. D.

WRITTEN FOR THE MASS. SABBATH SCHOOL SOCIETY, AND  
APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

---

BOSTON:

MASSACHUSETTS SABBATH SCHOOL SOCIETY,

DEPOSITORY No. 13 CORNHILL.

---

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1855,  
By the MASSACHUSETTS SABBATH SCHOOL SOCIETY,  
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of Massachusetts.

---

Geo. C. Rand, Printer, 2 Cornhill, Boston.

# CONTENTS.

---

	Page
CONFESSING CHRIST . . . . .	5
THOSE WHO ARE UNDER PECULIAR OBLIGA- TIONS TO CONFESS CHRIST . . . . .	15
WANT OF EVIDENCE . . . . .	21
OTHER OBJECTIONS . . . . .	37
WAITING FOR OTHERS . . . . .	46
HINDRANCES . . . . .	58
SOCIAL HINDRANCES . . . . .	69
INDUCEMENTS . . . . .	80

# TAKING UP THE CROSS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### CONFESSING CHRIST.

Meaning of the phrase "confessing Christ."—John the Baptist confessed him.—The blind man also, whom Jesus healed.—Peter's confession.—Confessors in apostolic times; at the present day.—Extent of the obligation.—Duty of all, involving other obligations.

To confess Christ, is to make a public avowal of discipleship. Whilst He was visible, upon earth; and before the church, as a christian community, was fully organized; this confession was made *orally* upon being interrogated; or *inferentially*, by being found in the train of his followers. John

the Baptist, when questioned concerning our Lord, "confessed and denied not; but confessed I am not the Christ." "Behold," said he, pointing to Jesus; "behold the Lamb of God!" This was confessing Christ.

The blind man, whom Jesus restored; to whom the Pharisees said, when they could no longer deny the miracle, "thou art *his* disciple; but we are Moses' disciples;" accepting the charge, thus made a public confession, that his restorer was indeed his Master; and for this he was cast out of the Synagogue. Subsequently, upon meeting our Lord, and understanding more fully his character and mission, he made his vows of attachment and renewed his profession of faith.

Peter confessed Him when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And again, on another occasion, when he exclaimed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!"



When the christian church was duly organized with appropriate ordinances, as it was by that commission, "go ye and make disciples of all nations;" every person who joined it, recognizing Christ as its foundation and its indwelling life, did thus publicly confess Him. Paul did so, when he was baptized by Annanias; so did Lydia and the Jailer, and the thousands who were added to the church under the preaching of the Apostles.

It is not necessary therefore, in order to confess Christ, that he should be visibly present; for represented in the church, which is his body, He is as truly the object of our choice and of our adherence, as He was the recognized Master of John and of Peter.

The confessors of that day, had much to intimidate them, and a heavy cross to bear. They were cast out of the Synagogue. They were branded as renegades and apostates from the Jewish faith. All sympathy and

succor were withdrawn from them; and it came to pass, in many instances, that they were despoiled of their goods, and exposed to the horrors of martyrdom. To confess Christ in the face of all this, required the highest degree of moral courage. And it was to fortify the soul in view of it, that Jesus spake those remarkable words: "who-soever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father, which is in heaven."

At the present day, and among us, no such trials exist, to test the sincerity of our discipleship. But if the gate be less straight than once it was, and the path less rugged; then is the sin the greater, for refusing to enter and to walk therein. If it was the duty of men and women in primitive times to confess Christ, in the face of persecution and even of death; how guilty shall *we* be, if, in times like these, we are ashamed to own him as our Lord and Master?

## EXTENT OF THE OBLIGATION.

Many think they are not called upon to confess Christ, because, in their own belief, and in the opinion of others, they are as yet not on the Lord's side. This profession of his name, they think, is not obligatory upon *them*. They are not his disciples — they make no such claims or pretensions, and why should they confess him? "Would it not be sheer hypocrisy in me," says one of this class, "so to do?"

It certainly would, I reply, if you were to confess Him, and yet remain in impenitence and unbelief. No man should confess Him who does not love Him and believe in Him. We ask for no hypocritical professions. But may we not inquire of the objector, if he is really not bound to *have* the qualifications of a disciple. I put the question; are you not under immediate and undeniable obligations to accept Christ as the only Sa-

viour? When He says; "take my yoke upon you;" are you not bound to comply? When He says; "come take up the cross and follow *me*;" can you deny that it is your duty to bear that cross? But this obligation which you admit, involves consequentially that other; viz., of confessing Him before men. How can you say that you are not bound to confess Him, without saying at the same time, that you are not bound to believe in Him? You are truly and imperatively required both to believe in Him, and to confess Him.

The nature of our religion is entirely misunderstood, and so are our personal responsibilities, when we put over upon any one class, the duties which belong equally to *all*. How common is it to hear a person say; "having made a profession of religion, *you* are bound to do so and so. It would not be right or consistent for *you* to do what *I* may do. *You* have bound yourself to a particu-

lar course, and have come under special obligations from which I am exempt. I have never made the vows which you have, and am therefore more free to do as I please.”

Here is truth in regard to the Christian, and yet a fallacy in regard to the objector. The Christian may do *any* thing that is *right*. His vows do not forbid him to indulge in any pleasures which are innocent, nor to engage in any pursuit that is lawful and honorable. The same may be said of the non-professor. But neither of them may do that which is *wrong*. The Christian,—to cite a familiar example,—may go to the theatre if it is *right* to go there. But if it is corrupting to his moral affections—as who can doubt it would be—then is he bound to eschew such amusements. I ask then, in all honesty, if it would be more injurious to a Christian than to a non-professor, to mix himself up with such associates, and witness such exhibitions? I speak in-

dependently now of example. I admit that it would be more injurious to the cause of piety for the Christian to venture upon such unhallowed ground than for some others. But if it is an injury to the morals, and perilous to the soul, it would be, apart from the example, as sinful and as wrong for the one as for the other.

I apply the same principle to positive as to moral duties—to that which we ought to do, as well as to that which we ought *not* to do. I feel bound to confess Christ before men. Why? Because Christ has commanded it. He has commanded me to believe in Him—to obey his precepts, and to confess Him. But have these commands been delivered especially to *me*? Has He written out my name, and said, “*Here*—you, having been a great sinner, are bound to repent and believe; and under a sense of gratitude for all my love, you are bound also to come out before the world and make con-

fession of my name." Is this said to *me* especially? But if what is said to *me*, is said to *all*, then the duty of confessing Christ is not laid upon *me alone*. If the obligation to confess Him is involved in the duty of believing on Him, there is not a person who reads these lines, but is bound to confess Him before men; for there is not one such, who is not under obligations to obey *all* his precepts. Wherever the Gospel goes, it carries the whole weight of its authority and its claims upon every soul that hears it.

Reader, thou art bound to be a disciple of Christ—to renounce the world as thy chief pursuit—to deny thyself, and take up thy cross—to be all that a Christian should be, and to do all that a Christian should do; and therefore, *thou art bound to confess Christ before men*. It is vain to plead that you have not the qualifications. You ought to have them. There is no reason outside

of your own bosom, why you do not possess them. You may deem yourself excused from many duties which you assign to the professor of religion; and you may think yourself excusable for indulging in many things which you say would be wrong in him; but let me tell thee, in all sincerity and faithfulness, that in this judgment there is a terrible fallacy. The position in which you stand, compared with that professor, is one which involves a guilt upon your soul, from which he is exempt; which leaves at *your* door a responsibility which lies not at his. He has performed one duty which you have left undone. Whatever faults he may have, or whatever inconsistencies you may attribute to him, justly or unjustly, you must admit that his conduct in one respect condemns you. He has confessed Christ before men. This duty you have yet to discharge.



## CHAPTER II.

### THOSE WHO ARE UNDER PECULIAR OBLIGATIONS TO CONFESS CHRIST.

Several classes under special obligations to confess Christ.—Those who have been consecrated in baptism.—Objection, that they are not qualified, considered.—Such cases not without hope.—Effect of negligence, in stupefying conscience, and leading to the practice of vice.—Mournful departures of baptized children.—Should still not be given up.—Every effort should be made to reclaim them, on the ground of their connection with the church.

THERE are several classes of persons who are under not only the general obligation alluded to, to confess Christ; but, in respect to whom, there is a very special claim to be openly and publicly on the Lord's side.

*The first whom I would address, are those who have been consecrated by baptism,*

*and educated in the Christian faith.* A profession, in one sense, has been made for such, and in their behalf. The parent, in the baptismal consecration, recognized God's right to them; and gave them over, as it were, into his hands. In that act, he said, that the child was a sacred trust from God; and he promised to bring it up for Him. By the same act, the parent declared his belief that the child was a sinner, needing the blood of atonement, and the washing of regeneration. With this view, he affixed "the seal of the righteousness of faith" upon it; recognizing the new covenant in Christ's blood; and saying to the Good Shepherd; "here is a lamb; take it in thy arms, and carry it henceforth in thy bosom."

In consistency with this early consecration, we will suppose that a course of religious training is faithfully entered upon, and diligently pursued. The child is taught its relations to God; first as a creature; next

as a creature fallen—a sinner; and then the way of life is laid open, and it is shown that repentance and faith are the conditions of salvation. As the child grows into intelligence, the duty of self-consecration is clearly stated, and frequently and affectionately urged. Can all this be in vain? No; it is not in vain. The young immortal feels its power. He knows that upon him there rests an unusual weight of obligation to confess Christ. In a sense, he is Christ's *now*. In the act of parental consecration he became so. My parents, he may well say, have given me to Christ; and why should I not give myself to Him? Why should I not recognize this claim by confessing Him before men?

Ah; but there are impediments. I am not qualified. I feel but little on the subject. I am not sympathetically with Christ. I have a deadness and indifference of heart and soul on religion. Even when the Lord's

table is spread, and I am urged to look on those emblems of his love,—how carelessly can I turn away to my worldly pleasures and enjoyments!

Mournful as this case is, it is not without hope. For it is to set the mind upon just such a train of reflection, that the child has been brought, by the baptismal consecration, into this relation to the church of God; and it is to lead him, as not seldom it does, to make the subject one of serious self-examination. In this way and by this means, how many have sought and found the spiritual qualifications for membership; and happily having found them, they assume the covenant for themselves, and confess Christ before men.

Failing to do this, there are many, we are sorry to say, who live on in guilt and worldliness, as if no such obligations rested upon them.

Were you consecrated in your infancy?

we ask them. Oh, yes, my parents have so informed me. Were you taught your need of a Saviour, and your obligations to serve Him? Yes, these duties and obligations were often and affectionately set before me. Why, then, we ask again, have you not confessed Christ? The answer probably will be; I am not yet a Christian. But such an answer, after such a consecration, and such a training, cannot be given, methinks, without a pang of conscious guilt. If any ought to be a Christian, you, the baptized child, ought to be. If they who never had this pious tutelage, are guilty for not believing in and confessing Christ, what shall be said of your course and your account, upon whom from your first being, has fallen the breath of prayer and the counsels of Christian and parental love? *You* ought to confess Christ. If your parents are dead, you owe it to their memory; if alive, to their parental anxiety and faithfulness. But you owe

it, above all, to *God*. You are his. You are not your *own*. Recognize this claim by giving Him your heart, and confessing his Son Jesus Christ before men.

## CHAPTER III.

### WANT OF EVIDENCE.

Want of satisfactory evidence of piety.—A common reason for not confessing Christ.—Doubts and fears.—Sincerity of such.—Should have Christian sympathy.—The internal emotion must be expressed by the external duty.—However weak the faith, it should not be left to languish.—So of love to Christ; if felt in ever so small a degree, should be cultivated.—Soliloquy of the doubter.—If his hope be feeble, and his love sincere though small, still bound to express them by the outward sign.—Christ's command.—Obedience the test of love.—Lying at the pool.—Pitiable case.—Hope of relief, in what.—Satan's temptations on the point of duty.—Evidence of Christian character must wane if duty be not discharged.—How to augment the Christian graces.—Viz: by their exercise.—How express our love to an earthly friend.—The same in regard to our Heavenly Friend.—The only consistent course.

*There is another class of persons, who seem to possess the qualifications, and to feel the obligation of confessing Christ before men; but who hold back on the ground*

*that they want a clearer evidence of their interest in Him.*

They are not prepared to take this stand on the Lord's side, because they have so many doubts and fears as to whether they are really disciples. If you could put them at ease on this point—that is, if you could make it certain to them that they had experienced a change of heart, they would come forward and make the required confession without any hesitation or delay. No duty, they will tell us, do they so much long to discharge—no privilege, in their opinion, would be more precious. All that they are waiting for is, for more satisfactory evidence.

We honor the integrity—we sympathize with the feelings of such persons. Yet must we say, in all truthfulness, that they are not likely, according to present appearances, either to reach the point at which they aim,



or to discharge a duty which they admit to be obligatory.

Either they are Christians, or they are *not*. If they *are*, the internal evidence is one characteristic, and the external duty is *another*. In all Christians, the *internal* evidence — including emotions, sympathies and principles, — as what we love or hate; what we choose or refuse; what we prefer or delight in most; views of ourselves as sinful, and of Christ as a precious and all-sufficient Saviour; the internal evidence arising from such experiences, is always supposed to be of sufficient strength at least to lead to the performance of the more important external religious duties.

Faith may be very weak; it may be even overshadowed by habitual doubts and misgivings; but nevertheless, where it exists in the smallest possible measure, it should be evidenced by *works*. It should not be hid under a bushel, but set upon a candle-

stick; in other and more literal language, it should be professed before men.

The love of Christ, too, may in particular instances be of somewhat doubtful existence. Many things may occur to absorb, for a season, the sympathies and affections away from Him, and stimulate them in the direction of the creature; but I do not see how, if love exist at all, it can be so low as never to be a realized emotion.

I have heard persons use language like the following: "I think I do at times love the Saviour; but then again I lose all sense of his preciousness." If this be a true statement of the feelings, it is one, as I think, which can be averred only by a Christian. An impenitent, unconverted person, could not in honesty make such a declaration. He could not say, "I think I do at times love the Saviour."

Now if this occasional emotion be *real*, it is evidence that a change of heart has taken

place — a change from indifference to love; and in my view, it lays the person who feels it under obligation to confess Christ before men. “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Our Lord does not say, if ye love me with *seraphic* love; with unabated, uninterrupted love; with a love that never consciously languishes: He does not say that your love must be as glowing as that of a Mary Magdalene, or as uniform as that of the Apostle John; but if ye love me, in the *least degree*; and especially if ye mourn because the emotion is so occasional or so languid; “if ye love me,” then “keep my commandments.” And what *are* these, his commandments? They are many; but this is one—and it is prominent in the list; “*do this in remembrance of me.*” “Confess me before men.” “Be not ashamed of me, and of my words.” Love, in its feeblest measure, cannot be excused from compli-

ance with these obligations. It surely would not wish to be.

The Christian is made up of the external duty, as well as the internal emotion. What he is *within*, God knows; but his outward deportment is no less a part of him than his inward experience. To constitute him a consistent Christian, both must be united. What he *does*, or what he refuses to do, is as important, in its influence upon others and upon the cause of Christ, as what he *feels* is upon himself, and upon his own serenity of mind.

Here is a plain duty, obligatory on every person who has faith in the feeblest measure, and love to Christ in the smallest degree; viz., the duty of confessing Him before men. This perhaps they admit; but they are waiting to obtain more evidence. They have been in this waiting posture perhaps for years. They have been lying at the pool; yet no angel has descended, and

no relief been obtained. They have no more faith, no deeper love. Not a particle more light has fallen upon them; and their case seems as pitiable as that of the man who had lain in the porches of Bethesda, with a malady of more than thirty years' duration. What shall we say to such? What counsels shall be given them? Experience tells them that they gain nothing by waiting. I see no other hope of relief or of spiritual improvement, but to take the proposed step—to confess Christ—to go cordially into every plan for the promotion of his cause and kingdom. How do they know but this is the very step needed to lead them into a clearer light, and to place their hopes on a firmer basis! If Satan, operating through their fears, or upon a disposition naturally timid and distrustful, can succeed in keeping them back from the discharge of so important a duty, and from the enjoyment of so precious a privilege, he will

use all his malignant arts to accomplish his malignant purpose.

Surely the evidence of Christian character will not increase; as by their own confession it *has* not increased, so long as they mingle with the unsympathizing world, and only give an occasional attention to their religious duties. How are the evidences of personal piety to augment? By solitary musings? By neglecting the commanded duties? By trying to keep the lamp burning in the solitary chambers of the soul? This ordinarily is not the way to get light and comfort. This self-inspection is important in its place; but there are positive duties, and a Christian activity, which are quite as important, in the development of Christian character, and in the confirmation of the Christian hope. Let not these be overlooked or neglected.

## HOW THE EVIDENCE MAY BE STRENGTHENED.

When there is a feeble faith, the only way to strengthen it, is to exercise it. It is a law that applies to the moral as well as the physical part of our nature, that exercise strengthens. A timid person may become bold by resisting his natural timidity, and throwing himself into circumstances where courage is required. A penurious man may become generous by forcing himself, as it were, to give out of his store whenever the occasion comes up, or when a direct application is made for his charity. If the one shrinks from all occasions requiring courage, he will grow more timid; and if the other closes his purse strings when called upon to give, *he* will grow more penurious.

The same law, I take it, applies to the Christian virtues. Here is one weak in faith; so much so as to be filled with doubts; and on this ground declines taking

a step which shall give the world the impression that he is a Christian. He is afraid to trust God for help in the discharge of a known and admitted duty. "If I could be sure that I was a Christian," says this doubting one, "I would not hesitate to confess Christ." But how is this assurance to come? By not doing what our Lord commands? By waiting, and lingering, and doubting? By taking no step which will test or strengthen one's faith?

Suppose, on the contrary, this person should say, "I will do my duty; I will venture to trust Christ in the important step which I propose to take, and which I ought to take; viz., of confessing Him before men:" and suppose, with this determination, he should go forward in the path which is prescribed; would not this exercise of confidence augment his faith, and so tend to liberate his mind from its distressing thralldom?



This confession is an act of faith as well as a proof of love. It is saying, "I believe Him to be a divine Saviour. I believe that 'He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through Him.' I am persuaded that if I do what He commands, He will uphold me in the discharge of my duty. He has commanded me to profess His name. Will He not strengthen and sustain me in the performance of this duty?"

Such is the language of humble confidence, while attempting to fulfil a known obligation. It is an exercise of faith; and the very act gives tone and vigor to the Christian character.

Instead, therefore, of waiting for more evidence, whilst declining to do what is expressly commanded—a policy which Satan approves, and perhaps suggests, and which never, as I think, can be successful—the best plan is, to find out what is required in the way of active obedience, and commence

at once ; relying for success on the promised grace of God. "To know of the doctrine," our Lord says we must begin "to do his will." The way to gain strength as well as to get knowledge, is to exercise one's self in the duties which Christianity assigns ; and then, at every stage of our progress, we shall find increasing light, and we shall tread the path of life with firmer step ; realizing practically the truth of the declaration, "the righteous shall hold on his way ; and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger."

I would apply the same principle to other Christian graces ; as, for example, love to the Saviour. You say that you hope you have experienced this emotion. By your admission, however, it is very feeble ; and is often overborne by the conflicting claims of the creature. Though there are times when you think Christ is precious, yet have you not that warm and glowing affection

which would justify you, as you think, in an open and public declaration of it before the world.

How shall this love be augmented until it reach the desired intensity? The course you have been pursuing is not calculated, as I think, to increase it. On the contrary, you will lose, I apprehend, in a great measure, the conscious possession of *any* love to the Redeemer.

How do we express our love to an earthly friend? By *outward acts*, of course. If that friend have laid upon us any specific favors to grant, or duties to discharge; do we not hasten to grant the one, and to perform the other? Is not our compliance prompt as well as cordial? While thus engaged, are not our thoughts and our affections drawn forth towards the absent one? We thus not only gratify an existing affection, but, by these very labors and sacrifices, we call it into more vigorous activity. Suppose

you should say; "I will defer the discharge of these obligations to my friend, until I have the evidence of a warmer love to him," do you think it likely that a warmer affection, would by such a course ever be realized? Would not your friend have reason to doubt the sincerity of your love at all? And would not the little love which you profess to feel, languish at least, if not be annihilated by such delinquency?

Not otherwise is it in relation to your best—your Heavenly Friend. He has said, "if ye love me, keep my commandments." Foremost among these commandments, is, that of *confessing* Him. It is this cross which you are required to take up. He puts it upon you, to say, whether you will ostensibly become his disciple! "For you, and for your salvation, He bore the persecutions—the scoffs—the cruelties, incident to his mission." He endured even the cross, despising the shame. Was there ever sorrow

like his ; was there ever love so deep ? And now all that He requires in return is, that, forsaking your sins, you cleave to Him, and profess his name before men. Suppose you refuse until you obtain stronger evidence that you love Him ; will you, by this abstinence from duty, be likely to obtain such evidence ? Will your love increase by disobedience ? Will the Saviour be as likely to augment it, while neglecting his commands, as when following them ?

How clear is it, then, that the only way you have to pursue, is, to do what this great friend enjoins ; believing, that he will fulfil his part of the blessed contract, if you will honor Him, by a conscientious discharge of *yours*. But take the other course, by waiting for more evidence ; and you will find, that your hopes, instead of being realized, will, in this respect, grow fainter ; that your moral energy will grow weaker, temptations will thicken upon you, and the soul be more and

more irresolute in regard to a public decision for Christ. Not being a professor of religion, Satan will suggest, that such and such things may be indulged with impunity and without inconsistency; and so you may be allured into paths which lead by no circuitous route to worldliness and to sin. How unlikely is it, that evidence of love to Christ will be on the increase whilst you are neglecting a known and acknowledged duty, suffering under the upbraidings of conscience, and exposing yourself to the tempter's wiles!

## CHAPTER IV.

### OTHER OBJECTIONS.

The admission of duty.—Held back by the fear of dishonoring a profession.—The apparent virtue of this.—Other ways of injuring the cause of Christ.—Possible selfishness and pride in refusing on such grounds to confess Christ.—This illustrated.—Objections to the course under consideration.—First; presents a possible evil as an excuse for non-compliance with an express divine command.—Secondly; looks too much to our own strength;—thirdly, because of the consciousness or uncharitableness mingled with it in regard to the supposed inconsistencies of professors.—Not sufficient ground for the insinuation.—A reasonable amount of consistency considering all things.—The mind should get clear of fears in regard to what may be.—More trust in the promised grace of God.

THERE are others, who, by their own admission ought to confess Christ before men; but who are holding back, through fear, that they may dishonor their profession.

This reason for not confessing Him, has in it some apparent virtue. It assumes that

the individual has a very great regard for Him; so great as under the circumstances, actually to induce him to withhold obedience to a plain command. He professes to feel a deep concern for the honor of religion; and does not wish, by any possibility to become the conscious, or even unconscious instrument of injuring it. Such persons do not seem to remember however, that it is possible to inflict an injury upon religion and to dishonor Christ, by other means and in other ways than by a discreditable profession of his name. It were well also for them to scrutinize closely this motive; and see if, at the bottom, there lies not some element of pride or selfishness. It may not be altogether the honor of religion for which they are concerned. It is possible, that the disgrace to themselves, by such an inconsistency, has quite as much influence as the wound which would be thereby inflicted on the cause of Christ. Some such trains of



thought as this may be in their minds; "If, in making a profession of religion, I were sure, that I should prove a consistent and exemplary Christian; so that no person should have any cause to question my sincerity or to criticise my conduct, *then*, it would do for me to go forward; but what a disgrace it would bring upon me, and my friends, if I should prove a backslider, or subject myself to the criticisms of the world or the discipline of the church! How mortifying it would be!" Very true; but who does not see, that in such thoughts, there is a mingling of pride and selfishness, rather than a predominant regard for the honor of religion?

The ground taken, is, that we may do or say something, which will bring discredit on a christian profession; and therefore we will not make such profession.

I object to this course, *first*; because it presents a possible evil, as an excuse for

non-compliance with an express divine command.

Were you to confess Christ before men—an obligation which you admit lies upon you—how do you know that you would be left to dishonor Him by any gross or overt act of sin? It is possible you might; but if you humbly and sincerely enter upon the discharge of this duty, there is every reason to believe you would *not*. Indeed you might well trust in the promised strength of Christ to keep you from such delinquency.

I object to it, secondly; because it assumes that you are *yourself* the depository of spiritual strength; whilst it implies no small amount of unbelief in the promises of God. Are you not dependent on the grace of God, for the hope that you now possess, however feeble that hope may be? Can you perform any duty without God's help? And if *not*; of course, you cannot in your own strength fulfil the duties of a public profession. This

being the case, your trust for consistency of conduct as a professor of religion, would be wholly in the grace of God. Had you a proper sense of this, you would not refuse to confess Christ on the ground, that you might dishonor Him. You would reason thus: "If it depends on my own strength of resolution, I am sure that I shall fail. I have no strength to walk the narrow road but that which God gives. But He has commanded me to do a certain thing—to confess Him before men—will he not therefore give me grace to lead a consistent life, if I sincerely comply with his command. May I not trust Him, whilst taking the very step which He has marked out for me?"

This is putting the subject, as I think, in its true and proper light. Dishonor Him you would, I have no doubt, were you to go forward in your own strength; but if you trust in his promised grace, you may take

even this important step without fear or misgiving.

I object, thirdly, to the course in question, because, many times, it is accompanied with some degree of censoriousness towards those who have made a public profession of religion. Some, I admit are not disposed to insinuate any thing against Christians on the ground of their irregular walk; but have fears in regard only to themselves, should *they* proceed to make an open profession. But others there are, who say, that they see so much inconsistency, so many delinquencies in those who are in the church, whereby religion is brought into disrepute, that they fear to assume a responsibility which may involve them in the same disgraceful charge.

I would remark in general, that there is not sufficient ground for the insinuation. Considering the numbers who join the church, the proportion of consistent believers, is quite as great, as we might reasonably ex-

pect. But a truly charitable spirit will not be disposed to base upon the delinquencies of others an excuse for neglecting the duty which Christ has laid upon *him*. Duty, it should ever be remembered, is a personal matter. If others fail in the discharge of it, is that any reason why *you* should not even attempt to fulfil it? True, there are inconsistencies in the church, as there are in every other community of people bound together by rules and mutual obligations. These inconsistencies we deplore. We admit that some may have mistaken their own characters when making their profession of religion; but with all these concessions, we still insist, that there is an amount of consistent piety, which should encourage you to come forward and join the household of faith.

I could not wish to rid your mind entirely of fears in regard to your future adherence to Christ; but I would not have you make

them an excuse for neglecting a duty which your conscience suggests and which our Lord explicitly enjoins. I would say to you; if you have a hope that you are Christ's, come out from the world and declare it. Confess Him before men. If others have not honored Him, as in your opinion they ought to have done, be it *your* aim to set them an example. Show that there is one, at least, who means to lead a consistent life. "But that is the very thing," say you, "respecting which I have so much fear and anxiety." Still I recommend you, even with such fears, to make the confession which your Lord requires. These fears may be needful. They may suggest your own conscious weakness;—a feeling which you need to cultivate, and which may lead you to look away from yourself to Him who said, "abide in me and I in you, for without *me* ye can do nothing." It is not by your own resolution or strength, that you are to

walk the walk of faith. You are to go up, "leaning on your beloved." He has promised, "to keep you from falling and to present you at last faultless before the presence of his Father."

4\*

## CHAPTER V.

### WAITING FOR OTHERS.

The wife waiting for her husband.—For relatives generally.—The course a natural one.—Some apology for it.—Will waiting expedite their decision?—Circumstances where it would be proper to wait.—Such circumstances stated.—Opposition of relatives a great cross.—Duty to Christ paramount nevertheless.—Relations and friends more likely to be influenced by going forward than by waiting.—Consistency.—Importance of taking a stand.—Its direct effect.—Sad examples of waiting for companions.—Backslidings and worldliness.—No true peace of mind whilst refusing to discharge a known duty.—Such enjoy neither religion nor the world.—Exhortation to the performance of duty.

ANOTHER class still there is, who, though they admit the obligation of confessing Christ, yet are disposed to wait, until some relatives or companions shall unite with them in the act.

The wife, for instance, who hopes that in



heart, she is on the Lord's side, and intends to be so by a visible profession, is holding back on the ground that her husband may one day unite with her in the discharge of the same duty. There may peradventure have been some serious tendencies in the husband; tokens as she thinks of good, which induce her to postpone this acknowledged duty for the present. She hopes and almost believes that the time will come, when, hand in hand, they may go up to the altar of God and make the consecration. A wish so natural, even benevolent, leads to a belief that delay in such circumstances would be at least pardonable in the sight of Heaven. And we feel disposed to apologize for a course which conjugal affection seems so naturally to suggest. Nothing could be more desirable than for the husband and wife to unite in this solemn act; and commence together the journey towards heaven.

But the question is, how much probability

is there, that where one of the parties has religious principle, and the other has not, this waiting will expedite the decision of the latter in regard to this important duty?

I can conceive of circumstances where it might be desirable and even proper to wait a reasonable time, the one for the other; as where both being under religious impressions, one obtains hope, whilst the other is still struggling under convictions; or where both being hopefully on the Lord's side; the one may wish for time to examine more fully the evidences of piety; but in general this waiting—especially where there is no manifest or deep interest on the subject of religion, is in my view one of Satan's devices to impede the growth of piety where it *does* exist.

Where the parties are in such close relationship, the external act of the one has great influence on the feelings and actions of the other. If the one carries out consist-

ently the principles of Christianity, the other will be deeply impressed with the reality and necessity of personal piety. But if there is any hesitation or half way compliance in respect to known duty, the force of such example will be to discredit the sincerity of the professing Christian. Hence it is, that an individual is far more likely to be savingly affected, far more likely to be brought to a speedy conviction of his own need of piety, by the exhibition of a consistent and decided compliance with all the commands of Christ, including of course that of publicly confessing Him.

It is a cross, I am well aware, especially, when it is known or supposed, that the step will not be agreeable to those with whom we are closely related; and the tendency is to wish to please or to propitiate even at some personal sacrifice. Many a one has held back from confessing Christ on this ground; and not unfrequently has the apology been, that this delay is solely in the

hope, that the relatives may either be less opposed, or may themselves become partakers of the benefit. Seldom however, is this hope realized by such delay. So long as we refuse to discharge a known duty, our influence over those whom we wish to benefit by our example, is proportionably diminished. The effect is this. "You are a Christian, you say; but you do not perform all the duties of a Christian. One of these duties is, to confess Christ before men; but you are trying to be a Christian *without* confessing Him." Is there not here an inconsistency; and, though it may not be spoken of, is it not perceived? Will the individual whom you hope to influence, be as likely to feel the force of your example by *not* doing what our Lord commands, as by a full and hearty compliance?

Go forward—take up your cross; and do your duty consistently as will appear; and then on the conscience and heart of all who

know you, or who are intimately connected with you, will be felt a moral pressure, which will lead them to appreciate your motives—to admit your sincerity, and possibly to follow your example.

Take your stand on the high ground of individual responsibility. Remember that every one—man, woman, and child, has got to bear each his own burden; and that “every one is to give account of himself unto God.” Take this stand, I say, and your example will operate with power; perhaps with *saving* power on those in whose salvation you are interested. Others are not made better by our delinquences. On the contrary, they are the more likely to persist in their sins and in their neglect of duty. But if we do what conscience and the word of God suggest; our friends, even though they may not like our course, will admit its consistency, and will feel its power.

Would we take our relatives along with

us to heaven, we must show them the path; not by pointing to it, but by walking in it. To induce *them* to confess Christ before men, we must ourselves so confess Him. If we would "allure to brighter worlds, we must ourselves lead the way." "Come thou with us," must be the language of our example, "and we will do thee good."

I have known young persons, hopefully converted, who have held back from a profession, on the same ground, viz: waiting in the hope that some dear companion may be induced to unite with them in the consecrating act. This is a natural and even innocent feeling, provided it be indulged within a reasonable limit. I would not have *any* person, young or old, come forward to make a profession prematurely; nor until some considerable time shall have elapsed for instruction and self-examination. There is danger both ways. Some, no doubt, are hurried into the church by the unwise urgency of Christians;

or by the equally unwise policy of ministers. Others again, owing to some peculiar timidity, or placed under some embarrassments of a personal or social nature, are kept back so long from the discharge of this duty, that they almost make up their minds that they can never fulfil it. Both these extremes are to be avoided. To make a profession as soon as the light of hope seems to dawn, or some evidences of a change of heart are apparent, would be exceedingly indiscreet. There should be time to examine that hope—to weigh in the balances of God's word these evidences. The convert should know something of the power of the world; how much influence it yet has upon him; and whether he has a faith that will overcome it. On the other hand, if the person, with a hope in Christ, and some degree, however small, of love to Him; still waiting for more evidence, or held back in the expectation that some others may be induced

to come with him; if from such or any other causes, he delays a profession of religion for months and even years, he is certainly not in the way of duty, nor can he expect to enjoy true peace of mind.

It is not an uncommon thing to find young persons in this state of mind. Ask them if they have a hope in the Saviour; they will answer, yes, a feeble one. Enquire into the history of their religious experience, and it may date back to some period when God poured out his spirit, and touched their own hearts with others, and led them to entertain a hope of having passed from death unto life. But why did you not make a profession of religion at that time, when your hope was new and bright, and your religious affections warm? The answer will be, perhaps, it was my intention to have done so, but I was peculiarly situated and associated. I had some companions who were also seriously disposed; and I determined to wait and see how



it would go with them. I thought it probable, they would unite with me in the consecrating act. But they did not seem to reach the point where I stood. They lost their serious impressions, and contrary to my expectations, they became as gay and careless as ever. So, instead of doing my duty, I deferred a profession of religion until I fell into a state of indifference and coldness which seemed to forbid my going forward. Here is an experience not very uncommon. And what has been the condition of a soul in such circumstances? Any thing but happy. There is in that soul perhaps a faint spark of grace; but it is smothered under feelings, and habits and delinquencies which the gospel forbids. The individual has not that freedom and recklessness in the pursuits of pleasure, which *they* have, who have never had any such religious experience. And when the Lord's table is spread, and the invitation goes out to those who love the

Saviour, to come and partake, how mournfully on the heart strikes that invitation! Many a pang is experienced in the secret bosom. Many a sharp twinge of conscience is felt.

If this should meet the eye of any young person whose case is here described, I pray you to look at it, and enquire what is now your duty to Christ and to your own soul? And if any are tempted to postpone a profession of religion on the ground that some companions may be brought in, and so make the matter more social and to you more easy; let them not join their duty with any such contingency, nor postpone it for any such consideration. It is a policy which will prove disastrous to your spiritual interest. Those companions may never come in. They may drag you back and drag you down with them, if you allow yourself to be thus influenced. But if you come out and confess Christ before the world, and before them,

how likely will it be to strike conviction into their minds, and lead them to choose the same Saviour, and walk with you to the same glorious heaven. "He hath taken my feet out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and set them upon a rock, and established my goings, and put a new song in my mouth; *many* shall see it and shall fear and shall trust in the Lord." Yes, many shall see it. They will see your profession, if you put it on a candlestick; and they will be led to ask themselves, why should not I also be there? and thus may they be led to trust in the same Lord, and to honor Him by the same open profession.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HINDRANCES.

The self-denial involved in a public profession of religion.—Relinquishment of pleasures that are vain and sinful.—Reasoning of the young on this point.—The point examined.—What is reasonable and what is not, in regard to pleasurable enjoyments.—The pleurist convicted of absurdity.—Religion requires nothing unreasonable, either in her commands or her prohibitions.—A Christian's tastes and sympathies the result of a change of heart.—The prejudice against an open profession in many respects unfounded.—An appeal to the experience of Christians.—The unconverted plead they have no relish for the duties of piety.—Their tastes are for other things.—An important admission.—Putting the subject in the true light. Effect of this admission on the conscience.

IN the order of time, the possession of piety very naturally and properly precedes the profession of it. But in the minds of most persons, the impediments are practically the same with regard to both. To be

a Christian, involves the obligation of confessing Christ before men; and such confession implies that in heart we have accepted Him.

A public profession of faith is supposed to bring the individual into such relations to the church and to the world, as oblige him to deny himself certain indulgences which he had before practised, and to perform certain duties which he had before neglected. This is well understood. Hence this self-denial and these christian duties, so long as the heart is not interested in religious things, are considered as inseparable barriers both to embracing religion, and also to professing it.

We may say, then, that the *love of pleasure* stands as an obstruction, especially in the minds of the young.

By confessing Christ, we are supposed to renounce the ordinary pleasures of the world. Without much discrimination, this

is viewed as a most difficult, if not unreasonable demand. "Are not the pleasures of the world given us for our enjoyment," it is asked! "And have we not the tastes and tendencies which are gratified by such indulgences? But if we become religious, and make a profession of our faith, we shall have to give up all these gratifications."

Reasoning in this way, the young mind takes up a prejudice against religion, and thus places a powerful obstacle between the soul and its salvation.

Let us look at this point. To relinquish pleasures which are injurious to the mind, or the body, or the soul, cannot be considered an unreasonable sacrifice. On the contrary, it is unreasonable to indulge them. To occupy one's self in allowable pleasures, immoderately as to time and measure, is also unreasonable. Now religion forbids only those pleasures which *are* injurious to the soul or the body; and in pleasures

which are allowable, she simply restrains us from the *excess*. The christian religion does this and no more. It says, "Any earthly pleasure which injures not the soul or the body, you are permitted to enjoy. But in this you are to use and not abuse the concession. You are to give to earthly pleasures the place and the time which their value and importance require. You are not to find in them your highest happiness; nor to occupy in their pursuit valuable time, which ought to be given to the higher duties you owe to God and to your fellow men." Is this unreasonable? Is it not far more unreasonable, morally absurd even, to rush madly after pleasures which corrupt the mind, harden the heart, and carnalize, so to speak, the whole soul? Were we sent into this world to lead a life of mere pleasure? Religion places this subject of duty and pleasure, in its true and reasonable light. It is an entire mistake to sup-

pose that in embracing religion, or in confessing Christ, you give up one single pleasure that is worth retaining, or come under obligations to practice one particle of self-denial which abridges your real happiness. It is that arch fiend — the great deceiver, who tells you this lie; and who persuades you that to embrace religion and confess Christ, will cut you off from all rational pleasure. It is not so. It only mingles duty and pleasure in such due and reasonable proportions, as constitutes a basis of pure and permanent happiness.

I admit that the person who makes a profession of the christian faith, with right feelings and principles, takes very different views from those usually entertained, of what constitutes true happiness. Such an one has undoubtedly lost a relish for many things in which he once delighted; and takes pleasure in many things which once had no attractiveness. This is a necessary result



of his change of heart. But ask him if he is less happy! Enquire if his pleasures are not as many and as refined as before! In fact, he has all sensual and social pleasures which are innocent and allowable; and superadded to these, he has the calm delight of a conscience void of offence, and of a God reconciled to his soul.

The prejudice therefore against confessing Christ on the ground assumed, is, I repeat, unfounded and unreasonable. The whole question is narrowed down to this, viz: whether we shall find our pleasure in the merely sensual and social part of our nature; or whether, with a reasonable reference to these, we shall cultivate and enjoy, as a principal source of our happiness, the spiritual and immortal part?

I dwell somewhat on this, because so many young people are deceived in regard to it. Having tried to some extent, what earthly pleasures can do for them, and as

I have no doubt with some degree of disappointment, let them try what religion will do! Let them come and drink at this full and pure fountain! All who have tasted of the good word of God, unite in declaring that they never before knew what true happiness was, and never had so keen a relish for all the allowable pleasures of life. I appeal to the experience of thousands of young persons, who have exchanged the pleasures of sin for the pure enjoyment of religion; whether one moment now spent in communion with God and in fellowship with his people, does not outweigh whole years of mere sensual delight!

But I am met perhaps by the reply; "I do not relish the pleasures of religion; and I *do* relish those of the world. What enjoyment I have, is found almost wholly in earthly pleasures. If I read the Bible, it is from a conviction that I ought occasionally so to do. I have not the same pleasure in

it which I have in reading a popular book. If I go to church, I go because my parents wish it, or because others go, or because it would be disreputable not to go; but I really take very little satisfaction in the service. And as to prayer meetings, I have not the least interest in or sympathy with them. But I do enjoy the gay circle, and the exhilarations connected with it. Now if I confess Christ, I must do violence to these tastes and propensities, and I must acquire an interest in scenes and services which at present are wholly unattractive."

This I acknowledge is putting the subject in its true light. Here, then, lies the impediment; viz., a love of earthly or sensual pleasures. It comes to this: whether these pleasures of sense are to be pursued to gratify self, or to be supplanted by those of religion, to honor Christ; whether you will be "a lover of pleasures," and take all the consequences; or a self-denying Christian,

with expectation of the life that is eternal? In this respect, and regarding this decision, our Lord says, "whosoever taketh not up his cross and followeth me, cannot be my disciple."

Religion not only requires her votaries to give up some practices, which worldlings and pleasurists pursue; but where her sway is admitted, she inclines the heart voluntarily to forsake them. A person who has tasted of *her* cup, cannot drink with any relish that of the sensualist. Why does not the Christian frequent the theatre and the ball room, and other haunts of the sensual and the gay? Not simply because it would be discreditable to his profession to be found there; but for another reason also,—he has no *taste* for them; or rather, he has acquired a taste for pleasures so much more refined and soul-satisfying, that it would be positive misery to be compelled to revert to them. So that embracing Christ and con-

fessing Him, supplies the soul with a new and far higher class of enjoyments than they can boast, who assume the false position that religion strips us of all rational pleasure.

If then you refuse to confess Christ, put your refusal on the true grounds. Say that you refuse, because you love the pleasures of the world, and that you do not relish those of true piety. You will not follow Christ, for the same reason that the young man in the Gospel would not. He had great possessions. He loved the world, and found in its service his chief delight. He would not forsake it, even to follow our Lord in the path to heaven. You cannot give up the vain pleasures of earth. Here is the very point into which the soul is pressed. How uneasy must be the conscience, how disturbed the peace, if such be the position you assume! What an uncomfortable feeling you must have, in view of

the short-lived pleasures of earth, the danger of losing the soul, and the constant pressure of a duty which is declined on mere selfish grounds.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SOCIAL HINDRANCES.

The circle of companions.—Their mutual interest, and the principles which bind them together.—Religion ignored.—Difficulty of breaking the circle.—Pride and shame operative.—Supposed effect of a disclosure of religious feeling or decision.—A great struggle ere it can be done.—Yet glorious and satisfactory when it is done.—Business circle.—The man of the world, how implicated.—His difficulty in taking the step proposed.—Sensation created by it, &c.—Self-ignorance in regard to the cause of his not breaking away.—The fear of man a great snare.—Power which Satan has over our false shame to prevent the discharge of duty.—Many kept back, even from taking the first step in religion, by such fears.—Another expedient, viz: trying to be religious without making a profession.—The absurdity and the impossibility of succeeding in such a course.

ANOTHER obstacle in the way of confessing Christ, is found in social and business engagements.

The circle of companions among whom

you are classed, are perhaps of a character which renders any such step as we propose quite difficult to take. They are without any religious sympathies. All their bearing—all their conversation, partakes of a gay or worldly spirit. The association seems to be constituted with the tacit understanding that the subject of religion shall be wholly ignored. Politics, literature, amusements, the weather, health, friends, criticisms on character, on dress, on books, in short, all the topics usually interesting to frivolous or worldly minds, form the staple of conversation; whilst the subject of religion is something with which they have nothing to do, and which they regard as interesting only to religious people. For one thus associated to introduce so grave and important a subject, would be considered as a disturber of their fellowship: as striking a chord which would jar on the sympathies of the whole circle. If in the conscience of one



of the party there should be felt a pressure of religious obligation, it would require no small amount of moral courage to make it known to the rest; to say to them, "My friends, I have hitherto gone with you, heart and soul, in all the gaieties of life; have talked with you of anything and of everything, save the subject of religion; but now I wish you to understand, that I have determined to make this the great topic of interest and of pursuit. Indeed, I seriously contemplate, ere long, a public profession before the world."

Such a declaration would be received in silence, if not in scorn. It would at least spread a seriousness over the faces of companions, and for a while make them feel, that however in heart they might dislike such a decision on the part of one of their number, yet, in their consciences they must approve it.

But it requires no small amount of decision, no feeble struggle to take a stand which

shall involve such social sacrifices; and I have no doubt that many a young person has battled it with conscience for a long time, ere he could make up his mind to take this stand. But glorious is the decision when it comes! Sweet is the peace of mind that follows it! "He that walketh with men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Somewhat similar is the case with men who have a large business circle, with whom they are implicated in arrangements of trade; and among whom the whole drift and current of conversation and interest relate wholly to the affairs of this world. Any person who for years has moved in such a circle, and been known as a mere man of the world, would find it no easy matter to appear in the character of a religious man. He cannot do this without giving some evidence of the change. It must be known throughout the entire business circle, that

he has taken this stand. If rallied in regard to it, he has got calmly yet firmly, to acknowledge it; and he will feel in duty bound to carry out consistently all the principles of christian morality which such a profession implies. Under these circumstances, how long sometimes will the pressure of obligation be felt, and even the upbraidings of conscience be endured, before a man will reach the point of deciding to confess Christ before men! It is in this case, the fear of man that operates strongly to withhold him. He is too apt to allow this impediment to lie between him and the path of christian duty.

On the score of mercantile integrity, that man would burn off his right hand sooner than do a dishonorable act. He glories in his high-minded adherence to principle. Why not then carry out this inflexibility and decision, in the higher department of religious duty! Suppose it *should* create a

sensation in the circle of his worldly associates; it will be such a sensation as they need to feel, such an example as they need to have set before them. It may be influential in exciting their attention to a subject which they have criminally overlooked and neglected; whilst he himself will not be the less respected, nor less influential.

In these examples, the individual may try to persuade himself that he is not afraid nor ashamed to confess Christ, provided he or she were only prepared by a religious experience to take the stand. But after all, if the feeling be closely analyzed, it may be found that the fear of man has more to do with it than was supposed. If the sentiments of his whole acquaintanceship were changed towards religion, so that from being indifferent or opposed they were to become earnest professors, would it not be easy for him, under such circumstances, to put in his lot with them? But is it less his

duty, even though no such change should take place in them? Certainly not. And yet it requires more decision, more moral courage in the one case, than in the other. Yet here is a cross which he is commanded to take up; and not to take up this cross, for the reasons assigned, argues some degree of the fear of man, and may possibly involve the individual even in the guilt of being ashamed of Christ.

I have little doubt that the enemy of souls makes use of this fear of man to "keep his goods in peace;" to prevent any step being taken which shall lead to an open and public profession of faith in Jesus. Knowing too, that to confess Christ before men is one of the results and consequences of repenting and believing in Him; that all who profess to experience true piety are called upon to declare it by uniting themselves to the visible church—these considerations, I have no doubt, are actually and constantly

made use of by Satan to prevent even the first step towards a religious life.

The suggestion is, "if I become a Christian, I must make a public profession. I must come out, and visibly declare myself on the Lord's side. Were it not for this, I might be induced to begin in earnest the great work." Many, I have no doubt, have been kept back from taking the first step in religion, by just such suggestions.

Others harder pressed by conscience, have tried *another* plan. They have undertaken to acquire a religious character which they may enjoy in the secrecy of their own feelings. "I can be a good Christian," say they, "without making any noise about it, or making any show of it. If God sees my heart, and appreciates my motive, that is all sufficient." And so he tries to be a Christian without this outward and public confession of his principles. But he finds many declarations of Scripture against him. The

words, "Whosoever shall confess me before men," &c., stand like a mountain between him and his proposed course. Again it is said, "Whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed." And still further; "Let your light so shine before men that they seeing your good works," &c. Has not an apostle said also, that faith without works is dead? One of these works is to obey Christ's command, and confess Him before men.

Thus is it impossible, on Scriptural grounds, to be a consistent Christian and yet refuse to discharge some of the most imperative duties which are enjoined by Christ upon all his disciples. How can one be a Christian, and not commemorate his death? Is not that last touching, dying injunction, obligatory on all who love Him, or who profess to be his disciples?

A clandestine path to heaven, I have never yet heard of. I have never heard of

a way, where there was no cross, no self-denial, no sacrifice of pride; or where the fear of man may exert a more controlling influence than the plain and positive commands of God. Such a road to heaven I do not find in the Bible. I should fear to tread in such a path, lest in the end it might lead to hopeless and eternal disappointment. I should be apprehensive, when I came to stand before my Judge, that one of the first questions which would salute my ear would be, "Hast thou confessed me before men?" What reply could I make? And, oh! if I should have to admit the reason, viz: that it was the fear of man; or that I had loved the praise of men more than the praise of God; what could I expect to hear my Judge say but this? "I cannot acknowledge you before my Father which is in heaven. It is only they who confessed me before men whom I recognize as my disciples in this great decisive day.



Here is a view of the subject which it were worth while to ponder. There should be no half way work in a matter that concerns our eternal well being. We should make up our minds to do what God has commanded; to follow Christ, however heavily the cross may press; to confess Him before men; believing that if we do so in sincerity, and from love to Him, He will confess *our* names before the Father and his holy angels.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### INDUCEMENTS.

The inducements many.—Command of Christ.—The obligation to commemorate his dying love.—Obligatory on *all*.—Can only be done by making an open profession.—A distinctive mark of discipleship in primitive times.—The inducement of *gratitude*.—What Christ has done for us.—His deep woes and humiliation.—His temptations, sufferings and death.—Gratitude to an earthly benefactor contrasted with that claimed by our Heavenly Benefactor.—An appeal from the foot of the cross.—Exhortation to confess Him at any sacrifice.—Another inducement, viz: to *honor* Him.—Love will wish to honor Him, especially in view of the indignities once endured for us. Comparison of sympathy with heroes and patriots in their sufferings, and with Christ in his.—The cause traced to its origin in the heart of man.—An appeal to those who love our Lord, to glory in his cross.—The fellowship of the saints another inducement.—A motive felt only by those who have religious sympathies.—High dignity of the church as an association for the greatest good.—Unspeakable privilege of the connection.—The future and endless and glorious distinctions of the saints.—Strengthening of piety another motive.—Union in this, as in other things, strength.—Social power of religion.—A profession partly for the good of others.—Power of exam-

ple.—The recognition and the reward.—Confessed before the Father by the Son.—Introduced to heaven.—Sitting down with Christ upon the throne.—Two eras of triumph, at death and at the judgment.—Closing appeal.

THE inducements to confess Christ are many. First, He has *commanded* it. It is one of the primary and positive injunctions. This has already been implied. We are commanded to forsake all and follow Christ. How can this be done without confessing Him before men? If our pride is in the way, we must forsake *that*. If friends or companions would hinder us, we must forsake *them*. If the world with its gain or grandeur pleads against it, we must turn a deaf ear, and say, we are to follow Christ.

Those solemn words, "Whosoever shall confess me before men," have in my apprehension the nature of a command. So also have those other words, not less impressive, "Whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful genera-

tion, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels." Be not ashamed to come out before the world, and confess Christ, is the plain meaning of these passages of Scripture. "Do this," our Lord seems to say, "whatever may be your exposedness to the scorn, ridicule, or hatred of the world."

Again, that dying command; "this do in remembrance of me," is obligatory on all his disciples to the end of time. It was delivered under circumstances the most affecting and soul-touching which can be conceived. What is said or enjoined by the lips of death, is caught by the ear of affection as a sacred legacy; and cold must be the heart that treats such last messages with indifference or neglect. This is our Lord's dying request. Every person who loves Him will hasten to fulfil it. Every person who has sins to be forgiven is interested in this command. It is an appeal that

should reach the heart of impenitence. Oh! ye who pass by, look and see if there ever was sorrow like unto his sorrow! Did He not taste that bitter death for thee? Was not that baptism of blood endured for thee? And yet, when his table is spread, and the invitation goes forth, "Do this in remembrance of me;" how carelessly and coldly thou turnest away from the sacred feast!

But this duty can be discharged only by a public profession of discipleship. It therefore involves it, and is thus an implied command to confess Him before men. Indeed, in primitive times, this was one of the distinctive marks of discipleship.

#### THE INDUCEMENT OF GRATITUDE.

Another inducement to confess Christ, is *gratitude*. What has He done for you and me? What sacrifices has He made, what sufferings endured? Being *God*, He became

also *man*; and the humanity which He assumed, was a *suffering* humanity. "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich." So poor was He, that, though "foxes had holes, and birds of the air had nests, He had not where to lay his head." He put himself in every condition of suffering to which mortals are or might be subject; that in all points being tempted like as we are—sin only excepted—He might sympathize with us in all our trials, and succor us under all our temptations. His heart of love and compassion shrunk from no toil, and his lips refused not to drink of the bitterest cup. The malice of devils, and the persecutions of men, He met with fortitude and resignation. And when He knew that the price of our redemption would cost Him tears and bloody sweat; would weigh down his spirit with a mountain weight of imputed guilt; nay, would

cost Him the ignominy and death of the cross itself; still He went through all without a murmur, and bowed his head amid the darkness of earth and of heaven! Was there ever, we again ask, sorrow like unto this? And it was all endured to give life and salvation to lost men. It was a purely voluntary sacrifice. It was the greatest exhibition of love which the universe had ever seen. What an appeal is here, to human gratitude! Measure it by the sacrifices made; measure it by the blessings purchased; measure it by the woes, present and future, from which it saves us! Eternity alone can gauge its height and its depth. The bliss of heaven and the misery of hell—both unending—must declare it!

Now let me ask every reader, if here is not a claim of gratitude? And how shall this gratitude be expressed? Jesus has told us. "Confess me before men." "Be not ashamed of me and of my words." "Take

up the cross and follow me. As I endured shame and spitting, mockery and death for *thee*; so be thou willing to endure, if need be, the same things for *me*.

Gratitude is a feeling that can usually be moved by *earthly* favors. Let a man relieve you from temporal sufferings; especially let him rescue you from temporal death: or let an individual lavish upon you rich gifts; would not your heart in such instances be deeply touched? Could you find words to express your obligations; or would you refuse to do any thing for your benefactor, that was within your power?

But here we present a still higher claim. Here is a more than earthly benefactor. "Greater love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends." "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commend-



eth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Standing then at the foot of the cross, I point you to that sufferer. These dying agonies are endured for you—to make your pardon possible—to make your salvation sure—to open for you the gates of an eternal paradise? If there is any sense of gratitude in your heart, you will be touched by such an appeal. You will ask, what can I do as a return for all this love and compassion? Recompense it, you never can. But one thing you can do; you can "confess Him before men." Say to this great benefactor; "Lord, I have no power to requite thee for all thy sufferings in my behalf; but thou knowest that my heart is deeply moved by thy dying compassion; and I would express my gratitude, by obeying thy commands. Whatever sacrifice it may cost me, I will confess thee before men."

## HONORING CHRIST.

Another inducement is that Christ may be *honored*. All men are bound to "honor Him even as they honor the Father." But when He sojourned on earth, as the man of sorrows, He met with little else than ignominy and scorn. "He was despised and they esteemed Him not." Everything in the way of contempt and obloquy which a malicious ingenuity could devise, was heaped upon Him.

"The only crown He wore, was of the twisted thorn;  
In purple He was crucified, not born."

Shall we not then wish to indemnify — so far as our example can go — the great Sufferer for all this shame and contempt? Even *now*, what multitudes pass by the cross, and seem by their indifference to say, "What have *we* to do with Thee!"

It is not so when a fellow creature suffers

unjustly. What a tide of sympathy will set in, if a patriot is exiled, or a confessor of the faith is imprisoned. By many, the blood of the patriot seems to be esteemed more precious than that of the Son of God! More honors will be awarded to the sacrifices made by some military hero, than for all the sufferings endured for sinners by the blessed Jesus. Why is this? Alas! we know the reason why. Sense has more influence than faith, and earthly things are put at a higher value than heavenly.

But there are those who love to honor the Saviour; who exalt His name above every name; who “confess Him before men;” and who can say with Paul; “God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!” To such, His very name is precious. Even the insignia of contempt, once hung about His person, as the crown of thorns, the purple robe, the mock sceptre — yea, the cross itself,

with all its associated ignominy, are to them most dear. And from the heart they can exclaim,

“ Jesus, I my cross have taken,  
All to leave and follow Thee;  
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,  
Thou, henceforth, my all shalt be.

“ Perish every fond ambition;  
All I’ve sought or hoped or known,  
Yet how rich is my condition,  
God and heaven are still my own.

“ Let the world despise and leave me,  
They have left my Saviour too;  
Human hearts and looks deceive me —  
Thou art not like them untrue;

“ And whilst Thou shalt smile upon me,  
God of wisdom, love, and might;  
Foes may hate, and friends disown me;  
Show thy face, and all is bright.”

Do you wish thus to honor the Lord Jesus? The way to do it, is to *obey* Him — to confess Him before men — to take

sides with Him in a world where he receives little else than indifference and opposition. Be on the Lord's side; and do all that in you lies to extend the cause of the Redeemer—to make it influential and universal.

#### THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SAINTS.

As a still further inducement to confess Christ, you will, by the act, be numbered with and enjoy the fellowship of the saints.

Some may not regard this as any very strong inducement; not having any present sympathy with the people of God. But there are others who would consider it no small privilege to be one of them, and to be in fellowship with them. How, without joining the sacred fraternity, can this fellowship be enjoyed? Every association formed with a view of mutual benefit, says; "if you would realize the benefit, then come and

be one of us. Join the association, and you shall share in the privileges secured by our union."

The church of God, is a divinely organized society. Its head is Christ. Its banner or motto, is the cross of Christ. Its members are the followers of Christ. It is the oldest society in the world. It has embraced within its pale and privileges the best and the wisest of all ages, including patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. It was founded by Jehovah, and God himself is its patron. All its rules are perfect. Every true member of this sacred fraternity has given to him "a white stone," the purport of which none can understand but they who receive it; and a white robe, which is to be worn forever, and is to become more resplendent with the lapse of ages. It is the only mutual benefit society which has perpetuity; for the oath and the promise of God render it indissoluble. There is no

association where the members are in such close alliance—where the sympathies are so deep, and the benefits so great. If one member of this society suffers, all the rest suffer along with him; and whatever joy is experienced by one, is sympathetically shared by all the rest. What a glorious society is the church of God! But all who enter it, must enter by one door. That door is Christ. They must enter it upon one condition; which is, “confessing Him before men.” There is no *secret* passage into it. Whosoever wishes to enjoy its advantages, must come up openly and ask for admission.

To be in the bosom of this blessed society, is an unspeakable privilege. Who would not wish to be among those who are to dwell forever in the presence of our Lord? Who would not be in fellowship with those who have God for their portion, angels for their guardians, and heaven for their home? If

you want to be one of the richest proprietors in the universe, be a true member of the church of God! Then, "all things will be yours," and you will be "an heir of God." Are you ambitious of distinction; do you aspire to dignity and to honor? Here, in prospect, are crowns, and thrones, and sceptres. 'T is true, these are spiritual dignities and glories laid up for the saints, and to be inherited in the glorious future. But they are on that account so much the brighter, and so much the more enduring. The way to them, however, is by the same gate of humiliation and self-denial through which the Master passed. Like Him, you must make yourself "of no reputation." You must take up the cross at His command, and bear it after Him. In one word, you must "confess Him before men."



## STRENGTHENING THE CAUSE OF PIETY.

Confessing Christ, strengthens the cause of true piety. In all associations, union is strength; and united action, is *efficient* action. Not otherwise is it in the church of God. Every true member who enters its communion, is just so much numerical strength added to "the sacramental host." The world loses one, and the church gains one. He is welcomed as a new recruit in the army of the living God. Whatever burdens there are to be borne, there is one more to help bear them; whatever work to be done, one more pair of hands to aid in its accomplishment. To confess Christ, is not simply to "lie down in the green pastures," or to wander by the "still waters." It is an act which implies labor, and self-denial, and self-sacrifice. It brings us into a conflict, where hard blows are to be given and received; and into a work where a

mighty tower is to be built, requiring an outlay of faith, energy, and perseverance. What a blessed accession, then, is it to the sacred cause, when numbers of true and sincere converts come out from the world and range themselves on the Lord's side!

But suppose a person says, "I can be a Christian without confessing Christ before men;" and undertakes the experiment. He tries to be a Christian without letting anybody know it. How, then, *is* anybody to know it? And what influence can such a person throw into the scale of true piety? How can a man light a candle and put it under a bushel, with the expectation that any person can have light from it?

A profession of religion, is partly for the good of others, though principally for the good of the individual. To witness a good profession, is to strengthen the bulwarks of Zion. It acts both *within* and *without*. It gives joy and strength to the church; and it

impresses upon the world the idea of religious responsibility. When a public confession of Christ is made, how natural the suggestion; "Why that man or woman more than *me*?" "He is taking the narrow road, and I am still in the broad road." "He is discharging a duty which *I* ought to discharge." "He is securing an interest which I am foolish enough to neglect."

How many thoughts like these strike on the conscience of the careless sinner, witnessing a consecration like the one in question. "Many shall see it, and shall fear and shall trust in the Lord."

#### THE RECOGNITION AND THE REWARD.

"Him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." This may refer to two periods. It may have reference to the soul's first introduction into the spirit world; and also to that great day, when the destiny

of all men shall be publicly announced, and forever sealed.

We believe that the souls of all true Christians do, at death, immediately pass into glory. They go where Christ has gone. They are with Him; and they behold His glory. Some formalities, it would seem, characterize their reception. "Who are these?" is the enquiry; and the answer from some authoritative source is, "these are they that have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

But still more. They are introduced by our Lord himself. By Him they are recognized. He says to them; "come ye blessed of my Father." He takes them to the throne. "These are the disciples whom Thou hast given me," He says. "As Thou Father art in me, so am I in them; as Thou didst send me into the world, so have I sent them into the world. They have confessed

me before men; for my sake they have endured the cross, and despised the shame. For me they have labored and have not fainted; and now let them share my glory, and sit down with me upon my throne."

Thus will He confess them before his Father. Is not such a recognition worth all the toil and the trials—the obloquy and the persecutions, which a suffering Christianity in this world has ever endured? Oh! to be recognized by Christ—to be welcomed to His arms—to hear Him say, in the presence of all heaven, this is my blood-bought disciple—what greater honor could be put upon the soul?

But suppose you try to steal, as it were, into the strait gate! You may, in so doing, profess that in heart you are a Christian; but in disobedience to Christ's command, you act more like a sinner. You light your lamp in the sepulchre of your own thoughts,

careful lest by any overt act, it should be implied that you are on the Lord's side.

How will it fare with you in such a case? Will Jesus say to you, at death, "here is one who confessed me before men; who was not ashamed of me and of my words? Alas! no such recognition can be for you!

It will not be apology enough to say, "I feared to take this stand. I was not sure I was a Christian. I had doubts, and so I kept my religion to myself." Will Christ accept such excuses, think you, for a lifelong neglect of an obvious and positive command? Who could dare to go before Him with such an apology?

But there is another era in the history of this matter. It is the era of the Judgment Day. Then, a grand division line is to be run. On the one side will be they who have followed Christ? obeyed His precepts, and "confessed Him before men." On the *other*, they who have not regarded His in-

junctions; who have denied Him before men; or who have refused to confess Him. Every man will take his proper place *then*. It will be a separation and a classification the most fearful. Every one will feel that it is for *eternity*. In view of it, who but must tremblingly exclaim —

“When Thou my righteous Judge shall come,  
To fetch thy ransomed people home,  
Shall *I* among them stand?”

Yes, *there*, on the right hand of the Judge, wilt thou most assuredly be found, if here on earth Christ's commands have been more influential with you than the love of pleasure, or the fear of man. Then will He confess you before His Father, and before all His holy angels. He will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.” How small, then, will seem the sacrifices you have made for Him! How sweet will be the recogni-

tion — how undeserved the reward! But to meet Him there as one who here on earth was ashamed to own his name, to find yourself classed with those who showed no sympathy with Him as a suffering Saviour, and who made no sacrifices to do Him honor before men; how terrible the thought! Who would not pray; “gather not my soul with sinners;” and who, in view of the everlasting glory and felicity of the self-denying followers of Jesus, but must exclaim;

“ With them numbered may I be  
*Here, and in eternity!*”



Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01001 4845

