



YOUTHFUL DEVOTEDNESS:

OR,

THE YOUTH OF THE CHURCH

INSTRUCTED IN THE

DUTIES OF PRACTICAL RELIGION.

BY THOMAS HOUSTON, D. D.,

Author of "Parental Duties," &c.

PASTOR OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, KNOCKBRACKEN.

WITH RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE,

BY PROFESSOR SYMINGTON, D. D.,

PAISLEY.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—*Ecclesiastes.*

"My son, give me thine heart."—*Proverbs.*

"I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."—*Proverbs.*

PAISLEY—ALEX. GARDNER.

BELFAST—W. M'COMB, G. PHILLIPS, AND MISS POLLOCK.

EDINBURGH—J. JOHNSTONE, AND W. WHYTE & CO.

GLASGOW—W. COLLINS, OGLE & SON, D. BRYCE, G. GALLIE,
J. KEITH & SON, AND W. MORRISON.

HOULSTON & STONEMAN, LONDON.

1849.

RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE.

IT will be readily conceded that the subject of this small volume is one of vital interest, not only to the individuals and family circles immediately concerned, but to the church of God and to society in general. In the discussions of the present day on the subject of education, it has frequently occurred to us that, on the part of the professors of Christianity, the provisions of the Domestic and Ecclesiastical constitutions have been overlooked, or not brought into view in all their obligations and importance. It has often suggested itself to us as a matter of grave inquiry, whether churches baptizing the children of their members do not greatly fall short in their duty to parents, and to the children when they reach the years of instruction. While confirmation, as a sacrament in the Papal church, and as a rite in the Episcopalian church, is justly rejected, as without authority in the Word of God, and as unsound in principle, it demands serious inquiry, whether duties corresponding in some measure to the repudiated rite, be not founded in natural and moral obligations, and required by the law of Christ and of God. Instruction in religion devolves, in the first place, and, in its early stages, on Christian parents; but it does not rest there solely and finally. To say nothing of the duty of parents, or of the culpable

neglect and very perfunctory performance of it on the part of many parents, is it not the duty of the Christian pastor, and of those associated with him in the oversight of the church, not only to see that the parental duties be performed, but themselves to interfere directly in this matter, by kind and familiar dealings with young persons themselves, and in special and appropriate religious exercises, to call the attention of the church's youth to the signification and obligations of their baptism, to the concerns of their personal salvation, and to the duty of a full voluntary incorporation with the church in accession to her communion, celebration of the Lord's Supper, and practical participation in all the interests of the church of Christ? We are of opinion that this should be done, and done early, and that there is incomparably greater peril incurred on the side of delay, than on that of an early advance.

The small work now submitted to the public supplies a desideratum in the matter to which we have referred, and presents a fine specimen of pastoral care of the lambs of the flock. The three first chapters enter into the very spirit of the duty which we have supposed to devolve on the Christian parent and pastor; while those that follow, exhibit, in natural order, practical instructions of great importance, demanding the early attention of youth, and at the same time, valuable remembrancers to persons in the midst of their days, or in the evening of life. We have had the privilege of perusing the sheets as they proceeded through the press, and with much cordiality recommend them to the Christian public. The subjects are

presented in proper consecutive order; the observations made on them are brief, pertinent, lucid, and impressive; they are supported by appropriate Scripture authorities; the illustrations are happy; they are enriched with short and apt quotations from old and modern authors; and they are enlivened with a fair proportion of anecdote; and they all breathe the spirit of an earnest and fervent piety. Besides calling the attention of Christian parents and the young to this valuable Manual, we cordially recommend it to the Christian Pastor, to the Ruling Elder, and to all the members of the church taking an interest, as they should, in the spiritual good of the young. While we urge the special obligation lying on parents, ecclesiastical office-bearers, and the members of congregations, to devote particular attention to the youth of the church, the reader will perceive that the Author has a strong sense of the obligation of the church to exert herself in the promotion of the interests of the kingdom of Christ at home and abroad—an obligation which she is yet only beginning to feel, and to carry into practical effect. In this connection, we regard the volume as peculiarly seasonable and valuable. In the hands of the Sabbath School teacher, and others taking an interest in the diffusion of religious instruction, it will supply useful directions and suggestions in the performance, statedly or occasionally, of duties to the young; and to the young themselves, if carefully and seriously perused, it cannot fail to prove a kind and faithful instructor and monitor.

This volume forms a proper sequel to "Parental

Duties," from the same pen; and is a suitable precursor to a "Brief Treatise on Christian Baptism," promised by the industrious author. We bid the estimable author "God speed," in his seasonable labours, and regard them valuable contributions to the cause of religion, as supplementing a deficiency in popular reading, and bringing into view a prevailing omission in Christian practice. We trust his labours will not be in vain; and that, under the Divine blessing, his works shall be followed with increased and prayerful efforts on the part of parents and churches, for the spiritual interest of the rising race; and that the aspects of the church, in respect of her youth, shall present greater promise, and the Redeemer see the dew of youth coming to him in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning.

ANDREW SYMINGTON.

PAISLEY, 28th July, 1849.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
INTRODUCTORY,	5

CHAPTER I.

BAPTISM—Doctrines which it exhibits—Privileges involved in it—and Duties to which it obliges,	17
SECTION I.—Doctrines exhibited in Baptism,	18
SECT. II.—Privileges enjoyed through Baptism,	22
SECT. III.—The Duties implied in Baptism,	25
SECT. IV.—Early Recognition of Baptism,	29

CHAPTER II.

CONVERSION—Its Nature, Necessity, Means, Evidences, &c.	41
SECT. I.—The Nature of Conversion,	43
SECT. II.—The Necessity of Conversion,	53
SECT. III.—The Means of Conversion,	59
SECT. IV.—Evidences of Conversion,	69

CHAPTER III.

PROFESSION OF RELIGION—Its Necessity, Nature, and Value,	80
SECT. I.—Necessity of a Profession,	80
SECT. II.—Nature of a Profession,	87
SECT. III.—Spirit in which a Profession is to be maintained,	95
SECT. IV.—The Membership of the Church,	99
SECT. V.—Communion at the Lord's Table,	115
I.—Nature and design of the Sacraments,	115
II.—Obligations to observe the Lord's Supper,	120
III.—Qualifications for observing the Lord's Supper,	122

CHAPTER IV.

CHARACTER befitting those who have made a Profession of Religion, and who have been at the Lord's Table,	133
SECT. I.—Evils to be shunned—views to be entertained,	135

	PAGE.
SECT. II.—The Pursuit of Religion the grand business of life,	146
SECT. III.—The Daily Prayerful Study of the Scriptures,	155
I.—Directions for Studying the Scriptures,	158
II.—Motives and encouragements to this duty,	167
SECT. IV.—Redeeming Time.	174
I.—Purposes for which time should be redeemed	178
II.—How time is to be redeemed,	181
SECT. V.—Formation of Character,	187
1. Elements of an approved character,	192
2. Manner of forming a useful character,	197
SECT. VI.—Proper Pursuit of Temporal Things,	201

CHAPTER V.

SOCIAL RELATIONS, and Influence of the Young upon society,	216
SECT. I.—Companions to be chosen,	217
SECT. II.—Public Spirit—engagement in benevolent exer- tions,	235
SECT. III.—The Cause of Missions,	251
SECT. IV.—Filial Respect for Parents,	281

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.	298
SECT. I.—Wherein Preparation for Death consists,	301
SECT. II.—Death of a Pious Youth,	310
SECT. III.—Final condition of a Child of the kingdom cast out,	320
SECT. IV.—The devoted Youth admitted to his reward in Heaven,	327

INTRODUCTORY.

THE class of persons for whose benefit the Counsels contained in the following work are chiefly intended, is, in many respects, interesting and important. In allusion to the natural divisions of the year, the season of youth has been commonly designated "the spring-time of life"—the period of bud and blossom; and according as it is cultivated or neglected, so will be the summer and autumn—the character of manhood, and the fruit of old age.

The young of the church are objects of parental affection and anxiety. They have received, in unconscious infancy, the seal of the Christian profession, and have been dedicated to God. Upon them the church's hopes centre; and on them, in a great measure, it depends what shall be the character of her future membership—whether she shall decline or advance—whether mount Zion shall appear most beautiful, the joy of the earth, or become desolate and forsaken, as an object "whom no man seeketh after." Prayers have been offered in their behalf at the mercy-seat. The heartfelt supplications of parents have covered their cradle, and followed them still, as they advanced through infancy and youth; and others, too, who are acquainted with the way to the throne of grace, have not failed to plead frequently and fervently in behalf of the rising generation. Instruction on subjects the most momentous and impor-

tant, relating to their duty and responsibility—their conduct and future destiny, have been given them, or are in reserve for them. Their privileges are among the highest and most valuable that human beings can enjoy on earth. Occupying a station so eminent, and possessing advantages so distinguished, it may reasonably be expected that the youth of the church should excel others, in all that is praiseworthy and virtuous. “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke xii. 48.) Even the infidel and irreligious readily observe the deportment of the young of Christian families; and by means of it, there will either be extorted from them a testimony in favour of true religion, or they will be greatly confirmed in ungodliness.

The class of youth to which we refer are, moreover, exposed to numerous *dangers*—some common to them with the young in general, and some peculiar to them, as, by designation and profession, separated from the world, and as being members of Christian families. These arise from the pleasures, engagements, and pursuits of the world—the temptations of the Evil One,—and the constitutional tendencies, frames, and habits of their own minds. On every side, indeed, they are beset with multiplied and diversified dangers—all the more potent that the young are too frequently unconscious of them, and are ever ready to risk, in their own unaided strength, the encounter with evils to which tens of thousands have before fallen victims. If they become the prey of temptation, they will inflict upon the cause of Christ a double and treble injury. Religion will, through them, be wounded in the house of her friends. Adversaries will be confirmed in their opposition to the truth, and will learn to blaspheme; and the young, who furnish the occasion for such reproach, will find the return to the path of virtue and integrity beset

with innumerable, and not unfrequently insurmountable difficulties. In general, the recovery of such young persons is all but hopeless; and early neglect of religion brings in its train loss of reputation, profligacy, and misery in this life, and ruin irretrievable in the world to come. "*The children of the kingdom shall be cast out.*"

On the other hand, the piety and steadfastness of the youth of Christian families are followed by eminent advantages to themselves, and are of singular use to others. The graces of Christian character appear peculiarly lovely and attractive, when they are seen subduing youthful lusts, and expanding and triumphing under temptations. Early devotion to the service of God will ensure opportunities of spiritual benefit and usefulness unknown to others; and from such an example, many will discern the beauty of holiness, and be animated and encouraged to walk in Wisdom's ways.

The importance of enlisting the youth of the church early in the work of religion cannot be too highly estimated; and, to a great extent, it has been sadly overlooked. Zion's children are committed to Christian parents to nurse them for God. In a solemn religious rite, they are publicly dedicated to the service of the church. They are placed under the special care of ministers and office-bearers of the church, and rendered objects of concern to all the members, that they may enjoy betimes the benefits which true Christianity confers, may exhibit the transcendent excellence of the Christian character, and may have peculiar advantages for the great and honourable work of serving God in their generation. When it is, furthermore, considered that a large proportion of the young die before they reach the years of mature manhood—one half of the human family being removed, as it is estimated, before the *eighteenth year*, and one-third of the remaining half before the *fortieth*—how important that the young should be

early taught to put their hand to the Lord's work! How desirable and valuable are the fruits of early piety!

The *advantages*, too, of beginning early a course of decided and devoted service of religion are manifest, when it is contrasted with engaging in such a work in mature life, or in old age. The young will thus be preserved from the sins of youth—they will be kept from the path of the destroyers, and be saved many sources of painful future regret, and bitter reflection. Surrendering their youthful energies to the God of their life—with spirits buoyant, and hopes ardent, they will know the pleasantness of the ways of wisdom, and taste, with a keener and purer relish, the elevated enjoyments of true religion. With the characteristic devotion of youth to a favourite pursuit, and their ready engagement in it, regardless of toil or danger, whether apparent or apprehended, what blessed results may be anticipated from the young engaging early in a course of devoted and sustained religious effort?—Soon as Zion shall have “the dew of her youth,” a “willing people” shall come to the king—volunteers in his service—shining in “the beauty of holiness,”—as well in the lustre of a holy character, as in works of distinguished excellence and usefulness.

The church has much to learn on the subject of training youth to the work of religion; and the young themselves, who are the church's foster-children, need to be aware of their weighty and manifold obligations. In no merely human profession or pursuit, do men rest satisfied with employing in it only those who, without previous training, have arrived at middle life, or who are advanced to old age. The child and the boy are educated for the avocations of mature days; and it is always regarded as a peculiar advantage to have youthful activity and energy enlisted in the chosen pursuit. The youthful recruit makes

the most courageous and persevering soldier, while advanced years disqualify for embarking in military service. And in almost every other profession, it is universally admitted, that if youthful ardour is cooled, before entering upon it, some of the principal motives to exertion will be wanting—a high measure of success is hardly to be expected—and many advantages are lost, which future application and industry, in ordinary circumstances, are inadequate to recal. Religion is truly the business of life—not a work only to be engaged in when the person has tried the polluted pleasures of sin, or experienced “the vanity and vexation” of the world, or when the things of time are receding from the grasp. It must not only mingle with all our pursuits, but it must be our first work, and it should direct, control, and sanctify every other. The church is placed in the earth to reflect the glory of her adorable Head—to expend all her resources in doing his work in the world,—and to be the divinely-appointed instrument of bringing the world itself into willing subjection to Immanuel. For such an honourable office, who may be expected to be better prepared than the dedicated youth of the church? Hers it should be to train them to the service, and betimes, to enlist them in it; and parents, ministers, and all the lovers of Zion should regard this as a principal part of their own special and paramount duty. The young should esteem it as their highest honour and privilege to “yield themselves to God,” and voluntarily separating themselves from others, as in their infantile consecration they were distinguished from the rest of the world, to array themselves around the standard of the Captain of salvation—nobly and courageously to fight the good fight, and to lay hold on eternal life.

Our own day especially imposes peculiar obligations upon parents, and all the guardians of youth, to train them for active labour in the Redeemer's

vineyard; and loudly calls upon the young themselves to come forth to "the help of the Lord against the mighty." This is an era of excitement, activity, and promise. On the one hand, there are temptations, most powerful and insidious, presented from various quarters, to lead away the youth of the church from religion, and to render them inefficient of good in society, or positively pernicious; while, on the other, there are calls to important public duty, and opportunities of usefulness offered, such as no former age presented. Satan, the arch-deceiver, plies all his policy to mar or pervert the work of spiritual instruction in Christian families; and the engagements of the world,—the unsanctified literature of the day—careless companions, and the pleasures of sin, are baits, alas! too successful, to ensnare unsuspecting youth, and to mislead them to ruin. "One sinner destroys much good." A single young person, who has been religiously educated, thus perverted, by his example encourages others in carelessness and neglect, draws them into sin, and affords a triumph to the enemy, great as it is melancholy. Would we not be ignorant of Satan's devices—would we defeat his designs, we must pray and labour, with all fervour and diligence, that the children of Zion may be preserved from the path wherein destroyers go; and we must constantly aim to engage them early and fully in the consecration of all their talents to the Lord's work.

For the prosecution of this service, how many favourable openings are everywhere presented in our day! A perishing world demands our prayers, and our united and increasing exertions. The great cause of Christian Missions—yet in its infancy, but every succeeding day pressing its claims more urgently upon the church, requires multitudes of labourers, both at home and abroad—while for the work of scriptural education, and the revival of godliness

within the church, there is indispensable need of a machinery far more powerful and more extensive than that which has hitherto been employed. Pecuniary means—though these are valuable in their place, are less required than active and devoted labourers. The church is enjoined by her Divine Head, to pray that the “Lord of the harvest” would “send forth labourers into his harvest,” because “the harvest is great, and the labourers are few.” The answer to this important petition would be found in many active and faithful men, willingly giving themselves to the work. Whence are we to expect a supply of such labourers? Is it not from the baptized youth of the church—from those who were solemnly dedicated to God and his service in infancy, and who have been taught by Christian parents to regard it as their highest honour and privilege to act in accordance with this early consecration?

Called, as the Church now is, to a great work, fitted to command all her resources, and to enlist all her energies—loudly invited to “enlarge the place of her tent,” and to “stretch forth the curtains of her habitation,”—and placed, as it seems likely she is, in the margin of great trials, she should consider it a principal object of concern to employ the young committed to her care in the work of faith and labour of love. Parents should learn not only to bring up their children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord,” but to train them less for themselves and the world, and vastly more for God’s public service. Ministers and public men in the church should diligently search for useful labourers among those whom Zion’s King has entrusted to them as objects of solemn and prayerful interest. If “the signs of the times” have any meaning, if they speak to us any definite language of direction or warning—they unquestionably admonish us to be especially attentive to the youth of the church—to prepare them for work and

for trial—and to expect future blessing, in a great measure, from such instrumentality.

The young, too, must be brought to feel that on them centre high hopes and manifold expectations. Theirs it is early to give themselves to the Lord. When the church invites—when parents, ministers, and prayerful men are awakened to an earnest concern about them, and the cry of perishing multitudes from every quarter addresses them, “Come over and help us”—they should cheerfully respond to the invitation, and say, “Here are we, send us.”—The future destinies of the church are, as far as instrumentality is concerned, in a great measure, in the hands of the young. The spread of the truth—the victories of the faith—the upbuilding of Zion, are to be accomplished mainly through their holy example, consecrated zeal, and sustained activity. “*It shall be done in thy son's days.*” The present generation—there is ground to fear—because of their lukewarmness, indifference, and worldly spirit, will not be honoured to build a house for the God of Israel. How elevated the distinction assigned to the youth of the church! How noble the position to be occupied by our sons and daughters, if they shall be called to perform the work to which the prayers of the faithful, in many lands, and for many ages, have been directed—the prospect of which strung the harps of ancient seers, and gladdened the hearts of martyrs of the Lamb—the full completion of which will cause all heaven to resound with triumphant hosannahs of joy and thanksgiving! And whether the rising youth entertain the hope that they shall shine in this world, in the triumphs of the Redeemer's cause, they should never doubt that their early devotedness shall, to themselves and others, be most salutary and beneficial. What a happy means of revival would it be to see the young of Christian families shining in the beauties of holiness, and yielding themselves as ready instruments for the advancement

of godliness! What a powerful confirmation would this furnish of the truth and excellence of Christianity! What extensive benefits might result from youthful faculties and energies applied in the undivided service of Him who is unspeakably the Best of masters!

The design of the following work is to supply instructions which the church, it is presumed, would address to her "sons"—earnestly concerned for their welfare, and anxious that they should be the "repairers of the breach"—the "restorers of paths to dwell in." It aims to excite the young themselves to recognize the paramount claims of the Redeemer's service, and to enlist them betimes in the noblest of all enterprises. Of the church adorned with the garments of praise and rejoicing in her king, it is declared—"INSTEAD OF THY FATHERS SHALL BE THY CHILDREN, WHOM THOU MAYEST MAKE PRINCES IN ALL THE EARTH."—The happy effects are—the perpetual memorial of the Saviour's name, and the nations of the earth brought to celebrate his praise—"I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations, therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever," Psalm xlv. 16, 17. To subserve this high purpose—to elevate Zion's sons to be "princes in all the earth"—and thus to cause the Redeemer's name to be remembered in all generations, and to lead the nations to praise him, the writer willingly assumes the office of a monitor to youth. The children of the church, he may be allowed to say, without affectation, have long been to him, objects of special and solemn interest. They have had a share in his daily pleadings at the mercy-seat. A considerable proportion of his public labours has been devoted to their moral and religious training; and a principal desire of his life has been to lead "the generation to come" to know "the testimony and the law which were left in Israel"—that sons should arise and declare them to their children—and that one race

might praise God's works to another, and declare his mighty acts. He would desire to remember frequently the command, "FEED MY LAMBS," and to regard obedience to it as a principal evidence of love to the Saviour. Happy would he consider himself, if any hints that may be suggested, were blessed as the means of conducting the feet of youth from the ways of folly into the paths of virtue and peace.

To the youth of the church, he would, with all humility and freedom, dedicate this feeble attempt for their benefit. These *Counsels*, however scattered and desultory, come to you as the fruit of anxious solicitude for your welfare. They are the results of some experience of the dangers to which you are exposed, and of the excellence of the cause which is recommended for your adoption; and they are offered to you, with earnest prayers, that they may be blessed as a means of moulding your character and regulating your lives.

We are desirous, dear youths, to lead you into the ways of virtue and happiness. We present to you objects of the purest and holiest ambition, whose very pursuit is ennobling, and the attainment of which will constitute the most glorious reward. We would engage you in a cause that may be at once profitable to yourselves, and advantageous to others—a cause intimately connected with your own happiness for time and eternity, and in which you will be acknowledged as benefactors of your species, and may, during your lives, and long after, be the dispensers of innumerable blessings to the human family. You will not despise, or pass unheeded, these admonitions, because they may appear to you too serious for opening hopes and buoyant spirits.

Subjects that relate to the habits and pursuits of life—that embrace the great interests of the immortal soul—that concern the prosperity of the church, and the honour of religion—that have an immediate

bearing upon a death-bed, and the destiny for eternity, should surely not be shifted aside, because they may be presented in a manner that may tend to repress youthful volatility, and to induce serious consideration. It is better now to reflect and ponder, and even to suffer pain, from serious consideration, than to rush heedlessly on danger, and to plunge thoughtlessly into irreparable ruin. The young may not unsuitably be addressed in the words of an English Statesman.* “While we laugh, all things are serious around us. God is serious, who preserves us, and has patience towards us; Christ is serious, who shed his blood for us; the Holy Spirit is serious, when He strives with us; the whole Creation is serious, in serving God and us;—all in heaven and hell are serious—how suitable then it is for man to be serious, and how can we be gay and trifling!”

The words which we utter are those of a friendly monitor—they are more. So far as they accord with the Scriptures of truth, you should regard them as the word of Christ himself. They come to you, accompanied with a voice from the “excellent glory,” expressive of all duty and all privilege—“This is my beloved Son—hear him.” If all must give an account of their stewardship; and if every talent must be rendered back to Him who entrusted it to us, then may we not doubt that by these words hereafter you shall be judged; and, according as you obey or neglect them, shall, in some part, be your future destiny—inconceivable felicity, or everlasting misery. May we, therefore, urge you *now* to ponder, reflect, and practise? Here are presented to you subjects of solemn habitual reflection. We aim to furnish to you right views of your relations to God and his church—of the claims of Christ’s cause—and of your future hopes and prospects. On every topic we sug-

* Sir Francis Walsingham.

gest to you the practical improvement. These are the counsels of the wisdom that is from above, and in following them, you will reap a great reward. "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it." "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable righteousness." (Proverbs viii. 10, 11, 17, 18.)

In the words of an eloquent American writer, we solicit, in conclusion, your serious prayerful attention to the matters embodied in these counsels.

"Religion is not a subject to be trifled with; it is not a subject to be rejected with aversion or dislike. It comes to you as a message from heaven; it comes clothed with the authority of heaven's king; it comes to make you holy and happy; to raise you into a resemblance to your Creator, and meetness for his presence; and it is your highest interest, as it is your most important duty, to welcome this religion to your bosom; as the sweetest solace of life, and the richest inheritance of the soul." *

* Lectures to Young Men on the Formation of Character—by Joel Hawes, D.D.—p. 57.—Glasgow Edition—1833.

CHAPTER I.

BAPTISM.—DOCTRINES WHICH IT EXHIBITS—PRIVILEGES INVOLVED IN IT—AND DUTIES TO WHICH IT OBLIGES.*

The youth of the Church have been introduced to her fellowship by the simple and significant rite of Baptism; and it seems proper to refer to the nature, obligations, and privileges of this ordinance, as, when rightly understood and improved, it is fundamental to future godly practice, and spiritual blessing.

Baptism has been well defined to be “a Sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s.”† Appointed by the blessed Redeemer, as a badge of discipleship, and as the introductory ordinance in his Church, it is replete with spiritual meaning—presenting, in an affecting manner, an exhibition of the cardinal doctrines of the glorious Gospel. External symbols, addressed to the different senses, teach more forcibly than words that are merely spoken to the ear. They are the *natural* way of communicating knowledge, while written language is the *artificial*; and by impressive representations, as in a well-executed picture, they exhibit great truths, and important facts, in a manner more strik-

* The Author had originally designed a much fuller discussion of the topics contained in this chapter, than that which has been given in the text:—but he reserves the greater part of the matter for a Brief Practical Treatise on Christian Baptism, designed both for parents and Children—a work, which, notwithstanding the various valuable doctrinal and controversial treatises which have been published on Baptism, appears to him yet to be a desideratum in the Church.

† Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism.

ing than could be effected by any description, however lengthened or particular. Divine wisdom is apparent in the two symbolical institutions of the New Testament. They are few in number. The one is the initiatory rite, the other a standing means of nourishing up saints to the stature of perfection in Christ Jesus. The simplicity of both ordinances, while it gives evidence of their Divine origin, renders them admirably adapted to the capacity of persons of every condition in life, and of every grade of intellect; and we cannot conceive of means that could be devised more suitable for inculcating the most important truths, and of promoting their continuance and diffusion throughout the world.

SECTION I.—*Doctrines exhibited in Baptism.*

The existence of Baptism, in different ages, and in all parts of the world, proclaims the divine authority of the church's exalted Founder: it displays, at the same time, other vital doctrines, in the most natural and impressive manner. The grand fundamental article of all revealed religion—the *doctrine of the Trinity*—is strikingly exhibited, by the application of water to the body, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and so long as the Saviour's parting commission to his apostles shall be executed, in the case of every person who is baptized, will the church present a solemn public testimony to the cardinal Scriptural truth—the plurality of Godhead in unity. The great *propitiation* made for sin by Christ's death, and evidenced by his resurrection, is not obscurely shadowed forth by baptism. On the eve of his crucifixion, He himself spoke of his death in terms that obviously referred to this ordinance, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"* The

* Luke xii. 50.

apostles repeatedly spoke of being “baptized into Christ’s death,” and of being “buried with Christ in baptism,”*—thus teaching, that the ordinance may be regarded as an exhibition of the all-important fruits of the Saviour’s death, burial, and resurrection from the dead.

Not only are the great objects of Christian faith symbolically exhibited in baptism—the principal doctrines of *subjective* religion are vividly represented and impressively taught in this ordinance. To believers, it presents a lively emblem of the *remission of sins*, and *the cleansing of the soul* by the blood of Christ, and of its renovation by the Spirit of God. In other words, it shadows forth by the simplest images, *fellowship with Christ in his death and resurrection*, with all the blessed consequences that result from it here and hereafter. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life.” “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”† These comprehensive declarations evidently imply that while baptism assumes as fundamental the doctrine of *human depravity*, and would be destitute of all proper meaning, if this cardinal article were denied—it symbolically and figuratively represents the great doctrines of regeneration—justification through the righteousness of Christ—adoption into God’s family—the mortification of sin—obedience of life—brotherly love—with future victory over death and the grave, and a glorious resurrection.

The commencement of religion in the soul in re-

* Rom. vi. 3, 4. Col. ii. 12. † Rom. vi. 3, 4. Col. ii. 12.

generation is represented by this ordinance. Hence, in obvious allusion to baptism, we are said to be “born of water and of the Spirit,”* and to be “saved by the washing of regeneration.”† Its progress is marked by the same expressive symbol. “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”‡ “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word.”|| And its glorious completion is thus also exhibited. “The like figure whereunto even baptism also doth now save us.”§

Of these great truths, baptism is a lively *representation* and seal—by it they are exhibited, and to believing subjects, they are confirmed and ratified. Most evidently, it is not the blessings themselves, but an appropriate and *significant* symbol of them. The washing with water is not regeneration and the renewal of the Spirit, but a sign of these important changes. It were obviously absurd to affirm that any external ablution can purify the heart and conscience; and incontrovertible facts declare that to many who have been baptized, the ordinance has been unproductive of any saving benefit. An unholy life is the sure evidence of an unrenewed heart. It is, however, a divinely instituted sign of union to Christ. It denotes fellowship with the church of the redeemed, and participation in the nature and privileges of the children of God. It is the recognised badge of a public profession of religion. Christians are thus taught to regard one another as brethren, and as united in promoting *His* glory, by whose holy name they are called.

Baptism *ratifies* Divine gracious truths to the heirs of salvation. Like *the seal* attached to a public doc-

* John iii. 5. † Titus iii. 5. ‡ Gal. iii. 27. || Eph. v. 26.
§ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

ument, so baptism confirms to God's people the faithful word that their sins are blotted out, and that those who have been *forgiven* shall never come into condemnation. Baptism, moreover, as the badge or symbol of a profession, is an act of *solemn dedication* to Him in whose name we are baptized. It was customary of old, for soldiers, when they took up the standard of their general, and vowed allegiance to him, to be marked with his name. So our baptism is a profession made in the most solemn and explicit manner, that we shall follow the Captain of salvation—fight under his banner, resolutely oppose his enemies, and be ever jealous of his honour. From Him it is the visible sign of accepting us as professed followers and soldiers. We are hereby devoted to the blessed Godhead; and we profess publicly to take God the Father as our Father—God the Son, as our Saviour and Friend—God the Spirit, as our Sanctifier and Guide—and God, in Trinity, as our sure and everlasting Portion.* And while baptism is an act of solemn worship and dedication, it implies that blessings are sought and expected from Him whose name is named upon us. It is resignation to Him as the source of all blessing, and it is an important means of blessing to those who are the predestined heirs of salvation. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." "According to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." †

* "The ordinance itself is a professed dedication to God, or an acknowledgement that the person baptized is obliged to be the Lord's; and signifies his right to the external blessings of the Covenant of grace, which are contained in the Gospel dispensation."—*Ridgely's Body of Divinity*.—p. 601.

† Mark xvi. 16. Titus iii. 5.

SECTION II.—*Privileges enjoyed through Baptism.*

This ordinance confers on its subjects benefits excellent and distinguishing. Of these we notice a few. First, Baptism brings with it *recognition of membership in the church*. The children of Christian parents baptized in infancy, are not thereby *made* members of the church. They were so previously, from connection with their parents: and in right of the profession of their parents, they are entitled to its privileges. Baptism is the visible means of recognition. The Abrahamic covenant, to which circumcision was appended as a sign and seal, included parents and their children, and the promise which guaranteed the enjoyment of special privileges, extended to both. The same Covenant, under a different administration, and having now for its visible seal “the washing with water,” is still the great charter of all blessed privileges. The application of the seal is the public badge of recognition—just as, in written documents, the signature of the hand, and the impression of the seal, imply a transference of obligation or privileges; and as in affiliated associations, the introduction of a member is connected with the giving of a sign or badge, by the possession of which the individual is then and afterwards recognized as entitled to the privileges of membership. Thus, by baptism, we are publicly recognized as pertaining to Christ’s church—the most excellent society on earth—to which belong all gracious and enduring blessings. The visible badge, or seal, does not of itself or of necessity confer these excellent benefits; but it is the sign and expression of our faith and hope that these blessings shall be bestowed. With this object, the person baptized is devoted to God; and with this view, he receives the token of brotherhood.

Secondly, Baptized youth become by their baptism *objects of special concern to the church*.

Children thus privileged are to be regarded as disciples in Christ's school—weak, it is true, and yet unfit to appreciate the advantages of such a relation—but still, as disciples, having the right to claim them as theirs, and possessed of a title to their full inheritance. Christian parents give a public pledge that every thing shall be done that is possible, on their part, to bring them to Christ, and to rear them for glory. The acceptance of this pledge by ministers in dispensing baptism implies that the church willingly recognizes the dedication, and consents, as a nursing mother, to regard the little ones thus surrendered to her tutelage, as objects of special interest and concern. They have a claim upon the *prayers of God's people*, and they actually enjoy them. The church, both by its officers and members, owes them counsel reproof and exhortation. Fellowship with the faithful is to them, even in infancy and childhood, a privilege of the highest value. They are hereby brought into near contact with the conversation and example of the saints—"the excellent of the earth;" and enjoy the best means of forming a holy character, and of being prepared for eminent usefulness and happiness. In all the prayers which are offered by the godly, in behalf of the visible church, baptized children have an interest; and they share in efforts which are the fruit of the spirit of prayer, and that relate to the future increase and prosperity of Zion.

Thirdly, *The young, in such circumstances, are interested in all the privileges of the visible church.* Christian parents in baptism avow their expectation that their children shall enjoy the full privileges of the church of Christ. These are partly *external*, and partly *internal*, and *spiritual*. To the church are secured, by her Divine Head, a ministry appointed by himself,—ordinances of worship as means of salvation,—constant preservation, and peculiar protection.*

* 1 Corinthians iii. 21, 22.

The visible church includes the invisible; and these outward privileges become, through the blessing of Christ, the means of conveying spiritual and eternal blessings to the heirs of salvation. To them pertain the covenant, and all its blessed provision, and they have the right and title to Christ, and all the benefits of salvation. While it is freely admitted that all who are baptized are not made partakers of these privileges; yet all such are specially called to their enjoyment, and have the means by which they may come to their actual possession. They are given up to God, in the hope of obtaining them. They are led to the margin of "the wells of salvation:" and while, from the earliest period of their existence, they have admission to holy ordinances, they are thereby conducted to the channels through which flow the precious blessings of everlasting salvation. The children of the church's members are regarded as "not unclean, but holy."* They are separated, dedicated ones. The outward privileges to which baptism introduces them, are more valuable than those which pertain to any other community on earth. When these are viewed, as in ordinary cases they should, as the heaven-appointed means of conferring saving benefits, we cannot estimate too highly the advantage of the condition into which the rite of initiation in the church brings its objects.

Lastly, *By baptism, the most solemn guarantee is given for the religious education of the youth of the church.*

Infant children are offered to the church as disciples, and in their baptism, they may be said to be publicly entered in Christ's school. Parents, in presenting them before the Lord, engage that "as long as they live," they "shall be the Lord's"—they vow to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition

* 1 Corinthians vii. 14.

of the Lord." Could there be a higher or more sacred pledge given for their instruction in the things of salvation? Parental concern for the welfare of children, elevated and strengthened by the sanctions of religion—a solemn vow made before many witnesses, and ratified by the impressive symbols of redemption, with the united prayers of God's people—in these circumstances, baptised infants are dedicated to God and offered to the church. If obligation to duty is felt in any case, surely it may reasonably be expected, that here it will exercise a powerful and permanent influence. The value of early religious education can never be too highly appreciated. It moulds the character—fits for extensive usefulness—preserves from the path of the destroyer, and frequently confers blessings for time and eternity, not on the individual alone, but upon others through his instrumentality. Baptized youth enjoy all suitable means of training for God and happiness, while the moral and religious instruction of others is neglected, and they are schooled for the world—initiated in the ways of sin and folly, and conducted into the paths that lead to destruction. How vast the distinction! How great and valuable the privileges which the youth of the church have, in the pledge given in their baptism for their religious education!

SECTION III.—*The Duties implied in Baptism.*

It is related of Cotton Mather, that he was accustomed frequently to give thanks to God for his baptism; and that he often referred to his early dedication to God, as a motive to diligence in Christ's service. The duties to which baptismal consecration obliges may indeed be regarded as embracing the whole course of Christian obedience. The Westminster Divines, in answer to the question—"How is baptism to be improved by us?"—the 167th in the

Larger Catechism—say, “The useful, but much-neglected duty of improving our baptism is to be performed by us all our life long; especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others; by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits confirmed and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein; by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to the grace of baptism, and our engagements; by growing up to assurance of pardon of sins, and of all other blessings, sealed to us in that sacrament; by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace; and by endeavouring to live by faith to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ; and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body.” From this comprehensive summary, it will be readily seen that due consideration of our baptism may minister the most useful instruction, and subserve the most important purposes. Hence may be drawn motives to humility, spiritual comfort, brotherly love, and the assurance of hope. From reflection upon their baptism, the young may be led to cherish a sense of Christian obligation to all duty, and may derive incentives to universal holiness. Among the duties that are especially incumbent upon baptized youth, may be mentioned—*serious and frequent reflection upon the baptismal vow—striving after conversion to God—early active engagement in Christ’s service—mortification of sin, and prizing and seeking early all the benefits of the covenant of grace.*

The young who have been dedicated to God should *early consider their ways.* They should inquire into the nature and design of baptism itself—an ordinance

so well fitted to instruct them in matters of the highest moment, and so interwoven with their future history and destinies. It reminds them of their original guilty and depraved condition, and of their need of Christ's blood for pardon and cleansing. It teaches them that they are under the curse, till they are renewed in the spirit, and obtain internal baptism—the circumcision of the heart. It exhibits the necessity of separation from the world, and the excellence of connexion with the household of faith. It imports an open surrender to the Lord, and is a sacred bond laid upon the young to be wholly and for ever his. Baptism is a symbol of regeneration. Without reference to this great internal change, the ordinance is destitute of meaning, and the application of the outward sign is useless. The young should begin betimes to ponder the solemn question, whether they have been “born of water and of the Spirit”—or whether they are yet dead in trespasses and sins. They should plead with God that, as by their baptism, they became *professedly* his, they may, by regeneration and adoption, become his *in reality*. They should consider seriously the evidences of regeneration, and never rest satisfied till they feel that with them “old things are passed away, and all things have become new.” By baptism, children are lent to the Lord, and pledged to serve him in newness of life. The highest honour on earth is to be a faithful servant of the King of kings. To this honourable service, baptism calls its subjects. The Hebrew servant, who loved his master and refused to leave him at the Jubilee, had his ear bored through with an awl, at the door-post, and remained a perpetual servant to that master. Infant baptism may be viewed as subserving a similar purpose. At the door-post of wisdom's house, the baptized child is pledged to loving obedience to Christ, and though unconscious at the time, he is a pre-engaged servant of the Lord of the house. So soon

as judgment comes into exercise, he should recognize the obligation, and willingly prefer the service of Christ to that of every other master. In the spirit of joyful devotedness he should welcome the service—“Here am I, Lord, send me.” “I am thy servant, Lord—thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.”—The whole life of faith may, in fine, be promoted by duly considering the baptismal engagement. Devoted to the Saviour in infancy, we should yield ourselves to him, and live to him alone. Awakened to a sense of the incomparable value of spiritual blessings, the baptized youth may plead his baptism as furnishing a plea and claim for the actual enjoyment—“Lord, I am thine—O, save thou me.” ‘I have been devoted to thee. Divine goodness has, in a wondrous manner, distinguished my lot—provided for me an ordinance in which I was pledged to be thine, brought to the fellowship of thy people, and presented in infancy with all saving benefits in Christ. I cannot doubt that the God of all grace was sincere in applying these precious blessings to me in sign and symbol—that, as he has no pleasure in the sinner’s death, so He really declared his design that they should be mine in full and everlasting possession. This early dedication, I venture to plead, on the footing of my Saviour’s merits. “I have gone astray like a lost sheep ;—seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.”*—Baptism thus viewed supplies constant and powerful *motives* to the cultivation of brotherly love, and the practice of universal holiness. Christians are baptized by the Spirit into “one body.”† If partakers at all of the spiritual blessings signified by baptism, we are members of the invisible church, of which Christ is the glorious Head. Baptism, like circumcision of old, is a *family ordinance*, and in its mystical import, it seals to the happy union and communion of “the household of

* Psalm cxix. 176.

† 1 Cor. xii. 13.

faith." What a motive is thus presented to cherish love and good-will to all who are partakers of the "one baptism"—and who are members of the "one body!" Having early named the name of Christ, we should *depart from all iniquity*. The washing with water directly refers to the grand and only means of moral purification—the blood of the Lamb. Whence can we educe a stronger motive to urge to universal holiness? What ordinance can more suitably and impressively teach us to purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; and to anticipate that blissful state, when we shall be presented to the Lord—"a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing!"

SECTION IV.—*Early Recognition of Baptism.*

The early recognition of baptism is among the first duties required of the youth of the church. It implies *a sense of the obligation of baptismal vows, and acting under such an impression—giving one's self to the Lord—renouncing the ways of youthful sins and vanity—and entering decidedly upon a religious life.* As these topics will be illustrated in subsequent portions of this work, we deem it sufficient, for the present, to advert to them in the way of a general reference. A solemn vow to be for God, and for no other, rests upon every Christian child. Ignorance of it is, in every sense, melancholy—betraying the natural blindness of the mind in relation to matters of the highest concernment. Neglect of it, when known, is deeply criminal—discovering the enmity of the heart against God, and manifesting deplorable ingratitude and rebellion. Nothing is more lovely than a young person early feeling and acknowledging the weight of the vow of God upon his conscience. The language of his heart should be—"I am thine, save me." "*Thy vows are upon me, O God.*" By volun-

tary surrender, he should make his own what has been promised on his behalf; and esteem it his highest honour, as well as his paramount duty, to yield himself to the Lord. The impression of the baptismal vow settled upon the mind, would propel to holy action. To withhold from God the *first fruits* of youth, is to rob him of what He claims by a special propriety. On the other hand, the conviction habitually cherished that we are God's, will supply a most powerful motive to pure and devoted conduct. It will lead to relinquish youthful follies, and guard against wicked companions; and inspiring early the consciousness of the dignity and responsibility of an immortal nature, it will impel to choose the pleasant ways of celestial wisdom.

This is obviously the import of the grand Scriptural counsel to the young—"REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH, WHILE THE EVIL DAYS COME NOT, NOR THE YEARS DRAW NIGH, WHEN THOU SHALT SAY, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THEM."* This is in effect saying—"Think early on God your Maker. Consider his incomparable excellency, and his glorious perfections. Reflect on his distinguishing and manifold goodness to you above others. Remember the obligations of gratitude by which you should be impelled to live to his glory—of his law, by which you are bound to serve him—of his gospel, by which you are called to love him supremely. Remember vows which are properly your own, by which you have been dedicated in soul and body to the Lord. In the days of your youth—the spring-time of your existence, hopes and joys, cherish this as a subject of devout and continual remembrance.' The precept does not mean a mere exercise of memory, or occasional-reflection. It is the remembrance which leads to decisive action that is enjoined. It bids to re-

*Ecclesiastes xii. 1.

member and turn to the Lord. It requires this to be placed as the first inscription upon the inner man. It is the *memory of the heart and conscience*—which should employ the mind daily—mingle in all our designs and pursuits—and direct, control, and actuate the whole conduct.* These dispositions the young should aim to possess and cultivate, “before the evil days come.” Such remembrance will be a preservative from the paths of folly. It will be the best preparation for days of trial. And, in a season when the spirits are buoyant with new-born hopes, and the heart is alive to pleasure, and prospects of enjoyment swell the bosom, the remembrance of God as our Benefactor, and Sovereign, and Portion; and the cherished impression of our engagement to be his, will impart a new zest to every lawful pleasure, and add a keener and purer relish to every lawful enjoyment.

The *motives* that should constrain the youth of the church to recognise early their baptism, and enter decidedly upon a religious life, are manifold and

* “Remember thy Creator.”—“Remember Him as the great Author of your being; and spend not the existence which He has given, and which he every moment sustains, in forgetfulness of him, and rebellion against him. Remember your unceasing dependance upon him for life, and breath, and all things; and cherish the humility that becomes dependant creatures. Remember Him as your all-bountiful benefactor, both in providence and redemption, the Father of mercies, the God of salvation.

. . . Remember Him with the dispositions, the worship, the service that are due to him. It is affectionate, reverential, practical remembrance of him that is here recommended. Think how awful it is, that God should be so generally forgotten by his intelligent offspring; that He should have so few of their thoughts, so little of their regards. Dare ye to be singular, by devoting yourselves to God in a world where he is so grievously dishonoured, where there are so few hearts that give him a welcome residence. Choose ye his love as your portion, his service as your employment, his glory as your end.”—*Wardlaw on Ecclesiastes*, Vol. II. pp. 265, 266.

powerful. The following may, when duly considered by the young, be instrumental in leading them to choose the ways of godliness. *The responsibility of baptized children is peculiarly solemn and weighty.* God's rule is the law of *retribution and proportion.* Privileges enjoyed in youth—opportunities for knowing and doing the will of God, are talents of the most valuable kind, and these bring with them the highest responsibility. The young have been born in the church of Christ—they were baptized as a means of introducing them to all the privileges of disciples*—they have been taught to read the Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation—they have heard the preaching of the Gospel—been joined with professed Christians in the hallowed exercises of worship—and been separated from a wicked world. Upon the accountability arising from such multiplied and eminent advantages, the children of the church should frequently and deeply reflect. Should they disregard it, they may be assured that it is not for a moment overlooked by Him who so distinguished their lot, and who will be their final and inexorable Judge. In the “book of his remembrance,” all their privileges, as well as all their actions, are faithfully recorded; and in this world and the next, the award will be in proportion to the improvement or neglect of the talents that have been entrusted. Their ruin will be tremendous, if they refuse to consider these things. They will “treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.” Life will pass away unblessed. They will lie down in their grave, their bones full of the sins

*The Saviour's commission to his ministers—“Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them,” &c.—properly signifies, to “*make disciples,*” and intimates that baptism is the appointed ordinance, by which individuals are enrolled among the disciples of Christ, that they may be trained for his service—by which they are entered into the school of Christ, as professed subjects of spiritual instruction.

of their youth. Their state in the judgment will be terrible—their future torment inconceivably fearful—and all will be aggravated from the consideration of what they were—what they enjoyed—what was done for them from their earliest years.

The sin of deferring to recognize baptismal engagements is manifold and aggravated.—One of the most common and powerful temptations that assail the young, is that of deferring the business of religion till a future period. They look to others. They entertain the idea—so congenial to the natural heart—that to be devoted to religion is incompatible with the enjoyment of pleasure. They wish to have mirth and happiness, without the restraints of religion. They are deterred through shame; and on various other grounds they procrastinate. All this is exceedingly evil in itself, and is frequently followed by consequences the most injurious. It implies disregard to God's authority; it plainly indicates the prevailing love of sin; it discovers contempt of the obligations imposed in baptism; and it perils the momentous interests of the soul and eternity upon an uncertain future. The depravity of the nature, if not early checked, gathers strength and vigour with our growth. The mind speedily loses its delicacy of sentiment and feeling; conscience becomes callous, and the heart is hardened. First warnings unattended to, and early counsels disobeyed, the heart becomes less susceptible of receiving right impressions; and the way is opened for throwing off entirely religious restraints, and for launching away into a career of folly and dissipation. Repentance and conversion become more improbable, the longer they are deferred; and facts, numerous and solemn, declare that when first calls are unheeded, and first impressions stifled, the hope of salvation becomes every year more uncertain, and the individual given over to lusts, on the gratification of which the heart was

bent, is left to become a formalist, or a hypocrite, and at last is given up to utter rejection. When the means of grace are faithfully dispensed, the greater number of those who are converted, are awakened in youth. If under the faithful preaching of the word, and the enjoyment of other privileges, the young do not soon profit, there is strong ground to fear that they may not profit at all. In the ministry of the apostles, wherever abundant success followed their labours, it was chiefly the fruit of first efforts; and when this was not enjoyed, the servants of God generally directed their steps to another place—indicating that the rejection of their message exposed those to whom they were sent, to be left in confirmed rebellion and ungodliness. So, we have reason to fear, not a few baptized youth are given up, for resisting first impressions, and neglecting to make an early improvement of their distinguished privileges. Indeed, it can hardly be expected to be otherwise; for it would be difficult in words to declare all the evil of the young refusing to recognize their baptism, and postponing the personal application of the things of salvation. They may never have another season; and they certainly will never have a better. Many, who like them procrastinated, remain, till their final account, impenitent and unpardoned—to bewail throughout a lost eternity, their contempt of God, and their neglect of salvation. Their sin is most displeasing to God. It is virtually saying to him, “Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thee.” We will go on sinning for a time, and then, when we are tired of the service, we will repent and reform. We will abuse the mercy and forbearance of God, to reject his claims to the homage of the heart and life, and to do service to his great enemy! Can such a spirit and conduct possibly escape the vengeance of the Almighty?

Innumerable advantages accrue from the early recognition of the baptismal covenant.—To the young, decision in religion is of inestimable value. It fortifies the mind against temptation—moulds the character—and gives a proper bent to the pursuits of life. It purifies and elevates the heart by bringing into near intercourse with the Best and most glorious of beings; and it thus serves to raise the youth to the conscious dignity of an immortal creature. Spiritual as well as temporal blessings are enjoyed in the way of decision and devotedness in religion. The divine assurance is ample and all-encouraging—“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added.” “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”* Deliverance from a state of indecision and irresolution is itself no mean advantage. And to be brought in contact with the friends of God—to enjoy an interest in their prayers, and realize their fellowship—and to be led, through intercourse with them, to the contemplation of heavenly objects, and to the holy services of religious worship, are benefits which the young can never too highly appreciate. The young become useful by becoming pious. None others “serve their generation,” but those who, devoting their hearts and lives to religion, serve it “by the will of God.” The decided piety of children is the highest comfort and honour to Christian parents—it gladdens the heart of ministers—and cheers the faithful and the aged, who prefer the good of Zion to their chief joy. It powerfully confutes the cavils of infidels, and silences gainsayers; and not unfrequently, it has proved a blessed instrument of revival to the church.

* Matthew vi. 33. 1 Timothy iv. 8.

Substantial and lasting pleasures result from the early recognition of baptism.—The desire of happiness—natural to every human being—is especially powerful in youth. The young universally pursue after pleasure, as, with spirits lively and passions warm, they are fitted to enjoy it. Without attempting to enumerate the elements of human happiness, it may be assumed, as a fundamental maxim, that, *True religion is peace, comfort and felicity, and that separate from it, there is nothing that deserves the name of happiness.* It is not merely that it alone reveals a state of bliss in the world to come, and conducts to its sure enjoyment—it discovers the only way to substantial consolations and holy joys in this present earthly condition. It prevents the countless miseries which come upon those who disregard its claims; it alleviates outward trials, and enables its possessor to rejoice even in tribulation. It cures the evils of the heart, by subduing and eradicating those disorderly passions, and inclinations, which create so much dissatisfaction and misery in human society. It confers the “witness of a good conscience.” It provides mental pleasures of the highest kind, by presenting to the mind objects of contemplation, the most excellent and ennobling. Its consolations under sorrow, disappointment, and bereavements are effectual to relieve and cheer the heart. They are balm to the wounded spirit, and like the source whence they spring, they are pure, unfading, and eternal.

The *Privileges* which true religion confers are most valuable. Peace with God and the enjoyment of his favour—union to Christ—an inheritance with them that are sanctified—these are privileges which transcend all our present conceptions. True religion implants in the heart *spiritual graces*, and these become sources of unspeakable pleasure. “The water,” says the Saviour, “which I shall give him, shall be in him

a well of water springing up to life everlasting.”* Faith realizing things invisible and eternal; hope, like a star, illuminating scenes of darkness, and pointing to a glorious heaven; love, centered upon objects the most exalted, delighting in God, acquiescing in the perfect wisdom of his dispensations, grateful for countless benefits, and rejoicing in his salvation; and repentance, patience, meekness, temperance,—all these are as purifying streams issuing from an inexhaustible fountain of grace in the heart, and flowing forward to the ocean of endless felicity. The *duties* of religion, too, bring with them diversified and exalted pleasures. Praise is comely and pleasant for the upright. Prayer is the calm rest and satisfaction of the heart, revealing its wants, cares, desires, to One who will assuredly hear, and who is ever ready to answer. The reading of the Scriptures, hearing the word preached, the holy rest of the Sabbath, admission to the Lord’s table, participation in social and domestic worship, are exercises suited to the rational and spiritual nature—exercises which refine, and satisfy and ennoble—which, while they contribute to form a holy character, prepare for higher even heavenly enjoyments. The assurance, too, of an interest in the love of God, and the hope of future glory, which true religion brings in its train, delight and satisfy the heart. Animated by such joys, the evils that afflict humanity, are felt to be indeed “light and momentary,”—as to the Israelitish Lawgiver, when on Mount Pisgah, the wilderness is forgotten, and the eye rests with unmingled delight upon the ineffable pleasures of the heavenly country—the land of promise. These pleasures never satiate nor weary. Neither the world nor any enemy can take them away. They are a healing medicine for every wound, and a balm for every woe; and they are continually augmented, as

* John vii. 37.

every woe; and they are continually augmented, as the capacity for relishing and enjoying them expands. They are pleasures for life; they yield solace, support and triumph in death; and in the future state, they become "*rivers of pleasure, and joys at God's right hand for evermore.*" Such is the happiness which religion holds out to the young, as it invites them to its service. "Length of days" is in wisdom's "right hand, and in her left riches and honour." Should not the baptized youth of the church early make these pure and unalloyed pleasures their own? Happiness here and hereafter depend upon their choice—the earnest in time will be followed by eternal and unchangeable felicity.

The examples of many honoured servants of God should excite and encourage the young to recognize early their baptismal dedication.

Many, whose names are recorded in the Book of life, enjoyed the benefit of parental dedication, and willingly devoted themselves early to the service of God. The largest number of those whose lives and characters are depicted in the Bible as servants of God, and who were eminent instruments in advancing the Divine glory, were thus distinguished. Of these, Moses, Joseph, Samuel, David, Josiah, Obadiah, Daniel, and Jeremiah, in the Old Testament, and John the Baptist, and Timothy, under the New, are exhibited as illustrious examples of youthful piety—remarkably blessed themselves, and singularly useful in their generation. In all ages, since the introduction of Christianity, it is evident that a peculiar blessing has rested upon the lives and labours of those who, early recognizing their infantile dedication, have yielded themselves to the Lord. Numbered with these were many of the illustrious reformers and martyrs of Christ, and some of the most devoted missionaries, who have carried the gospel to the perishing heathen. The names of Guthrie and

Rutherford, of Cargill and Renwick, and of many others of the covenanted confessors and martyrs of Scotland, will live enshrined in the hearts of all who value the cause of true religion and civil liberty—and of these it is recorded that they enjoyed faithful parental training, and were remarkable for youthful piety.* Richard Baxter, Philip and Matthew Henry, and a great number besides, of the Nonconformists of England, are instances of singular usefulness, in connexion with early devotedness. Elliot and Mayhew, and the Mathers of America, are a part of the same great “cloud of witnesses.” Who has not heard of Pearce, and of the family of the Janeways, who gave themselves to God in childhood—who were honoured to do much for Christ’s cause in a short time, and whose works, though they are dead, will always speak? Brainerd, the most prayerful and devoted of missionaries, whom God honoured with eminent success, and Edwards, his biographer,—one of the greatest of uninspired men,—in early life, dedicated their heart and life to God, and even before they had passed the years of boyhood, exhibited fruits of wisdom and piety, which have seldom been equalled, and never surpassed. The “Resolutions” of Jonathan Edwards, prepared when he was but *twenty years* of age, deserve to be frequently pondered and adopted as rules of conduct for the young. How admirable the spirit which the following express; and how worthy of imitation!—

“Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God’s glory, and my own good, profit, and pleasure, in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriads of ages hence. Resolved to do whatever I think to be my duty, and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general. Resolved to

* See Scottish Worthies.—*Passim*.

“Resolved, to be continually endeavouring to find out some new invention and contrivance to promote the fore-mentioned things.

“Resolved, never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body, less or more, but what tends to the glory of God; nor be, nor suffer it, if I can avoid it.

“Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.

“Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.

“Resolved, never to do any thing, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.

“Resolved, never henceforward till I die, to act as if I were any way my own, but entirely and altogether God’s.

“Resolved—constantly, with the utmost niceness and diligence, and the strictest scrutiny, to be looking into the state of my soul, that I may know whether I have truly an interest in Christ or no; that when I come to die, I may not have any negligence respecting this to repent of.

“Resolved—very much to exercise myself in this all my life long, viz., with the greatest openness I am capable of, to declare my ways to God, and lay open my soul to him, all my sins, temptations, difficulties, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires, every thing, and every circumstance.”* May the youth of the church be led by the Spirit of all grace to follow them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises! May they choose early that best part, “which shall not be taken from them!”

* Edwards’ Life and Diary, in his Works.

CHAPTER II.

CONVERSION.—ITS NATURE, NECESSITY, MEANS, EVIDENCES, &c.

The *Importance* to all of a great spiritual change is frequently declared in the Scriptures, and the passages which speak on this subject, are among the most pointed, explicit, and solemn in the sacred volume—“Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” “So then, they that are in the flesh, cannot please God.” “Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” “If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” *

These are the solemn testimonies of God that cannot lie—of Him who knows what is in man—at whose tribunal every human being must one day compear—and whose judgments, we know assuredly, will always be according to truth. They are spoken of all without exception. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no, not one. Every individual must be translated from a state of guilt and sin to a state of holiness, if he would

* Heb. xii. 14. Psalm ix. 17. Eph. ii. 1. Rom. viii. 8, 9. Gal. vi. 15. John iii. 3. Mat. xviii. 8. 2 Cor. v. 17.

escape the tremendous wrath of the Eternal, and partake of the Divine favour here, or obtain happiness hereafter. These, and like Scriptural declarations innumerable, represent human beings as aliens from God, and exposed to his indignation, until the state is altered, and the heart renewed; and they assert in the most unequivocal terms, the importance of a spiritual renovation of the heart, towards the enjoyment of God's favour, or of aught that can be regarded as a real blessing. It is, moreover, very evident that this change, whatever it is, is something quite different from mere external reformation, and vastly superior to it. It would be a gross abuse and perversion of the Scriptural declarations we have quoted, and others that refer to this subject, to apply them to a mere moral and external reformation—to the exchange of one set of opinions for another, or to an alteration of conduct, which a person has it in his own power to effect, or that may be effected by external circumstances or agencies. The Scriptures term this change a *new birth*—a *passing from death unto life*—a *new creation*—a *resurrection*. Such strongly figurative expressions are devoid of all proper meaning, if conversion only intends an outward moral reformation. It is comparatively easy to exchange one sin for another—and many circumstances may serve to displace one set of habits, and to induce another. Foolish notions may be given up—evil practices may be laid aside—and many external duties may be performed. The outward demeanour may be becoming, and the conduct praiseworthy; and yet there may be no change of heart—no conversion. To use the language of some of the old writers, *a man's sins may forsake him, and not he his sins*. The love of sin may still predominate within—the heart may be wholly a polluted fountain—and the motives of a course of conduct that is of good report among men, may be corrupt and perverse.

The language of the word implies something altogether different from a mere visible or partial reform. It asserts the necessity of an internal, total change. It speaks of a change of heart—expressively and frequently entitling it a “new heart,” a “heart of flesh”—and, in terms that cannot be misunderstood, ascribes it to supernatural agency, asserting or implying that it is beyond created power to effect it. While our baptism points to this great change, and the sacred Scriptures represent it as fundamental and essential to the possession of all spiritual blessings, it concerns us deeply to reflect on its paramount importance to ourselves. To all, the momentous inquiry should be frequently brought home—enjoying the outward seal, have I really partaken of the “washing of regeneration?” Have I passed from death to life? or am I still under God’s fearful wrath and curse—dead in trespasses and sins? One thing is needful—and till the spiritual change of which we speak has been experienced, it can never be rightly known or secured. May the young seriously lay to heart this subject! May each reader feel the infinite importance of settling now the great question—whether he is in Christ, or is yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity!

To guide to a right decision upon this all-important topic—we shall explain briefly the *nature* of the great *Change*; advert to its *necessity*; notice the *Means* whereby it is ordinarily effected; and state a few of its more obvious and distinguishing evidences and effects.

SECTION I.—*The Nature of Conversion.*

The conversion of a sinner is the turning of the heart from sin to holiness, and from the dominion of Satan to the service of the living God. It is a real internal change, affecting the whole inner man, alter-

ing the bent of the thoughts and inclinations—and imparting a new and spiritual direction to the desires and affections of the heart. It is a complete revolution of the moral nature. It comprises a change of views, and a transformation of character, in which the person who was previously at enmity with God, disregarding his authority, hating his perfections, and the slave of sin, becomes at peace with him, the object of his love, the Lord's free-man. It is accompanied by an alteration of state, in which the condemned criminal becomes a pardoned subject and an adopted son. Instead of hardened impiety or thoughtless folly, godly contrition takes possession of the heart. Unbelief gives way to confiding trust and dependence; love instead of enmity prevails within; and in the room of aversion to things spiritual and divine, a new relish is implanted, which can only rest satisfied with its appropriate objects—the things of the Spirit of God—the things that pertain to everlasting salvation.

The phrases whereby this moral change is designated in the sacred volume, when duly considered, are fitted to guide to a right apprehension of its nature. It is the taking away of a "*hard and stony heart*," and the implantation of a "*heart of flesh*." This work, it is evident, is in all respects, far above created power. Accordingly, three times in a single verse, God claims it as his exclusive and glorious prerogative, (Ezekiel xi. 19,) "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." The former condition—the natural state—is most significantly termed, "a hard and stony heart"—the person unrenewed being insensible to the things of God—the great matters of sin and salvation, of God's glory and eternity—and the affections being cold and lifeless, in relation to all spiritual objects. In conversion, instead of "the

hard and stony heart," there is given a "heart of flesh." Life is implanted, and thenceforth the person is distinguished by spiritual feeling and motion. Bring him to the concerns of God's glory, and he feels; to sin, his own and others', and he is affected; to Christ and his salvation, and new and warm desires actuate the soul; and to the duties of holy obedience, and he is compelled and drawn by a constraining, irresistible influence. His heart is "enlarged," and he runs in the way of the Divine commandments.* And as the heart in the physical system controls and directs the chief vital functions, so in the great spiritual change, the implantation of a new heart is equivalent to a renewal of the whole man: it alters completely the current of the thoughts and desires, moulds the character, and impresses a new bent and direction on the whole life and conduct.

It is again termed *regeneration*—a new birth—and the person changed becomes a new creature, John iii. 3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" (2 Cor. v. 17,) "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" (1 Pet. i. 23,) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Here, again, God is distinctly revealed as the author of this change, since He alone who gave man existence at first, can bring into being a new creature. As in the natural birth, no new matter is produced, but all its capacities and senses are new, conversant with new objects, and suited to the new state into which it has entered; so in the spiritual change, the individual is the same, but he is a new man, possessed of new capacities, perceptions, dispositions, and prepared to make a new use of all his faculties. He is introduced to a spiritual world, and becomes capable of enjoyments and satisfactions, to

* Psalm cxix. 32.

which he was before an entire stranger. As the formation of the foetus in the womb is beyond the power of human comprehension, so the manner in which the new nature is implanted, transcends human knowledge. As the birth of the human infant precedes the exercise of its faculties, and is the necessary introduction to all the actions of the future life, so the new birth is indispensably requisite to the performance of all spiritual actions—to all works that are morally good and acceptable in the sight of God. This is the starting point of a spiritual existence; and just as the members of the new-born infant are weak, though all the parts of a perfect man are present, and increase by nourishment and exercise, so the new creature, feeble and imperfect at first, advances in the Divine life, until he arrives at the “stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.” Without this change, no human being, however gifted with natural or acquired abilities, can see the kingdom of God. He cannot discern its spiritual nature, or the excellency of its blessings, and he can have no relish for their enjoyment.

Conversion is likewise styled “*newness of life*”—a “*passing from death unto life*”—a *resurrection*—a “*new creation.*”^{*} Still the grand leading idea is, that God alone, who works all in all, can effect it, since these great operations, infusion of life, quickening the dead, and creating anew, are the sole products of Divine almighty agency. How complete and wonderful is the change! Where death reigned before, and corruption held undisputed sway, a spiritual existence is conferred—the grave of a natural state is opened, and the dead are awakened to life. With new-born powers and faculties, they are introduced into a new world of spiritual existences. Rescued

* Ephesians ii. 10. Romans vi. 14. John v. 24. 1 John iii. 14. Ephesians iv. 24. Colossians iii. 10.

from death, they become the servants of their glorious Deliverer. They are put in possession of powers and dispositions, of which they were before wholly unconscious. The law of the new nature is the law of gratitude and devotedness. They are required henceforth to "walk in newness of life." "Risen with Christ," they seek "the things that are above;" and as alive from the dead, they "yield themselves to God," and "their members as instruments of righteousness."*

This change, is, moreover, an alteration from a state of moral and spiritual *darkness* to the *light* of spiritual knowledge, and holiness, and comfort. The regenerated are delivered from "the power of darkness," and brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The natural state was one of deep ignorance, and total blindness. The "god of this world" had blinded the minds of them that believe not; and of all that is most important for them to know, they were completely ignorant. By the work of the Spirit of God, the shades of night are parted, and "the day-spring from on high" visits the soul. The subjects of his gracious operation become the children of light. God, "who made the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Spiritual discoveries may be at first dim, and many clouds may, for a time, obscure the vision; but the least in the renewed family is enabled in some measure to say, "WHEREAS I WAS ONCE BLIND, NOW I SEE." They never return to a state of complete darkness again. The spiritual views imparted are *humbling, sanctifying, refreshing, and increasing*. "*The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more, till the perfect day.*"† In fine, this important change is described as a becoming *spiritually, instead of carnally* minded; laying aside "the old

* Rom. vi. 13.

† Prov. iv. 18.

man and his deeds," and "putting on the new man;" renouncing the service of Satan and sin, for the blessed freedom wherewith the Son makes his people free. The natural state is one of total depravity, in which the love of sin predominates. The understanding is darkened, and the heart and conscience are defiled. The "prince of this world" reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience. The habitual bent and inclination of the mind and heart, are the objects that gratify the flesh. In love with sin, the person is the slave of sin. He is led captive by the Destroyer at his will, and he serves divers lusts and pleasures. The strength of corruption in the heart is like a *law* constraining obedience—like a cruel and despotic master, compelling his slaves to fulfil his pleasure. In the great spiritual change, the enmity is slain—the old man is laid aside—the bent of the mind becomes spiritual, and the person experiences that to be "spiritually-minded is life and peace." By the grace of the Saviour, and the energy of his word, the individual becomes "free indeed." "He is the freeman, whom the truth makes free." The service of sin and Satan are felt to be intolerable slavery, and are renounced for ever. The dominion of the old man is completely broken. The new-born creature is enrolled among Christ's "willing people," that come to him in the day of power. Joyfully accepting of Christ's yoke, he enters upon a service of love. He consents to the law of God, that it is holy, and just, and good. He "delights in it after the inner man," and says from the heart, "*Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only, will we make mention of thy name.*"*

It will be obvious from these diversified Scriptural representations, that as essential parts of regeneration, or as inseparably connected with it, are—1. *New views* of things spiritual and divine—views not natu-

* Isaiah xxvi. 13.

ral to any mind, nor acquired by the exercise of intellect, however powerful or gifted. These views are spiritual, supernatural, and experimental. Sin is seen as odious and abominable—the person regards himself as polluted, guilty and wretched—God is beheld as infinitely excellent and glorious—Christ as fairer than the sons of men, and altogether lovely, and salvation by him as unspeakably valuable and all-desirable. The “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” let into the mind attracts, subdues, and fills the heart—and presents spiritual and heavenly objects, as interesting, lovely, and of surpassing importance.

2. *Convictions of sin, deep, heartfelt, and abiding.* When the Spirit of truth comes, “He convinces the world of sin.” Through the law, by which is “the knowledge of sin,” this blessed Agent not only shows the evil of sin in general, but brings home to the conscience a sense of the guilt and greatness, the defilement and misery of his particular transgressions. He feels his own sins to be infinite in number and of fearful demerit. He is persuaded of the righteousness of the law in his condemnation. He is convinced of the heinous and aggravated nature of sin, as committed against God, his Creator, Preserver, and most bountiful Benefactor. He sees it in the glass of the Redeemer’s sufferings; and is taught impressively its evil character and tremendous consequences, in the groans and agonies, the sufferings and death of God’s well-beloved Son. The depravity of his nature, the multiplied transgressions of his life, his daily sins, and especially the sins of unbelief, appear before him in the darkest colours; and convinced and alarmed, he cries out, “Lord, save me, I perish!” “What shall I do to be saved?” He obtains the spirit of the contrite ones. The hardness and impenitency of the heart are removed, and he is given a heart which feels and bleeds for sin—“a heart

of flesh." The spirit of a distressed penitent and returning wanderer is his: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and I was chastised; Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." * "I will arise, and go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight; and am no more worthy to be called thy son." † Differences there are in the strength and continuance of such convictions in various individuals; but in substance, they are the same in all who become partakers of the grace of salvation. All see and acknowledge the spirituality and extent of the divine law—the reasonableness and justice of its claims—their own countless violations of its requirements—the guilt they have incurred—the righteousness of God in awarding the deserved penalty—and the unspeakable danger of endless misery. Under such views and feelings, the awakened sinner is led to despair of help or salvation in himself; and burdened with sin, and pressed with danger, he flees for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him in the Gospel.

3. *A new spiritual relish for spiritual objects.* This has been regarded by a distinguished writer as the substantial matter in conversion—as embracing the whole change. ‡ Although we may hesitate to define this great change, by this mode of phraseology, we admit at once that it always brings with it a new spiritual taste, and imparts to the inner man, a relish with which before he was wholly unacquainted. Formerly he had no liking to God—no sympathy with his glory—no delight in his people—no desire after the blessings of his salvation—no love to holy ordinances. His desires were sensual—his inclinations carnal. He sought to gratify the lusts of the flesh. In Jesus Christ, he saw no form nor comeliness, on account of

* Jer. xxxi. 18.

† Luke xv. 14.

‡ Dr. Dwight.

which he should desire him. Like food put into the mouth of a dead man, or administered to a person in disease, spiritual things when brought near excited no appetite, or only produced loathing and disgust. In the renewal of the mind by the Spirit, the aversion of the heart to spiritual objects is removed, and a holy relish for spiritual objects is communicated. God is seen in his matchless excellency, and is desired, loved, and adored. Christ and divine things become objects of intense interest, and of commanding attraction. A spiritual appetite is implanted, which cannot be satisfied but with spiritual objects, "My soul thirsteth for God, the living God." "The desire of our souls is towards thy name, and the remembrance of thee." "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."*

4. *The reception of Christ into the heart, and relying on him as the rest and portion of the soul.*

Conversion is a turning from a state of unbelief to cordial trust and confidence. Christ Jesus is proposed as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, and is offered as a full and adequate supply for all the wants of the soul. He is a Physician, Shepherd, Husband, Portion. He is made of God unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He is covenant of the people—God's salvation—All and in all. Thus is he presented in gracious manifestation and offer to all who hear the gospel. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit reveals to the heart the Saviour in these blessed characters and relations. Faith implanted in the soul credits the testimony which God has given of his Son, and embraces the divine Saviour as he is offered. It looks to him for deliverance and safety, flees to him for refuge, and rests and feeds upon him for all strength, and nourishment, and comfort. It is the *assent of the mind* to all blessed truths respecting Christ and his salvation, and the *confi-*

* Psalm xlii. 2. Isa. xxvi. 8. Psalm lxxxiv. 2.

dence of the heart in the person, promise, and righteousness of the Redeemer. This is so nearly connected with the great change of which we are speaking, that it is represented as an essential and primary element of it, "*He that believeth hath everlasting life.*" "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."* Faith is the first act of the new creature. In believing we live. It is the vital breath of the regenerated subject. "He that believeth shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life." Appropriating and cleaving to Christ as the chief good, the person who believes has found the hidden "treasure," and he is willing to part with all to enjoy it. From the heart, he says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."† Henceforth he values the favour of his gracious Lord as better than life. He lives to please him; and the grand desire of his heart, is to be conformed to his blessed likeness, and to be with him, beholding and enjoying him for ever.

"Thus faith is the cardinal virtue of the Christian—the root and stem of all graces; and till we believe, we are not converted; so soon as we believe according to his word, we are converted. This is the kind of conversion which the Scripture enforces. When once the happy change has passed—and pass it must on all who would enjoy eternal life—the converted man feels like one translated out of darkness into marvellous light; a new world opens before him; a new object and end of life seems to have taken possession of him; a new and opposite direction is given to the energies of his soul; and now all his desire, all his anxiety seems to be after that salvation, which before he neither sought, nor apprehended, nor valued."‡

This change, we need only further remark, in rela-

* John iii. 36. i. 12.

† Psalm lxxiii. 25.

‡ Redford's Great Change—pp. 6, 7.

tion to its nature is, besides being supernatural, *instantaneous, universal, and the commencement of all purity and excellence of character.* Between death and life, there is no intermediate state. Whether convictions are powerful or weak, the change is effected in a moment. The soul spiritually dead before is quickened; in a "time of love" the Redeemer passes by, and says, "Live;" and the person instantly becomes a new creature,— "old things" passing away, and all things becoming "new." It is *universal*, pervading the whole inner and outward man; affecting all the faculties, and impressing a new bent and direction upon the whole heart and life. The regenerate becomes "*a new lump,*" as they were previously "unleavened." The conduct is effectually and thoroughly reformed, as the heart is renewed. The seed of holiness is sown in the heart and mind, and it cannot but germinate and bear fruit in the life and actions. Henceforth the individual is numbered with the saints of God. He is alive unto holiness, and he cannot but go forward to perfection, until he appears before the throne of God, completely transformed, shining in the beauty of holiness—without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

SECTION II.—*The Necessity of Conversion.*

The indispensable need of this change to every human being who would enjoy happiness, may be shewn in various ways:—First, *God has repeatedly declared it.* Three times in one discourse, in the space of a few verses of the same chapter, the Saviour, who is truth itself, declared it, (John iii. 3, 5, 7.) "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" "Ye must be born again." These expressions are designed to have the largest latitude of meaning. "Except a man"—in the original it is "any one." There

is need to every person, young or old—whatever his previous character or habits—indispensable and urgent need, if he would possess God's favour here, or come to his presence and glory hereafter, to be "born again." In many other places of the sacred volume, God has asserted the same necessity. He has invited and commanded the sinner to turn from sin, or die; to repent, or perish; to become holy, or underlie his wrath for ever, and be excluded from all the benefits that result from his favour. This connexion God has established, and none can alter it. Let God be true, and every man a liar. He who is truth itself, and who can never repent or change, has proclaimed to all his creatures without exception, that there can be no friendship between him and the sinner unrenewed—that there can be no salvation without conversion.

Secondly, *The state of the sinner compared with the character of God* absolutely requires this change. The descriptions of man's condition and character given in the volume of inspiration, are verified by universal experience; and it need not be told how utterly contrary these represent the sinner to be to God. Sinners are estranged from the life of God—aliens from him by evil works—at enmity with him. God is "light," while their understandings are darkened, and their hearts are blinded. He is love, and they are "hateful, and hating one another." They are under the curse—loathsome, polluted, far from God, and far from righteousness. They dislike to retain God in their minds. They are "sensual, worldly, devilish;" "carnal and sold under sin;" and they "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is God, blessed for ever." This account is applicable not to a particular class of the unrenewed. However fair may be the outward aspect, and whatever diversity there may be in some adventitious circumstances, it is descriptive of the moral character of all natural men: Jew and Gentile are all under sin.

Sinners remaining in this condition cannot possibly enjoy favour or fellowship with God. No law is more universal than this. Evil shall not dwell with God, nor shall fools stand in his sight. All sin, in any form, is held by him in eternal abhorrence. The sinner must be completely changed; his whole nature must be renewed, before he can have fellowship with God. The enmity must be slain—the rebel become a friend and an obedient son, before heaven's exalted Sovereign can regard him with approbation, or he can enjoy the precious fruits of covenant favour.

Thirdly, *There can be no holy character, and no holy conduct*, till the heart is renewed. An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. A clean thing cannot proceed out of an unclean. The character accords with the nature; and the actions of the life are consonant to the internal dispositions and principles. Unchanged, the sinner is unable to perform aught that is morally or spiritually good. He cannot even see the things of the Spirit of God, "for they are spiritually discerned." In the words of an early Christian father,* the best actions of the unrenewed, are but "splendid sins;" or, according to one of the articles of the Church of England, "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of the Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or deserve grace of congruity; yea, rather for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."† The tree must first be good, before the fruit can be good,—the heart must be made "good ground," before it can bring forth fruit to reward the cultivator, or repay the possessor.

* Augustine.

† Articles of Church of England—Art. XIII.

Fourthly, Conversion is indispensable *to a happy death, and an entrance to heaven.* To the righteous, and to them alone, death is gain. The instances on record are not few of the triumphant deaths of real Christians; the joyful exits of the unrenewed have yet to be written. Instead of these, many cases have been related of men of highly-gifted intellects, who were placed in the most favourable outward circumstances in life, shrinking from dissolution with horror, and passing off the stage of life in misery. Religion alone—real religion, which takes up its abode in the soul when the heart is renewed, and which expands and comes to maturity at death, can smooth a dying pillow, and make the last scene calm, peaceful, and triumphant. Nothing but a holy nature, it is obvious, can dwell in heaven. In the abode of perfect purity—into the immediate presence of Him who is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” can no unclean thing enter. The sinner’s nature unchanged, is opposed to heaven and its exalted Sovereign. To suppose him to be admitted to heaven in this condition, would be to “suppose vice dwelling in the region of perfect purity; hostility to God, raised to the honour of immortal fellowship with him; and deep, unsubdued, hateful depravity, reaping the reward of faith and love; and in association with all that is pure, glorious, and blessed.”* Heaven would, indeed, be no place of happiness to an unconverted sinner. It is a universal law, that there can be no felicity, where the nature and dispositions are not suited to the objects of enjoyment; and no full happiness can be partaken of which is not spiritual and holy. The unrenewed sinner in heaven would be out of his element. He loved not the Sabbath here, and how could he be happy in the eternal Sabbath-keeping of heaven? He had no pleasure in the saints; none in the work of

* Redford’s Great Change—p. 10.

praise, and the other varied exercises of religion; no fellowship with the righteous; no delight in drawing near God; and how could the songs of the redeemed, and their lofty communion, and the enjoyment of the God of their salvation minister felicity? To a carnal mind, all the sights of heaven would be oppressive—all its employments a drudgery—all its diversified and overflowing pleasures only splendid misery. The presence of God and holy angels would be full of torment; and the unholy creature would shrink instinctively, and in conscious wretchedness, from every thing that is to be seen, heard, or enjoyed in heaven. Into a place of which holiness is the all-pervading element, and the summit of whose happiness consists in the cloudless vision and blessed fruition of God for ever, the unconverted sinner cannot enter. And it may be added, that the kindred element of the unconverted heart is the prison-house of sin—the abode of endless woe. By a law as firmly established, and as universally operative as the law of gravitation, sin and punishment, impenitence and destruction, are infallibly connected. Like a talent of lead, the hard and stony heart gravitates downward to endless misery. Sinners must repent or perish; the nature must be changed, or the individual be lost for evermore.

Fifthly, We only subjoin farther, *That this great change must be accomplished in this present world; and it is most important that it be effected in early life.* Death produces no alteration in the moral condition or habits. The character in which we pass out of time, will appear with us in the world of spirits, and will rise with us in judgment. It has been forcibly said to be “the dying dress of the soul—the vestments in which ‘t must come forth to meet the sentence of an impartial Judge.”* If, then, none can en-

* Haweis's Lectures to Young Men, on the Formation of Character.—p. 46.

joy happiness without the possession of holiness—if none can enter heaven without moral purity, it is evident that the heart must be changed, and the life conformed to the image of Christ, before we die, else our hopes of future felicity are all a delusion. And as an approved character is gradually formed,—being the combination of right principles, and the cultivation of proper habits,—the fruits of a glorious change require to be brought forth and matured, to constitute a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. The season of youth is more suitable than any other for turning to the Lord, and for beginning to acquire this meetness. It is most reasonable to devote the spring-time of life to the service of the Author of one's being. The fervour of youthful affections employed in religion is as the incense of youth: and beginning early to seek the Lord, a long day of active and honourable service may be realized; and the character formed by the combination of many holy elements, tested in trials, and matured by experience, will stand complete in all the will of Christ, and a greater reward be enjoyed in glory. Although God may call sinners at different periods of life, and send them into his vineyard, yet it may safely be affirmed that the most suitable for the work of conversion is the time of youth. Every call—every warning—every invitation, is eminently fitted to operate upon the young mind. The pleasures and advantages of religion are calculated to attract the young; the dangers of an unconverted state are to them peculiarly imminent; and the honour and rewards of a life of holiness are to them doubly and trebly enhanced. Let them begin, then, to seek the Lord early. Let them be serious, earnest, resolved on this subject. Let them see, above all, to have their calling made sure; their conversion to God ascertained; that they may be glad and rejoice all their days in God.

SECTION III.—*The Means of Conversion.*

We proceed to notice some of the *means of conversion*. The Holy Spirit, the great Author of this change, acts in a sovereign manner, and divides to every one severally as He wills. Sometimes in a sudden and extraordinary manner, He plucks brands out of the burning, arrests the sinner in his thoughtless downward career, and turns him to the Lord. The instances of the conversion of the apostle Paul, of Augustine, of Bunyan, of Colonel Gardiner, and John Newton, show how powerfully He can bring down the rebel, and how effectually he can draw the sinner with cords of love, and bands of a man. Even in these cases, we can discern a certain established order followed, and a regard had to certain means of Divine appointment, displaying the inscrutable wisdom, as well as the irresistible energy of the Almighty Agent. And in ordinary cases, it may be safely affirmed, that there is a settled way in which the Spirit performs his saving operations in the hearts of sinners—whatever circumstantial differences there may be in particular cases, with respect to the views presented to the mind, the strength of convictions, and the length of their continuance. Of the *means of conversion*, we mention—

1. *Faithful parental prayers, instructions, and examples.* These have been blessed in all ages to gather not a few into the fold of Christ. The promise to the father of the faithful is especially addressed to believing parents and their children, “I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee.” The God of Abraham still manifests a peculiar regard to those who by faith are the spiritual children of the patriarch. The dedication of their infant offspring He accepts; their prayers He hears and graciously answers. He accompanies their instructions with a

blessing; and the holy and attractive examples of the life of religion which they presented to their children, frequently become the means of impressing tender minds, of convincing them of sin, and of drawing them to the Saviour. It is probable that not a few of the youth of the church, who become monuments of mercy, are thus led to Christ, and thus become partakers of the blessings of salvation. How should such a consideration impel parents to all diligence, and urge them to show all fidelity in the performance of their momentous duties! And how forcibly ought it to press upon the children of godly parents the inquiry; What has been to them the fruit of faithful parental training; and whether their conversion to God has been the result of the eminent early advantages which they have enjoyed?

2. Serious solemn *consideration* is rendered by the Spirit a means of conversion. Naturally all sinners are thoughtless, and make "*light*" of the great concerns of the soul's salvation. While they remain in this state, all the means of conversion must prove unavailing. Warnings pass unheeded; calls and invitations are disregarded; promises allure not; and the awful realities of death, and judgment, and eternal salvation produce no deep or lasting impression upon the heart and conscience. God's counsel to the sinner is, "Thus saith the Lord, *Consider your ways.*"* And we are assured that such consideration is indispensable to the turning of the heart to God, and that it always precedes it. The awakened sinner is led to reflect upon his former case, his state of mind, his habits of life. He is brought to consider his accountability—his guilt and fearful danger. Thus is he led to desire deliverance from "the wrath to come"—to appreciate the excellency, and value of the salvation that has been provided, and to "flee

* Haggai i. 7.

for refuge" to the hope of the gospel. The prodigal, when he "came to himself," reflected seriously on his perishing state, and on the plentiful and happy condition of the men of his father's house, "*How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger.*"* The awakened on the day of Pentecost, considering their manifold sins, aggravated by their rejection and crucifixion of the Saviour, cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"† And the Philippian jailer, under a similar state of thought and feeling, exclaimed, "What shall I do to be saved!"‡ The language of the Psalmist is truly applicable to all convinced sinners without exception, and aptly describes the progress in the work of conviction till it issue in conversion, "*I thought on my ways, and turned my heart unto thy testimonies.*|| The Divine Spirit working conviction, and leading to solemn reflection, discovers former courses to be rebellious, sinful, ruinous. The sinner sees that his sins are more numerous than the hairs on his head,§ and that each one of his trans-

* Luke xv. 17.

† Acts ii. 37.

‡ Acts xvi. 30.

|| Psalm cxxx. 59.

§ In Moffat's "Missionary Labours and Scenes in South Africa," the following account is given of the feelings and expressions of a *Bechuana female convert*:—"In the course of a few days, she came to the author, in a state bordering on distraction. 'My sins, my sins,' was the language of her lips, tears streaming down her already-furrowed cheeks. Her half-frantic soul would hear no comfort, nor listen to any counsel. Night after night she would call me out of bed, to tell her what was to become of her soul. One day, meeting her in the street, with both hands she grasped mine, and as if her heart would break, exclaimed—"To live I cannot—I cannot die." Again she was directed to the Lamb of God, and the fountain opened for her sins; but she interrupted me by saying—"You say the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sins; do you know the number of mine? look to yonder grassy plain, and count the blades of grass, or the drops of dew; these are nothing to the amount of my transgressions."—*Missionary Labours and Scenes.*—pp. 573-4.

gressions has incurred God's righteous indignation, and has exposed him to his infinite wrath and curse. His former ways appear all froward and grievous; and as he reflects upon his ingratitude, ungodliness, and apostacy, and feels how wretched, polluted, and helpless he is, he sees himself in danger of eternal destruction. "*The wages of sin is death.*" He is made sensible that death, in its most fearful import, he deserves. He dreads it, while he apprehends it near. He is thus brought to cry out, with the full and agonizing expression of the heart, "What shall I do to be saved?" While such reflection is calculated to put the convinced sinner upon searching for a way of escape from the wrath to come, it leads him to hail with joy the announcement of a full and free salvation. Consideration of this kind is indispensable as a means of regeneration. It may exist to some extent, and yet the person remain unconverted; but without it, the individual must be regarded as in a hopeless condition. Let the young, then, receive instruction, and take warning. Let them take time for serious, solemn reflection. Let them ponder each one frequently the questions—"Whose am I? What am I doing? Whither am I going?" Under the blessing from above, such reflections may bring them to be sensible of their guilt and misery, and may conduct them for relief to Him who has graciously said—"Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

3. The *word of God read or preached*, is the great means of regeneration. The testimony of holy Scripture is most explicit on this point. "Search the

*The writer would affectionately recommend to the young the habit of retiring at times for special solemn consideration and self-examination. He has known the value of youth spending some time in the evening alone in the fields for such meditation and prayer; and he cannot but regard it as, in many instances, a means blessed to conduct to joy and peace in believing.

Scriptures," says the Saviour, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they testify of me."* "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."† The Divine word, perfect and infallible, is thus proclaimed to be the grand instrument of the sinner's conversion. This may, indeed, be regarded as the *primary design* for which it is given to the sons of men. Its great object is to make known God's excellent way of salvation. It declares the melancholy fact—to which the sinner's conscience bears witness—that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" that all are under God's fearful wrath, and exposed to his dread condemnation. It offers salvation to perishing sinners. It reveals a Saviour, able and all-sufficient; and bids the most needy, and helpless, and wretched welcome to an interest in his great salvation. The Scriptures are the great means of working saving conviction. "*By the law is the knowledge of sin.*" "Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"‡ The Scriptures convey light to the darkened understanding. They contain "the treasure hid in the field," and hold forth to the destitute and perishing, "the pearl of great price." The word read or heard is "the good seed" of the kingdom—the spiritual seed of the soul—the great means of awakening, and nourishment, and comfort. By no other instrumentality have ever any been delivered from wrath, and conducted to "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." The Bible "has God for

* John v. 39.

† Romans x. 17.

Psalm xix. 7.

James i 18.

‡ Jeremiah xxxii. 29.

its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."*

The word must be *studied with attention, and practically applied*, to be productive of saving effects. As long as it is neglected, or read without any serious, fixed attention; or perused only for its historical records; or merely to inform the judgment or fill the memory, there can be no hope of obtaining through it salvation. It must be taken as the law of the Lord—all perfect, binding on the conscience, and converting the soul; the authentic offer from heaven of pardon and life; the proclamation of mercy to a rebel; the charter of all our hopes. It becomes the means of conversion and spiritual blessing, as it reveals and brings near to the heart, Christ and his finished salvation. In the field of Divine truth lies this "precious treasure." The awakened sinner, convinced of his poverty and wretchedness, searches and finds it; and, overjoyed, he is willing to part with all that he has, and to buy that field. The word points to Christ as the only sure refuge, and as the way that leads to its opened gates. It lifts up the Saviour, as the "Brazen Serpent," and exhibits the only way of deliverance for the wounded and perishing. By means of the "exceeding great and precious promises," which are contained in the word, sinners become "partakers of the Divine nature, and escape the pollution that is in the world through lust."†

In all ages, the faithful *preaching of the word* has been honoured as the great means of bringing men from darkness to light, and of translating sinners into the kingdom of God. "When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."‡ When the prophet, at God's command, preached to "the dry

* Sir William Jones.

† 2 Peter i. 3.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 21.

bones," in the valley of vision, the Spirit and breath came, and entered into them, and they lived, and stood up "an exceeding great army." As the apostles went forth to execute their heaven-appointed commission, proclaimed Christ crucified as the only Saviour, and preached everywhere that men should repent, multitudes believed and turned to the Lord. And in every place, and among people the most diverse in habits and customs, the simple and faithful preaching of the Cross, has been the instrumentality which God has blessed, to rescue the captives of Satan, and to bring men to salvation.

To receive saving benefit from the word, it must be employed as a means of conversion: we must come to it for eternal life, and receive the testimony which it contains, concerning the Saviour of sinners. To every one who reads or hears it, we should be thoroughly persuaded, it must be either "the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." Would you know the word, as "the power of God, and the wisdom of God for your salvation?" You must regard it with the most solemn and fixed attention; submit the whole mind and heart to its directions; embrace with eagerness its gracious offers and promises, and trust entirely to its announcements. Nothing must divert the attention from searching the Scriptures, and waiting on the ministry for the life of the soul. Other books must be used only as helps to open the ear and the heart to God, speaking in his word. The constant proclamation of Heaven to all who would have salvation is, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." In many instances, the convinced sinner has obtained relief, and experienced the morning dawn of a time of love, by the Spirit sealing upon the heart some sweet and suitable declaration of the word. The "righteousness of faith" is near, even in this word which we speak and which sinners hear. Faith implanted in the heart by Divine agency credits the report; and the sinner,

accepting of the gracious proposal, finds rest in Jesus, and receives the end of his faith, even "the salvation of the soul."*

Lastly, *Prayer*, and various other *subordinate means* have been blessed of God, as instruments to promote the conversion of sinners. Without entering upon topics of "doubtful disputation," we have no hesitation in declaring that God in his word has warranted the perishing to cry to him for deliverance; the awakened to seek to him for mercy. He is the "Hearer of prayer," and He waits to be gracious. The applicants to the Saviour, whose cases are recorded in the history of the gospels, who experienced his power to save, and became monuments of his mercy, called upon him with fervent importunity, and He heard and relieved them. The woman of Canaan worshipped him, and said, "Lord, help me." The blind man cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David." The leper prayed, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The publican said, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Blind Bartimeus exclaimed, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." The dying malefactor prayed to a dying Saviour, "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." With similar petitions, and in this spirit should awakened sinners go to the throne of grace, that they may ob-

* Our fathers were accustomed, in urging attendance upon the word preached, to lay great stress upon a *searching ministry*—one that discriminates character, and urges the truth upon the conscience of the hearer. The excellent Christopher Love, immediately before his execution, in his last charge to his wife, urged her to seek after such a ministry, as of unspeakable importance, and to place herself and his children under it, at whatever difficulty or hazard. The plain and common observation, that "a praying people makes a useful minister," has much weight; and we should always seek blessings from above upon the servants of God who speak to us the word of life—and attend upon their ministrations prayerfully, for our individual salvation.

tain mercy. They should go, freely and particularly confessing sin; they should plead in the blessed name of Him whom the Father heareth always, and in whom He is ever well pleased. They should ask the Spirit to work in them convictions; to show them the things of Christ, and to change and renew their heart. The promise is most full and encouraging, "He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Laying hold on this blessed assurance, they should wrestle for the blessing, and lie at the mercy-seat till they obtain it. Pardon and salvation are to be found there; and their resolution should be, "I will go in unto the king"—like that of the devoted Esther, when she went into the king uncalled—"If I perish, I perish." Contrite sinners can never go uncalled to the mercy-seat. They approach not to a capricious earthly monarch, but to the august Sovereign of heaven, seated on the throne of grace,—to Him who delights in mercy—and who gives the fullest testimony that none ever perished, or will perish at the mercy-seat.

As *subordinate means of conversion* may be mentioned, *awakening books*, that contain clear views of the Gospel, and that are adapted to convinced sinners—converse with faithful ministers, and with experienced Christians—and decided and circumspect separation from the world. There have been servants of God, who are honoured to speak when dead; and their writings, that were conceived and penned in prayer, have been owned to bring wandering sinners to the Saviour. Such works as "Baxter's Call to the Unconverted," "Alloine's Alarm," "Bunyan's Grace Abounding," "Barron Fig-tree," and several of his smaller pieces, "Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," "Boston's Fourfold State;" "Booth's Reign of Grace," "James' Anxious Inquirer," have been the means of awakening and conversion to some, and may be of great use to the

anxious inquirer. Let them be employed, not as describing a course through which all must pass—for the cases of convinced sinners are very diversified—but in order to deepen impressions of Divine things, to lead to the Scriptures, and, above all, to bring the sinner to flee personally to Christ, and to accept him in his gracious offers; and they may be of much advantage.* Intercourse with prayerful persons, who have themselves experienced the pangs of the new birth, is sometimes of singular use, to bring the thoughtless to solemn consideration, and to direct the steps of inquirers into the way of peace. The spiritual conversation of a few pious women, was as the arrow of God in the conscience of Bunyan; and to many others, who have been rescued from the path of destruction, a single pointed suitable expression of a pious acquaintance, has not unfrequently been of eminent benefit. Converse with the servants of God is indeed a great privilege. Those who are seeking salvation, should by all means open their case fully to select Christian friends. They should seek from them instruction and direction; they should converse with them about spiritual things; and, above all, they should enlist their prayers in their behalf. Thus many find that Christian fellowship is the immediate way to communion with God.† Many have been drawn to Christ by the attractions of the godly

* Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," was the means of awakening Wilberforce; and the "Practical View of Christianity," by this distinguished man, was instrumental in leading Legh Richmond—then a fashionable, thoughtless young clergyman—to a due sense of Divine things. The simple and affecting narrative of the "*Dairyman's Daughter*," has been blessed as the means of conversion to many. It is related that when the author was near his end, and the *fiftieth instance* of spiritual awakening, from the reading of this tract, was related to him, the dying saint, with evident joy and satisfaction, blessed God that he had been thus honoured to promote the great work of saving sinners.

† See 1 John i. 3.

converse and example of lively Christians, with whom they have come in contact. It need scarcely be added, that so long as the world is loved, and thoughtless companions and frivolous pursuits are delighted in, there is no hope of enjoying converting grace. These will be freely relinquished, and that for ever, if the individual has become the subject of a great saving change. Withdrawal from the multitude, and abstration in a good measure from worldly pleasures and pursuits, are means that conduce to greater earnestness about salvation. The command of God is, "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate;*" and the most comfortable promise is annexed to it, "*I will receive you, and be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*"*

SECTION IV.—*Evidences of Conversion.*

A few brief hints will suffice to exhibit the most prominent evidences, that usually accompany this important change. "*By their fruits,*" says the Saviour, "*ye shall know them.*" While it is admitted that real Christians themselves, at times, "*walk in darkness, and have no light;*" and through the imperfection of sanctification, and the work of the enemy, their marks of grace are obscure, it is yet presumed, that there are indications by no means indistinct, which discover whether the individual is yet unrenewed, or whether by regenerating power, he has passed from death unto life. All should seriously and frequently inquire on this momentous subject; and the evidences are so simple and yet so plainly delineated in the word, that all might, with proper diligence and application, arrive at a right conclusion. We proceed to notice a few of the more obvious and palpable evidences.

* 2 Corinthians vi. 17, 18.

First of all, This change is indicated by *the alienation of the heart from former objects of delight and pursuit*. These objects are such as satisfy the flesh, and are adapted to the corrupt inclination. The world, and its pursuits and enjoyments; the company of the frivolous, the gay, and the earthly-minded; the objects of sinful pleasure—to these the heart was naturally addicted, and amidst these the unregenerate seek all their happiness. The Spirit of God in conversion, discovers the vanity and worthlessness of such objects, and powerfully withdraws the mind from them. The delights which they administer are henceforth regarded as “the pleasures of sin,” which continue but for a moment, and which leave a fearful and lasting sting behind. Intercourse with such objects is seen to be fraught with danger and irreparable injury to the immortal soul, and they are therefore relinquished. To gain the soul appears more valuable than a universe; and those things which obstructed the pursuit of eternal salvation cease to yield comfort and satisfaction. They become, on the other hand, objects of dread and settled aversion. The “father’s house,” and people that were ours, are forgotten, and pleasures of the flesh or the mind which were indulged before, are reflected upon with feelings of penitence and self-abhorrence, and regarded with detestation. Sin of every kind appears hateful, holiness lovely and all-desirable; and the habitual language of the heart is, “*How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*”*

Again, A saving change brings with it *new views and affections toward the Saviour, the Author and Finisher of faith*. “*Unto you, therefore, that believe, He is precious.*”† Formerly he was despised or rejected, or only regarded with cold speculative sentiments. Now he is embraced in the heart; trusted in for life and salvation; and regarded with profound

* Romans vi. 2.

† 1 Peter ii. 7.

veneration, and the most cordial love and affection. The converted person feels that he owes all to Christ; and inexpressibly more than his heart can ever conceive, or his tongue declare. He is the "Alpha and Omega" of all his joys and hopes. In his person, and finished work, and blessed example, he appears possessed of innumerable and matchless excellencies; and the heart is drawn out to desire him and delight in him. He is esteemed as "the treasure hid in a field;" the "pearl of great price;" and the young convert would willingly part with all to possess it. "He loves much," because he is sensible that, through Jesus, much has been to him forgiven. Christ is precious to him in his person, his love, his sacrifice, offices, relations, promises—in his service, cross and crown. He seeks to come to him as his "exceeding joy." He esteems him as "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely," and the estimate and uppermost desire of his heart is to "account all things but loss and dung," that he "may win Christ, and be found in him."*

Heartfelt and increasing humility is a further evidence of the new birth. Whatever views of sin were entertained before, it is only in conversion, that the individual becomes a real penitent, and obtains the spirit of a *contrite one*. His sins beheld in the glass of the Redeemer's sufferings—his character contemplated in the light of the matchless condescension and excellencies of the "Author of eternal salvation," produce deep self-abasement. Spiritual views of the law of God humble the soul. The grace of God, abounding to the undeserving, the rebellious and the miserable, fills it with penitential views and emotions; while the discoveries of the gracious character of a reconciled God, expel the pride of the heart, and inspire a frame the most lowly and reverential.

* *Philippians* iii. 8, 9.

“The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good; but I am carnal, sold under sin.”* “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, and I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”† “O Lord, I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell amidst a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.”‡ Such are the spirit and language of true converts; and this is, in some sort, their habitual frame of heart. The more clear and spiritual their views of divine things, the deeper are their feelings of self-abasement. They learn to walk “humbly with God;” they are “clothed with humility;” they cultivate the spirit of entire dependence. Like “the lily of the vallies,” they take root downwards, and their spiritual beauty is seen, and their spiritual fragrance diffused in a situation, to attract little observation, and where the carnal eye perceives no form or comeliness.

Love to the saints, and the spirit of universal benevolence are inseparable fruits of a saving change. This the Saviour emphatically teaches is the grand characteristic of discipleship, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”|| “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother.”§ “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that hateth his brother abideth in death.”¶ These reiterated and very explicit declarations assign a high place to the principle of love, as an evidence of a renovated nature. The spirit of genuine Christianity, it has been justly remarked, is the spirit of benevolence; and all who have been renewed in their hearts, must possess it. Having been selected when

* Romans vii. 12, 14.

† Job xlii. 5.

‡ Isaiah vi. 2.

|| John xiii. 35.

§ 1 John iii. 10.

¶ 1 John iii. 14.

unworthy to be objects of divine compassion and benevolence, rescued from a perishing condition, pardoned and accepted, they learn to love fellow-men "with a pure heart fervently." They forbear and forgive one another, "as God for Christ's sake has forgiven" them. They "put on bowels of mercies." Their love is disinterested and active. They do good to the souls and bodies of men; they love their enemies, and they learn to bless them that persecute them, and to pray for those that despitefully use them. Towards the brethren of the household of faith, their affection is of a higher character still. It is the love of *complacency* and of holy spiritual fellowship. They delight in the image of Christ in fellow-saints; and loving "Him that begat," they "love every one that is begotten of him." *Love is the fulfilling of the law.* True converts with fraternal affection cleave to all who give evidence that they are of the family of God. They bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. They regard them as children of the same family, called to a community of privileges, trials, and joys, and partakers of one blessed hope. With the saints, "the excellent of the earth," are all their "delights;" and they learn, as members of one body, animated by one glorious Head, to suffer with every suffering member, to "weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice." This disposition of mind is characteristic of all that have been adopted into the family of heaven. It is a principal feature of "the spirit of adoption," whereby we cry "Abba, Father." When other marks of regeneration are weak or obscure, this evidence will yield satisfaction, and minister the assurance of hope. To love a saint as a saint, to delight in him as bearing the image of Christ, the Well-beloved, is a sure indication that a person has passed from death unto life, and that he has obtained an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

Finally, *Delight in the ways of holy obedience is an unequivocal evidence of real conversion.* “If ye love me,” says the Saviour, “keep my commandments.” “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”* There may be the form of outward obedience to some divine precepts, and of observance of divine institutions, while the heart is unchanged, but such obedience is formal, slavish, and partial. There may be even zeal in religious duties, and sacrifices may be apparently made, to advance religion. But the spirit of love and liberty is wanting, the aims are selfish, and the motives and ends are low and carnal, and the whole profession is, in consequence, a deception, and the service is rejected of God. The “new heart and spirit,” conferred in regeneration, on the contrary, are “enlarged;” and the person inclined to holy obedience, runs in the path of God’s commandments.† He is brought to reverence the authority of Him whom he has joyfully taken to be his Lord and Master. Duty becomes his delight. None of the Divine commandments are to him any longer grievous. The language of his heart is, “O Lord, I am thy servant.” “Here am I, send me.” “All the commandments of my God, I purpose to obey.” Gratitude and love henceforth become the actuating principle of all his duties. He serves as “a son his father.” “The love of Christ constraineth us.” “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”‡ In the heart of every regenerated person, the Holy Spirit dwells, sealing till the day of redemption, and sweetly and powerfully drawing him to all duty. This blessed Agent works within hatred to sin, an earnest desire after holiness, and impels to vigorous and sustained endeavours to please God in all things. His it is to heal the fountain, that purifying streams may issue forth in the life. Divine ordinances and insti-

* John xiv. 15; xv. 14. † Psalm cxix. 32. ‡ Romans viii. 14.

tutions appear to the renewed heart excellent in themselves, from the authority that has appointed them, and the wisdom which they display, and from their conducing to ends the most salutary and valuable; and they are therefore delighted in. The high and holy motive of love to holiness, because it is agreeable to the nature and will of God, and the great end of living to the glory of God, assume the highest place in the thoughts and pursuits. Thus does the converted person learn to “delight in the law of God after the inner man.” “He walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” “*Old things are passed away, all things have become new.*” However weak may be his graces, and imperfect his attainments, there is a wide and essential difference between his feelings, habits, and pursuits, and those of the unrenewed, even in the most favourable circumstances. He is a “new creature,” and his motto, as it is that of all who have experienced this great change, is, “None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.” *

Having thus exhibited the nature, necessity, means, and evidences of regeneration, we cannot turn away from this part of the subject without urging the reader seriously to ponder what has been advanced; and above all, to seek to have the question settled, whether he himself has experienced this great change. The youthful reader should be reminded that the Scriptures declare, in terms most explicit and solemn, the grand distinction among the children of men. The whole human family is divided into two classes—the righteous and the wicked—the children of God, and the children of the Wicked One; those who are lying under God’s fearful wrath and curse, and those who

* Romans xiv.

are objects of his distinguishing favour; and in one or other of these classes you now rank, and with the one or other you will take your lot of happiness or misery for evermore. Heaven's irreversible sentence is, "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him; woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for he shall eat of the fruit of his doings." * This is no illusory statement. It is no fancied picture of the imagination—no figurative language, employed merely to alarm fear, or to deepen the effect. It is the plain, uniform testimony of God's unerring word, the solemn recorded verdict of Him in whose hand is your breath, and who will be your final judge. Let me affectionately entreat you to ponder the subject with personal and immediate application to yourself. "He that believeth," it is testified, "hath everlasting life. He that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." * Consider that you are either now a partaker of everlasting life, or are lying under God's tremendous wrath; that you are either going forward to the reward of the righteous, or are in danger every moment of being cast into unquenchable fire. You have heard the declaration of Him that cannot lie, and about you it is certainly spoken, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God." Before you has been presented a plain simple account of this important change, such as some who, on earth, are now rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and as many who are now in glory have experienced it. The means by which it is ordinarily effected, and the marks by which it is indicated, have been likewise declared. What can you now say concerning your own state and character? Have you experienced aught of all this,

* Isaiah iii. 10.

† John iii. 36; Gal. iii. 10.

or are you yet “far from God, and far from righteousness—living without God, and without hope in the world?” If you are *careless* on the subject, or presuming upon the vain hope of future amendment, you have reason to tremble. The matter is so momentous and urgent, that, if regarded at all, it must fix the attention, and subdue the heart; and, in fact, none have, at any time, experienced regenerating influence, who had arrived at years of judgment, that have not been solemnly concerned on the subject. “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” “Come and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as snow.” “Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” These are the gracious and affecting invitations of the Redeemer of men—of Him who is “exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins.” They are now spoken to you, and on the reception which you give to the offer, hangs your eternal felicity, or your everlasting destruction. Christ is now waiting to be gracious—ready to receive and bless you—as He will ere long summon you to meet him in judgment. If you have not heretofore laid to heart the subject; or if the evidences of the new birth in your case are obscure, let me exhort you to come to this almighty Saviour with all speed. Flee now from the wrath to come. While mercy invites, and means of salvation are at hand, and “the Spirit and the bride say come,” be persuaded to relinquish carnal security, and the ways of sin, and the pursuits of the world, and to betake yourself to the Saviour for pardon and acceptance. Harken to the voice that now addresses you—“*Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?*” This earnest, repeated invitation virtually declares, that if you remain unmoved and impenitent, you will *die*, you must perish

for ever; and it proclaims in the most gracious manner, that in turning to the Lord, you will escape his vindictive vengeance, and your souls shall live for ever.

Would that you were now undeceived! The least consideration might suffice to show you, that you cannot be happy without holiness; and that you are not Christians, except you believe in Christ, with a new heart, and delight in his service. You are sinners—guilty, polluted and perishing. In every thing you sin, and come short of the glory of God. You are condemned already, dead in trespasses and sins, under the power of the Evil One, and hastening forward to meet the dreadful doom which your multiplied and aggravated sins have merited. Let me beseech you to “consider your ways,” and turn to the Lord. Come now, “for all things are ready.” There is a Saviour ready to receive you, able and willing “to save to the uttermost all that will come unto God by him.” There is blood that “cleanseth from all sin.” The Almighty Spirit is graciously promised to them that ask him: and his office and glory it is to apply all the benefits of the great salvation; and through him, you may enjoy at present all saving and sanctifying blessings. Repent, and believe the gospel, and you will be happy. Trifle and delay, and you may be for ever undone. As we have already showed, that your early piety will be of immense advantage to yourselves and others, so we would remind you that conversion in youth is of peculiar value in prosecuting a life of religion. This is the first step in a course of holiness; and without it, a profession of religion is deceptive, fruitless, and lifeless—a shadow without a substance—a skeleton, where there is no animating principle, and no motion. A better season for giving yourselves to the Lord, you will never enjoy. Your comfort and usefulness in life, your peace in death, and your felicity throughout eternity, urge

you to make the instant and deliberate choice; and to let nothing interfere with your resolution of dismissing from your mind all other concerns, till the great question of your freedom from condemnation has been settled. Come, then, to Jesus, and be saved. His sure and unchangeable word is passed, that he will not cast you out. Remember that "one thing" is unspeakably and continually "needful;" and see that you make a present choice of "the good part that shall not be taken away from you." "Choose you this day whom you will serve." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Jesus, the anointed Saviour, who died to save the chief of sinners, and who urges the acceptance of his purchased and proffered salvation, by so many affecting counsels, and moving invitations, is "the Lord, mighty to save." He seeks you to hasten now from the city of destruction. He beseeches you to come to him. He stands prepared to receive and to bless you. "*To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*"

CHAPTER III.

PROFESSION OF RELIGION.—NECESSITY OF A PROFESSION
—ITS NATURE—VALUE TO THE YOUNG OF MAKING A
PROFESSION EARLY.SECTION I.—*Necessity of a Profession.*

Our blessed Lord has inculcated, in very strong and impressive terms, the *necessity* of a public religious profession of religion. He represents his followers as “the light of the world,” and compares them to a “city that is set upon a hill, that cannot be hid;” and He enjoins them—“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* In the most pointed terms, when referring to the judgment to come, He afterwards declares a profession of his name before men, essential to final salvation; “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”† And elsewhere, when teaching the incomparable value of the soul, and the urgent need of securing its salvation, He adds, “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.”‡ With the same explicitness, the apostles of the Lamb declare the indispensable necessity of a public profession of religion. Faith in Christ is generally admitted to be essential to the enjoyment of the blessings and hopes of salvation; but the apostle Paul connects with

* Mat. v. 14, 16.

† Mat. x. 32, 33.

‡ Mark viii. 38.

it, as equally needful, a profession of Christ's name. "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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

The necessity and importance of a public profession of religion are taught, when baptism is enjoined to be observed by all who become disciples of Christ. In his last commission to the apostles, the Saviour directed them to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and among his last instructions, before he ascended into glory, he declared, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."† On the opening of the new dispensation, by the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the apostles declared to the converts the necessity of baptism, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."‡ The ordinance was designed to be a visible badge of a profession of faith in Christ, and of subjection to him, and of separation between Christ's disciples and the rest of the world. It was to them the public renunciation of all former connections, and the pledge of allegiance to Christ as their Lord and Master. It was an act of joining themselves to his people, and the declaration of willingness to share with them a common lot. It was the outward symbol of their hearty purpose to do Christ's work, and to bear his reproach, as they expected to share his

* Rom. x. 9, 10.

† Mark xvi. 16. It is observable that in the latter clause of this verse, it is not said that he that is not baptized, but simply, "He that believeth not shall be damned;" as if to declare, in the most emphatic manner, that the absence of faith, and not the want of baptism, excludes from the hope of salvation.

‡ Acts ii. 38.

glory. And all this was enjoined, and required of all who embraced the religion of Christ, when it was first promulgated, and when manifold signs and mighty wonders attested its heavenly origin, and its irresistible power. The same authority still requires the open profession of Christ by such as would be owned as his servants in the world, and would enjoy the benefits of his salvation.

It is vain to allege, as some have done, that religion is a matter between God and an individual; and that it may be embraced and cultivated in secret, without any public observable attention to its duties. We readily admit that real saints are "*hidden ones*;" that religion has its seat in the heart; that it flourishes chiefly in the shade; that all ostentation is to be avoided and condemned; and that a pious character is unobtrusive and retiring. But this hinders not that religion should manifest its character and exhibit its commanding influence in social and public relations. It might suffice to show this, to observe that the Saviour has placed his people in the world to reflect his glory, and has commanded them to "let their light so shine before men," that "others may see their good works, and glorify their Father in heaven." But, besides, every Christian sustains relations to the Author and Finisher of his faith, and is called to the performance of duties, which indispensably require a public profession. Indeed, we cannot conceive a person to be a Christian, who is unwilling to have his attachment to Christ known in the world. The Saviour is the Husband and Head of his people; and his redeemed ones are represented as his Spouse, the Bride, the Lamb's wife. Does not this imply an open embracing of Christ in this relation, and a public joyful avowal of interest in him and dependence upon him? What would be thought of a wife who would refuse to have her espousal publicly known, or who would be ashamed to own a conjugal relation to her

husband? The Redeemer is the Shepherd of his people, and they are the chosen, separated sheep of his pasture, that hear his voice, and follow him; and of whom it is declared, "a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger." Moreover, Christ is the King of the saints; they are his spiritual kingdom in this world, his faithful subjects; the predestined jewels of his crown. Surely this implies a profession of allegiance to him, and willing subjection to his authority, so as to display his excellency and advance his honour. The right of citizenship is founded upon known affection to the Sovereign, acknowledgment of his authority, and the homage of the life. If we are of Christ's kingdom, we will not only have said to Him in secret, "My Lord, and my God," but we will be "joyful in our King;" we will often declare, with the fervent love and admiration of the heart, "The Holy One of Israel is our Almighty King."

Besides, the Redeemer has established a church in the world, in a visible organized form; He has constituted a family bearing his name. For this separate peculiar society, He has provided special and eminent privileges; and He requires connexion with it, and the performance of the duties that result from this union, as indispensable to their enjoyment. The church is organized in the world, and separated from it, for the purpose of recognizing Christ's authority, obeying his laws, observing his institutions, and promoting his glory. To all its members, is addressed the command, "BECAUSE HE IS THY LORD, WORSHIP THOU HIM." United to one glorious Head, they are constituted members one of another. While they love and serve him continually, they are required to love as brethren, to perform all offices of kindness one to another, to live for others rather than to themselves, and to "do good to all men as they have opportunity." Obedience to Christ's authority certainly in-

cludes the service of the life, as well as the homage of the heart; the performance of external acts, as well as the cultivating of right dispositions and motives. How can a person be a Christian, if such duties are overlooked or neglected? Can he worship Christ as his Lord, and refuse to unite with those who in every place call upon his name? If a faithful subject delights to honour his sovereign; if a dutiful child loves and openly obeys his parent; if an affectionate wife accounts it her honour to bear the name, and promote the happiness of a beloved husband; much more will a Christian delight to confess, and obey Him whose "name is excellent in all the earth"—Him to whom he is under infinite obligations, and from whose hands he expects in due time to receive the reward of a "good and faithful servant."

The saints are, in fine, *separated from the rest of the world, and consecrated to God*, "to show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." They are his chosen *instruments* for bringing the world into subjection to its rightful sovereign. This implies that they are not only separate from a world lying in wickedness, but that they are publicly arrayed around the standard of another Master, visibly employed in his work, and constantly aiming, in their whole spirit and conduct, that the glory of the Lord may be revealed, that all flesh may see it together. If this work is evaded as troublesome, or neglected, the claims of the person to be considered a friend of Christ are worse than doubtful. A Christian one cannot be, who does not supremely love Christ; who does not gladly, openly, and habitually acknowledge him as his God and Saviour, who aims not to keep from the heart all his commendments, and who does not regard it as his great work and principal honour to make known the Saviour's renowned fame throughout the earth, that all kindreds of the nations may be brought to do him homage.

The profession, therefore, that one may love and serve Christ in *secret*, and refuse to confess him before men, is a grievous delusion. It implies rejection of his authority, avowed disobedience to his commands, and is wholly incompatible with the dedication of the heart and the consecration to him of the service of the life.

There is another deception which we fear is very common in our day—that of persons who live in a society that bears the Christian name, thinking that to profess Christ requires *no special separation from others, and no decision in religion*. This is an evil incident to the application of the term Christian to communities, as a mere geographical or political designation; and in a low state of religion, it is of fearful magnitude, and of most disastrous consequences. Persons were baptized in infancy, they have received religious instructions, they attend upon Christian institutions—they are not grossly profane in their conversation and conduct. They, therefore, take to themselves credit for being all that is required in the followers of Christ, and they think their hopes of final salvation secure. And even where there is not ignorance or carelessness to such a degree, among the children of decent professors, we fear there are many who attach no proper meaning to the Scriptural terms which are employed to describe a Christian profession. With them, discipleship requires no relinquishment or self-denial, incurs no reproach or opposition, and does not demand the engagement of the heart in religious duties, or the consecration of the life to God's service. Hence they recognize no obligation and feel no pressing need to make a public profession of Christ before men; and the vague profession which they assume is as different from that which is enjoined by the Saviour and the apostles as can possibly be imagined. The youth of the church should be particularly guarded against a profession of this kind. The Scriptures uniformly represent Christian discipleship

as implying a serious counting of the cost, denying and forsaking all that we have; and supreme love to Christ, displayed in preferring him infinitely above all other objects, and in readiness to forsake all for his sake. They declare that in making and holding fast such a profession, we are "God's house"—the temple of his gracious special residence, erected for the manifestation of his glory; and they represent the genuine followers of the Saviour as required to "go without the camp" to him "bearing his reproach;" as separated from an evil world, and called to encounter from it hatred and persecution. It is a great delusion to think that such accounts only apply to the times of primitive Christianity, or that they are descriptive of the condition of Christians, in special seasons of oppression of the church, or of public calamity. The professors of the faith of Christ are called *saints*, and they should seek to realize this high designation; they should live and act as consecrated ones, devoted to God's service, and pursuing continually after universal holiness. The distinction between the followers of the Lamb, and the world that contemns and opposes them, should be clearly marked now, as it was in the days of primitive Christianity. Professed believers are as imperatively called as ever they were, to exemplify the holy character of sons of God; to be faithful servants of Christ, and to "shine as lights in the world." And they are certainly forewarned that in the world, and from it, they shall have tribulation; and living godly, they shall endure persecution. If there is any truth or propriety in such representations, and these are the uniform testimony of the Divine word, they emphatically teach that a profession of Christ requires solemn decision; that it implies voluntary and resolute separation from every thing that would prevent the maintenance of faithful allegiance to Christ the Lord, and the exemplification of visible holiness; and that Christians may always expect

manifold opposition from the world.* A profession which contains not these elements, God can never approve; a cause embraced through custom, education, or in an inconsiderate lifeless manner, will not be firmly held, and can impart no sustaining supports, or living comforts. Let the youth of the church therefore seriously consider that, in professing Christ, they must forsake former thoughtless courses and foolish companions; that they must come out on the side of Christ, to follow him whithersoever He goes; never to be ashamed of his cross; and that they are solemnly engaged to be henceforth examples to others of the power of godliness. If they propose to themselves lower aims and ends, they only deceive themselves, do incalculable injury to the cause which they avouch, leading fellow-professors into formality and hypocrisy, and confirming others in infidelity and irreligion.

SECTION II.—*The Nature of a Religious Profession.*

The nature of a proper religious profession comes now to be considered. The *matter* which it embraces may be said, in brief terms, to be *true religion*, just as we speak of other professions,—the medical profession, meaning the knowledge and practice of the science of medicine; and the military, that of the art of war. And as religion may be viewed under a two-fold aspect—as a system of faith, worship, and morality, revealed in the Scriptures; and as the views and dispositions of genuine piety in the heart; or,

* The trials to which the converts from Paganism in some places, and those to which such as relinquish Popery for evangelical truth, even in parts of this country, are exposed, show the opposition which a Scriptural profession has to encounter. Our profession, even in circumstances of no outward difficulty, must be able to raise us above similar trials, else we have cause to suspect that it is not genuine.

in other words, as *objective* and *subjective* religion; a religious profession is to be regarded as comprehending both. In the fullest sense, whatever God has revealed in his Word, may be taken as the matter of a true religious profession. "THE BIBLE," it has been appropriately said, "IS THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS."* What God has seen fit to reveal, it is important for man to know, believe, and profess. The Scriptures are the standard of infallible truth, and to us they are given as a "banner" to be displayed. All right knowledge about religion is derived from this source, and the Scriptures, too, are an unerring rule of holy practice. In making a profession, we are called to be God's witnesses; and while it is required, if we would be faithful and true, that we speak what we know, we should be concerned to utter nothing that is not in strictest accordance with the record that God has given us, and to embrace in our testimony whatever is contained in that record. Nothing is here trivial or unimportant; and although some portions of revealed truth are more important than others, none are *unessential*. Whatever God has been pleased to reveal, we should consider important to know, and should regard it incumbent on us to profess. A Christian confessor should labour to possess an extensive acquaintance with revealed truth; and he should be ever prepared to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, to buy the truth and not sell it, and to regard every particular contained in it as more precious than the most fine gold.

But it may be necessary to be more specific, in speaking of the profession, which it is the duty of the young early to make. To confess Christ, is to recognize publicly his character and claims; it is to subscribe to the truth and excellence of the doctrines

* Chillingworth.

which his word contains, and to avow them as the belief of our hearts; it is to embrace him as our Lord and Master, and swear perpetual allegiance to him in this character; and it implies the entire surrender of ourselves to his service, and to the advancement of his glory. The profession of our faith must, in other words, contain—

First, *A cordial and joyful acknowledgment of Christ the Lord, as our Saviour and Master.* We thus join ourselves to the Lord. By our profession, we declare that we are on the Lord's side. Embracing him as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and in all endearing relations, we are not ashamed to own him and his cause. We glory in our near relation to him. We are of one family—that which, in heaven and earth, is named after Christ. We esteem it our greatest honour to wear the badge of discipleship, and to be distinguished from all others, by our relationship to this glorious Saviour. We are his servants—the sheep of his pasture—his loving, obedient children—the soldiers of his cross—the predestined heirs of his glory. “Bought with a price”—we are not, and we do not wish to be esteemed, “our own.” The language of each genuine professor to Christ his Master is that of the Apostle of the Gentiles, before heathen mariners and soldiers, “Whose I am, and whom I serve.” And all who have been drawn to the service of this exalted Prince, willingly declare, “O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.”* “All people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.”†

Secondly, *A public avowal of the doctrines of God's grace.* The grand characteristic of the doctrine of Christ is, that it is “the Gospel of the grace of God.” Salvation is wholly of grace. “A great

* Isaiah xxvi. 15.

† Micah iv. 5.

Saviour for great sinners;”—A full and free salvation for creatures undeserving, miserable, perishing;—All good in man, originating in the sovereign favour and mercy of God, and pardon and acceptance for the guilty and polluted, not in any sense through works of law, but solely as the fruit of gratuitous favour, through the obedience of the Mediator—this is the glory of the gospel—that which constitutes the report, emphatically “glad tidings,” good news from a far country. This is “the faith once delivered to the saints”—the “one faith”—the “most holy faith” of the saints, which is so often spoken of in the New Testament. This one all-precious faith, we are bound to embrace and profess, and steadfastly to maintain. The “form of sound words,” we should hold fast. Compromise or modification of the truth as it is in Jesus, we can never admit, for any advantage, whether present or future, whether real or imaginary. Resting our own souls upon the precious doctrines of grace, and clinging to them, as our food, treasure, life, we cannot but exhibit them as our Banner before others, and joyfully profess them as the foundation of all our comforts and hopes. To compromise these principles, or dilute them, or amalgamate them with specious errors, would be to introduce another gospel, and to expose ourselves to the curse denounced against those who preach it. A faithful confessor must love the truth with his whole heart, witness for it in all its integrity and excellency, and should himself exemplify its life-giving and transforming power. Thus, and thus alone, will the church be united, prospered and perfected. “Speaking the truth in love,” the church, as a mystical body, “grows up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.”*

Thirdly, *The devout and diligent observance of ordinances of worship.* These are instituted by the au-

* Ephesians iv. 15.

thority of Zion's King, whom the believer willingly owns as his Lord and his God; and whose honour he regards himself as specially bound to advance. They are appointed as acts of homage to an exalted and glorious Sovereign: they furnish plain and palpable tests of obedience; and through them, as ordained means of salvation, high and heavenly blessings are enjoyed. Religious ordinances constitute a principal part of Christ's yoke, and such as, "labouring and heavy laden," come to him for rest, must take it upon them, and joyfully wear it. Others may neglect holy ordinances, or may observe them in a trivial and careless manner; or may attend upon some religious institutions, as convenience or custom may dictate, while others, equally important, are wholly overlooked. The true disciple of Christ regards it as his honour and highest delight to obey the mandates of his exalted King, and to advance his glory. While he willingly gives him the homage of the heart, he knows that he cannot withhold from him external acts of worship, if he would confess him before men. Prayer in secret—so frequently enjoined, he views as an essential function of his spiritual existence; and he makes it so much his business, that he may be said to "pray without ceasing." His delight is to be alone with God. His principal work is at the throne of grace. He learns, in all things, "by prayer and supplication," to make his requests known unto God. He wrestles for the blessing, and seeks solid rest and consolation where it is alone to be obtained—at the mercy seat; and many a happy hour he spends in the closet, pouring out his heart to Him who sees in secret, and who has promised to reward him openly. The various relations of life imply the acknowledgment of God who instituted them, in corresponding acts of worship. He is "the God of all the families of Israel," and a profession of his name requires that

the household should be dedicated to him—that an altar should be erected to him in the house, and that all that concerns the family should be regulated so as to promote the Divine honour, and to secure his blessing. If the professor of Christ's name has a family committed to him, he will make it his chief study, as David, to “bless his house.” His resolution will be, that “he and his house will serve the Lord.” His dwelling will be consecrated as “a house of prayer;” the voice of joy and melody will be heard in it, and the sacrifices of prayer and praise will be brought daily to the family altar.

God is the author of the social relation; and in the blessed economy of redemption, He has constituted a household of faith—one “family that in heaven and earth is named after Christ.” Communion of saints, which implies fellowship in good things, and mutual sympathy in evil, cannot be fully realized without acts of joint social worship. He who has himself passed from death unto life, dearly loves the brotherhood of faith; and in the spirit of his profession, this love will attract him, as with magnetic power, towards fellow-professors, that they may speak often one to another. Believers, in the right frame, can never be indifferent to the *fellowship-meeting* for spiritual converse and prayer. They cannot “forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is,” but will “exhort one another daily.” The saints on earth, the excellent, are the believer's “delight;” and the desires and rest of his heart being with them, he cannot but seek after the social prayer-meeting, where his spiritual longings are satisfied. Thus he meets with fellow-travellers to Zion; he converses with members of the same family; he enjoys the benefit of united prayer; and realizes in the presence of the Lord whom he loves, the fulfilment of the all-gracious assurance, “Where two or three are met in my name, there am I with them.”

Public ordinances, whether stated or occasional; hearing the word, the prayers, and praises of the sanctuary; receiving the sacraments, the seals of the covenant of grace; public fasting and thanksgiving; and vowing to God, are comprehended in the matter of a proper profession; and the person who makes it will diligently and reverently observe them. These are to be maintained in their purity and integrity; not curtailed to suit human caprice or convenience, nor polluted by any intermixture of human invention. These form the "service of the sanctuary," and Christians, as being "a royal priesthood," have a deep and constant interest in its performance. It is impossible that any who love the king of Zion should be unconcerned about the ordinances of his house. They are established to manifest his glory; they are appointed means of intercourse with him, and through them He confers upon his people all saving blessings. Hence it is that the believer confessing Christ, says from the heart, "The habitation of thy house I have loved well." All his "well-springs" are in Zion; and his fixed purpose and ruling desire are to wait upon God in the institutions of the sanctuary, expecting, through them, the discoveries of grace, and the earnestness of glory, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple."*

It should always be borne in mind that, while diligent attendance upon the institutions of religious worship is necessary, as distinguishing those who yield obedience to Christ, from those who obey him not, the *manner* of the observance is of immense importance. Mere bodily service profiteth little. Professing Christ in acts of worship, we should have grace

* Psalm xxvii. 4.

that we may worship with reverence and godly fear. We should aim to advance his glory, and enjoy his presence, above all things. In *faith* we should attend upon Divine institutions. "He that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." They that worship him must worship "in spirit and in truth;" for he "seeketh such to worship him."

Finally, a religious profession requires *a readiness to vindicate Christ's cause, and embraces all the precepts of Gospel morality.* Occasions will frequently arise in the life of every professor, in which he will be called to avouch his Master—avow his truth, and defend it against gainsayers—give a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and fear, and urge the claims of Christ's cause upon those with whom he has influence or authority. These duties he cannot evade, if he would be true to his Master. The faithful professor has no disposition to shrink from their performance, whatever difficulty he may encounter, or to whatever risk he may be exposed. His calling is to be a witness for Christ and his truth, and to these he will reckon it his honour and privilege to bear unswerving testimony, even amidst opposition, and enmity, and reproach. A holy practice is alone becoming a holy profession. The disciple of Christ, while he loves his Master supremely, learns to love his neighbour as himself. In discharging faithfully all relative duties, he exemplifies the excellency of his principles, and adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. The least of Christ's commandments cannot be wilfully overlooked, or violated, but on pain of forfeiting the kingdom of heaven. A conversation becoming the gospel, a course of conduct void of offence toward man, as well as toward God, are indispensable to a Christian profession; and those who rightly display it will habitually remember the comprehensive inspired direction,

“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”*

SECTION III.—*Spirit in which a Profession is to be maintained.*

A profession of this kind, to subserve the great ends for which it was appointed to be made, must be maintained with all *publicity and candour*; be marked by *decision*; be made in the *most solemn manner*, and adhered to with all *constancy and steadfastness*.

First, it must be *public and candid*. A gospel profession is compared to a *lamp*, lighted and set up on a conspicuous place. Witnesses are candlesticks, or torch-bearers. The church is “the pillar and ground of truth,” and Christians, her true members, are as “lights of the world,” “a city set on a hill that cannot be hid.” All these representations imply the necessity of publicity in the profession of Christ. The word *profess*, or *confess*, carries in it prominently this idea, and likewise expresses the concomitant idea of simplicity and candour in the profession. And when we are directed to confess “before men,” and “with the tongue,” it is evident that the object in calling for a profession at all, is, that it should be made openly, so that all may fully see and understand it. Those who profess Christ are commanded to be “ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.” Obedience to this precept, and to others of kindred meaning, supposes publicity and simplicity. Indeed, the whole business of a religious profession proceeds on the ground that these

*Philippians iv. 8.

two attributes are indispensable and prominent. Without them, the grand ends of a religious profession, God's glory, and the good of men, cannot be reached. The light that is given us to display must not be confined—it must not be hid “under a bushel,” but placed upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. We must come to Jesus not, as Nicodemus, “by night,” but boldly, openly espousing his cause, and joining ourselves to his people. We should publicly proclaim our attachment to him, and with candour of mind, and plainness of speech, declare at all times, that we have chosen the Lord to serve him.

Secondly, *Decision* is equally necessary to a right profession. In any profession in life, decision of character is essential to honourable distinction and success. The undecided are timid, and indolent, and wavering; and in this state of irresolution, in vain do they look for success in any pursuit. On the other hand, before the fixedness of purpose, and energy of endeavour, implied in decision, difficulties melt away; and ends are compassed, the attainment of which once appeared all but impossible. A religious profession demands decision and promptitude, as well in its commencement, as in its whole future course. There must be calm, deliberate counting the cost; the willing relinquishment of objects that would interfere with the service of religion; and the resolute choice of a course which is to be followed and delighted in till the end of life. To “halt between two opinions,” to “serve God and mammon,” to be undecided in relation to the path of duty, and irresolute and fitful in pursuing it, are states of mind inconsistent with a confession of Christ before men. The reverse of all this is the character of a faithful confessor. In choosing his Master and service, his heart is fixed; in difficulty and trial, he is firm and inflexible. No matter what others do, he is prepared to act with decision, whenever he dis-

cerns the path of duty; and in testifying to truth, and yielding himself to the service of religion, he cleaves to the Lord "with purpose of heart." The language of the veteran Joshua is his, "If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." * And if called to suffer while they witness, the spirit of the three Hebrew confessors will be their's, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: if it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." † Or with the Apostles of the Lamb, they can appeal with intrepidity to adversaries, rejecting their solicitations, and unappalled by their terrors, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to obey God or man, judge ye." ‡

Thirdly, It should be *solemnly made and ratified*. The original word for confessing Christ most frequently used in the New Testament, embraces, in its radical meaning, the idea of *an oath or vow*. Thus, should a Christian profession always be characterized. As in baptism, there is a solemn devotement to the Lord, and engagement to his service, so, in professing Christ before men, a vow of allegiance is made to him, and by promise and covenant, we renounce all other lords, and dedicate ourselves to him for ever. Taking hold of God's covenant, each professor says, virtually vowing, "I am the Lord's," and "subscribes with his hand to the Lord."|| With all the solemnity of an oath, we bind ourselves to the service of Christ. By personal dedication or covenanting, we yield ourselves to the Lord; and by public social vows, the

* Joshua xxiv. 15.

† Acts iv. 19.

‡ Daniel iii. 16, 17, 18.

|| Isaiah xliv. 5.

church is married to her exalted Head, and is engaged to all fidelity in homage and obedience. The public profession that has eminently conduced to the promotion of the divine glory, has been, in all ages, a *covenanted profession*. Under the Old Testament, it was designated by *vowing a vow to the Lord*;—every tongue swearing to him, being joined to the Lord in a conjugal relation. Under the New Testament, it is termed *joining ourselves to the Lord, yielding ourselves to him*; and as an early example of such a profession, eminently approved and commended, it is said of the Macedonian churches, “they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then unto us by the will of God.”*

Lastly, The profession thus made is to be adhered to with all *constancy and steadfastness*. How frequently and solemnly is this spirit enjoined in connexion with a religious profession. “Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” “Hold fast that which thou hast till I come, that no man take thy crown.” “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” (Phil. iii. 15. Rev. iii. 11. Heb. x. 23.) These, and many similar directions, enforced by the most weighty arguments, enjoin steadfastness, as opposed to all versatility and inconstancy. They urge to perseverance to the end in the Christian course. Every view of a Christian profession implies steadfastness of purpose, and advancement in pursuit. The marriage-contract is for life; the vow of allegiance is lasting; the soldier’s oath to his general is taken to be a pledge of adherence in all changes of fortune, in success or defeat. Such is the profession of the name of Christ; His truth is never to be forsaken; his service never abandoned. *Enduring to the end* is the Christian’s character, “*Steadfast, im-*

* 2 Corinthians viii. 5.

moveable, always abounding in the Lord," is the motto of his conduct; and the precept and promise constrain his obedience and animate his exertions, "BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO THE DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE."*

SECTION III.—*The Membership of the Church.*

None can rightly make a profession of religion, without publicly entering the fellowship of the church. This is an eminent means of confessing Christ before men, and therefore we treat of it somewhat more in detail. "*The visible church,*" as it is well described by the Westminster Divines in the Larger Catechism, "*consists of all such as profess faith in Christ with their children.*"

When baptized children arrive at years of judgment and accountability, it is required of them that they should openly and cheerfully acknowledge their baptismal engagements, and join themselves to the Lord. The church is erected and maintained in the earth, as a society professing faith in Christ, and a primary design of its establishment was, that there might be gathered into it all who, in every place, make such a profession. It is, therefore, an institution divinely appointed, and suitable for disciples, who come to Christ and submit to him, making a profession which distinguishes them from the rest of the world, and which manifests them to be on the Lord's side.

The church is a community of which Jesus Christ is the legislative, governing, and vital Head. It is the "one family in heaven and earth" which is named after him—his mystical body—his spouse, to whom is addressed the command, "He is thy Lord, wor-

* Revelations ii. 10.

ship thou him.”* Connexion with this society, therefore, implies a public declaration of accepting Christ as our Head, submitting to his authority, and depending upon him for every thing. It is established in the world as “the Pillar and ground of truth,” like a monumental pillar to raise aloft the standard of truth, and to display it amidst surrounding darkness. Hence the best way to profess Christ’s truth is to enrol one’s self in this excellent community. The church consists of “all that in every place call upon the Lord, both theirs and ours;” and rendering to its exalted Lord, suitable homage will be best done by joining in the solemn acts of the church’s worship, public and social. In fine, this society is framed to be the kingdom of Christ in the world; governed by the sceptre of his grace, and obedient to his laws; and as distinguished by the maintenance of truth and a godly practice, “a light shining in a dark place.” The profession of subjection to Christ, will therefore be best made by publicly joining ourselves to the body of Christ’s disciples, and cultivating their special and separate fellowship. If we have one Lord, and one faith, we must be of one body, and members each one of another. If, like the Moabitish convert, we resolutely go forth to the land of Israel and say, “Thy God shall be my God,” we must be prepared at the same time to declare, “Thy people shall be my people.” The two relations are represented in the Scriptures as inseparable. Union to Christ implies union, through him, with all that acknowledge him as their Head. Fellowship with God is realized through the word faithfully declared, and by means of communion with God’s people. This is the nearest step to its participation—the immediate means that conduct to its enjoyment, 1 John i. 3, “That which we have seen

* Psalm xlv. 11.

and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

It is indeed difficult to conceive how there can be a profession of Christ where there is a refusal to enter the membership of the visible church, or where this duty is unduly delayed or neglected. The church is Heaven's institute for confessing Christ, maintaining his truth, preserving his ordinances, and promoting his glory in the world; and it has been determined by infinite wisdom that these high ends cannot be effected by any other instrumentality. So long as the individual has not visible connexion with this important society, he cannot be said to sympathize with these ends, or to give himself to seek their attainment. He has not fully come out on the Lord's side; and, as far as he is concerned, a profession of faith in Christ, and of subjection to him is not made. In such a case, neglect or delay is tantamount to refusal, and the Saviour's declaration is strictly applicable, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."*

As we have shown that one cannot be said to esteem Christ and his salvation, who is unwilling to confess him openly, so we remark that love to the Saviour, where it really exists, will constrain to seek union and fellowship with his church. The church is the elect, loved Spouse of Christ; the Bride, the Lamb's wife. It is his "garden enclosed," his "vineyard of red wine," his "pleasant plant." The advancement of his honour is inseparably connected with the stability and progress of his church; and Zion's increase and prosperity are constantly near to his heart. This is his "rest," where he ever stays, for he is pleased with it. He "delights in the gates of Zion, more than the dwellings of Jacob." Her walls are continually before

* Matthew xii. 30.

him. His eyes and his heart are there perpetually. Such being the Saviour's estimate of his church, it seems evident that those who have tasted that He is gracious, and who have been taught to live for his glory, must desire incorporation with this distinguished community. As they value the love of Christ, they will seek to be numbered with those to whom on earth it is exclusively exhibited. As they desire his gracious presence, they are drawn to the people and places, to whom it is promised; and as they cannot but seek that his glory may fill the whole earth, they will regard it as at once their duty and privilege to be connected with an institution expressly ordained for the purpose of spreading the Saviour's "renowned fame" to the limits of the globe, and of bringing all people into willing subjection to his authority.

1. *The qualifications for Church Membership.*

What is implied in church membership, and the qualifications for entering the fellowship of the church require to be briefly considered. *Regeneration* or *real saintship* cannot be regarded as a term of visible membership; because man cannot judge the heart, and cannot certainly know the state before God. The visible church is an assembly of saints and sinners. Into the gospel net, fishes good and bad are gathered, and they are not completely separated, till at the last judgment, the net is drawn to the shore, and the righteous and the wicked are for ever parted. Notwithstanding, those who have the keys of the kingdom should use their utmost pains to separate the precious from the vile, and to make a difference between the clean and the unclean. And those who enter the visible church are under the most solemn responsibility to see that they have evidence of being *first in Christ*, before they essay to join themselves to his people. In the days of primitive Christianity, the Lord added to the church

such as should be saved. It is declared concerning the primitive professors, that "they gave themselves first to the Lord," and then to his servants, to perform all duties connected with their ecclesiastical state, "according to the will of God." It, therefore, deeply concerns every person who would profess Christ, by entering the fellowship of the visible church, to have evidence that he is among the saved, and that he has voluntarily and deliberately dedicated himself to the Lord and his service.

Moreover, the *descriptions* of the church and its members, contained in the sacred Scriptures, show what is implied in its fellowship, and the qualifications requisite for enjoying it. It is designated *God's house*—a *spiritual kingdom*—a *holy nation*—a *peculiar people*. It is a society called out of the world, and its members are frequently entitled Called ones, "the called of Christ Jesus."* They are called out of the world from a state of sin, and from the service of Satan, into God's marvellous light; to spiritual liberty, to God's service, and to heaven. The church is a believing family, and its members are the faithful of the earth.

The English church, in one of her formularies, defines the church as "a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."† In the invisible church, Christ dwells in the hearts of all the members by faith, and in the visible, there must be a profession of cordial trust in him; and fidelity in maintaining his cause in the world. *Competent knowledge* of divine things

* Both in Hebrew and Greek, the terms for Church *קהל*, and *εκκλησια*, signify an assembly of persons called or convened together.—See *M'Leod's Ecclesiastical Catechism*, Question 11, Note A.

† Thirty-nine Articles, Art. xix.

besides is implied in the membership of the church. Ignorance here is criminal and fatal. “*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*” Some degree of knowledge of themselves, of their lost state, and sinfulness of heart and life, of the way of salvation, of God and his glorious character and perfections, of Christ, in his person, finished atonement, and precious offices, of the Spirit and his work, and of the doctrines of grace, is indispensable to the membership of the church. Visible holiness also, importing duties to God and man, is essential to all right ecclesiastical fellowship. The church is the “mountain of truth,” and “the habitation of holiness.” The “goings out, and the comings in thereof;” “the whole limit round about is most holy. Behold this is the law of the house.”*

The church of Christ in the world may then be said to be a society separated from the world; organized by Christ, its exalted Head, for the purpose of professing his truth, observing his laws and ordinances, advancing his glory throughout the earth, and preparing sons for heaven. Those who join themselves to this association must do it *voluntarily*, while yet all, to whom the word of God comes, are under the most solemn obligation to seek such fellowship. They are to enter into one and the same covenant in a public manner; and while they are pledged to the performance of all the duties implied in it, they should exemplify before the world the grand characteristics of a select society, separated from the world that lies in wickedness.

A few additional observations will conclude what appears requisite to be advanced on this topic.

1. The fellowship of the church is ever represented in sacred Scripture as an *all-desirable privilege*, and they who enter it, must come to it with all readiness and cheerfulness. The work of grace is to make a

* Ezek. xliii. 10.

people "willing," as in "a day of power."* Genuine converts are represented as flying "like doves to their windows," and as flowing to Zion "for corn and for wine, and for the young of the flock." Through the work of the Spirit, multitudes, in the days of primitive Christianity, thus joined themselves to the Lord, and were added to the church. The members of the church should still be so characterized. They must freely, deliberately, and resolutely "choose whom they will serve." Voluntarily relinquishing the service of the world, and of all other masters, they must embrace Christ, as their only Lord, and his service as perfect freedom. His work is most honourable. Visible fellowship with those who are designated "a royal priesthood" confers eminent distinction and true nobility.

2. Entering the membership of the visible church *implies a solemn covenant*, and this is for substance the same, whether *verbal* or *implied*. In all ages, the practice of the church has been to require a profession on admission to membership, in the way of a vow, solemnly and publicly made. This was done in the Jewish synagogues—to the model of whose government and worship the New Testament church was designed to be conformed. The original words in the inspired records for *profession* or *confession* properly signify assent or consent by a covenant or oath.† The Apostle Paul translates the word for *swear* in the Old

* The Hebrew term for "willing," may be rendered "voluntary offering"—God's people are dedicated volunteers.

† Schleusner gives as the proper meaning of "Ἐξομολογία"—*assent, consent, or a covenant*, and by metonymy, "that which is thus covenanted or agreed," also "a league." The Septuagint employs this term in translating the Hebrew נָדָה, *vow, or voluntary oblation*. Leigh in his "*Critica Sacra*," gives the meaning, "To bear witness of one, plainly and sincerely, and to acknowledge as his own; frankly and boldly to profess what one holds in matters of religion."

Testament, by a word signifying to confess or profess.* In primitive times, candidates for baptism, were required publicly to express their assent to a covenant, which declared their renunciation of the devil, giving themselves up to the government of Christ, and a profession of faith.† Forms of these covenants yet remain, and they were extensively used in both the eastern and western churches.‡ Various of the Reformed churches followed the same practice; and in the “Directory for worship,” adopted by the *Westminster Assembly*, it is declared, “Those who are admitted to sealing ordinances, shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety. When unbaptized persons apply for admission into the church, they shall, in ordinary cases, after giving satisfaction with respect to their knowledge and piety, make a public profession of their faith in the presence of the congregation, and thereupon be baptized”§ It were very suitable that in all cases, assent to this covenant were explicitly and openly made, instead of there being only an implied consent to the articles of the Christian covenant. However this be, entering the membership of the church by a profession of faith, and a covenant engagement, serves valuable and important purposes. It is the public acknowledgment and voluntary ratification by the individual who makes it of that covenant with God and his church, which was made on his behalf in baptism. Thus he takes upon himself the vows that were made for him by his parents; professes his personal belief in the great doctrines of the Bible; pledges himself to the performance of all personal and relative duties; and avows

* See Romans, xvi. 11. Phil. ii. 10. 1 Tim. vi. 12.

† Hill's Lectures, vol. iii. p. 254.

‡ See Bingham, *Antiq. Chr. Ch.*, vol. iii. 221, 228, 231. *Apostolical Constitutions*, p. vii. Sect. 4.

§ *Directory for Worship*—C. ix. Sect. 3 and 4.

his determination, in the strength of Divine grace, hereafter to live as a disciple of Christ, and a member of his church. An engagement thus solemnly and publicly made, is of great benefit to the individual himself, and to the church with which he becomes connected. It imposes a superadded obligation upon him to walk in all the ways of holy obedience; among fellow members of the church, it gives mutual confidence and comfort; and it supplies to all a powerful motive to concord, and faithful discipline, and united effort.

3. *Many important duties, which are plainly enjoined, cannot be suitably performed, without being in the membership of the church;* and these are solemnly incumbent upon those who would confess Christ before men. They should love one another with a pure heart fervently. Thus do they give evidence that they are Christ's true disciples. As a holy brotherhood, they are to cherish love towards one another, in its highest exercise of complacency and delight. They should maintain oneness of affection, and unity of mind and judgment. The Spirit enjoins them to be of one heart and of one soul, having the same love;* and they are represented as of one accord, and of one mind, as all speaking the same thing, perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.† They should sympathize with each other; mutually communicate to one another's necessities, as well in things temporal as spiritual. They should watch over each other, bear one another's burdens, pray for each other, and exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day. Called out of the world, they are to maintain a holy separation from the men of it—the erroneous and the immoral—and they should embrace all opportunities of assembling themselves together for religious worship.‡ They must strive together for the faith of the Gospel, and om-

* Phil. iv. 2.

† 1 Cor. i. 10, 11.

‡ Acts ii. 42. Heb. x. 25.

ploy united prayers, counsels, and efforts for its universal dissemination. They are, moreover, to be examples to one another, and to the world, of practical godliness. They are to provoke one another to love and good works, to avoid casting a stumbling-block before the brethren, and to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things, that the name of Christ and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

These duties, all-important, and so intimately connected with the advancement of God's glory, and of true religion in the world, it is evident, cannot be fully or properly discharged but in a church state. In fact, many of them are wholly overlooked, and their obligation is not acknowledged or felt, whilst persons remain out of the fellowship of the church. How much of an approved Christian profession lies in the observance of such duties, we need not wait to declare. But it must be apparent, that when they are neglected, the "grace that bringeth salvation" is not displayed in its sanctifying and elevating influence; and Christianity is shorn of its beauty, and stripped of its attraction. If, then, the profession of Christ be any thing but an idle name, it will be made by publicly entering the fellowship of the church; and maintained by diligently, faithfully, and cheerfully performing the duties which such a connection involves. Concerning fellow-Christians, the Apostle declares of the members of one of the primitive churches, "They glorify God, for their professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ;"* or, as it may be better rendered, "for their subjection to the Gospel of Christ, which you have professed,"† Of all Christians, it is beautifully said, "whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end."‡

Fellowship with the catholic visible church, im-

* 2 Cor. ix. 13.

† Dwight.

‡ Heb. iii. 6.

plies membership in a particular section of the professed body of Christ. Unhappy divisions exist, and may be expected to continue till the Redeemer shall come and establish his kingdom, and until times of refreshing and reviving shall have come from the presence of the Lord. While the Christian cannot but mourn for “the divisions of Reuben,” and seek, by Scriptural means, their removal, he must seem to countenance them by connecting himself with one section of the church, and by refusing ecclesiastical fellowship with others. His duty is to pray for every part of the Christian church, and to contribute all in his power, that, in terms of the Divine prediction, there may be one Lord, and his name one over all the earth. The question with what department of the church it may be an individual’s duty to be connected, is not to be determined by considerations of convenience or worldly interest, nor to be settled by advancing proud pretensions of antiquity, or by boasting of numbers and respectability. The notes or marks of a true visible church of Christ, as they have been generally exhibited by the reformed, are, *The true preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments, and a Scriptural discipline faithfully administered.** That section of the church is to be considered most pure, which, in doctrine, wor-

* The Confession of the Church of Scotland thus speaks—“The notes, therefore, of the true Church of God, we believe, confess, and avow to be, 1. The true preaching of the Word of God, in the which God hath revealed himself unto us, as the writings of the prophets and apostles do declare, (John iii. 34.) 2. The right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, which must be annexed unto the word and promise of God, to seal and confirm the same in our hearts, (Rom. iv. 11.) Lastly, Ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God’s Word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed, and virtue nourished,” (1 Cor. v. 3-5.)

The Confession of Belgia declares—“Wherefore the true Church may be discerned from the false by these notes: If the true preaching of the Gospel do flourish in it, if it have the lawful administration of the Sacraments, according to Christ’s

ship, discipline, and government, is in nearest conformity to God's blessed word; and with this, an individual seeking to confess Christ before men should, at all hazards, be connected. It may be added, that that section of the church is *faithful*, that honestly bears testimony to the rights and prerogatives of her exalted Head; that is careful to maintain the observance of all ordinances, public, social, domestic, and private, and that exemplifies in the lives of its members, a godly practice. That which in all things is most nearly conformed to "the pattern" exhibited in Divine revelation, is most conducive to the advancement of the Divine glory. The fellowship of that part of the church which displays this character should be earnestly sought, and its profession, testimony, and practice eagerly embraced, and carefully followed. In the words of an eloquent advocate of the church's liberty and independence, "It is his (the Christian's) duty to pray for every part of the Christian church, to inquire what part adheres most closely to the Holy Scriptures; and without bias, from interest or prejudice, join in that communion which is most pure, in which his edification may be promoted, and in which he may prove most useful to the kingdom of Christ."* The precepts of inspiration are pointed and unequivocal on this article. 1 Thess. v. 21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Song i. 7, "Go ye forth by the footsteps of the flock; feed your kids beside the shepherds' tents." Heb. vi. 13, "Let us follow

institution; if it do use the right ecclesiastical discipline, for the restraining of vice; finally, to print up all in one word, if it do square all things to the rule of God's Word, refusing whatsoever is contrary to it, acknowledging Christ to be the only Head of the same; by these notes, I say, it is certain that the true church may be discerned. From the which it is not lawful for any man to be severed."

* Ecclesiastical Catechism, by the late Dr. M'Leod, New York.
—Question 14.

them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Phil. ix. 13, "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Jer. vi. 16, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your soul."

A public entering into the fellowship of the visible church being thus a principal way of confessing Christ before men, the young should regard it as their privilege and honour, early to make such a profession. It is incumbent upon all, to whom the word of salvation comes; it is especially incumbent upon those who were in infancy dedicated to God by baptism. Christ the Lord, who has a paramount and exclusive claim upon them and their services, requires them thus to seek him early. He has prepared his church as a blessed institution for their spiritual instruction; He invites them to his ordinances as well-springs of comfort and blessing; and He commands them to avouch him to be their God, by taking their stand with his people, as the appointed way at once of declaring their separation from the world, and their adherence to his cause, and of enjoying the great blessings of his salvation. Their baptism requires them early to seek full connexion with the visible church. Their engagement was to be wholly the Lord's, and in the full fellowship of the church alone can they implement it. The privileges which baptism confers cannot be enjoyed, while young persons refuse or unduly delay to unite with the visible church, and to attend upon all appointed ordinances; nor can they expect, while they act thus, that God will remember their baptismal covenant to them for good. Remaining without the membership of the visible church, they virtually declare that they set no value on their baptism; and the vow then made on their behalf, they refuse to make their own, and ne-

glect to pay. In this state, how can they possibly expect to enjoy the blessings that pertain to a separate, dedicated people? On the other hand, by an intelligent and open espousal of the church's testimony, a young person takes his place among the volunteers in Christ's army, and claims the name of one of Zion's children. Need we add, that to himself this step is calculated to be of great and lasting advantage? The promise to Zion's children is that they shall be "all taught of the Lord," and great shall be their peace. The membership of the church is a safeguard against many evils and temptations, to which the young are exposed. Companionship with fellow-believers moulds the character, and blessings are enjoyed in holy ordinances, unknown to those who seek them not in the only way in which God has promised to bestow them. These are benefits of no insignificant value to the young themselves. Early decision, shown by entering the fellowship of the church, is, besides, of much advantage to others. It gladdens and strengthens faithful fellow-professors, and is calculated to impress others, and to lead them too to confess Christ before men. How lovely and attractive appears the band of youthful entrants into the fellowship of the church! Thus Zion exhibits what constitutes a sure mark of prosperity, "the dew of her youth," and a "willing people" comes to her like "dew from the womb of the morning."

If, on the contrary, the young neglect this great duty, and do not enter the fellowship of the church in early life, such conduct is not only deeply criminal, but is generally followed by unspeakable loss. Regarded in its proper light, it implies the violation of a solemn engagement, undervaluing the greatest privileges, and contempt of the highest authority. Deferring to make a profession of religion by entering the membership of the church is a temptation of the great enemy; alas! in many instances,

too successful, to render the young careless about all religion, and to seduce them into final apostacy. Should they afterwards enrol themselves with the professed citizens of Zion, they lose the advantage of youthful impressions, and are in danger of becoming formalists or hypocrites. It has been matter of common observation with devoted ministers, who have taken pains in instructing candidates for church-fellowship, that young persons, from *twelve* to *sixteen* years of age, most generally discover greater aptitude to benefit by instructions, and to receive and retain impressions of Divine things, than those who apply for admission at a later period. When vital religion is low in the church, the sentiment is commonly avowed, that the young are in danger of entering its membership at too early a period; and the counsel of lukewarm or worldly friends is, that they should not take this step till the judgment is matured. We hesitate not to pronounce such advice as delusive and injurious. There is greater danger in deferring unduly to make a public profession, than in entering the fellowship of the church early. The first business that should occupy the thoughts, and engage the pursuits of an immortal being, is the service of his Creator and Preserver. The Redeemer himself, at the age of *twelve years*, appeared with his parents at the temple; and without affirming that in all cases the young should, at the same age, be prepared to enter the membership of the church, we may be free to say, that were parents faithful to their great trust, and were baptized youths to feel a proper sense of their obligation to the Author of their existence, they should, near that period of life, be prepared to make an intelligent profession of religion, and to become useful members of the church.

Proper *qualifications*, it is true, are required for making such a profession. There must be previously acquired a competent knowledge of the great doctrines

of the Bible; the church's testimony must, to some extent, be understood, and the individual seeking ecclesiastical fellowship, should be in the habit of performing religious duties. But when there has been a due attention to baptismal vows, either by parents or children, a young person may possess such knowledge, and be distinguished by such practice at the period we have specified. Children can much sooner understand the great doctrines of the gospel than is commonly believed, when they are carefully instructed in them; and when parents take them by the hand, leading them to Christ, and train them early to take on them his yoke, they will generally be found qualified to conduct religious duties to the edification of others, even in early youth. The young should always be told that they are criminally negligent, whenever they defer unduly to make a full profession of Christ before men. Let them early grasp with their hands the standard of truth. Let them choose for their companions the followers of the Lamb. Let them begin soon to engage in the service of religion, and to delight in all holy ordinances. Thus will they find the membership of the church a safeguard from innumerable dangers and enemies; they will reap both profit and comfort from walking in wisdom's pleasant paths; their example will be beneficial to others; and of Zion the language of their hearts will be, "All my well-springs are in thee." "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life."—Ps. cxxxvii. 8. Ps. xxvi. 8; xxvii. 4.

SECTION IV.—*Communion at the Lord's Table.*

It seems to be generally admitted that a public participation in the rites of a religious system is a profession of that religion. Thus the devotees of different Pagan systems, ancient or modern, have walked each one in the name of his god; and thus various sections of the Christian community have displayed and upheld their separate professions, by their respective members associating together in the same ordinances. There are some institutions, however, attendance on which is more distinguishing than the observance of others. Of this kind, are the ordinances, which have been sometimes termed *sealing* or *confirming*—the sacraments of the church. These may be considered as the open and visible badges of a profession; the ordained symbols, whereby we testify to the world, and to one another, that we have chosen Christ as our Saviour and Lord; that we are fully resolved to follow him in the maintenance of his cause, and the observance of his laws, and that we desire to enjoy the closest fellowship with his people. Other institutions, such as the hearing of the word, or the assemblies for public worship on the Sabbath, may be observed, and the distinction not be fully marked between those who profess Christ and those who profess him not. But these were designed to be distinct and peculiar, and attendance upon them is intended to declare that the person who makes it has taken his side, and solemnly and decisively attested his profession.

1. *Nature and Design of the Sacraments.*

Having previously considered the nature and design of the ordinance of baptism, and as we are not particularly required to speak of the profession made by those who were not baptized in infancy, we shall briefly not-

ice the general *design* of the sacraments, and then refer to the Lord's Supper, as a principal way of manifesting and sealing a Christian profession.

The Sacraments are peculiarly adapted to be distinctive badges of a profession, as they were expressly instituted by Christ, the church's glorious Head, to display his authority, and to be of perpetual obligation. They are intended, moreover, as *signs* of spiritual blessings. Baptism has been already spoken of, as very significant and expressive. Not less so is the Lord's Supper. The material elements of bread and wine point to the body and blood of Christ. They exhibit, in lively representation, the great facts of the incarnation, obedience, and atoning death of the Redeemer of men. They shadow forth the design of his glorious undertaking, the moral causes of his sufferings, the glorious results of his interposition, and especially the participation by his people of the blessed fruits of his death. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? "For we, being many, are one bread, as we are all partakers of that one bread."* This comprehensive declaration teaches that the disciples of Christ are shown to be "one body," by partaking of the spiritual food which is administered in the Lord's Supper. By believing, they were before brought into this holy fellowship; and in this ordinance, they visibly exemplify it, while they enjoy the great benefits which result from union to the Living Head, and to his members.

The Sacraments are likewise *seals*, intended to confirm to his people his promises, and to ratify his covenant-engagements. A seal among men is employed either to appropriate, or to authenticate and confirm. Attached to a document, it denotes that the person who applies it, acknowledges in the fullest

* 1 Corinthians x. 17.

manner his interest in it; and it assures the party concerned, that the document to which it is affixed is genuine and binding. As applied to holy ordinances, the term signifies, that God who instituted them, has given them *to confirm his faithful promises* to those who partake of them, and to assure them of the certain enjoyment of the blessings promised. Strictly speaking, God's unchangeable word is sufficient, but in condescension to our weakness, and that his people may have strong consolation, He has appended these ordinances as visible seals of his promises. Thus He promised to Noah, that He would no more destroy the earth with a flood, and He established the rainbow, as a visible seal, or a perpetual confirmation and pledge of the promise. In like manner, the Christian sacraments are designed to assure the believer that he shall receive the blessings promised, so sure as he partakes of the external symbols. Circumcision is declared by the apostle Paul to have been "a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith."* To Abraham and his descendants, the mark in their flesh not only formed a standing distinction between them and others, but it also conveyed the assurance that God would regard as righteous all who believed his word, and received the promise of the Seed to be revealed. Baptism, it is evident from Colossians ii. 11, 12, has been instituted for the same object, for it and circumcision are there represented as of similar import. And when its divine Institutor said, concerning the Lord's Supper, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood," it is plain that he meant that the covenant was ratified by his blood. There is a double figure in the words. The cup is put for the wine contained in it, and the wine is an emblem of the blood by which the covenant is confirmed, and by which it becomes a glori-

* Romans vi. 11.

ous new testament, conveying rich spiritual blessings to the heirs of salvation. The sacraments are, therefore, visible pledges or confirmations of the great facts of human redemption, and assurances that God will actually bestow the blessings of salvation,—pardon, sanctification, and eternal life, upon all that believe.

Being seals on God's part, they are expressive, likewise, of a solemn engagement on ours. In believing, we set to our seal that God is true; and especially in the reception of the Christian sacraments, we come under a solemn engagement to devote ourselves to the service of Christ. The gospel is sometimes represented as a *covenant*, and this implies mutual stipulations. God graciously offers to his people the blessings of life and salvation, and in the sacraments, gives the strongest assurance of their enjoyment; on their part, believers promise faith and obedience, and bind themselves by solemn pledges to be the Lord's. Duty is inseparably connected with privilege, and they who rightly partake of the seals of the covenant, join themselves to the Lord, in "a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten." These ordinances, then, instituted by the church's exalted Head, were plainly intended to be of constant obligation, and were designed to distinguish the followers of Christ from the world; to exhibit the truths of the gospel, and the rich benefits of salvation; to seal to believers divine promises; and to lead them to covenant with God. They are, therefore, ordinances of deep and solemn interest, and of great importance. God's people have not unsuitably been termed the "*Sacramental Host*," as they are a holy and separate fraternity, who have solemnly bound themselves by sacraments to live to his glory.

There is still an additional view to be presented of the Christian sacraments: they are efficacious *means of grace*, as well as signs and seals of the cov-

enant. By this remark, it is not intended that there is an inseparable connexion between the participation of the sacraments, and the actual communication of grace, or that persons who enjoy them, however administered, receive saving grace, irrespective of moral character. This is the mere dogma of superstition. It is to return again to the beggarly elements of Judaism; it is to re-impose upon the church the yoke of those who taught that circumcision and sacrifices were effectual for salvation, without faith and holy obedience. This extravagant tenet is opposed equally to the divine Word, and to all observation and experience. "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" and this declaration, true of every part of the service of religion, is especially applicable to the Christian sacraments. They are of spiritual efficacy to them only who by faith receive them. To believers, they are valuable means of conferring and strengthening grace. As the different senses are addressed through the external symbols, so in sealing ordinances, much more than in other appointed institutions, the great objects of faith are presented with peculiar vividness and impressiveness. The near sight of a crucified Saviour leads to repentance and the mortification of sin. The affecting memorials of redeeming mercy draw the heart to love and gratitude. The rich benefits of salvation, like a full feast, fill and satisfy the soul, while the solemn engagements into which the individual is called to enter, serve to nerve him with new resolution, and to animate him to all holy obedience. In all gospel ordinances, there is food provided for faith, but in these is presented wisdom's full feast. They are as the "banquet of wine." Those who share in their enjoyment are brought into the "banqueting house;" and in anticipation of holy communion in the sacraments with God and with fellow-saints, they can each one say, "My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and

fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips;" or as they come away from their enjoyment, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."* Those who have felt most interest in the sacraments, and who have most desired access to them, have been in all ages Christians of a large stature. As they have waited upon them, their views have been enlarged, their affections warmed and elevated. They have become more dead to the world and the pleasures of sense; more heavenly in their spirit and conduct; and beholding through this bright medium the glory of the Saviour, they have been changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

II. *Obligations to observe the Lord's Supper.* The OBLIGATIONS to observe the Lord's Supper are of the most powerful and constraining kind. All Christians are required thus to commemorate the Saviour's death, by the authority of Zion's King. This is, moreover, the *command of his love*—his parting dying command. As the New Testament passover was instituted at a time the most affecting and momentous in the world's history, so the institution, surrounded as it is with an array of circumstances most affecting, has the strongest claims upon the Christian's observance and veneration. The Saviour has expressly declared, "ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." But this institution is more than a bare command to claim obedience and to test friendship. It is a *love-token* left behind by a dear departed friend; and if we are unmindful of it, or habitually neglect its observance, we cannot possibly be regarded as cherishing towards him sentiments of esteem and respect.

Moreover, the observance of the Lord's Supper is

* Psalm lxiil. 5. Song ii. 2.

appointed to be a *principal way of confessing Christ before men*, and therefore attendance upon it is an indispensable duty. Thus we exhibit allegiance to the Captain of our salvation; thus we glory in his cross, and show forth his death, and thus, we publicly mark our separation from the world, and our communion with God's people. If this is heaven's prescribed way for owning our relationship to Christ and his saints, can we neglect it, and be free of criminality? Can we overlook it, and vainly hope to be partakers of the blessed fruits of the relation? Regarding the sacraments as *seals* of the covenant, we cannot neglect them without disregarding the covenant itself, and undervaluing its excellent provisions. God has as closely connected the seal with the enjoyment of covenanted blessings, as He did of old the offering of the appointed sacrifice upon the altar with the remission of sin. It is true, in the one case and the other, the outward rite was nothing without faith and repentance, and other holy dispositions. But the neglect of the appointed ordinances would certainly evidence a man to be destitute of the moral dispositions which constitute the principle of all right obedience, and is therefore a wilful rejection of the covenant itself.

And, finally, *the abundant enjoyment of holy privileges* is connected with the dutiful observance of sealing ordinances. These are eminent *means of grace*, of singular advantage to the partaker himself, and of much value for the edification and comfort of the church at large. Neglecting them, we forsake our own mercies. While, on the other hand, by their right observance, we obtain spiritual strength and vigour and refreshment. Our souls are filled "with marrow and fatness," and we go on our way rejoicing. The great Master of the feast once said to his sorrowing disciples, on the eve of instituting the Lord's Supper, "*with desire have I desired to eat this Pass-over with you before, I suffer.*" He still cherishes a

similar desire after communion with his people in the seals of his love; and He is prepared to confer on them all the substantial and enduring blessings of spiritual communion with himself. Should not his disciples hail with unmingled satisfaction a meeting with the Lord in the banqueting house? Should they not gladly welcome the occasion of commemorating the unparalleled love of Jesus, and of showing forth his death? Should they not feel the constraining force of a special obligation, impelling them to say with an honoured servant of Christ, as he triumphed over discouragements and difficulties, "*I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem?*"*

III. *Qualifications for observing the Lord's Supper.* If such is the nature of the Lord's Supper, and such the obligation of its observance, the natural inference is, that *special qualifications* are required of those who would seal their Christian profession by attending upon this ordinance. Other institutions of our holy religion, such as the preaching of the word, are open to all, but this is obviously distinguishing and peculiar. It is not instituted for the conversion of sinners, or for gathering in rebels and wanderers to the household of faith, but for confirming to the friends of Christ, the benefits of the covenant of grace, and for nourishing up the children of the family to life everlasting. It is not a *converting*, but a *sealing*, and *strengthening*, and *comforting ordinance*; and they who are invited and entitled to partake of it, are those who in actual union to the glorious Head, enjoy holy fellowship too, with all the members of his mystical body. The invitation to wisdom's feast is offered in these terms, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And the communion which the saints have with Christ, and with one another, is declared to be maintained and exhibited through sealing

* Acts xviii. 21.

ordinances ; “we are all one body, and one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread.”* To realize this fellowship, and so to share in the spiritual benefits of this sacrament, we must possess the requisite qualifications.

We are always to make the distinction between the qualifications which the church is bound to require of those who are admitted to her fellowship, and those which the same persons should seek for themselves, either in entering the church at first, or in coming to ratify their profession at the Lord's table. A title in man's sight to holy ordinances must consist in a credible profession, and in a deportment becoming the gospel. Before God, the Judge of all, nothing will do but faith which receives and rests upon Christ alone for salvation, and which works by holy obedience. The church, or its officers, cannot judge the heart. They can only demand the external qualifications, which would seem to evidence that the profession is made in sincerity ; and they must see that there is nothing outwardly inconsistent with Christian principle in this life. The tares and the wheat will grow together in the same field till the harvest day, notwithstanding all the desire of servants to have them separated. There rests, however, upon those who hold office in the church, a strong obligation to see that the standard of scriptural qualifications for admission to holy ordinances be not lowered ; and an awful necessity lies upon those who would partake of the seals of the covenant, to see that they are actually interested in the covenant ; and that desiring to enjoy the children's bread they indeed pertain to the family of God.

The qualifications indispensable to those who would desire spiritual benefit from observing the Lord's Supper may be reduced to *three*—*religious knowledge ; faith in the great object exhibited in the ordinances,*

* 1 Corinthians x. 17.

and in the blessed truths which it holds forth; and *the dispositions of heart* which truths, when rightly believed, unvariably produce.

A profession of religion demands, as a primary qualification, a due measure of *Scriptural knowledge*. Ignorance, instead of being the mother of devotion, is the parent of sin, and leads to fatal delusion. Through the knowledge of the truth, all the blessings of salvation are conferred. Sinners are thus regenerated and justified;* believers are sanctified through the truth; thus are they established, and guided onward to glory. A profession, to be of any value, must be an *intelligent* profession. As the participation of the sacrament of the Supper implies the renewing of a profession of Christ, there is evidently required, as a qualification for it, knowledge of the great leading doctrines of the Gospel. Intended as a standing memorial of the death of Christ, to observe it aright supposes a knowledge of the person and character of Christ, the causes and design of his death, and the great benefits which he thereby procured for the children of men. A knowledge of the sinner's loss through Adam, and of his recovery through Christ; an acquaintance with the nature and provisions of the wondrous scheme of human redemption, is fundamental to an intelligent profession of Christ, and essential to the enjoyment of all holy privileges. As there is brought into view in the Lord's Supper a number of elements and actions which shadow forth spiritual mysteries, so it is requisite that he who professes to observe the ordinance, should know the import of the symbols, and the blessings which they figuratively indicate.

The grand distinguishing property of the knowledge which constitutes a proper qualification for the sacramental feast is, that it be *experimental and practical*. It is the knowledge of the heart—it leads its subject

* James i. 18. Isaiah liii. 12.

to *feel* in accordance with new spiritual views; and while it enlightens the mind, it expands the affections, and constrains to the obedience of faith. Correct views of Divine mysteries are accompanied by devout affections; the power of the Gospel formerly hid is now felt; and by means of external instruction, the individual taught by the Spirit obtains a new relish for Divine things, and grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Such knowledge is often possessed by babes in Christ; it is frequently found with the illiterate, more than with those who possess human learning, and other external advantages. The attainment of it not being dependent upon external circumstances, all should earnestly seek after it. How small a portion of the knowledge of Divine things is sufficient to warrant admission to the sealing ordinances, we do not pretend to say; but wherever evidence is afforded of it being heartfelt and practical, the great qualification is possessed. "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," (John vii. 17.) Parents should early and faithfully instruct their children in the nature of Divine mysteries, with a view to their sealing their profession at the Lord's table. The young should apply their minds diligently to the study of Divine truth; and above all, the presence of the Great Teacher should be fervently sought—"What I know not, teach thou me." The promise is most encouraging—"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*

2. *Faith*, implying the confidence of the heart in Christ, and the cordial belief of the truths connected

* Is. liv. 13. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

with his mediation, is requisite to a proper commemoration of the Saviour's death. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." If we avow allegiance to Christ as the Captain of our salvation, we must choose him as our Saviour, embrace him as our Head and Lord, accept of him in all his offices, and rest upon him alone for salvation. Beholding him as lifted up, we are healed. Looking to him as "the Author and Finisher of faith," we lay aside every weight and every besetting sin, and run with patience our appointed race. The great truths exhibited in the sacrament of the Supper—a Divine Saviour, a substitutionary sacrifice, a complete atonement, the covenant ratified, a feast of spiritual blessings, and communion with God and with his people, must not only be believed but appropriated, if we would derive benefit from coming to this ordinance. These form the spiritual aliment of the soul; they are the provision of the banqueting house; they are the dainties that are prepared for the marriage-supper of the King. Without a thorough conviction of our absolute need of them, without a relish for their enjoyment, without the heart delighting to feed upon them, we are disqualified for coming to the feast.

3. And, finally, the profession cannot be made and confirmed at the Lord's Supper, *without those dispositions of heart*, which Divine truths, rightly believed, invariably produce. To make a profession of religion, we must know and believe what we profess. This profession is substantially that we renounce sin, accept of Christ as our only Saviour, love him supremely, and serve him with our whole hearts and lives. Faith, when genuine, purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. The truths of the Gospel, when believed, affect the heart and lead to self-abasement, godly sorrow, and all the exercises of genuine repentance. Christ Jesus, exhibited in the excellency of his person, and the perfection of his

sacrifice, appears an object all-lovely and attractive, and the heart is constrained to love him. Gratitude, spiritual desire, and delight are experienced in embracing and resting on a Saviour and salvation suited to the sinner's necessity, and adequate to all his wants. These kindred graces, working within, will impel to holy obedience in the life. The heart united and enlarged, will run in the way of the Divine commandments.

Without such qualifications, it must be evident that no part of the service required in the Lord's Supper can be rightly performed. We cannot commemorate Christ's wondrous sacrifice, if we have not knowledge, faith, love, gratitude, and humility. His death cannot be showed forth without assured belief in the doctrine of his cross, and the *affection and delight* of the heart glorying in his finished work. And if the ordinance is a seal of the covenant of grace, and God in it promises to be our God, we, on our part, engage to be his people. But this we cannot do, while we remain in love with sin, or submit not to Christ, or dislike the way of holy obedience. Without a sense of the need of pardon, a desire after holiness, sorrow for past transgressions, and a cordial purpose to cleave to the Lord, we cannot covenant with God, nor can we entertain right views and expectations in reference to forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal life.

Two additional observations will suffice on this part of the subject. First, It is requisite to have faith and other holy dispositions *actually in exercise*, if we would derive spiritual benefit from coming to sealing ordinances. A gracious state constitutes *habitual preparation* for partaking in the Christian sacraments; the exercise of grace constitutes *actual preparation*. The "wise virgins" were acknowledged to be the bridegroom's friends, even though in his absence "they slumbered and slept;" and they were prepared to meet him, and were taken in with him to the marriage,

because they had oil in their vessels with their lamps, and had trimmed their lamps—because they were possessed of a principle of grace in the heart, and had it drawn forth to renewed exercise. The “foolish virgins,” on the other hand, were rejected, though they had the name of virgins, and possessed lamps—though they made a profession, and were in some concern to prepare to meet the bridegroom, because they were destitute of such a principle. Without the graces of faith, and love, and repentance actually working in the heart, we cannot expect to meet the king at the feast; we cannot seal our allegiance to him, or share in the abundant provision of his house. If we come to the banqueting-house at all, we must come as the friends of Christ. Hating his enemies, and putting away from us all that He dislikes; we must “sit down under his shadow” with delight, reposing our entire confidence in his person and salvation. Engaging to be his now and for ever, we must in love embrace him, and with the satisfaction of the heart say, “This is my beloved and my Friend;” “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Partaking of the bread of the family of God, and claiming fellowship with them, we must cherish the fervent love of the brethren; our delight must be with the saints, “the excellent of the earth.” And pledging to the Redeemer at his table, and over the symbols of his dying love, the homage of our hearts and lives, we should come to it, putting away all idols, and with the humble, resolute desire and purpose to keep all his commandments. With such dispositions and desires, we shall be welcome guests at the marriage feast; and from the sacramental service, we shall derive an increase of grace, and new and animating encouragements to pursue the path that leads to comfort and felicity.

Secondly, *The absence of these qualifications, or a sense of the want of them, we must bear in mind, will*

free no person from the obligation to obey the command of Christ, and to commemorate his death. The command, "*Do this in remembrance of me,*" is binding upon all Christ's disciples. It is binding equally with any other requirement of his word—such as to "*remember the Sabbath-day,*" to sanctify it, or to do no murder; and no plea of unfitness for the service can justify us in neglecting an ordinance which Christ, in the most affecting circumstances, appointed, and which is designed to subserve the most important and valuable purposes. If we are reluctant to make so public and explicit a profession as attendance upon this institution implies, we should remember that the very name of Christians which we bear, and attendance upon other ordinances of the Sanctuary, involve the same profession. If we are unfit to approach the Lord's table, we are unfit to live; we are unprepared to die. Living in unbelief and disobedience, we are under the wrath of God, and we are wholly unprepared to meet the Lord at his coming, to death and to judgment. Besides, we can perform no other religious duty aright, without the dispositions of heart that are required as qualifications for partaking of the Lord's Supper. We cannot pray, or hear the word, or do any work of acceptable obedience without faith, and penitence, and love. To be half-religious is to be irreligious. We cannot "*halt between two opinions,*" or "*serve two masters;*" and the notion, which we fear is extensively prevalent among the baptized youth of the church, and with the mass of Christian professors, that we can possess Christian character and be safe, while the whole heart is not given to God, or that we may observe some religious institutions which are more common, and neglect others, because they are peculiarly solemn, is a fearful and fatal delusion. The truth is, that all the pleas that are advanced to excuse professing Christ from commemorating his death are futile and invalid. They pro-

ceed from the love of sin, and opposition of heart to submit to the authority of Christ, and secret dislike to his image. Those who make these, while they profess concern for preparation, and dread of coming unprepared, not unfrequently discover their dislike to vital piety, by living from year to year in the same neglect, showing no anxiety to possess the qualifications which they reckon so important, and sometimes abandoning, one after the other, the different parts of a religious profession. Their immediate duty is to repent and believe the Gospel. Without this, they are under God's wrath and curse, and are far from safety. But coming to Christ, as "weary and heavy-laden" sinners, and inclining their neck to the yoke of holy obedience, they will obtain all needful preparation for solemn duties. At the Lord's table, they will find acceptance; and nourished and strengthened by partaking in the feast of love, they will go on their way rejoicing. The declaration of the Prophet, concerning reverential attendance upon the institutions of God's worship, and about doing his will, is emphatically true of this ordinance. "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." *

Such being the nature and design of the Lord's Supper, and such the obligations to observe it, need we employ arguments to induce the baptized youth of the church to ratify their profession by an early attendance upon this holy institution? When the nature of the ordinance is understood, and opportunity of access to it is enjoyed, neglect of it must be viewed as a refusal to confess Christ before men, and as indicating disrelish and dislike to the blessed provision which the ordinance is appointed to be the means of communicating. Would you not be found

* Isaiah xl. 31.

chargeable with such a heinous offence? It will be your interest and privilege to avouch your baptismal covenant, by coming early to the Lord's table. In the purest and best days of the Church of Scotland, it was usual for the youth of the church, to make a profession of religion, by publicly entering the fellowship of the church, and partaking of the Lord's Supper, at the age of *twelve* or *thirteen* years. manifold advantages would still accrue to the youth of the church, if they were prepared, at a like early period, thus to make a profession. The preparation required may be obtained by that time, equally as at a more advanced period of life; and there are various important advantages in seeking it, before youthful passions come into full exercise, and ere the young engage in the active business of life. The solemn views entertained in connexion with the Sacramental vow, the preparation essayed in self-examination, repentance, faith, meditation, and prayer, and the dedication implied in the service, are singularly useful to the young in the morning of life; while the spiritual benefits that are guaranteed to faithful communicants, serve the most valuable purposes, in guarding them against numerous evils with which they are surrounded, and in preparing them for a career of future usefulness.* Let the young, therefore, seek early to enrol themselves among the Sacramental host. Let them esteem it their highest honour to ratify at the Lord's table their profession of allegiance to Christ, and their fellowship with his people. All requisite qualifications are promised to those who are duly impressed with a sense of their importance, and who are in earnest in seeking them. There is something

* It is related in the Memoirs of Frazer of Brae,—the most exact and Scriptural analysis of spiritual frames and exercises in our language,—that he was first awakened to a serious sense of his need of personal holiness, by his proposal, when very young, to observe the Lord's Supper.

peculiarly lovely in the young coming forward publicly to enlist under the standard of the Captain of salvation. Proportioned to the sincerity of youthful dedication are the privileges which their exalted Leader confers upon them. He accepts of the kindness of their youth, and remembers with deepest interest the love of the espousals. He brings them into the banqueting-house—the place of his gracious presence, the scene of special Divine manifestations; and as they enjoy spiritual communion with him, and in all their future services, and conflicts, and trials, “his banner over them is love.” The youth of the church are affectionately invited, and urged, from these considerations, to seek early this noble distinction. Yielding themselves to the Lord, and taking hold of his covenant, they will reap the benefits of decision in religion. They will experience the heart-satisfying pleasures of true devotedness; and future blessings will crown their lot, and attest, that in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward—“Them that honour me, will I honour; but they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.”

CHAPTER IV.

CHARACTER BEFITTING THOSE WHO HAVE MADE A PROFESSION OF RELIGION, AND WHO HAVE BEEN AT THE LORD'S TABLE.

That they who have named the name of Christ should "depart from iniquity," is the dictate of enlightened conscience, as well as of Divine revelation. A vow solemnly made to God in espousing a Christian profession, and in coming to the Sacramental feast, ought to be fully paid; and sincerity in religion, demands that we should not "defer" to pay it, and that the whole life should be consistent with the principles professed, and with the act of dedication that has been voluntarily made. Christians are called to the fellowship of the gospel, that they may "shine as lights in the world." The disciples of Christ are under the most weighty obligations to exemplify the spirit and character of their blessed Lord; and when brought to the light of salvation, they are called "to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."

The young who have confessed Christ before men, and have sealed their profession by partaking of the Lord's Supper, need counsel with respect to their future conduct, for they are beset with numerous difficulties and dangers. If faithful to the blessed Master in whose service they have enlisted, they have, moreover, important duties to perform; and upon the character by which they are distinguished, and the spirit and deportment which they exhibit, interests of great magnitude are suspended. Much, very much, will depend upon the young being thoroughly aware of the obligations arising from a public profession, and from sacramental privileges, and upon the course which they adopt after they have been admitted to

holy ordinances. The great enemy frequently makes his fiercest assaults upon Zion's travellers, as they descend from the mount of special privileges. If he succeeds in leading young professors to rest satisfied with past attainments, or to forget speedily solemn impressions and vows, or to become formal and neglectful of important duties, like too many who wear the Christian name, then the melancholy result may be easily predicted. The life will be unprofitable. The person may become a backslider or an apostate, and the termination may be confirmed impenitency, hardened infidelity, and deplorable self-deception. On the other hand, if the young, at this period, are rightly impressed, and adopt the course to which their profession and vows point them, they shall themselves realize many blessings; and their conduct and example will be the means of conferring numerous invaluable benefits upon others. Lengthened and somewhat extended observation has confirmed us in the opinion, that the period immediately after making a public profession of religion and partaking of sealing ordinances, is one of peculiar temptation, and that, according to the views then entertained, and the course pursued, the person will either degenerate and bring reproach on religion, or advance in the Divine life, and become an instrument of blessing to the church and the world. With such an impression, we would affectionately and earnestly warn the youthful professor against dangers to which he is exposed, and point out to him the way of peace and happiness. Our desire is to conduct him to a Guide who is perfectly acquainted with the way, a Leader who never deceives, a Guardian who is almighty to protect, a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. May He direct to suitable counsels, and may our young readers hear and obey the word of the faithful Shepherd!

SECTION I.—*Evils to be shunned—Views to be entertained.*

There are numerous evils which beset the Christian's steps at every stage of his progress towards the heavenly country. Hence his path is likened to a *pilgrimage*, and his course is said to be through the wilderness. His work on earth is termed *a race, a warfare*; and he is admonished that he must run that he may obtain, that he must fight, if he would grasp the palm of victory, and that it is incumbent on him at all times, "forgetting the things that are behind, to press to the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ." Without a proper estimate of the dangers and difficulties of the journey, none will prosecute it aright. Insensible to the peculiar evils to which they are exposed, the young cannot be expected to encounter them with resolution and fortitude, and defeat and ruin will be the baleful consequences.

Without adverting to other evils which assail the young at other periods, some of which have already been mentioned, we notice *the loss of serious impressions,—forgetfulness or neglect of solemn vows,—indecision in religion,—conformity to the world,—and backsliding*, as dangers to which youthful professors are peculiarly exposed; as evils of grievous magnitude, by which thousands have been overwhelmed, and involved in irremediable and hopeless ruin.

DECAY OF SERIOUS IMPRESSIONS.

Even those who have enjoyed distinguishing privileges, are very prone to lose speedily solemn impressions, and to forget the vows that were uttered in the most affecting circumstances, and with apparent sincerity. Of this we have frequent mention in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament. God often complains of this in the

people of Israel; and their whole history furnishes many affecting and melancholy instances of their forgetfulness of God, and their constant tendency to relapse into apathy, indolence, and rebellion. After the most signal deliverances, when they had witnessed the most astonishing manifestations of the Divine hand, and had come under the most explicit and solemn engagements, they turned back as a bow that shoots deceitfully, their vows were neglected, they tempted God; and distrust, ingratitude, and disobedience characterize them. The instance so well selected by Saurin, may be quoted, as illustrative of what frequently occurred in all periods of the history of the Jewish people.

“The church hath seldom seen happier days than those described in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus. God had never diffused his benediction on a people in richer abundance. Never had a people expressed gratitude more lively, piety more fervent. The Red Sea had been passed; Pharoah and his insolent court were buried in the waves; access to the land of promise was opened; Moses had been admitted to the holy mountain to derive felicity from God—the source, and sent to distribute it amongst his countrymen: to these choice favours, promises of new and greater blessings yet were added; and God said, ‘Ye have seen what I have done unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, although all the earth be mine.’ The people were deeply affected with this collection of miracles. Each individual entered into the same views, and seemed animated with the same passion; all hearts were united, and one voice expressed the sense of all the tribes of Israel; “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do!” But this devotion had one great defect—

it lasted only forty days. In forty days, the deliverances out of Egypt, the catastrophe of Pharaoh, the passage of the Red Sea, the articles of the covenant; in forty days, promises, vows, oaths, all were effaced from the heart, and forgotten. Moses was absent, the lightning did not glitter, the thunder-claps did not roar, and the Jews made a calf in Horeb, worshipped that molten image, and changed their glorious God into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass."

That such conduct was very displeasing to God, and injurious to the Israelites themselves, the sacred writers frequently declare. "They have well said all that they have spoken. Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever." "They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt." "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." * This, indeed, was the great reason why severe judgments were frequently sent to punish Israel's waywardness and rebellion. For this they were sold into the hand of various powerful oppressors, and the glory departed.

Nor should it be believed that such conduct was only exemplified during an imperfect and comparatively dark dispensation. The disciples of Christ, even while their Lord was with them on earth, forgot his miracles, distrusted his power, and acted unworthily of their profession and privileges. The same night witnessed the solemn profession of the ardent apostle, "*Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee,*" and his deplorable fall. We have, alas! too many examples of the transient nature of religious impressions among professors in our own day.

* Deuteronomy v. 29. Psalm cvi. 21. Hosea vi. 4.

They are betimes greatly affected; they have joys or sorrows on religious subjects very deep and absorbing. In their own apprehension, they have obtained entirely new views and feelings, and under such impressions, they form resolutions, from which they think it impossible that they should ever recede. They come to the Lord's table, and they give themselves to the Lord, with much apparent earnestness and cordiality; and, for the time, they imagine that henceforth they shall never go back. How lamentable is it, that such impressions speedily prove themselves to be transient, like "the morning cloud, and the early dew that passeth away!" The Lord's affecting complaint, about his ancient people, is too truly applicable to many young professors in our day, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."* The kindness of youth is speedily forgotten; the love of espousals has waned, and difficulties in following religion are magnified; while ease is courted, pleasure pursued, or lukewarmness and formality reign in the heart. Against such a case, we would affectionately and solemnly warn youthful professors. The decay of religious impressions either springs from an unrenewed heart, or indicates a yielding to an insidious and powerful temptation. The seed sown upon "stony ground," sprung up rapidly, but, having no root, it "withered away," and brought forth no fruit. To be impressed, for a season, with the terrors of the Lord, and not subdued; to have fears awakened that do not conduct to the gospel refuge, and that promote not sanctification, and to be affected with the manifestations of Divine love, and not experience its constraining and transforming power is fearfully dangerous. Impressions that result in no permanent salutary effects tend

* Jeremiah ii. 2.

to harden. The person who has been the subject of them, becomes callous and insensible, and is not unfrequently given over to the spirit of spiritual slumber and indifference. Transient devotions and vows neglected serve to strengthen the unbelief of the heart; they tend to confirm others in their neglect of religion, and in formality; and, in some instances, they have been known to land individuals in the gulph of despair. Few states are, indeed, more to be dreaded in the early stages of a religious profession. As among men, if, after warm professions of friendship, we treat a person with neglect, or unkindness, or insult, we are prone to shun his company, and to think he will not forgive us; so when religious impressions are not retained in their vigour, and vows to God are violated, we are tempted to become aliens from God, or to despair of pardoning mercy. In both cases, the effects are most disastrous. To this may be traced so much unfruitfulness among professors; and hence flows, too, what is frequently to be observed and lamented in the church—the want of consistency and steady progress among the members of the church. The effect upon others is most injurious. It is like the Israelitish spies, bringing up an evil report of the promised land. Many are discouraged; some are led to entertain prejudices against religion, and are confirmed in ungodliness. Such a case is, besides, utterly incompatible with the possession of true religious comfort; progress in the divine life cannot be made, while solemn impressions are not retained, and the assured hope of salvation can never be reached.

In view of such dangers, young professors are earnestly entreated to watch and pray against declension of first love, and against forgetfulness of vows. Let them fear lest they thus fall into the snare of the destroyer. Examine anew and carefully, after making a profession and enjoying sealing ordinances, the state and frame of the heart, and the motives that

actuate the conduct. Consider seriously the position that has been assumed, its solemn responsibilities, and the high and important duties to which it imperatively calls. Spread out before the Lord the vows that have been made, and enter at once upon paying them. Take anew "the cup of salvation," and call upon God; and receiving grace from Him who is always able and willing to confer it, enter with alacrity upon a course of new obedience, and prosecute it with vigour. Beware of harbouring, however secretly, any besetting sin, and guard with holy watchful jealousy against the first appearance of decayed love. Much fervent prayer is needful to preserve you from the wiles of the adversary, and to draw down into your souls quickening influence from on high. Ask that gracious Spirit who alone can sanctify, and who will preserve you from falling. It was faith, one of the principal graces, that made all right impressions at first, and that excited to proper vows; and this holy principle renewed and strengthened, can uphold and settle you. You should look habitually to Jesus, "the Author and Finisher of faith." Frequently should you importune Him as did the disciples, "*Lord, increase our faith.*" Thus will you vanquish the temptation to become cold and negligent; you will be preserved from declension; having made vows, you will be enabled each day to perform them, and you will be made "steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord."

INDECISION IN RELIGION—CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

Again, *Indecision in religion, and conformity to the world*, are evils that have a fatal and extensive influence upon many who have made a religious profession. They are convinced in their hearts that Christ and his service should be to them "all and in all," and that they should be wholly the Lord's. Their

purpose at all times has been, whatever others do, they will serve the Lord; and persuaded that religion must either be every thing or that it is nothing, they have resolved to discard low aims, and worldly considerations, and henceforth to live not to themselves, but to Christ, as their glorious and only Master. Alas! that such resolutions should be so evanescent. Descending from the mount of privilege to the world, they breathe its infected atmosphere, the hand becomes palsied, and purposes of good are left unexecuted. Overlooking the paramount claims of religion, they become conformed to the world; and, like many nominal professors, they hesitate when they should act with decision, they make excuses when none are admissible, they are satisfied with a low standard of religious practice, and refuse to come up to the full measure of Christian character and obedience. Such persons, like Israel in Elijah's days, "halt between two opinions," or like Agrippa, who notwithstanding his candour and uprightness as a judge, and his convictions from the Apostle's reasoning, remained in unbelief—"they are *almost* persuaded to be Christians."

Such a state of mind arises from a variety of causes. Some have no just ideas of the importance of Divine things, and never seriously consider the consequences of their conduct in regard to religion. Others are under the dominion of some besetting sin. Some dread the ridicule and reproach of singularity and decision in religion; with many there is a continual looking to the example or approbation of others, rather than the diligent study of the requirements and model presented in the Sacred Scriptures. "They love the praise of men more than the praise of God." They are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." The fruits of such indecision and worldly conformity are evil, and most pernicious. The Saviour has, in the fullest terms, inculcated upon all his disciples, full decision, and entire devotedness, and

has appended to his commands on this article, the most solemn sanctions, "Choose ye whom ye will serve." "Ye cannot serve two masters." "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."* The most attractive examples likewise are held forth in the Bible, of those who rose above the common standard of their age, and were decided on the Lord's side. Caleb "followed the Lord fully," and God owned him as his servant, and gave to him and his posterity the land in inheritance. Joshua, when in old age, declared, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Elijah was faithful amidst a nation's apostacy, and the Lord honoured his decision before his enemies, and crowned him with a glorious reward. Why should we extend the enumeration? This has been the way of all God's approved servants. They have aimed to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. Solemn resolutions, formed in Divine strength, they have endeavoured at once to carry into accomplishment; and dreading the danger of irresolution, and worldly conformity, they have "pressed forward to the mark of the prize of their high calling," and have laid hold on eternal life.

Thus, too, must you act, if you would enjoy the light of God's countenance, and follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. The evils of indecision you should seriously consider. At once unreasonable and contemptible, it is palpably opposed to the whole portraiture of the Christian life, exhibited in the word, and it is uncomfortable and dangerous. The business of religion is, in the fullest sense, a "*reasonable service*;" and to withhold from it the entire consecration of the heart and life

* Mark viii. 38.

is irrational, as it is wicked. Interests of the highest moment are suspended upon the choice made, and the conduct pursued. Life and death, blessing and a curse are proposed, and the person is indispensably required to choose and act. Indecision and neutrality are not *negative* states merely. In the estimate of Him with whom we have to do, they are tantamount to a complete rejection of his service, and the denial of his name. "He that is not with me, is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." In matters of great moment, to be irresolute and undecided indicates mental imbecility, and is pitiable as well as unreasonable. Success in the pursuit of any object may never be expected in this way. The curse of Reuben is upon the wavering and undecided—"unstable as water thou shalt not excel." This state is, moreover, inconsistent with real peace and assured comfort. Fluctuating between conviction and irresolution, wavering amidst unexecuted purposes, the individual if not utterly callous, must at times endure mental torture, and conscience will inflict its direst stings. A condition of this kind, how undesirable for life, how dangerous and miserable to meet death, and to enter eternity in! Of some the poet's declaration is sadly true,

"They resolve, and re-resolve, and die the same."

From such a state of mind, let it be your study to be completely freed. Shun, as most dangerous, all that irresolution in purpose, and wavering and indecision in conduct, which characterize so many in the things of religion. Having made your choice, and adopted your course, follow it resolutely, steadily, constantly. "*Onward and upward*" must always be the motto of the Christian course. "So run that ye may obtain," is the command laid upon him at all times, absolutely precluding all indecision, and call-

ing to sustained exertion. May your whole conduct testify that you have fully felt its obligation! May you hearken, believe, and obey; and may yours be the comfort and happiness of those who yield themselves to the Lord; and who press to the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!

BACKSLIDING.

Lastly, you should guard against all *Backsliding*, as an evil very common, heinous in its nature, and of most pernicious tendency. This evil is insidious, and assumes many deceitful forms; but, in all cases, it is directly opposed to all proper profession of religion, and the consequences to which it leads are disastrous. There is backsliding in heart when the person hankers after forbidden enjoyments, or after objects which he professed to forsake for ever; when purposes solemnly formed are forgotten; and when fervent desires become languid and cold, and religious duties are either neglected, or performed without any proper devotional spirit. In all such cases, "the plague is begun," and nothing but wakeful vigilance, solemn consideration, and a hearty return to the Lord will prevent its destructive progress. It has been properly said, that backsliding begins at the heart, and in the closet; and secret backsliding, when indulged in, most generally manifests itself in open apostacy. A lively devotional frame is exchanged for a worldly, lukewarm spirit; private prayer is occasionally neglected, or observed in a formal, lifeless manner, and the individual becomes tired of other parts of a religious service, and invents plausible excuses for neglecting them. By and by, he leaves off to do good—not unfrequently lays aside the mask of a profession, which at best was worn only to deceive, and sometimes sits down in the chair of the scorner. It is unnecessary to depict the complicated evils of such a course, or the dreadful final condition

of the backslider. Suffice it to say, that the decisive testimony of the Spirit of truth is, "*The backslider in heart shall be filled with his ways.*"* Backsliding in heart goes out into apostacy in conduct, and the backslider eats the fruit of his doings in judgments that overtake him here and hereafter. Watch, then, with the utmost vigilance against the beginnings of this evil. Be in dread when the edge of religious duties is, in the least degree, blunted; when the affections to spiritual things become cold or lukewarm; and when any part of the business of religion is felt to be irksome or wearisome. The least approach to such a state is dangerous, and the most fearful warnings are presented in the word to guard the entrance of the backslider. "If any man draw back unto perdition," says God, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." All drawing back—all receding from a profession and from solemn vows, incurs the risk of perdition. It is a step in a downward descent; and if persevered in, return becomes more and more difficult, and God is provoked to give over the person to perpetual backsliding. Against an evil of such magnitude, let the youthful professor watch and pray continually. His only way of safety is to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, to dread the least appearance of evil, to practise frequently a diligent self-scrutiny, and to guard against whatever would withdraw the heart from God, or from the spirituality of religious duties. It has been well said that, in the Christian warfare, "no armour is provided for the back; and he that would enjoy the conqueror's crown, and wave at last the victor's palm, must habitually remember that there is no discharge in that war, and that the least inaction or neutrality, if it does not forfeit the victory, will give an advantage to the enemy, which he will not be

* Proverbs xiv. 14.

slow to improve, to the injury and disgrace of the soldier of the cross.”

Other evils incident to youth—those to which they are exposed from inexperience, and from peculiar temptations—will be avoided by a habit of continued watchfulness and prayer; and above all, by adhering closely to the Captain of salvation, and by depending on him entirely for grace sufficient. “Without me,” says the Saviour, “ye can do nothing.” Without his blessing, you are, and must be miserable; without his gracious protection you cannot enjoy a moment’s safety. If, on the other hand, you seek his face continually, and rely upon his protection and guidance, He will be your shield against all dangers. He will unstring the numerous evils which you may have to encounter, and render you at length victorious over them all. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who leads and feeds his people all their life—the Angel who redeems them from all evil. Depending on his promise and grace, and living near him, you will be enabled to say, as the venerable apostle of the Gentiles, when he was a confessor and suffering witness for the truth, “*Nevertheless, the Lord stood by me, and delivered me;*” and anticipating with joyful confidence the future, you will declare, “*Yea, and he will deliver me, and preserve me to his everlasting kingdom.*”

SECTION II.—*The pursuit of Religion, the grand business of life.*

When our blessed Saviour warns his disciples against undue anxiety about the things of the present life, He gives this plain and comprehensive direction. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* Without adverting to other matters that

* Matthew vi. 33.

are included in this beautiful precept, it evidently implies that religion is to be regarded as the principal business of human life. It enjoins those to whom it is addressed, to choose heaven as their end, and holiness as their way. This they are to prefer to all other objects and interests. Here they are deliberately to place their chief felicity, and to seek it by the most careful concern and earnest endeavour. This they are emphatically enjoined to "seek first." It must be esteemed as the first and best object, in itself all valuable and excellent, and apart from which nothing is desirable. The care for God's honour and the soul's salvation must take place of all other cares, to it all the concerns of this life are to be subordinated. The interests of the Saviour's glory are to be sought more than our own things. They are to have the preference to all that ever comes in competition with them; and all else is to be cheerfully sacrificed to secure their possession. The kingdom of God, and his righteousness, are to be sought with the prime affections and desires of the heart. The morning of youth should be dedicated to their pursuit; and these substantial and blessed realities ought to enlist the first thoughts and activities of every period of life; and their attainment should be the chief element in every plan of conduct, in all that engages the attention or calls forth exertion. The gracious and ample assurance offered for outward provision stands in this connexion alone. All things needful for the body, all that pertains to a comfortable blessed lot in life, "shall be added" to those who walk in the way of holy obedience. Nothing is promised to any human being out of this order. But in choosing and following it, there is the securest guarantee that "bread shall be given and water made sure;" that "what is good the Lord will give," and that nothing really good shall be withholden.

This important precept speaks with peculiar sig-

nificancy and application to the baptized youth of the church, and especially to such as have made a visible profession of religion, and have partaken of the Lord's supper. If conduct has any meaning, they have declared that religion is to them all; that they prefer the service of Christ to that of every other master, and that in it they seek all their honour and happiness. The remembrance of their own voluntary profession, demands that they seek first, and with all diligence and constancy, the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Moreover, the young naturally have their thoughts and anxieties exercised betimes about the things of this present life. The youthful mind is forecasting of the future. Provision for the body, the relations to be formed in life, and the pleasures desired or expected, engage their thoughts or excite their imagination. Hope clothes the scene with its pleasing illusions, or clouds damp their ardour, and lead to despondency. The precept to which we have referred supplies an effectual antidote to vain hopes on the one hand, and to undue depression on the other. The ascended Redeemer, who is "Heir of all things," has infallibly assured us, that in making religion the grand pursuit, there shall be no want of outward provision. Seeking spiritual blessings, we shall find them; and "over and above," there shall be given food and raiment, comfortable relations, a sanctified lot, and many sources of outward enjoyment and satisfaction.

In urging the young to make religion the principal business of life, it is not necessary, in this place, to define wherein true religion consists, or to describe its nature. Those whom we address are supposed to have acquired some knowledge on the subject. They are acquainted with religion as implying the obligation of the soul and of the whole man to God, a right disposition of heart towards the object of worship, and the manifestation of this disposition in acts

of spiritual devotion, and in the universal obedience of the life. And they have been taught that such a spirit and conduct can only be produced by the operation of the Spirit of God; that it results from the great internal change which He alone can effect. It is possible, however, to admit these truths, and to have correct speculative views concerning the nature of true religion; and even to make a strict religious profession, and yet be far from recognizing religion as the great concern of life. Some through utter thoughtlessness, others from loose sentiments; some from aversion of heart; and numbers from following the multitude, shift aside the claims of religion, or yield to them but an occasional or passing tribute of respect; while other matters chiefly occupy their thoughts, and command their attention. With many professors, religion is a business to be entirely separated from the ordinary pursuits of life. It is to be attended to on the Sabbath, or is the work of the public assembly; it may occupy shreds of time, after the concerns of the world have engrossed the principal part of every day; and it is suitable for seasons of disappointment, and affliction, and death, when submission to calamity, and the thought of the soul, and of God, and eternity, appear to be inevitable. It need not surely be declared how erroneous are such views, or how unreasonable and infatuated is such conduct. Religion, if it is any thing, must be every thing. It must mingle in all our concerns, and control and direct all our pursuits, else we are still in rebellion against its authority, and can know none of its rich consolations, and heavenly hopes. We must *strive* to enter in at "the strait gate," and to walk in "the narrow way," if we would enjoy eternal life. *Pressing into the kingdom* is the irreversible law of its possession. It is the greatest folly to think that this striving and pressing is an exercise only for some rare or great occasions. It is

designed to be the business of every day and hour of life. All other affairs must be postponed to it; or, to speak more properly, every other engagement must be brought to subserve this grand and momentous pursuit.

To be thoughtless on this subject is not to be ascribed to the mere levity of youth. It is the saddest moral infatuation. What! to think little on matters that concern your present existence, preservation, and happiness; that concern God's character, claims, and glory—the soul's eternal destinies—and that are indispensable to the performance of all duties that relate to God and man. This is to degrade the moral and intellectual nature, and instead of acting like a rational and accountable being, it is to sink down to the level of the beasts that perish. Aversion to religion, however secret, and perverted sentiments in relation to it, cannot excuse or palliate the fault. On the contrary, it greatly aggravates it. "They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be made manifest."* Dislike to the claims of religion, or to any of its duties, evidences a corrupt and perverted state of the moral nature. It is aversion to all that is lovely and excellent; it is rebellion against Him whose authority over us is sovereign and irresistible, and upon whom we are absolutely, and at every moment, dependent. Wrong sentiments, and foolish notions in religion, proceed from "an evil heart of unbelief," that leads to departure from the living God. These aggravate the sin of neglecting religion now, and it should always be borne in mind, that hereafter you will be judged, not by what you have thought or believed, but by what God has plainly declared. "His word is for ever settled in the heavens." The concurrent testimony

* John iii. 19, 20.

of every part of Divine revelation is, that “to fear God and to keep his commandments, is the whole duty,” work, and interest “of man;” and all principles and conduct that are opposed to this, must be regarded as direct hostility to the truth, power, and authority of God, excluding from his favour, and consigning over to the woes of a ruined eternity. May we not conclude, then, in the language of an eloquent writer:—

“Religion is not a subject to be trifled with; it is not a subject to be rejected with aversion or dislike. It comes to you as a message from heaven; it comes to make you holy and happy; to raise you into a resemblance to your Creator, and meetness for his presence; and it is your highest interest, as it is your most important duty, to welcome this religion to your bosom, as the sweetest solace of life, and the richest inheritance of the soul.”*

To neglect religion, or to yield to it only an occasional and divided homage, because this is the way of multitudes, or because its power is so little manifested in the lives of professors, is a grievous mistake, and a fatal temptation. We must not go with a multitude to do evil; and it is an evil of the worst kind to follow the example of the irreligious, or the lukewarm or hypocritical, in opposition to the plain and pointed requirements of the inspired Word. Religion is no vain thing, even though its professed friends neglect it, or prefer other things in its stead. You must be content to be singular, and to separate, even from the dearest friends, if their example would tempt you to undervalue its claims. In the appropriate language of the writer we have just quoted,

“Religion, in its truth and importance, is not affected in the least, either by the neglect of the worldly, or the sins of the hypocritical, or the imper-

*Hawies's Lectures to Young Men on the Formation of Character, Lect. V. p. 57.—Glasgow Edition.

fections of the pious. It stands as clear from all connexion with these, as ‘the spirit that pervades all things is pure from matter and from sin.’ It is not the less worthy of your reception, nor the less imperious in its claims, because many around you neglect it, and others who profess it, appear to be destitute of its spirit and power. The simple question is, ‘Is religion a reality; is it founded in truth; does God require me to love and serve him; does He command to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and has He suspended the salvation of my soul in obedience to this command? If this be admitted, it is nothing to me, if all the world neglect religion. This is a personal concern. It has nothing to do either with the impenitence of those who are out of the church, or the hypocrisy of those who are in it. *They* are to give account unto God, each one for himself. And so are we. On the great day of the Lord, it will not save *you*, nor *me*, that others neglected religion. Each will stand or fall by himself, and each receive, in his own person, the joyous or dread reward of eternal life, or eternal death.”*

Having thus shown you the folly and wickedness of neglecting religion, or of giving to its duties a secondary attention, we will not wait to show that to make religion a paramount concern is imperatively enjoined; that this, in the fullest sense, is your reasonable service, and that it is conducive to your true dignity and happiness. Of all this, the reader of the Scriptures must be persuaded, whether he follows the course which his convictions point out or not; and of those who make a public profession, and ratify it by the sacramental vow, there are few, it is likely, who have not, at least, *temporary convictions* of this kind. Aware of your temptations and dangers, notwithstanding, to make religion as others do, a

*Haweis’s Lectures.—p. 53.

matter of inferior moment, we venture to offer you, briefly, *Three Counsels*.

First, *Learn habitually to regard God's glory and your soul's salvation as a subject of supreme importance.* This you must regard as your chief end. Labour to secure it, whatever else you neglect or pursue after. This should occupy the uppermost place in your thoughts, and affections, and plans, and be the principal business of every day. For this you should live, as to secure these high ends you should be willing to die. Your baptism, your profession, your voluntary vows, all bind you to make this your grand business. You should always hold yourselves prepared to do God's work, whatever else may be left undone; and to all solicitations from within or without, to relax your exertions, or turn aside, you must resolutely oppose the purpose of good Nehemiah, "*I am engaged in a great work, and I cannot come down.*" Remember, to you this is "one thing needful," the great subject of overwhelming and everlasting moment. Let your whole spirit and conduct bear testimony that you so esteem it; and you will thus walk worthy of your high vocation, overcome powerful temptations, and lay hold on eternal life.

Secondly, *Let true religion have a commanding influence upon all your other engagements and employments.* To the Christian, "every thing is sanctified by the word and by prayer." The proper office of religion is to renew and elevate the moral nature, to furnish new and pure motives for every part of the conduct, to control and direct the whole man, and to reduce all into subjection to the obedience of Christ. No mistake can be greater or more fatal than that of confining its dominion or influence to particular times—of shutting it up to the sanctuary, or the Sabbath, and of excluding it from the daily pursuits and enjoyments of life. Beware of this very common and very dangerous temptation. Take true religion with

you into all your affairs. Act in every thing on religious principles and motives; and while you study to subordinate all to your grand pursuit, conduct yourself, in matters of inferior moment, as under the All-seeing Eye, and as one that must give account. The walk of faith, from which the Christian is never at liberty for a moment to deviate, is in every thing that calls forth the energies of mind or body. "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Common actions will thus be elevated and ennobled; and from the fountain healed, life-giving and refreshing streams will flow forth to purify the whole conduct, and to diffuse health and fertility around. Relative duties will be faithfully performed, from a principle of love to God, and from a spirit of universal benevolence. So will you keep a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man; and religion will appear in its beautiful and attractive aspect—the child of God, the friend of man, and the guide to all real and substantial happiness here and hereafter.

Lastly, *Religion, you must always recollect, as it merits the highest regard, so it claims your immediate attention.* All delay is dangerous, and, in many cases, it is ruinous. God's time is the present. "*To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.*" All deferring the concerns of God's glory, and of the soul's salvation, has a hardening tendency. It multiplies obstacles to a future return to God; renders more hopeless the attainment of the joys of salvation; and casts a deeper gloom over the prospects for eternity. Aim, then, to be *just now* what God requires—what his unerring word represents as essential to acceptable obedience and happiness. Study to reach fully a high standard of moral excellence; and lay yourselves out thoroughly to do the work of God with all your might. To you the present is emphatically "*the accepted time, and the day of salvation.*" Means of grace are multiplied, and opportu-

ities of improvement and usefulness for the young are increased, beyond example in any former period. Some of this class, in various places, are presenting shining examples of Christian devotedness. We affectionately urge you now to be decided, to make religion your grand business, and to seek in its cultivation your present and highest enjoyments. Discard at once, and for ever, the deceptive purpose of being more devoted to religion, at some future period, than at present. Venture your all upon Christ and his service—or rather surrender up all to him; for there is no venture, as there can be no loss in his service. Let this principle regulate all your relations, and influence all your conduct—to act in religion this moment, as if the next you were to be called to give in your final account. What your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no thought, or purpose, or device in the grave, whither we hasten. Thus may you receive the exalted approval and commendation of the Best of Masters. “*She hath done what she could.*” From his hand, you will receive the blessing. He will render you a blessing to others; and He will confer on you at last, the glorious reward which true religion always brings—“*a crown of life which fadeth not away.*”

SECTION III.—*The daily prayerful study of the Scriptures.*

It is the distinguished commendation of Timothy—“And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”* This declares an eminent attainment, and, taken in connexion with “the unfeigned faith” of Timothy’s mother and grandmother, and his usefulness and devotedness in the ministry of the gospel, it furnishes a fine illustration of the advantages of parental piety

* 2 Timothy iii. 15.

and early religious instruction, and of their connexion with singular ministerial success. Of the baptized youth of the church, we might naturally expect to hear a similar commendation. Parents are under the most solemn obligations to teach them early the knowledge of Divine things. The sacred oracles are put into their hands; in childhood, they frequently acquire an acquaintance with the contents of the Bible; and previously to their making a profession, they are supposed to have known the leading truths of revelation. These are no mean advantages; and if duly appreciated and improved, they confer benefits which cannot be derived from acquaintance with any other book in the world. The Scriptures are God's word; they reveal his glorious character, and man's condition and destiny; they disclose a wonderful method of setting him free from the curse which his sins have incurred, and of introducing him to happiness here and hereafter. They are able to make him "*wise unto salvation.*" They are the infallible directory of faith and practice. They teach man what he is to believe on all subjects that concern his dearest interests; and they instruct him what to do. The Scriptures supply the food for his soul, the balm of his spirit, and the charter of all his hopes. The Bible well deserves the recommendation which was uttered by the celebrated Locke, shortly before his death—"IT HAS GOD FOR ITS AUTHOR; SALVATION FOR ITS END; AND TRUTH, WITHOUT ANY MIXTURE OF ERROR, FOR ITS MATTER."*

* The well-known lines of Sir Walter Scott, express the manner in which the Bible is ever to be regarded—

"Within that awful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries!
Happiest they of human race,
To whom God has granted grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch and force the way.
And better had they ne'er been born,
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn."

Notwithstanding, however, the excellency of the Scriptures, and the advantages enjoyed by Christian youth, in having them early put into their hands, there is reason to fear that the Bible is comparatively a neglected book, even by many who make a profession of religion. Such is the tendency of our corrupt nature, that the commonness of our blessings frequently lessens, in our minds, a sense of their importance. As the air that we breathe, though indispensable to life, and food and moisture though essential to nourishment, are undervalued while we enjoy them; so the precious word of God, without which the life of the soul cannot be begun or prolonged, is frequently possessed without being studied; its vastly important designs are overlooked; and it is not applied to practical purposes. It is owing, in a great measure, to this neglect, that so little impression of God speaking in his word is felt upon the heart and conscience, by many within the pale of the visible church; that reference to the unalterable rule of duty is so habitually neglected; and that so many Christians make little progress in the divine life, and know little of the strong consolations of true religion. Need we wonder at this, so long as the Bible is neglected—so long as it is not employed for the ends for which its Divine Author communicated it to men? It is the Lamp of life; and if men do not walk by it, they must walk in darkness. It is the food of the heart; and while this heavenly provision is refused, there can be nothing but leanness to the soul. It is the perfect rule of faith and practice, and if conformity to it is not studied, the views will be confused or erroneous, and the conduct irregular and disorderly. And without a firm trust in the sure word of promise, there can be no solid and cheering hope. Like the mariner without a compass, or without a secure anchorage in a storm, the person who does not employ the Scriptures as the pole-star of life, and who has not his hopes

founded on the truth of religion, may expect to be exposed to dangers of every kind, seen and unseen, and is in peril of final destruction.*

I.—*Directions for Studying the Scriptures.*

To escape this ruin—to walk worthy of a Christian profession—to make progress in holiness, and to realize substantial and enduring hopes, one direction is all-important:—

FOLLOW CONSTANTLY THE DAILY PRAYERFUL STUDY OF GOD'S WORD. Without this, you cannot make proficiency in what has been termed "the most excellent of the sciences"—the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and you will not grow in grace. Through habitual converse with the word of God, your views of divine things will become clearer and more fixed; your affections will be raised to things above. You will be led to calm and assured confidence in Him whose glory beams in every page of revelation; and through the work of the blessed Spirit, whose grand instrument is the word, you will advance to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Earnestly desiring that this may be your character and attainment we exhort you—

First, *To cultivate the habit of solemnly reading, every day, a portion of the Holy Scriptures.* Whatever other books you read, let this be the chief. Let it occupy the largest proportion of the time which you devote to reading; and whatever be your engagements, you should redeem time for this purpose. Here you will find heavenly *manna*—the food of the spiritual life—and you should go forth into the field of Holy Scripture, and gather it fresh every morning. The psalmist's account, in the first psalm, of the man

* "I have many books that I can sit down to read; they are indeed good and sound; but, like halfpence, there goes a great quantity to a little amount. There are silver books, and a very few gold books; but I have one book worth them all, called the Bible, and that is a book of bank-notes."—*John Newton.*

who is "perfectly blessed" is, that "his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Perfect felicity is not attainable in any other way. Adopt this course, and, under Divine guidance, you cannot miss it. In this path, the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err. Other books may be read and studied, as illustrating the sacred word, and quickening the desire after it; and they are to be laid aside, when they are in danger of engrossing the attention, or of causing the book of God to be disrelished or neglected. The learned Salmasius said, on his death-bed, "I have lost a world of time: had I to begin life again, I would spend much of my time in reading David's psalms, and Paul's epistles." The excellent Philip Henry presented an example worthy of imitation when he said, "I read other books that I may be the better able to understand the Scriptures." And it is testified of one who was a profound scholar, and the most devoted of modern missionaries—Henry Martyn, "So deep was his veneration for the word of God, that, when a suspicion arose in his mind, that any other book he might be studying, was about to gain an undue influence on his affections he instantly laid it aside, nor would he resume it, till he had felt and realized the paramount excellence of the divine oracles. He could not rest satisfied till all those lesser lights, that were beginning to dazzle him, had disappeared, before the effulgence of the Scriptures."*

These instances, and similar examples have been exhibited by all "the excellent of the earth," who have followed the guidance of the star of revelation to the regions of perfect day, are worthy of your imitation. The word of God is to be taken for constant direction, and used for daily food. In it the Great Prophet is constantly speaking to us on themes the most inter-

* Martyn's Life, p. 59

esting and momentous, and we ought ever to hear and obey him. It has been remarked as a singular proof of divine wisdom and condescension, in giving the Scriptures, that the *size* of the Bible is such as to fit it for universal perusal. While the written laws of so small a spot of the world as England are contained in some *fifty folio volumes*; and few men, even in the course of a lifetime, can hope to be fully acquainted with them; the statute-book of heaven, designed for all nations, and to be of use in all ages, is of such dimensions, that by reading a few chapters daily, it may be read through more than once in the course of a year. God's design in communicating such a revelation of his will to man, was that it should be frequently consulted; and none of the great objects which it is intended to subserve can be gained, without referring to it constantly. It is our highest interest, as well as our imperative duty, to make the word of God our daily companion.*

Secondly, *the Scriptures are not merely to be read—they should be the subjects of study and meditation.* The Saviour's impressive and pointed direction is, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."† The term is borrowed from the practice of *miners*, and implies frequent trial, and diligent and laborious

* Dr. Samuel Johnson gave the following advice to a young man who visited him on his death-bed—"read the Bible every day of your life." M. De Renty, a French nobleman, is said to have cultivated the habit of reading three chapters of the Bible every day with his head uncovered, and on his bended knees. Dr. M'Crie relates of John Knox, the illustrious Scottish Reformer—"it had been his ordinary practice to read every day some chapters of the Old and New Testament; to which he added a certain number of the Psalms of David, the whole of which he perused regularly once a month." M'Crie's *Life of Knox*, p. 338.—Sir Matthew Hale said, that if he did not honour God's word by reading a portion of it every morning, things went not well with him all the day.

† John v. 39.

investigation. It is searching to discover something of great value, the person esteeming all his toil well rewarded if, after much pains, he discovers the precious ore. Such ought to be our study of the holy Scriptures. We should avoid above all things, the desultory, careless reading of God's word. Remembering who is its glorious Author, and for what important purposes it has been given to us; we must aim, in perusing it, to acquire more than notional views, or to deposit it only in the memory. We must search the word as for hid treasure, we must dig deep into the mine of inspired truth. Comparing things spiritual with spiritual, and taking one part of the word as the interpreter of another; and above all, seeking a personal interest and portion in the great things which God has revealed, we shall advance in divine knowledge, and obtain the light which while it enlarges the intellect, sanctifies the heart. The young who have made a profession of religion, should regard themselves as having thereby entered as pupils in Christ's school, and the whole future life should be one of diligent study, and progressive learning. As the excellent Jonathan Edwards resolved, so should they endeavour, to grow sensibly every day in the knowledge of God's will, as revealed in the Scriptures. This study should not be confined to small or favourite portions of the word of God. If we would find the all-enriching treasure, "our research should compass, as far as possible, the whole extent of the mine." The diffusion of important truth over the whole surface of Scripture, instead of systematic arrangement, shows the need of diligent study, as it is best fitted for instruction. The method which God has chosen to communicate his will to men, is calculated to reprove and deter the indolent; it is best fitted to excite to persevering research, and to reward the industrious. Let the young, then, labour to gain a fuller acquaintance with the sacred

oracles, every succeeding day of their lives. While they search after the mind of the Spirit speaking in the word, let them, by reflection and meditation, rest and feed upon the great truths of revelation. The inspired direction to the rulers in Israel* is still applicable to the youth of the church, and is to them of the highest importance. By spiritual meditation, they will secure as their own what they acquire by reading; the food derived from the word will be digested and converted into spiritual nourishment, the heart will be elevated and enlarged with the contemplation of divine mysteries; and the student of the word will assume a higher rank in the scale of rational and immortal beings. As with the Bereans of old, the daily study of the word will supply a patent of true nobility,† as it will inspire the heart with imperishable hopes and blissful prospects. The duties and trials of every day require this habitual study of the word; and the true spiritual enjoyments of the Christian, all flow from the fountain of revelation. The exercise is delightful as it is profitable. God's testimonies are to the believer better than thousands, and great sums of gold and silver. They are more pleasant and refreshing than honey distilling from the rock; and in all his doubts and fears they are his counsellors. The youthful poet, Collins, when in declining health and near the close of his earthly pilgrimage, was found sitting by a flowing brook with his Bible, which he clasped to his bosom and exclaimed, "O this blessed book; but for it I would be miserable, but now I am happy." And an eminent minister of Christ, when anticipating his end, parted from his Bible, styling it, "*the best of all earthly companions.*"

Thirdly, *The reading and study of God's word by the young should be prayerful.* The Spirit alone who

* Joshua i. 8.

† Acts xvii. 11.

inspired Holy Scripture can communicate the saving knowledge of divine truth to the mind, and can, through the word, sanctify the heart. From the Father of lights, descends every good and perfect gift; and He has ordained prayer as the means of conferring it. Besides, the truths of the word become either the means of spiritual benefit to all who read them, or are for their condemnation. They are the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, to as many as receive them. We cannot possibly profit if we do not "mix faith" with the reading or hearing of the word; and this faith is produced solely by the operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart. The discoveries of the word are sublime and wonderful; but they do not enlighten the mind, and make wise unto salvation, except God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* The gospel remains "hid" to the unbelieving, as to "them that are lost," except "the Interpreter, one among a thousand," opens the understanding, and at the same time, unlock the Scriptures. The promises which are "exceeding great and precious," cannot make us "partakers of the divine nature," nor become to us a rich inheritance, till the Spirit apply them, and by them seal us to the day of redemption.

Prayer for divine teaching should always accompany the reading and study of God's word. The most laborious and valuable of modern expositors, speaking of his advancement in the knowledge of the Scriptures, says, "A spirit of continual prayer, mixed with reading, has been my principal help in all these things."† The recommendation of Quesnel to a minister is equally applicable to the youthful professor, "He must learn divine things otherwise than by study.

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† Scott's Life, p. 330.

The unction of the Spirit is a great master in this science, and it is by prayer that we become his scholars. Much prayer and little study advance the work of God, more than abundance of study without prayer.* Let the young remember and practise this maxim. Let them join much fervent prayer with the reading of the word, as they desire to advance the work of God in their souls. When they open the Bible, they should look upward for divine teaching; they should breathe forth fervent ejaculations as they listen to the announcements of God speaking in his word; and when they conclude the exercise, they should implore divine influence to seal instructions upon the heart, to dispose and enable them to obey the word, and to render them wise unto salvation. The course followed by a simple-minded Indian convert should be theirs, "*I open,*" said he, "*my Bible, and God speaks to me: I close my Bible, and I speak to God.*" The direction given by the excellent Willet, a laborious and successful student of the word, is to the same import, "Sometimes speak to God, and sometimes let God speak to thee;" and he professed to his friends how much he himself had thereby improved his talent.† Go, then, frequently with an open bible to the throne of grace. Read and study the Scriptures on your knees. So you will receive divine illumination and comfort. "Through patience and comfort of the Scriptures," you will have hope. In the conduct of life, you will hear a voice behind you, speaking as from the Oracle, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" and you will experience the fulfilment of that most comfortable and comprehensive assurance given to the sons of Zion, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."‡

* Quesnel on John vii. 17.

† Life of Dr. Andrew Willet.

‡ Isaiah liv. 15.

Lastly, the word should be read and studied in the way of *immediate and particular practical application*. "If any man," says the Saviour, "will do the will of God, he will know of the doctrine whether it be of God." We must begin with practice, if we would profit by our researches into the word; we must hear, so as to do; we must learn in order to practise. It has been justly observed, that any truth of the word read or heard, which does not influence the heart and life, is in reality disbelieved. The Great Teacher lays the utmost stress upon this view of the subject. The truths which He reveals are all designed to be practical, to improve the heart, and to constrain the obedience of the life. Mere reading or hearing, without a corresponding practice, cannot profit, and will only evidence that the word has produced no saving effect; and that he to whom it was addressed, is yet an alien from God, and averse in heart to holy obedience.

The Scriptures reveal *principles of action*; and they are never studied aright, if we do not take them as a rule for the daily walk, a standard to regulate our spirit and conduct, and a mould to which the whole frame and habit of the inner and outer man are to be conformed.* The Saviour, well knowing how prone we are to refuse to bow to the authority of the word, or to pay a seeming respect to it while we disregard it in practice, speaks with remarkable plainness on this topic, and gives repeated and solemn warning. "*What do ye more than others?*" is the searching question which he addresses to those who profess his name, and enjoy the revelation of his will. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not those things which I say?"† "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his

* "The eye of the Bible," says Mr. Milner, "like that of a portrait, is uniformly fixed upon us, turn we where we will."

† Luke vi. 46.

will, shall be beaten with many stripes.”* One of the most striking and impressive of our Lord’s parables—that of the two builders, was spoken to illustrate the danger of hearing the word, without doing it, and to show the benefit of associating a right practice with the study of the Scriptures. The “foolish man, who built his house upon the sand,” and who, when trials came, lost the fruit of all his labour, and miserably perished, is he who “hears Christ’s sayings, and does them not.” He, on the other hand, is truly wise, who builds his house on a rock, where it stands secure against the winds and waves of trouble from every quarter, and this is the man “who hears Christ’s sayings and does them.”† One of the most beautiful incidents of our Lord’s ministry gave a tender and affecting confirmation to the same doctrine. While he was preaching the kingdom—and it was intimated that his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak with him, “He stretched forth his hands toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”‡ He thus declared that true discipleship is inseparably connected with believing and obeying, as well as hearing his word; that true disciples are dearer to him than any earthly relations; and that He loves, cherishes, provides for, and has intercourse with them, as he does towards the most endeared relatives.

The grand distinction in characters is made on the same ground by the apostles of the Lamb. The statement of the apostle James is so explicit and comprehensive, that no other need be adduced—James i. 22, 25,—“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto

* Luke xii. 47.

† Matt. vii. 24—28.

‡ Matt. xii. 46—50.

a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straight-way forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Here hearing without doing is declared to be self-deception. It produces transient impressions, and the person remains without any permanent benefit, or becomes hardened to his condemnation. On the contrary, he who diligently considers the word as a law to be obeyed, and a rule to walk by,—“the perfect law of liberty,” is preserved from forgetfulness, and will be blessed in his deed. Walking in the way of obedience, as directed by the word, the works of his hands are acknowledged and blessed; and in keeping God’s commandments, he has a “great reward.” *

II.—*Motives and Encouragements.*

The daily reading of the Scriptures in an attentive, prayerful, and practical manner is recommended to the young, by the most powerful *motives*, and under the highest *encouragements*.

God himself has enjoined it. He has directed us to “search the Scriptures,” as we would value the testimony of Christ, and would inherit eternal life. He commands us to make the constant appeal “to the law and the testimony;” and declares, that “If they speak not according to this word, it is because there

* “That book,” said King Edward VI., “the Bible, in all right, ought to govern us who use the sword for the people’s safety. He who rules without the Bible, is not to be called God’s minister. Under that we ought to live, to fight, to govern the people, and to perform all our affairs. From that alone we obtain all power, virtue, grace, salvation, and whatsoever we have of Divine strength.”

is no light in them.”* Parents are required to have God’s words in their hearts, and are enjoined to speak them to their children when they sit in the house, and walk by the way, when they lie down, and rise up.”† And the “testimony and the law,” which are placed in Israel, are given to be transmitted; and a solemn charge is laid upon the fathers “to make them known to their children,” that “the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born.”‡ These are the dictates of the highest authority; of permanent and universal obligation. The duty enjoined upon parents implies correlative obedience on the part of children. What the former teaches, the latter are to learn. The young are to receive the instructions of wisdom, that they, in their turn, may communicate them to the following generation.

Their own safety and comfort in religion require such a course. The Scriptures are a safe and unerring guide, and the means of all spiritual comfort. Other guides may fail or deceive, but this never can. As He speaks in his word, God causes his people to hear a voice behind them saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it;” and hearing and obeying, they cannot stumble or err. The important inquiry for youth, in the opening of the cxix. Psalm, finds its answer here, “Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Walking by the light of the word, we attain to purity, protection, and peace. In this course, every young person will be able to say from his own experience, “Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer:”§ and solid and lasting comfort are to be enjoyed in the same way. “I have rejoiced in the way of thy tes-

* Isaiah viii. 20. † Deut. vi. 7, 8. ‡ Psalm lxxviii. 5, 6.

§ Psalm xvii. 4.

timonies, as much as in all riches." Thy testimonies also are my delights, and my counsellors." The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."* These declarations of the psalmist accord with the personal experience of all who have made the Bible their daily companion; of all who have come to its prayerful study. The exercise is pleasant and delightful in itself, and is calculated to minister peace and heartfelt satisfaction. In the study of Sacred Scripture we converse with God, and have intercourse with the excellent of the earth. The intellect is expanded by the contemplation of the loftiest and noblest objects, and the heart is purified. We breathe a holy atmosphere, sources of uneasiness and dissatisfaction are removed, and we delight ourselves in an abundance of peace.

Again, *The gracious operations of the Spirit are exclusively conducted through the instrumentality of the word.* The Spirit's work is essential to our enjoyment of every part of the great salvation. He convinces, converts, sanctifies, comforts, and perfects. It is his office savingly to teach, to enlighten, and to lead into all truth. He takes the things of Jesus, and shows them to the mind, and is the Spirit of grace and supplication. In these most important and most needful operations, the Spirit never works without the word. He gives no new revelations. He never travels out of the path of the divine record. His office is to teach and lead, by bringing to remembrance whatever Jesus has spoken in his word. The bright light with which He illumines the mind arises from his opening and applying the Scriptures. The joys that he pours into the heart are the consolations of the word; the petitions which he dictates, when he makes intercession within, are the pleading of the promises which he has inspired; and if He sanctifies

* Psalm cxix. 14, 24, 72.

and transforms, it is by the same instrumentality, and in the fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer, "*Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.*" The knowledge of the Scriptures being thus indispensable to the Spirit's gracious operations, how can we hope to enjoy "the fruits of the Spirit;" how can we walk in the Spirit, if we do not frequently converse with the Bible,—if we read not therein by day, and meditate by night?

All eminent saints and servants of God have, moreover, been distinguished by their delight in God's word, and by their extensive acquaintance with it. They were "mighty in the Scriptures." This was the element which they breathed, the armoury whence they drew all their weapons for conflict, the food that nourished and strengthened them, the fountain out of which they drew forth with joy the waters of salvation. "The word was found, and they did eat it, and it was the joy and rejoicing of their heart."* It was their light and comfort in affliction—the sword of the Spirit in their hand—the matter of their prayers—the theme of their praises, and their staff and stay as they passed through "the valley of the shadow of death." Would you follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises? Make the Bible your constant companion. Study its blessed truths. Search it as for hid treasure. Receive its testimony concerning Christ, and learn to draw from it direction, strength, and everlasting consolation. So will you too experience its strong support in trial; when walking in darkness, the light of the word will shine upon your path, and you will be enabled to add your testimony to the many that have been already given to the Divine faithfulness—that "not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord hath spoken concerning you."†

* Jeremiah xv. 16.

† Joshua xxiii. 14.

And thus, in fine, may be *realized the blessed assurance of hope*. “The things which were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”* Of all solid expectation of future good, the believer can say, “in his word do I hope.”† The divine promise is an “anchor ground,” sure and steadfast. It entereth within the vail, “whither the forerunner is for us entered.” It is “settled fast in the heavens,” and will last for ever. The hopes that are based on any other foundation are illusory, and they make ashamed those who confide in them. Those which are taken from the word applied by the Spirit are sure and stable, as the pillars of the eternal throne. They may always be safely taken as the matter of earnest prayer, and joyful confidence. They are fitted to relieve fears, and to cheer the heart. They irradiate the dark future, yield strong consolation in trouble and sorrow, and bring triumph in death. The Christian’s hopes are no pleasing fancy or vain imagination. They arise from God’s undoubted and unfailing veracity; and like the bow of promise, they shine above dark clouds, and assure of future blessings. Would you feel the weight of these obligations, and possess such eminent advantages? Then you must frequently read the Scriptures—you must prayerfully and diligently study them. You must aim to grow daily in an increasing acquaintance with the word, and to conform your spirit and conduct to this perfect law of liberty. Your guidance, safety, and comfort in life; your advancement in true knowledge, and your usefulness in the world, your hope of future felicity, your preparation for it, and your victory over death; all are so intimately and inseparably connected with a thorough experimental acquaintance with the Scriptures, that

* Romans xv. 4.

† Psalm cxxx. 4.

motives, the most powerful, urge the young to make them their constant companion. With a voice from the excellent glory, God is continually addressing you, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM." Hear Christ, the great Prophet, speaking in his word. Believe, love, obey his voice; and to you, the wonders of the transfiguration scene will be betimes renewed; and in the performance of this great duty, you will enjoy privileges exalted and satisfactory, as they are excellent and lasting.

The directions of the excellent Matthew Henry to young ministers may be suitably given to the youth of the church in general. "Study close, especially make the Bible your study. There is no knowledge which I am more desirous to increase in than that. Men get wisdom by books, but wisdom toward God, is to be gotten out of God's book, and that by *digging*. Most men do but walk over the surface of it, and pick up here and there a flower. Few dig into it. Read over other books, to help you to understand that book. Fetch your prayers and sermons from thence. The volume of inspiration is a full fountain, ever overflowing, and hath always something new."*

We close these counsels, respecting the daily, prayerful study of the Scriptures, with the beautiful observations of the learned and judicious Witsius:—

"The attentive study of the Scriptures has a sort of constraining power. It fills the mind with the most splendid form of heavenly truth, while it teaches with purity, solidity, certainty, and without the least mixture of error. It soothes the mind with an inexpressible sweetness; it satisfies the sacred hunger and thirst for knowledge, with flowing rivers of honey and butter; it penetrates into the innermost heart with irresistible influence; it imprints its own testimony so firmly on the mind, that the believing

* Henry's Life—Williams's Edition, p. 222.

soul rests upon it with the same security as if it had been carried up into the third heavens, and heard it from God's own mouth: it touches all the affections, and breathes the sweetest fragrance of holiness upon the pious reader,—even though he may not perhaps comprehend the full extent of his reading. We can scarcely say how strongly we are opposed to that preposterous method of study—which, alas! too much prevails among many—of forming our views of Divine things from human writings, and afterwards supporting them by Scripture authority—the result either of our own inquiry, or adduced by others too rashly, and without further examination, or bearing upon the subject; when we ought to draw our own views of Divine truths immediately from the Scriptures themselves, and to make no other use of human writings than as indices, marking those places in the chief points in theology, from which we may be instructed in the mind of the Lord.”*

* Witsius' *Miscell. Sacr.* Vol. II.

Lady Jane Grey, the night before she was beheaded, sent a Bible to her sister Catherine, with this encomium written on a blank leaf at the end of it:—“I have here sent you, good sister, a book, which, although it be not outwardly trimmed with gold, yet, inwardly, it is of more worth than precious stones. It is the book, dear sister, of the law of the Lord. It is his testament and last will, which he bequeathed unto us wretches, which shall lead you to the path of eternal joy; and if you, with a good mind, read it, it shall bring you to an immortal life. It shall teach you how to live and how to die. It shall win you more than you should have gained by your father's lands; for, as if God had prospered him, you should have inhabited his lands; so, if you apply diligently to this book, seeking to direct your life after it, you shall be an inheritor of such riches, as neither the covetous shall withdraw from you, neither thief shall steal, nor yet the moths corrupt.”

SECTION IV.—*Redeeming Time.*

Much has been said and written of the value of time, and of the importance of improving it aright; and yet after all, there is perhaps no subject in which the young more require to be instructed and impressed. The period of the continuance on earth of each individual is determined; it is but brief, and on the season of youth, as a preparation for the future, great interests depend. The habit of making the most of present opportunities, and of performing present duty with all diligence, is important to all—to the youthful professor, it is invaluable. Thus alone can he fulfil the sacred obligation into which he has entered, and thus only will he be qualified for the proper discharge of the solemn duties implied in the Christian profession. Time is to be regarded as among the chief of those talents which the Lord has intrusted to us, with the charge, “Occupy till I come.” It is given to be laid out, so as to yield a profitable return; and the loss or improvement of it must to a certainty be accounted for to the Lord at his coming. The Scripture direction is “redeeming the time”^{*}—meaning, to “endeavour to recover, or bring back the time that has been lost, by diligently using what remains, and improving it to the most valuable purposes.” The connection in which this Divine counsel is introduced, is observable and striking. It follows a solemn call to repentance, and a promise of spiritual revival. It is opposed to a careless, inconsiderate course of conduct, which is represented as folly; and it is enjoined as the means of escape from danger, and of security from abounding evils. By redeeming time, we give evidence that we are awaked from the dead, and that Christ has given us life; we walk not as fools; and in evil days, when

^{*} Ephesians v. 16.

exposed to temptation or trial, we enjoy safety and comfort.

It is of vast moment to the young to be made thoroughly alive to the value of time, and to be brought early to redeem it. Without such a sense and habit, they are in danger of misspending and frittering away the season of improvement, of floating loose on society, of spending a life devoid of all profit to themselves or others, and having to lament at length, in unavailing regrets, their thoughtlessness and folly. The due improvement of time, on the other hand, will in itself minister real satisfaction, and its fruits will be salutary and permanent. We may learn to live much in a little time, and by turning to profitable account our days as they pass, we may ourselves grow up to the stature of perfect men in Christ, and may be honoured instruments of advancing the Divine glory, and of benefiting others.

There are many considerations which should urge the youthful professor, when entering upon a course of Christian activity, to commence with cherishing a deep and constant sense of the value of time, and to go forward with the fixed purpose always to redeem it. It is one of the most precious gifts which God confers. He bestows it in a manner different from that in which He dispenses his other benefits; for these are given largely, but this is dealt out by moments, without any assurance of one to succeed another. It is accounted to us as the period to seek salvation, and to prepare for eternity. Our time here is the day of our merciful visitation—the day of work, the space granted us to repent, and to attend to the things that belong to our peace. If the soul's salvation is not secured now, it is lost for ever; and surely this is too momentous a concern to be trifled with. The whole period on earth is not too large to devote to a matter of such transcendent importance; and the least portion of it is too much

to be abstracted from the all-engrossing concern of eternity.

Time past never returns, and mispent time leaves behind grounds of bitter and lasting regret, even when the individual has obtained mercy; and in many instances, it conducts to the fearful doom of "the wicked and slothful servant," who hid his Lord's money in the earth, instead of improving it. When we consider, moreover, how much of our time is necessarily taken up in preparing for the business of life, in sleep and food, how much is taken away by others, how much is already gone, we should feel the unspeakable importance of redeeming what remains. It may be added, that the most eminent persons who have been in the world, have acknowledged the value of improving time, and have been careful to practise it. Our highest and brightest example here, is the perfect model of Him who came down from heaven on a mission of boundless love and mercy to our world. He "went about doing good." He never trifled, or mispent time. It was his meat and drink to do his Father's will, and to finish his work. Declaring his devotedness, He said, "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."* His whole life on earth was the illustration of this determination. When preaching to multitudes, and working miracles of mercy, during the day, He spent whole nights in prayer, or "rose up a great while before day," and retired to pray. In this practical estimate of the value of time, and of the importance of constantly improving it, our blessed Lord has left us "an example that we should follow his steps." All who have imbibed the mind of Christ, and who have walked as he walked, have in practice shown the unspeakable value which they attached to time, and have eu-

* John ix. 4.

deavoured to fill up the period allotted to them, with employments tending to advance the Divine glory, and to benefit mankind. From the period of the Apostle Paul's conversion, how diligent, how unwearied was he in his Master's work! With what true devotedness did he declare his fixed attachment to his service, and his heroic fortitude, when He said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus."* Many other instances of redeeming time occur in the history of eminent servants of God. Luther, when engaged in the most active employments, and in incessant travels and labours, to the astonishment of Europe, produced a translation of the whole Bible, of such a character as to have no equal before its publication, and few superior to it since. A single word explains all. Luther followed a rigid system of doing something at his translation every day. "*Nulla dies,*" says he, "*sine versu,*" and this brought him soon to the conclusion of the whole work. It was by the same regard to the value of time, and by the same steadfast method of redeeming it, that Calvin, when labouring under bodily infirmities, and surrounded with hosts of enemies and distracting anxieties, prepared and published so many imperishable works. Of Melancthon, it is recorded, that if interrupted in his studies, he would redeem from sleep or from recreation the time he had lost. The excellent missionary, Henry Martyn, had the character at college of "*The man that never wasted an hour.*" Such instances should serve at once as a precept and encouragement to similar diligence and devotedness. If you would number among "the excellent of the earth," and would be honoured of God in your generation, you must, above all, avoid dissipating this precious talent, or hiding it unimproved;

* Acts xx.

you must habitually aim at laying out the time for some valuable purpose.

1. *Purposes for which Time should be Redeemed.*

As furnishing the young with some plain and useful hints upon this important subject, we shall notice a few of the *purposes* for which they should redeem time, and afterwards the *manner* in which they may practically observe the Apostle's direction.

First, of these purposes may be mentioned, *the great business of your own salvation.* This is your great concern. For this your days on earth are given you. The work of God, the first great work of your life is to believe on Him whom the Father hath sent. There is space afforded for repentance. Preparation for eternity is our main business in the world; and our present time is given as "capital to trade with for eternity." If time is heedlessly squandered, the great business of life will be neglected, the soul's salvation will not be sought, and the vast concerns of eternity will be overlooked. It is because men "make light" of these things, that so much time is wasted to no purpose; and the sad result is that, in many instances, salvation is sought "*too late.*" "The master of the house" has arisen and shut to the door, and then those who begin to seek, who idly *wish* instead of *striving* to enter in, shall be excluded. Our important duty and highest interest is to "seek the Lord while He may be found, and to call upon him while He is near." Did we sufficiently realize the necessity and greatness of the soul's salvation; did we properly reflect upon an eternity of misery to be shunned, or an eternity of bliss to be enjoyed; we would be impelled to improve every moment of time, by labouring with all diligence to "make our calling and election sure." We should redeem time for religious duties, for reading the Scriptures, for prayer and

meditation and self-examination, for retirement, and for those duties which concern others.*

Secondly, We should redeem time for actively advancing God's glory throughout the earth. This great work is worthy an immortal being; it is fitted to enlist the highest energies of all minds, even the most gifted. It engaged the counsels of eternity, brought the Son of God from heaven to earth, and led to the surpassing wonders of Gethsemane and Calvary. For this the Mediator ascended to heaven; and for effecting it, the whole moral government of the universe is conducted. Angels rejoice in the glorious design, as they take the deepest interest in its accomplishment; and for this the saints of God have in all ages laboured and prayed. The promotion of God's glory in the world includes the banishment of vice, the diffusion of the gospel, the instruction of the ignorant, the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the earth, and the conversion of the world. This world, it has been properly said, "was created by Christ and for Christ;" and Christians are the ordained instrumentality for accomplishing God's designs of mercy towards the perishing human race, as they are greatly honoured by being called to take a part in this enterprise of mercy and love. Time occupied in promoting God's glory, and in spreading the Saviour's renowned fame is time, in the best and fullest sense, redeemed. The work ennobles all who engage in it aright. We become co-workers with God in it, and shall eventually share in the ultimate glorious triumph of the cause of truth and righteousness.

Thirdly, The necessary pursuits of business and our

* Voltaire, the celebrated French infidel, when dying, said to Dr. Tronchin, his physician, "I am abandoned by God, and man. I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months' life." The doctor said, "Sir, you cannot live six weeks." Voltaire replied, "Then I shall go to hell, and you will go with me;" and soon after expired.

mental improvement calls upon us to redeem time. The divine injunction requires us to be "*diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*" We should provide "things honest in the sight of all men;" and much of our time must, in general, be occupied in pursuits that pertain to the things of this present life. Wasting time is wholly inconsistent with success in any avocation; and we can neither obey the divine command concerning our worldly employments, nor hope for success in them, if we are thus characterised. Besides, it is a solemn duty to improve our own minds, according to our own circumstances and opportunities. By redeeming time *for* business, we will again be able to redeem time *from* it, for intellectual improvement. We shall thus find the truth of the declaration of heavenly wisdom, "*The hand of the diligent maketh rich.*" We may have to give to him that needeth. And our minds well cultivated, we shall be fitted for more extensive usefulness in our day, and shall have opened up to us new sources of comfort and happiness.

Lastly, Time should be redeemed for *benevolent exertion*. In a world like ours, where sin reigns, there will always be many cases of human misery to be relieved, and many trials and sufferings to be alleviated. The vicious to be reclaimed, the poor to be supplied, neglected youth to be snatched from the paths of destruction and trained to virtue, and the aged and infirm to be cared for and sustained; these are offices to which our holy religion calls its professors; and we can neither exhibit its spirit, nor fulfil the will of its Divine Founder, if we shift such claims, and neglect these duties. We should redeem time from other employments for such services. In them, we are honoured to be almoners of the Divine bounty; and what we thus do, if performed in a right spirit, will be accounted as done to our blessed Lord and Master himself. When He shall sit on the throne of

judgment, in distributing the reward of grace, He will make special mention of works of mercy—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."* How important to redeem time for works which shall hereafter receive this wondrous commendation!

In short, the Christian is called to improve his talents and redeem time for studying and practising whatever may make him stand complete in all the will of Christ—for benefiting, to the utmost, fellow-creatures,—and for bringing the greatest revenue of honour to Him who has called him out of darkness into his marvellous light.

II.—*How Time is to be Redeemed.*

A few cursory hints may suffice to show in what manner the youthful professor may practically exemplify this important duty.

1. Avoid, as exceedingly injurious, *habits of wasting time*. These are various and very common. Some consume it in sloth; others spend it in undue attention to dress and decoration of their persons; some kill time by indulging excessive fondness for company and amusements; and some, in trifling conversation, dissipate their days, and enfeeble their minds. The lazy loiterers in society are a numerous class; and the expenditure of a most precious talent, in one or other of these ways, is chargeable against many even who have made a profession of religion. No lengthened argument is required to show how evil in their nature, and pernicious in their consequences, are such habits. The slothful person is pronounced a "wicked servant," and is rejected with utter disapprobation. Attaching great importance to dress, and consuming time in it, is not only prohibited in Scripture, but it

* Matthew xxv. 40.

almost always betrays a want of concern for mental improvement, and for the cultivation of the heart. Love of amusements, and of worldly company, or of parties of pleasure, besides losing much valuable time to ourselves, spreads snares for others. We encourage them in the like dissipation, and do all that we can to render them prodigal of one of Heaven's best gifts, and forgetful of their solemn accountability. And much talking will generally be found "idle words;" wanting not much vanity, and devoid of all profit to ourselves and others. Beware of all approach to such habits, if you would redeem the time. If once contracted, they will insensibly steal away your time, till hardly aught remains to prosecute the great ends of existence; they will unfit you for turning to good account what is left; they will effectually prevent the accomplishment of good resolutions; and they will render you guilty partakers in the slothfulness and dissipation of others.

2. Learn to improve *the brief intervals of time*. The most active person has many portions of time that intervene between one employment and another, and that may be taken from seasons of retirement or leisure. A profitable employment of these, forms at once a salutary habit, and yields valuable fruits. Indeed, upon the neglect or improvement of these intervals, depends, in a great measure, the character we form for usefulness and activity, or the contrary. It is related of a distinguished French authoress, *Madame de Genlis*, that her duty requiring her to be at table, just *fifteen minutes* before her royal mistress came to dinner, she improved this brief space by reading and study, and to this the public owes one or two of her lively volumes. The devoted and eminent student, *Halley*, in his last session at the University, resolved to spend the few minutes, at morning and night, in which his tea was a-drawing, in committing to memory the Sacred Scriptures; and

to this may be ascribed, in a considerable measure, his great readiness and accuracy in bringing forward scriptural testimony. You will derive no little advantage from imitating such examples. Half hours and minutes redeemed, will, in a short period, accumulate into a large stock; and what others squander unheeded, you may make to yield a profitable and lasting return.

3. *Beware continually of procrastination.* It has been quaintly, but properly said, "God's time is always to-day; Satan's time is always to-morrow." God enjoins present duty, and gives to none assurance of opportunities to come. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "To-day is the acceptable time." The habit of delaying, and putting off till to-morrow, what may and should be done to-day, is most pernicious. The young should be most careful to avoid it. Let them actively betake themselves to the work which present duty requires, and they will thus escape the future bitter reflection of resolutions having been formed, and not executed; the work of each day will be done in its place, and the approval of the good and faithful servant will be the fruit and blessed reward.

4. *Fill up your time with useful employments, and observe order and punctuality in attending them.* Every day, every hour is given us by God, that something may be done in it conducive to his glory, and to our own benefit. There is work enough for every hour; there is important business for every moment. The habit of President Edwards was to mark out beforehand the particular works to which, at specified times, he would direct attention, and punctually to observe them. When riding or walking, he always took with him materials for writing, that he might note down observations or reflections as they might arise. It is of great benefit thus to lay out a plan, and to endeavour rigidly to adhere to it. Order is

essential to sure and comfortable progress in any pursuit, and punctuality, while it inspires confidence, enables to effect what to others may appear wonderful. "A time for every thing, and every thing in its time," "a place for every thing, and every thing in its place," are valuable maxims for all, and to the young they are especially useful. The following simple illustration has been given of the advantage of following out a fixed plan, "One morning a man was digging a path through a deep snow-bank. It was almost insupportably cold, and he seemed to make but little head-way, though he worked as if for a wager. At length, getting out of breath, he paused, and marked out the width of the path with his shovel; then marked out the width of each shovelful, and consequently the amount of snow at each throw of the shovel. In 15 minutes, he had done more, and it was done neater and easier, than in 30 minutes previous, when working without a plan."* Nothing should be done in "a hurry;" all our duties should be performed with composed and fixed attention; and, in general, one thing should be thoroughly finished before we engage in another. The reply of Sir Isaac Newton to one who expressed astonishment at his efforts and success, and who inquired how he accomplished so much, was characteristic, "I do but one thing at a time, and try to *finish* it, once for all."

5. *Early rising* is a habit indispensable to a proper redeeming of the time.

The counsels and experience of the wisest and best, concur with examples recorded in the Scriptures to recommend strongly this habit to the young. It conduces to health, invigorates the mind, facilitates success in the pursuits of life, contributes to spiritual advancement and comfort, and ever tends to length of life. The shrewd remark of Franklin is, that "He

* Todd's Students' Manual.—p. 39.

who rises late, may trot all day, and not have overtaken his business ;” and Swift gives it as the result of his own experience, “That he never knew a man that came to greatness or eminence who lay in bed of a morning.” The excellent Dr. Doddridge, speaking of his “Family Expositor,” gives the following striking testimony on this subject, “I will here record the observation which I have found of great use to myself, and to which I may say that the production of this work, and of most of my other writings is owing, viz., that the difference between rising at 5 and 7 o'clock in the morning for the space of 40 years, supposing a man to go to bed at the same hour at night, is nearly equivalent to the addition of *ten years* to a man's life.” What an impressive argument this in behalf of early rising! How few are there, when their days on earth are numbered, who would not desire to have ten years added to their life! Young persons! you have the means in your power now, and you will as really make the acquisition, as if your days on earth were protracted, as were Hezekiah's, a number of years, with this important advantage besides, that they will be years of vigour, and activity, and improvement.* The instances of distinguished saints recorded in Scripture, and of eminent advantages which they enjoyed in connexion with early rising, furnish a strong motive for adopting this practice. The sweet singer of Israel speaks of preventing the dawning of the morning, that he might meditate on God's precepts.† The first gracious tidings of the Saviour's victory over the grave were announced to female disciples, who came “early, while it was yet dark, to the sepulchre;” and the first interview with the risen Lord was made to one who remained a sorrowful and early visitant. Of our blessed Redeemer himself, it is recorded that “He rose a great while before day,” and

* See Todd's Students' Manual.

† Psalm cxix, 147

retired “to a mountain to pray.” Would we imitate Christ, and follow the example of “the excellent ones of the earth;” would we reap benefits for the mind and body, for this world and the world to come,—let us cultivate the habit of early rising.

6. Remember continually that you must give *an account of the improvement of all your time to God*. “After a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them.” That account you cannot evade, and you may rest assured it will be most full and particular. Your Lord’s money—and your time is a principal part of it—you should be prepared to render back, with a due account of the improvement. Cherish the impression upon your spirits of the certainty and momentous nature of this account. Set it before you, in carving out work for your day, and in entering on any business; and reflect on it solemnly when you are taking yourselves to task for the engagements of every day. So will you be preserved from many evils into which others are precipitated; you will be prepared to give in your account at last with joy; and instead of being found *a time-waster*, you will live to some valuable purpose, and the joys of eternity will compensate abundantly for time well-spent, and for opportunities and privileges improved.

SECTION V.—*Formation of Character.*

From those who have made a profession of religion, and have become members of the church, there are naturally expected a character and deportment superior to others. The expectation is reasonable, and youthful professors should endeavour to satisfy it. It has been justly observed, that though men of the world dislike religion, they are keen-sighted enough to observe inconsistencies in religious professors; and not only do they mark them, but from them, they frequently take occasion to direct their most virulent attacks against religion itself. The Author of our holy religion frequently inculcates upon his followers the value and necessity of approved character. He requires them to be “harmless and without rebuke” in an evil world, to shine as lights therein, to do good to all as they have opportunity, and by their example, not less than by their doctrine, to be as “the salt of the earth”—the preserving and purifying element of human society.

In one of the beautiful and expressive apophthegms of the book of Proverbs, the royal preacher declares, “*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver or gold.*”* The value of this maxim to persons in any station in society can hardly be estimated; to the young entering upon their Christian course, its importance is incalculable. “A good name” may be taken here to mean, “a character of tried worth,” and this is intimately connected with the advancement of God’s glory, and the honour of the church. Among men it commands attention and respect; conciliates favour; and possesses a moral influence, which adventitious circumstances of rank, or riches, or power, or even of talent and learning, never can confer.

* Proverbs xxii. 1.

The slightest observation of society will serve to show the manifold advantages of possessing an approved and established character. It forms a defence against suspicion and evil reports. A person of bad or doubtful character is suspected of crimes of which he is not guilty, and even his good actions are ascribed to bad motives, and he can never command the confidence of fellow-men. A man of tried reputation, on the other hand, is raised above suspicion. Should he at times be exposed to the reproach of the unworthy, within himself he has an antidote for the poison; and when he has passed through the temporary ordeal, he will come forth with renovated strength and brightened beauty. A good character, again, brings with it the testimony of a good conscience, and commands the approval and esteem of those whose opinion and regard are really valuable. The pleasures of an approving mind, which accompany it, are preferable to all the treasures of earth. The unsuspecting confidence, and cordial approbation of the wise and the good, are a part of its reward here; and all, whether good or bad, are constrained to render to such a character the tribute of respect. A good name thus becomes the means of increasing one's capacity, and of extending his sphere of usefulness. Character is thus power—character is influence; and even, though poor in the world, and devoid of all other means by which to influence his fellows in society, the person of known worth has the power of becoming eminently useful; and the circle in which he moves, and the church and society at large will derive from him manifold and permanent advantages. A fair character frequently leads the way to advancement and success in the world.

“Reputation,” it has been justly remarked, “is better than the richest capital. It makes friends—it creates funds—it draws around its possessor patronage and support—and it not unfrequently opens

for him a sure and easy way to wealth, and honour, and happiness." Intimately connected also with the interest and happiness of those to whom we are nearly related in life, is the character which we form. Parents, friends, all who regard us with any interest or affection, have their happiness, more or less, bound up with the character for which we are distinguished. Our reputation for uprightness and usefulness will reflect on them honour, and give them satisfaction and delight; while our want of a good name will cover them with shame, or fill with poignant sorrow and grief relatives and friends, who naturally expected to derive from us sources of satisfaction and happiness.

The influence of character even extends to future generations, and looks forward to the eternal destiny. It is a maxim of most extensive application, and of vast importance, that "*no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.*" The character which a person possesses will influence others for good or evil; it may be impressed on the next generation, and that on the next; and thus the character, and consequently the happiness or misery, of multitudes in coming ages; may, in a great measure, be dependent on the spirit which we cherish or display, the conduct we pursue, and the principles which we profess and disseminate. And never can it be too frequently and deeply considered, that the character and dispositions which we now acquire will generally go with us to death, and remain with us throughout eternity. It is the beautiful thought of the lamented Pollok, in his "*Course of Time,*" that in the great congregation that shall meet around the "*great white throne*" for judgment, nothing will remain but character.

**"It was a strange assembly, none of all
That congregation vast, could recollect
Aught like it in the history of man.
No badge of outward state was seen, no mark**

Of age, or rank, or national attire,
Or robe professional, or air of trade.

* * *

It was a congregation vast of men,
Of unappendaged and unvarnished men ;
Of plain unceremonious human beings,
Of all but moral character bereaved.
His vice or virtue now to each remained
Alone. All else with their grave-clothes, men had
Put off, as badges worn by mortal, not
Immortal man ; alloy that could not pass
The scrutiny of death's refining fires."

Course of Time—B. viii. pp. 227, 229.

The habits, mental and moral, acquired in life, it has been solemnly and suitably said, "are the dying dress of the soul—the vestments in which it must come forth to meet the sentence of an impartial Judge. If filthy, they will be filthy still ; if holy, they will be holy still. It should be constantly remembered, and solemnly considered, that the character which we are now forming, or which we have put on is, in all probability, that in which we shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and in which our condition throughout eternity will be decided."*

As additional to these observations on the importance of character, we remark that a character for good or evil is formed in *early life*. Making due allowances for constitutional diversities of temperament and disposition, for differences of opportunity and education, and for variety in the mode of development, it may be safely affirmed, that, as the most critical period of human life is from *thirteen* or *fourteen* to *twenty-one* years of age, so during this period, more is done to mould and settle character, than in any similar portion of the future life. If the age of boyhood and advancing youth is trifled away ; if, during it, religion is neglected, and improper hab-

* See Haweis's Lectures on Formation of Character.

its acquired, mature age will be unprofitable, and, in a great majority of cases, the character will be such as to command no respect, and to be productive of no useful fruits. If, in this spring-time of life, the mind and heart are uncultivated; if opportunities of improvement are neglected, and habits of slothfulness are formed—not to speak of indulgence in vicious courses—a loss will be sustained which no future exertions will fully retrieve; and the character will receive an impression, which future regrets will not avail to efface. Youthful professors! You cannot feel this too deeply! You may be tempted, as thousands like you are, to put away from you considerations so solemn, or at least, to refuse their entertainment till a future and, as you vainly think, “a more convenient season.” You may seldom or never have thought that the spirit, and conduct, and habits which now distinguish you, have aught to do with your future character in public life, or with your usefulness and success in the station which you may afterwards be called to occupy. But be assured this is a great, and, in many cases, a fatal mistake. Life will unquestionably take much of its tone and colouring from “the plastic powers,” which are now operating. Almost every thing depends upon a proper direction being given to the outset of life.

“Just as the twig is bent, the tree’s inclined.”

The course which you now take is usually decisive. Whatever principles you adopt—whatever habits you form, will become to you a kind of *second nature*; and whether good or bad, will remain with you fixed and permanent.

So uniform and established is this connection between youthful dispositions and habits, and the character that distinguishes a person throughout life, that it has been said, if the habits, mental and moral, of the boy are known, you may from them pre-

dict the character of the man—whether as active or indolent, upright and honourable, or mean and contemptible, useful or unprofitable. Even the intellectual and moral features of childhood not unfrequently appear distinctly visible, amidst the cares and activities, the fully developed affections and dispositions of manhood. It is on this principle, that, in perusing the biography of distinguished individuals, we feel an irresistible propensity to learn the habits and pursuits of their early years; and we all know with what interest we mark the *germ* of a feature of character in infancy and boyhood, which becomes full-blown in mature years, and which brings forth plentiful fruits of wisdom, and virtue, and holiness.

1. *Elements of an Approved Character.*

What, it may now be inquired, is the character for which youthful professors should study to be distinguished? What is the character which may be regarded as inseparably connected with future usefulness and success? For the present, we content ourselves with sketching a brief outline, and exhibiting a few of its more prominent features; and we shall then offer a few hints concerning the proper method of forming such a character.

It is a plain but important observation, that, if a person would draw an elegant portrait, he must copy after a faultless model, and he must begin by forming in his own mind, a distinct image of what he wishes to delineate. Just so,—if you would be distinguished by a character which gives promise of future usefulness and perfection, you must have a clear idea of such a character; a just conception of the essential elements of the “good name,” which is “rather to be chosen than great riches.” Here it is of unspeakable

moment to think correctly, and to form a fixed and accurate judgment. "No man," it has been justly remarked, "can well be expected to rise higher than his own standard of excellence. If this be low and faulty, such will be the character that is modelled after it. If it be noble, and pure, and elevated, such will be the character that is formed under its influence."*

First of all, Those who would possess an approved character must aim to have more than a *negative reputation*. They must not be content merely to pass without blame or censure. It is a grievous delusion for persons to imagine that they are all that is right, or that their prospects for the future are safe and good, because they are free from some gross defects, or common errors and vices. You may succeed in deceiving fellow-men sometimes in this way, but you are only practising a more fatal deception upon yourselves, and you cannot deceive God. The mask will in a little fall off. Nothing will do in profession or character but a principle of positive holiness. The lamp without oil in the vessel will go out, and leave its possessor in midnight darkness. The house that is only "swept and garnished," without being "furnished," will be again entered by the evil spirit, bringing with him seven other spirits, and "the last state of that man is worse than the first." You must never, then, rest satisfied with being free from matters of blame—from what is mean or morally wrong. Instead of aiming not to be blameworthy, you must study and practise what is praiseworthy. You must "*shine as lights in the world*," and not think it enough to be inoffensive and without a cloud upon your reputation. Not even popular applause should content you. This you may possess and yet be destitute of any right principle, and your char-

* Haweis's Lectures, &c.

acter be utterly worthless. Nothing short of what is solid and substantial ; nothing short of what is really good and excellent should content you. You must adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and aim ever to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

Again, The youthful professor should seek early to be distinguished by *those qualities which, in the common judgment of society, are regarded as constituting a good character.* Indifferent as mankind are to religion, they expect much from those who make a strict religious profession. Those who have voluntarily arranged themselves on Christ's side should therefore be known in society, as rising above the common level, and as distinguished for whatever is virtuous, and praiseworthy, and honourable. They should not regard it sufficient to have a knowledge of religion, or to be reputed attentive to religious duties, though this should not be wanting. They should show that their character is formed after a higher model than the mere men of the world ever propose to themselves ; and they are required to exhibit qualities and habits superior to those which are the offspring of mere natural principles. In such a character there should be *integrity*, or unbending regard to rectitude, *decision*, and *independence* ; or a fixed determination to be governed by an enlightened conviction of truth, and the *absence of all selfish aims and motives.* There should be kindness and compassion to fellow-men, or disinterested benevolence, and a public spirit, discovered in willingly denying one's self, and readily making sacrifices for the good of others, and for the promotion of the cause of truth. These are some of the leading features of a good character ; the living, breathing lineaments of that good name, which is better than riches, and more fragrant than precious ointment. Labour, my young friends, to possess such a character early ;

and let it be developed more and more, as you advance in life. You will thus prepare the way for your own future usefulness. Thus may you be instruments of unspeakable good to others; and you may bring a revenue of glory to Him whose servants you have professed to be; whose favour is better than life, and in whose presence there is fulness of joys for evermore.

The character which the youth of the church should seek early to form should, moreover, be *spiritual*; it should be one of sterling and unostentatious piety. God honours his own gracious work in the hearts and lives of his servants; and those who have been owned by Him to do any great work for the advancement of his glory, have been men of strong faith, fervent prayer, single-minded, and consistent holiness of heart and life. Destitute of genuine piety, attainments in knowledge will be of no avail; and all other advantages will fail to render persons approved and faithful servants of God, or to secure the rewards of holy obedience. The Christian professor should realize the character of a *man of God*. He should possess *spiritual* attainments, and "covet earnestly the best gifts." His acquaintance with divine things should be progressive, and he should be ever ready to impart to others the benefit of his acquirements. He should regard himself as laid under the strongest obligations to "do good to all men as he has opportunity;" and every where, and at all times, to diffuse abroad the savour of the knowledge of Christ. A character adorned with spiritual attainments, and replenished by spiritual gifts, will command esteem and respect. It will reflect credit upon the professor of religion, and is indeed that which constitutes "the man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Unaffected, devoted benevolence should be regarded as a main element of the character which the youth-

ful professor is to put on, and it is essential to fruitfulness and success. "Good-will to men" is a principal feature of our holy religion; of that religion which brings glory to God in the highest, and which proclaims and establishes peace on earth. Genuine benevolence should breathe in all the dispositions, and pervade all the conduct of the baptized youth of the church. A contracted, selfish spirit, however manifested, will never command esteem and affection, and cannot possibly lead to extensive usefulness. The young must learn not to live to themselves; they must seek to know the luxury of doing good. They must cultivate universal philanthropy, and be at pains and expense to benefit others, if they would follow Him who "went about doing good," or have eminent success in His service. It is not merely by talking or bustling about benevolent schemes that we put on or display this feature of character. We must put our hands early to the work. We must learn to regard it as our true interest and honour to do good to the bodies and souls of men. We must prize it as our highest reward to be the instrument of enlightening even one individual who is in moral and spiritual darkness, to lead one child to Jesus, and to pluck a single brand out of the burning. This we must regard as our special errand into the world, and consider that for this we are given all the talents, natural and acquired, that we possess, if we would really reflect around us that lovely feature of the gospel—"good-will to men," and attract wanderers to the path of life. Devoted benevolence is at once one of the highest qualities of a useful character, and a signal means of success in valuable undertakings. All who have done much good in the world have possessed it. Begin now, youthful servants of Christ! to cultivate and exemplify it, and you will lay a sure foundation for future usefulness and distinction. Consult, contrive how you may be employed in doing good.

Hail every opportunity that may invite you to a work of benevolence; and be assured your own mind and body will be the better for engaging in it. Your other pursuits, instead of being retarded, will be furthered, and you will reap the benefit, as you will enjoy the pure satisfaction of having co-operated in the purpose and plan of divine benevolence, and of being acknowledged benefactors of mankind.

2.—*Manner of forming a Useful Character.*

For the formation of such a character, the young should,

1. Remember that their *own personal exertions are indispensable*. The higher elements of a spiritual character are of Divine communication—but are never possessed, save in the way of faithful and sustained efforts. A proper character is not obtained by inheritance from parents, nor created by external advantages, nor put on by indolence and inactivity. It is the result of strenuous endeavours; it flows from holy diligence, and is the fruit and reward of good principles, displayed in a course of virtuous, praiseworthy, and benevolent conduct.

2. *Habitual self-denial* is essential to the formation of a useful and approved character. All who have been honoured servants of God, in any age, have displayed a high measure of self-denial. They have imbibed, and reduced to practice, this first lesson of discipleship. Gideon's *Three Hundred*, who were honoured with the victory over the enemies of Israel, were hardy, self-mortified men, disregarding their own ease, and borne on by an insatiable desire to avenge the insulted and oppressed cause of Israel's God. The Old Testament prophets, and the ministers of the ancient sanctuary, were required to be denied to ease, honour, and worldly interest. Our Lord's directions, when He commissioned his disciples to set

up his kingdom in the earth, implied a high measure of self-denial, and of non-conformity to the world. The martyrs of Christ "loved not their lives to the death;" and all who have been renowned as reformers, missionaries, and eminently successful servants of God, have been thus distinguished. Let this be the course adopted by the youthful professor, to mould his character. Learn to take up the cross daily, and follow Christ. Go to him "without the camp," bearing his reproach. Begin early to despise and to trample upon the fading honours, and perishing possessions, and sickening pleasures of the world. You will thus be trained for veteran service in the army of the Captain of salvation, and you will enjoy here and hereafter the rewards of veteran soldiers. Like the army of confessors and martyrs that has gone before, not loving their lives to the death, you will overcome "by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony;" and a crown of glory, "that fadeth not away," will be your future unspeakable distinction.

3. *Intimate and frequent intercourse with persons of decided piety and real excellence* will contribute to the formation of a distinguished character. Example is powerful to modify and mould character, and to prepare it for usefulness or trial. Every individual has a company, which may be called his own, to which his attachments are drawn, and in which he seeks for rest and satisfaction; and the character of this society determines his character. Let the young, then, choose as their companions the pious, the devoted, and the benevolent. You should imitate good men as they follow Christ, and follow them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises. Avoid, as the worst plague, the loiterer, the dissipated, the irreligious, and the selfish. Consult with those who are worthy of your confidence, how you may be useful, how you may excel in every good word and work.

With approved servants of Christ concert mutually, and prosecute plans of usefulness; and above all, employ the power of united fervent prayer. You will thus feel an irresistible impulse to all that is virtuous, and amiable, and excellent. Your future life in this world, and your eternal state, can alone attest fully how much you will profit by companionship with "all them that fear and obey God."

4. *Proposing to yourselves an elevated standard*, is a principal means of forming a distinguished character. The Apostle's direction is to "leave first principles," and "go on to perfection,"* and again to "press to the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."† Dr. Carey's maxim was, "Attempt great things; *expect great things*;" and Robert Raikes, the founder of Sabbath-schools, assumed for his motto, "*Trust and try*."

Justly has it been said, "that he who aims at the sun, to be sure will not reach it, but his arrow will fly much higher, than if he aimed at an object level with himself." So let the young fix on a high standard; and though they may not fully reach it, they will certainly rise higher than if they aspired after a model of inferior excellence. You should adopt also as the maxim of your conduct, "*what ought to be done, can be done*"—and you should try. Work patiently and perseveringly, and, in general, you will succeed. The Saviour himself is the blessed and perfect model. His character is a concentration of all conceivable excellencies; and his possession of our humanity was designed to exhibit it as the object of our imitation. We must study to follow him in every

* Hebrews vi. 1. The Greek expression may be literally rendered "the beginning of the word of Christ," and doubtless refers to the "first principles of the oracles of God," mentioned before.

† Philipians ii. 14.

thing as dear children. The mind that was in Christ Jesus should be also in us; and in all labours and trials, and duties, public and private, we should aim to be like him, as we expect to be with him in glory. To walk in "the footsteps of the flock of Christ;" to follow distinguished servants of God, as they followed Christ, is to imitate the Master. It is, moreover, to take the best course for arriving at the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Here we have a complete portraiture; and by copying after it daily and diligently, we will not fail to reach a measure of excellence, which cannot otherwise be obtained, and which will produce salutary and permanent fruits.

I may only add on this topic that, while studying to put on an approved character, you should cherish a deep and absorbing sense of your responsibility to God for all your talents. Your time, your life, your opportunities—all are his; and all should be willingly consecrated to his service and the advancement of his glory. It is his "excellent and honourable work" to which He invites you. He now calls you to seek that character, and those attainments, which may save you from the doom of "the slothful and unprofitable servant," and which may ensure for you the commendation of the "good and faithful servant." Ere long, you must stand in the presence of your Judge. The body will return to the dust whence it was taken, but the immortal part,—your spirit, your minds will survive. You will stand before the judgment-seat in the character that you put on here, and on this will issue forth the sentence that will fix your everlasting state, that will send you away to tenant unquenchable fire, or that will bid you welcome to the endless and unspeakable joys of your Lord. Under such solemn impressions, may you go forward, transcribing into your spirit and life whatever is excellent and lovely, and of good report; and may your char-

acter be as the path of the just, resembling the shining light, which shineth more and more till the perfect day!

SECTION VI.—*Proper Pursuit of Temporal Things.*

Religion is designed not alone to communicate new spiritual principles, and to impress a new spiritual character—to introduce to heaven, and to prepare for its enjoyment. It is intended likewise to direct, in relation to the things of the present life, and to render them conducive to the soul's felicity. "*Godliness is profitable for all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*"

The young who were dedicated to God in baptism, and who have taken upon them the vow of a Christian profession, have a part to act in human affairs, have worldly interests to consult, and must fill earthly connexions; it is therefore of much importance to them to consider properly the position assigned them, and to discharge aright its various duties. It certainly never was intended that young professors, on recognizing the paramount claims of religion, and surrendering themselves to its influence, should forsake the active employments of life, or retire into a convent. They are called, it is true, to "come out and be separate," and to "overcome the world" by faith. But though not *of* the world, they are yet *in* it. They are required to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world." The relations of life they are to sustain in the spirit of true religion; the business of life they are to manage on religious principles, and to holy ends; and their duty is to render all worldly things, with which they are conversant, subservient to the great end of promoting the divine glory, and their own salvation.

These duties, although clearly enjoined in the Word,

and obviously implied in a Christian profession, are of difficult performance. The young, especially the baptized youth of the church, are exposed to no little danger in this quarter; and our own age and country present many temptations arising from worldly pursuits, by which thousands are entangled and overcome. Some readily imbibe the erroneous and pernicious sentiment, that religion is a business only for the closet or the sanctuary, or the Sabbath, and that it has nothing to do with the every-day concerns of life. The young are tempted on all sides, to make worldly things their grand business, and to neglect "the one thing needful." Parents frequently train them more for the world than for God; and they enter into its relations and embark in its employments, without any deep sense of their obligation to be the Lord's; and with the intention, whether secretly cherished or openly avowed, of making religion a mere secondary pursuit. In an age of refinement, and when the Spirit's influences are in a great measure withdrawn, the spirit of the world has, to a fearful extent, infected the church. Covetousness has been pronounced "the master sin of the church" in our day; and thousands take themselves credit for being religious, and think their interests are secure for eternity, who "*love this present world;*" and of whom it may be said, as of Ezekiel's hearers, even when attending upon religious ordinances, "their hearts go after their covetousness." The young need to be warned against a two-fold danger here. The one is the neglect of the active duties of life, and the other the pursuit of temporal interests, so as to neglect religious duties, or to perform them in a formal manner. Both are clearly condemned in the word of God, and both lead to ruinous consequences. The Scriptures represent slothfulness as a disposition and habit utterly opposed to the character of a faithful servant, and covetousness is declared to be "idolatry."

The same high authority that enjoins us to be “diligent in business,” directs us to be “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,” and declares, “if any man love the world, or the things of the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

To guard the young against these extremes, and to direct them in a course in which they may enjoy the things of this life with a blessing, and in which the pursuit of them may *subserve*, instead of *retarding* their eternal interests, the following hints may be of service:—

First, Let the Saviour’s direction be adopted as the leading maxim of the conduct, and constantly followed, “SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED.”* Secure first an interest in Christ and his salvation. While others are “cumbered about many things,” regard this as the “one thing needful,” and choose it as the best portion, that cannot be taken away. Do not postpone the pursuit of salvation till an uncertain future. Resolve, before entering upon worldly concerns, to make sure of a part in the kingdom of God, and follow this steadfastly, perseveringly, as the first and grand business of life, as the principal matter to be secured above all others. You must begin early to refrain from courses of conduct, however inviting, that would interfere with the attainment of this great end. In whatever you propose to engage, make it a first inquiry how this may contribute to obtaining the kingdom. Relinquish at once whatever would mar your progress heavenward, however pleasing or profitable it may be to the flesh; and frequently take yourselves to task as to whether present pursuits are furthering spiritual interests. Abandon them freely, or slacken the pursuit, if they prevent your attention to spiritual duties, or if they

* Matthew vi. 33.

damp a devotional spirit. In fine, seek "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" *early*. Seek them first in every thing, seek them constantly, and make every thing else over which you have control, subservient to the diligent pursuit of divine things. Thus will you realize the assurance that all other necessary good things shall be added. Reverse this order, and give undue prominence in the pursuit to the concerns of this world, and you have no promise of any thing being conferred upon you with a blessing. But following this divine counsel, you will have food and raiment, relations and possessions in life, with the favour of heaven. Your lot will be carved for you in sovereign wisdom and love; and whether you be high or low in the world, yours will be the blessing of Jacob, "the dew of heaven" first, and then "the fatness of the earth," and blessings "to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills." Impressed with the sense of divine overflowing goodness, you will be enabled to say, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, and the inheritance which I have got excels in beauty."

Secondly, in outward pursuits, you should aim to be *active* and *diligent*. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." This truth is confirmed in the history of mankind in innumerable instances, both in mental and secular pursuits. The active and diligent frequently get the start of others who have naturally more distinguished talents, or who enjoy superior outward advantages. From poverty, the diligent not unfrequently rise to possess a competence, and sometimes even to affluence. *Perseverando vinces*—by perseverance you will conquer—is a maxim which has been tested in a thousand instances, in all ages, and in all ranks of society; and the young should adopt it, in whatever pursuit they may engage. It is not the hope of success alone, or chiefly, that should propel you to activity and diligence. Sustained in-

dustry is enjoined as a Christian duty. Time is never to be wasted; opportunities are to be improved to the utmost; and whatever our hand finds to do, we are to do it with our might. We are servants to Christ, in our daily employments, having our stations assigned us by him, and being accountable to him in all things; and we should always dread the doom of "the slothful servant," and should aim to *increase*, by trading with our Lord's money. The habit of activity and diligence in outward pursuits, will influence the mind in relation to higher concerns. It will secure time for spiritual duties. It will excite to fervency in seeking the blessings of salvation; and it often leads to active efforts for advancing the Redeemer's glory in the world. Such a habit brings with it its own reward. They have "great peace" who love God's commandments. Faithful in that which is least, they are often entrusted with that which is greatest; and in the way of "giving all diligence," they reach to "the full assurance of hope," steadfast to the end.

Worldly affairs, however, should be conducted with *prudence*, and on principles of the *strictest integrity*. In the Psalmist's description of a good man, it is said, "*he will guide his affairs with discretion.*"* This must be the characteristic of all who would honour God in the world, or succeed in temporal pursuits. The young, in setting out in life, are liable to be betrayed into imprudent courses; and none can tell how much evil to themselves, and injury to religion, may result from a single improvident step, from rash speculation, or from adopting plans of business without due foresight and consideration. Christian wisdom and genuine piety are displayed in weighing matters carefully, before *acting*; and in avoiding resolutely the course that would peril religious principle or charac-

* Psalm cxii. 5.

ter, however alluring. “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way; but the folly of fools is deceit.” “The prudent man looketh well to his going.”* A fundamental maxim which should ever be remembered in conducting worldly business is, to “*owe no man any thing.*”† Punctuality to engagements, integrity in action, and sterling honesty should ever characterise the Christian professor. These internal principles will be his safeguard against the destructive courses into which thousands are hurried by the spirit and tendency of the age, hasting to be rich; and the outward manifestation of such principles never fails to recommend religion, and to command respect and veneration for those who possess them.

Thirdly, You should own *God in every thing*. Upon the Divine direction, support, and blessing, you are absolutely and constantly dependent. Destitute of God’s favour, you can have no real success. Even prosperity will be destructive. Here there are life, comfort, peace; and apart from the blessing on high, the best outward condition can only be productive of dissatisfaction and misery. “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy steps.” “Commit thy way to God—trust in him—and He will bring it to pass.” In choosing a condition of life, in entering upon any outward pursuit, *Begin with God.* ‡ Seek counsel from above, and make the Divine glory the great end in all that you propose or do. Remember constantly, that without Him you can do nothing; and that what you obtain of outward things can minister satisfaction to you, and be

* Proverbs xiv. 8—15.

† Romans xiii. 8.

‡ We have a fine illustration of the importance of this maxim, in an incident recorded in the life of Benjamin Franklin. When the Delegates, that met at the era of American Independence, had spent some three or four weeks in deliberations and discussions on the proposed constitution of the United States, one morning, Franklin is represented as having said to his fellow-

really good for you, only in as far as you enjoy it with the Divine blessing. The counsel to Israel of old, should be ever before you in the pursuit of temporal things, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, &c. And thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of mine arm hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth."* One rule you should always observe, "Engage in no pursuit in which you cannot with freedom invoke the Divine blessing;" attend to no business without cherishing a deep and abiding sense of your dependence upon God, and of your entire accountability. If you thus acknowledge Him "in all your ways," He will order your footsteps aright. What you obtain in life will be doubly and trebly enhanced to you. It will come to you as a good gift from a father's hand—itself a blessing, and at once the fruit and earnest of that favour which makes rich and adds no sorrow. What God gives or withholds, will contribute to your highest benefit. "They that seek the Lord shall lack no good thing." "For the Lord God is a sun and shield. He will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing."

Fourthly, In worldly pursuits, *avoid covetousness, and beware of undue anxiety.* "Covetousness," the highest authority pronounces to be "*idolatry.*" It is

Deputies, that he saw they could make no progress, because they neglected to seek counsel of the God of nations; and he proposed that henceforth their meetings should be opened with prayer. This proposal, remarkable as coming from a man who was not distinguished for personal piety, was readily acceded to; and it is related, that the future deliberations were conducted in an amicable spirit, and that the labours of the Delegates were speedily brought to a successful termination.

* Deut. viii. 11, 17, 18.

putting the world in God's place, and yielding the homage of the heart to a base creature, instead of giving it to the Creator, "who is blessed for ever," and who is supremely and exclusively entitled to it. The disposition thus strongly condemned, is very insidious and hateful; and it prevails to an alarming extent at the present day, even within the Church. Under the plausible pretence of providing for things honest in the sight of men—on the plea of making provision for a family, and sometimes through avowed regard to the precept enjoining diligence in business—professed Christians pursue after the world with all avidity. Hence they seek for their gain, each one from his quarter; they become unduly anxious about outward prosperity; they are fretful and discontented, if they are not adding field to field and house to house, and they withhold more than is meet from Christ's poor, and from the propagation of the Gospel. Few vices are more hateful than this, and few dispositions tend more directly to hinder progress in religion, or to make men formalists, or hypocrites, or apostates. It is not without solemn meaning, that the example of Judas among the apostles is held forth as he that betrayed the Saviour, and whose besetting sin was covetousness. The apostle Paul writes the history of many an apostate, since his day, when he declares, "*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world.*"

The young, in entering upon the pursuits of life, should therefore watch diligently and pray fervently against this evil. The least approach to a covetous disposition is to be shunned, as contact with an infectious malady. Hence the Spirit of God enjoins, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have;" and the reason subjoined is urgent and impressive, "for He hath said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."*

* Hebrews xiii. 5.

Even in words, Christian youth should avoid that kind of conversation which has of late become so common among professors, of frequently talking of mere worldly things, and their whole spirit and conduct should give evidence that, through the power of the cross, they are crucified to the world, and the world unto them. The Saviour's plain and pointed direction is, "Be careful for nothing," and "*be content with such things as ye have.*" While diligent in business, the mind must not be "divided,"* and we must not be unduly anxious about the future. No man can serve two masters; and homage to God and Mammon are utterly incompatible. Of two sisters, both of whom were true disciples, and whom Jesus loved, one is reprov'd, because she was "cumbered about many things," and the other is approved and commended, because, dismissing the world, she sat at Christ's feet, and had chosen "the good part" that shall not be taken away. Let the youth of the church labour to possess the same spirit. They must be mortified to the world, and overcome it by faith, if they would evidence that they have obtained the better portion. Let them dismiss all undue anxiety about worldly prosperity. Let them ever cultivate a liberal spirit, and as their circumstances improve, let them give to Christ's cause, as He has prospered them. Let them aim, in thoughts, desires, words, and conduct, to live above the world. Thus will they escape a master evil, by which many are overcome; and in the fulfilment of the all-gracious promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," they will obtain a competent temporal provision, while internal peace, and the assured hope of salvation will be a portion vastly superior to that of worldly men, "even when their corn and wine abound."

Fifthly, Propose to yourselves constantly *the pro-*

* The original word for "Be careful," signifies to "divide the mind."

per ends, for which Christians should seek the possession of earthly things. These are not to gain high rank and distinction in the world, nor to pamper the flesh, nor to look for happiness, where it never can be found—in mere earthly possessions and enjoyments; nor to make provision for the future, though this within proper limits is allowable. There are higher and nobler ends which a Christian should propose to himself in the pursuit of worldly things, and it is of much importance that the youthful professor should distinctly apprehend them at first, and ever afterwards keep them steadily in view.

To have a proper notion of these ends, there are two views which should be assumed as fundamental. 1. *In temporal things, we are but stewards of what we possess;* and 2, *Every thing is sanctified to the Christian by the word and by prayer.* Worldly possessions, be they large or small, are given to us in trust. They are our Lord's money, to be laid out, according to his will, and so as to advance his glory; and for them all, we must give an account to the Great Proprietor, at his coming. If we appropriate them as our own, and either squander or neglect to improve our "talent," we can only expect the doom of the unfaithful—to be put out of the stewardship, to our disgrace and confusion. Christians, if they would be true to their profession and character, must acknowledge God in every thing. Common avocations are exalted to Christian duties, when they are conducted in the spirit of prayer; and our lot, and relations, and possessions in life are blessed, when the word is employed as our constant directory, and God's presence and blessing are habitually sought in them.

To the youthful professor, who has voluntarily sealed his renunciation of the world, the following *ends* may be noticed as important and indispensable to be proposed in the pursuit of earthly things. Let them be kept steadily in view, and they will at once

furnish powerful motives to laudable exertion, and will raise the mind above the grovelling desire of carnal things.

We should labour with our hands, that *we may "have to give to him that needeth."* Our industry, as our spirit, should never be selfish. We should make it a distinct end, and assign it a high place in our designs, to have wherewith to supply the wants of the poor, to be "willing to communicate, ready to distribute." It is certainly more "blessed to give than to receive." By imparting to the necessitous, we make God our banker, and what we lend to Him, He will repay with double and treble interest. By liberal things, will the liberal stand. Riches shall ever be in his house. The blessing of the perishing shall come upon him; and his seed, it is promised, shall be "mighty" and "blessed."* Christians should purpose to themselves, to give to the needy, as a distinct and primary object of their industry. They should consider that, as Christians, it is not left optional with them, whether they shall impart to the poor or not, or in what proportion they shall give. What they possess is given to them under the reservation of supplying the claims of the needy, that are presented to them; and they are to do this, "*according as God has prospered*" them. They are greatly honoured in such a service, as they are constituted almoners of the Divine bounty, and they are ever assured of a high recompense of reward, in performing a pleasant duty.

Again, *the advancement of Christ's cause throughout the world has paramount claims upon the fruits of our industry.* The spread of the Bible, the instruction of the ignorant, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the earth, are ends of the highest and most exalted character. How ennobling to labour

* Psalm cxii.

for such objects! In dedicating largely of the means which are furnished us in providence to these purposes, we become co-workers with God, and enjoy the privilege which angels may envy us—of spreading the Redeemer's renowned fame throughout the nations, and of bringing the world into subjection to the Lord's Anointed. Christians should aim to render all their temporal pursuits subservient to the promotion of this blessed object. Inspired prediction assures us that at a future era of brightness and glory, thus it shall be. The abundance of the sea shall be converted to Christ. The gold of Tarshish shall be dedicated to him; and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring presents. The results will be joyful and most glorious. The "bells of the horses," and every pot in Jerusalem, shall be "holiness to the Lord," and the Redeemer's large and great dominion shall extend "from sea to sea," and from "the river to the ends of the earth." The youth of the church should reckon it their highest privilege to be called to take part in hastening forward this blessed consummation. They should make the establishment of Christ's kingdom a principal object in their worldly pursuits. With enlarged liberality they should readily contribute means for this purpose. Labouring for an end so glorious, they may expect a blessing upon their industry. Anticipating the happy results, they shall realize a peace in life, and a joy in death, unknown to others, in the reflection that they have had a part in an enterprize of love, which engaged the counsels of eternity, which brought the Son of God from heaven to earth, and which shall one day fill the whole world with songs of salvation.

Waiving the consideration of other ends, we observe, in fine, that the youthful professor should, according to the Saviour's direction, *make to himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*—by doing all the good in his power with the worldly means intrusted

to him—being an example to others of the pure and elevated benevolence of the Gospel. Here Christians are to stand forth in marked contrast to the world's selfishness. They should shew that they value earthly substance not as an end, but as a means of promoting God's glory and doing good; that they can labour and deny themselves, for the benefit of others; and that even in temporal pursuits, they have learned not to live to themselves, but to Him who died for them, and rose again. How beautiful and impressive would such examples be, in a world where such vast multitudes are the avowed worshippers of Mammon! Let the young study to be, in this respect, "living epistles, to be seen and read of all men." They would themselves be blessed in such a course. A large, liberal spirit is itself a blessing to its possessor, and the benefits that an example of this kind would confer upon the Church, and upon human society in general, are incalculable.

Sixthly, In earthly pursuits, let it always be borne in mind, that the time is approaching—and it may be near—*when we must part with all worldly possessions and interests, and render up our final account.* To one who was presuming upon lengthened prosperity, it was said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." In so short a period may we, too, be called to part with all earthly things. How miserable, if we have them for our only portion, or if we have been building upon them for satisfaction and happiness! Our true interest is to enter upon worldly pursuits, under the settled conviction that they are but *temporary and uncertain*—to manage them with the constant conviction, that we may, any moment, be called to relinquish them wholly,—and to seek to be prepared always for that account which we must certainly render of our stewardship. Above all, we should labour to secure *the true riches*—the possession that never fades away. The diligent pur-

suit of the heavenly inheritance will lessen, in our esteem, the value of earthly things. Affections set on things above will become more and more disengaged from the things of earth—and a treasure laid up in heaven will attract the heart thither, and will preserve it tranquil and fixed amidst the ever-shifting scenes of human life. In this spirit, the young will learn to live above the world, and to overcome it by faith. They will render earthly pursuits and possessions subservient to their grand concern—the salvation of the soul. They will pass through the world as a wilderness, and as strangers and pilgrims; and when parting from it, they will leave it without regret. Having served their generation, according to the will of God, they will cheerfully exchange the labours and trials of time for the substantial joys and inexhaustible treasures of eternity.

In conclusion, the young should be thoroughly impressed with the truth, that *true religion exerts the most favourable influence upon worldly avocations, and tends, in various ways, to ensure worldly prosperity.* It may not, it is true, conduct the pious man to worldly wealth or honour. But in every condition, blessings are upon the head of the righteous. Jacob, when a youth and an exile from his father's house, was blessed in the family of an unnatural kinsman; and Joseph, amidst the changeful scenes of an eventful life, experienced the Divine favour ministering to him preservation, and conducting him to distinction and honour. True religion to the young will purify the understanding, and exalt the intellect. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" "the knowledge of the Holy, that is understanding." It will preserve from vices that injure health, mar mental peace, and dissipate substance. It promotes health, builds up the reputation, and confers those principles and dispositions which have a tendency to conduct to the attainment and proper use of outward

things. Even infidels have been constrained to acknowledge the superior excellence of Christianity, and its adaptation to promote, in the most extensive sense, the prosperity and happiness of mankind. “No religion,” says Bolingbroke, “ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, as the Christian. The Gospel of Christ is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, benevolence, and universal charity. Supposing Christianity to be a human invention, it is the most amiable and useful invention that was ever imposed upon mankind for their good.” And Rousseau confesses, “that if all were perfect Christians, individuals would do their duty, the people would be obedient to the laws, the chiefs just, the magistrates incorrupt, the soldiers would despise death, and there would be neither vanity nor luxury in such a state.”

In the words of a distinguished living author,* even in relation to temporal interests and blessings, may we not say, “*What a happy world would this be, were Christians what they ought to be, and all men Christians!*” May it be your continual aim, youthful followers of the Lamb! to shine as lights in the world. May you study to conduct all your worldly engagements and pursuits, under the controlling and presiding influence of true religion! May you learn—“denying ungodliness and worldly lusts”—“to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world;” and may you find, in your own happy experience, that “godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come!”

* Dr. Wardlaw—Discourse on the “Christian Character.”

CHAPTER V.

SOCIAL RELATIONS, AND INFLUENCE OF THE YOUNG UPON SOCIETY.

That is a solemn and impressive declaration made by the Apostle Paul,* on which the youth of the church should frequently reflect, "*None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.*" The social principle is implanted in the human heart by the Author of our nature; and in the case of every person it will seek its appropriate exercise. The young begin early to give indications of the existence of this principle. It exerts a powerful influence upon their life and conduct, an influence for good or evil, affecting not individuals merely, but communities likewise; and that not at the present time only, but also throughout future generations. Whether the young think it or not, their character and conduct will affect the character and destinies of others. They themselves will gradually, but surely, contract a resemblance to those with whom they associate. The connexions which they form, will, to a great extent, tend to mould their character, and will be sources to them of happiness or misery, for this world and the next. The Spanish proverb is just, as it is of most extensive application, "*Tell me with whom thou goest, and I will tell thee who thou art.*"

The young, it has been observed, are hardly aware, in any case, of the influence which society has upon themselves, or of the power which they are destined to exercise upon others; and yet, considering the happiness or misery that are inseparably connected with this influence, there is hardly any subject which deserves to be pressed more frequently upon their seri-

* Romans xiv. 7.

ous consideration. Youthful professors require especially to be warned and counselled, in relation to the companions with whom they associate, and the influence which they exercise upon society. The world in which they live, and through which they pass to eternity is evil; and if they fully enter into its connexions, they will speedily assume its form and fashion. Their lot will be with the world, and having chosen their portion here, they will forfeit the eternal inheritance.

The enemy of souls employs evil companions as a frequent and most effective means of leading astray the simple, of withdrawing numbers who were baptized in the church from its fellowship, and of alluring them to destruction. It deserves, moreover, to be seriously considered that it is not possible for a professor of religion to live in the world, and to produce no effect upon society around him. Either he must exert an influence for good, or his conduct and example will be mischievous. By his calling, he is "the salt of the earth," and he acts as a purifying and preserving element upon society; or, as the salt that has "lost its savour," he is himself rejected, and others encouraged by him, and hardened in neglect, are drawn through him to share the same condemnation. In the view of an influence so important, and of results so momentous, we regard it as peculiarly incumbent to counsel the young in relation to their connexion with society, and to direct them in reference to the cultivation of a spirit, which shall render them benefactors of their species.

SECTION I.—*Companions to be chosen by the Young.*

God who implanted the social principle in man, and who requires his people to promote his glory in the world, as members of human society, has uttered many solemn and explicit declarations in his word,

in relation to the companionship which they are to cultivate. He has told his servants *whose* company they should choose, and *whose* they are to avoid. He has prescribed the nature of the intercourse which they are to maintain with others, and has, in the plainest terms, announced the consequences of obeying, or of disregarding the divine admonitions on this subject. The language of a saint is, "I am companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts ;"* and all that have received the mind of Christ, feel what the Psalmist utters in another place, "To the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight."† The way of transgressors and of the righteous is placed in the most marked contrast, and the young are counselled to avoid the least approach to the former, and to walk continually in the latter. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."‡ The prohibitions against associating with the wicked or the unworthy are frequent and most explicit; "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul." "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not. My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path."§ "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"|| These declarations, and many others of similar import, that are every where scattered throughout the Sacred Volume,

* Psalm cxix. 63. † Psalm cxvi. 8. ‡ Proverbs xiii. 20.

§ Proverbs iv. 14, 15. xxii. 24. i. 10, 15.

|| 2 Corinthians vi. 14, 17.

intimate how important God regards the companionship which his people form. They are as beacons set up to warn the young and inexperienced against the danger and ruin to which they are exposed from improper associations; and they are, at the same time, friendly guides, to direct the steps into the way of safety and peace. It might be sufficient that He who "knows what is in man," has thus plainly intimated his will, and has so frequently spoken on this subject, to lead all to be peculiarly guarded in relation to the companions which they should choose, and to be especially watchful against connexions that are ensnaring and ruinous. Had God not seen the danger to which youth are exposed in this quarter, He would not have been at so much pains to point it so plainly that he may run who reads. Had He not known the influence of society in moulding character, and the certain ruin to which inconsiderate youth are often brought, through the seductions of companions, He would not have uttered so many solemn warnings. The announcements of the Word accord with the universal experience of mankind; and attention to them will be of unspeakable advantage in preserving them from the way of the "simple who pass on, and are punished."

The children of Christian parents, and the youth who have made a religious profession, need to give the most earnest heed to these counsels of the Holy One. To them they are addressed with peculiar affection, "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee." They are exposed to dangers in some respects greater than others, as the great Enemy continually seeks an advantage against religion, by spreading snares for the feet of its professors; and his instruments are everywhere, and constantly at work, to draw away from the church to their company, those who are on Christ's side. The young of Christian families are, moreover, often *unsuspicious*;

and when to this it is added, that there are yielding principles in every heart, and that companions that tempt to neglect religion, or that lead astray from the paths of virtue, often present at first all that is pleasing to the youthful mind—that they have learned to flatter, and are practised to deceive; it will be seen how important it is to listen attentively to the counsels of heavenly wisdom, and early to employ them as maxims for the life and conduct.

The value of these Scriptural declarations will be better appreciated, when we advert, in the next place, to—

2. *The company which the young should carefully avoid.* As evil company are obviously to be reckoned the infidel, the immoral, and the profligate; and any association with such is so utterly repugnant to the whole tenor of the Scripture requirements, that it must be taken as implying the voluntary renunciation of Christian character, and a heart in love with wickedness. But, besides these, there are many others, who are most unsuitable and dangerous companions for the youth of Christian families. All who are *destitute of vital piety*, are to be regarded as dangerous company; and the visible neglect of religious duties is the evidence which should lead the young to avoid them. Such persons may be respectable in the world, pleasing in their manners, honourable and generous. But, while the heart is averse to the claims of religion, and the life is uninfluenced by its power, and opposed to its requirements, these qualities render them only the more seductive and dangerous. The volatile and confiding spirit of youth, their fondness of pleasure, and unsuspectingness of danger, render them peculiarly susceptible of injury from the frivolous and the gay; and they who, by their polished wit and facetious humour, excite the laugh, and are the delights of convivial parties, are frequently the successful instruments of ruin to many

young persons who had received a religious education. They are, in truth, the snares which the Destroyer lays to take the feet of the simple; and thousands are thus entangled, till escape becomes impossible. The young should be particularly on their guard against the solicitations of the irreligious. At whatever hazard—even though they should be called unsocial, or branded as morose and mean-spirited—they must avoid familiar intercourse with those who forget God, and contemn religion. An enemy to God can never be a friend to man; and they who would be religious, can never form friendships, or cultivate intercourse, however casual, with the ungodly, but at the imminent peril of denying the faith, and casting away from them the fear of God.

There is still another class against which the young, who would be on Christ's side, need to be warned, in choosing their companions. These are they who make some profession of religion, *but who do not manifest a Christian spirit, and who bring not forth spiritual fruits.* They were baptized in infancy, but they give no evidence of having recognized their baptismal vow, or of having given themselves to the Lord. They may be in the church, but they are barren branches there. They are formal or lukewarm in their profession, worldly in their spirit, and unprofitable in their conversation. A large portion of their intercourse with others consists in gossip, or scandal. Some of them, while following religion, have evidently their hearts in the world. Their conversation savours of the earth; they are fond of light company, or are given to amusements. They delight in dress and other vanities; and, in fine, they give no doubtful evidence, that they are "lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God." Association with such persons can not be formed or maintained without manifold danger to the young, who have vowed to consider religion the one thing needful. It will

blunt the edge of devotional feelings ; it will gradually undermine right principles ; and it generally has the baleful effect of bringing down to the same level, of inducing formality and lukewarmness in religion, and of assimilating to those with whom we consort—the unfruitful and hypocritical. There is need of much wisdom and discretion here. In a period when vital Christianity is low in the Church, and the Spirit's influences are in a great measure withdrawn, the young should be aware, that the most effectual way of weakening in their hearts religious impressions, and of rendering them careless and lifeless, is to love the company of those who pursue pleasure as their chief good, while they profess religion ; or of those who bring forth no living fruits in their profession. It is the judicious remark of Bolton, “ Throw a blazing firebrand into snow or rain, and its brightness and heat will be quickly extinguished ; so let the liveliest Christian plunge himself into sinful company, and he will soon find the warmth of his zeal abated, and the tenderness of his conscience injured.”

The young should seriously consider, before they commit themselves to such company, the great and manifold evils to which they will be thereby exposed. There is the strongest probability that you will become like your companions, and your character and conduct will be moulded after theirs. You may be insensible to such danger ; and at first, you may even positively disapprove of the courses which those whom you make your companions follow. You may think your faith too firm to be shaken, and your resolutions too powerful to be moved. But you may depend upon it, you are launched in a perilous course, when you court such society, and enter into such company. With habits but imperfectly formed, and a character tender and facile, how can you expect to stand where thousands have already fallen?

How will you be able to resist insinuations and influences, which find powerful allies in the corruptions of your own hearts, and which are among the most plausible and potent of the wiles of the enemy? The testimony of Him who knows what is in man is, that "*Evil communications corrupt good manners.*" Ensnared by wicked company, your esteem for religion, its truths, and duties, and privileges, will lessen. You will be led, step by step, into practices which are condemned in the Scriptures, and opposed to true Christianity; and you may at length be plunged into the gulf of loathsome immorality, and brought to sit down in the seat of the scorner. Temptations to neglect duty and commit sin, will acquire tenfold force, by being presented by those whom you have chosen as intimate friends. The torrent of evil example will carry you headlong, and you may be left to pursue courses of wickedness which you would once have shuddered to contemplate. Even when the companions which the young choose are not the openly wicked, when they are the thoughtless, and those who have no relish for serious godliness, the danger is great, the influence upon the growth of piety in the heart is frequently most deleterious. What are usually termed "harmless follies," are in reality sinful pleasure. The soul delighting in them is lifted up to vanity, and speedily becomes cold to the Saviour and his love. The relish for divine things is weakened, and active exertions in religion are relinquished. Devotion becomes burdensome, and devotional habits are laid aside. The ways of declension and apostacy are always downhill, and neglect of commanded duties, most commonly, and often speedily, is followed by acts of overt and flagrant transgression. The bible neglected, secret prayer unattended to, the house of God relinquished, and pious friends forsaken, are the first indications that the individual has forgotten solemn vows and

departed from God: the next steps are, in general, immorality in practice, and proclaimed hostility to religion.

The termination of such a course is fearful. To become a mere formalist in religion, to be barren and unfruitful in the ways of the Lord is at once to be chargeable with aggravated sin, and to undergo the punishment of sin. It is a sad judgment, to be given up to a spirit of backsliding; and few sentences are more awful than that which is recorded against him who is allured into the way of sinful or careless companions, "*Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.*" Temporal interests are often seriously affected by means of evil company, and habits are contracted which inevitably lead to their destruction. Finally, it should never be forgotten that the end of these courses is "*death.*" The "companions of fools shall be destroyed." In righteous retribution, it is allotted that those who sin together shall suffer together, and those whose characters are assimilated on earth by companionship in wickedness, shall be mutual tormentors amid the punishments of eternity. The *tares* are *bound in bundles* when they are cast into the furnace of wrath. Multitudes, vast beyond expression, have been ruined for both worlds, by the influence of evil company.* Not unfrequently their names and characters are recorded with infamy in this world, and they are set up as beacons to warn youth of the danger of friendship in the ways of sin, and of association with transgressors. And, amidst the unspeakable woes of the future state of punishment, what heart can conceive the aggravated miseries of

* James, in his "Christian Father's Present," remarks, "In a large and populous town, where Providence has fixed my lot, (Birmingham) I have had an extensive sphere of observation; and I give it as my decided conviction and deliberate opinion, that improper associates are the most successful means which are employed by Satan for the ruin of men's souls."

those who, having forsaken God—"the Guide of their youth"—and disregarding his counsels, choose their lot with his enemies, and who shall be condemned to suffer with them the fierceness of his anger for ever? Let the young ponder these things solemnly and frequently now; let them constantly shun the path of the destroyers, and never, in any instance, take for their companions those who discover no delight in true religion.

3. *The Company to be chosen by the young* deserves to be noticed.

On a certain memorable occasion, when some of the apostles had been injuriously treated by the Jewish rulers, and when they were dismissed from an unrighteous tribunal, it is said, "*they went to their own company,*" and they forthwith engaged in acts of devotion; and forgetting their trials, rejoiced that they "were counted worthy to suffer shame" for the name's sake of Christ. Subsequently, when Peter was delivered, by a miraculous interposition, from prison and from death, and was conducted by an angel out of the very verge of danger, as soon as he became conscious of his deliverance, he went to the assembly for prayer of his companions in the faith and patience of Christ. The principle thus indicated is characteristic of all who belong to the spiritual family of God, and the example presented in these instances is worthy of constant imitation. The young who profess religion should take true disciples for their "own company." Among them their affections should find rest and satisfaction. They should love them "with a pure heart fervently." They should cultivate habitual intercourse with them; and whether in joy or in sorrow, in labour or in suffering, they should repair to them as their chosen society, as tried and much-loved friends. Joys are enhanced and increased, by being shared with those whom we love; and sorrows

will be greatly alleviated and lightened by the sympathies of fellow-disciples.

As the young, when setting out in a Christian profession, should be aware that the number of true disciples is but few in the world, and should be particularly careful in the choice of companions, a few hints in relation to the company which they should choose may not be unsuitable.

The grand principle which should guide them in this matter is, *to take those for companions, by whom they may expect to be improved in all spiritual attainments*, by whom they may be benefited for this world, and for the world to come. Such are the truly pious; and whether they are those who, being in early life, have dedicated to God the dew of their youth, or are venerable for the crown which heavenly wisdom has placed on their old age, they are worthy to be taken as chosen friends. The former will be valuable helps to the young, as similarity of age will lead to familiarity and confidence, and the warmth of youthful affections and juvenile activity will excite to useful labours; and intercourse with the latter will confer the benefits of godly experience, and will attract by the example of tried virtue. Aged disciples may, by their prayers, instructions, and example, be of singular use to the young; and it may be safely affirmed, that the youth who have grown in grace, and been useful in their day, have all set a high value upon intercourse with aged believers.

Again, the *humble and self-denied* are the proper companions for youthful professors. Humility and self-denial are among the first and most important lessons of our holy religion. If we do not learn, and habitually practise them, we cannot be Christ's disciples. They are, however, contrary to our nature; and the sanguine temperament of youth combines with allurements in the world to render these dispositions of no easy attainment. As subsidiary to the work of

Divine grace, proper companions are of much value in calling into exercise such a temper of mind, and in giving it the force of a habit. There is something peculiarly attractive and lovely in the flower that blooms in the shade; and the "lily of the valley" is beautiful for the delicacy of its tints, and for the position in which it is found. By associating with the humble, pride of heart, which is indigenious in human nature, is rooted out, and humility, a lovely exotic, a plant of paradise, will take its place, and shed upon the whole character a delightful fragrance. Habits of self-denial are greatly strengthened by associating with those who have learned to practise this disposition. How important, therefore, is it to have the force of the example of familiar friends to impel us to the cultivation of the chief of virtuous dispositions!

Furthermore, the companions which the young will find profitable, are those who *cherish habitual reverence for Divine institutions, and who practise benevolence toward men*. They love the sanctuary; they converse daily with the word; they value prayer; they improve opportunities; and they have a heart to love all men, and to do them good. They are fearers of God, and benefactors of men. There is an eminent advantage in going to God's house in company with the wise and the devoted. God "delights in the gates of Zion, more than the dwellings of Jacob." Our companions should be chosen with the view of enjoying through them "*the communion of saints*;" and they with whom we most frequently converse should be travellers to Mount Zion, who will animate us in the way, and impart to us spiritual benefit in the social exercises of religion. The ascetic, or the selfish, can never confer any large measure of strength or comfort upon those who associate with them. The heart of a companion glowing with love to God and man will warm the hearts of others who come in contact with it. "Iron sharpeneth iron, and so doth a man his friend."

And lastly, the *devoted, and those who have the lively hopes of future bliss*, are especially worthy to be taken as chosen companions. Singleness of heart is an eminent quality: and a heart and treasure in heaven are of inestimable benefit to their possessor, and to such as enjoy his confidence, and share his friendship. Devotedness to Christ and his service cannot exist without leading the person who is so distinguished to desire and to labour to bring others to be devoted too. In such company, a person of a right spirit breathes as in a purer atmosphere. Intercourse with zealous servants of Christ elevates above the earth, and its low aims and pursuits, and raises even above the ordinary measure of Christian attainment. Things heavenly and eternal appear in their immense magnitude and importance, and as objects of powerful attraction. Associating with such companions, the young will learn to live above the world, and to overcome it by faith. Their characters will be purified and exalted, and they will be enabled to say with the Apostle, "*Our conversation is in heaven, whence also we look for the Saviour.*"

The views which have been given about the choice of companions become doubly important when applied to the choice of a companion for life—when referred to the marriage state. This subject would require a separate and lengthened consideration. For the present, a passing hint or two may suffice. The Scripture injunction is most plain and positive, in reference to the formation of the conjugal relation among Christians. "BE YE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS."* Believers are elsewhere enjoined to "*marry only in the Lord.*" This is the

* 2 Corinthians vi. 14. The negative command here given is a prohibition of intimate fellowship with idolators and unbelievers in general, but there can be no doubt that it forbids the marriage of Christians with unbelievers—the conjugal relations being often represented under the figurative expression of *yoking together*.

direct Scripture command on the subject—neglect of which has been productive of incalculable evils in families, as well to the parties themselves, as to their posterity.

Many weighty and most solemn considerations enforce obedience to this precept upon those who propose to enter into the conjugal relation. The marriage of professors with the irreligious is represented in the Bible as the source of innumerable evils. The intermarriage of the people of God with the descendants of Cain filled the old world with wickedness, and brought the flood upon the ungodly. Strange wives turned away Solomon's heart; and the reason assigned why many of the kings of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord is, that by marriage they had entered into idolatrous connexions. The evils that flow from professors of religion forming improper conjugal unions are so numerous and fearful, that they may be justly regarded as the punishment for violating a plain and explicit precept. In any case, it is very sad for a professor of religion to become voluntarily connected with one who has no love to religion, so as to become "one flesh;" but in the face of a positive Divine prohibition, it is aggravated criminality, and the punishment is, in consequence, peculiarly marked and severe. The decline of piety, the neglect of domestic religion, and sometimes total apostacy, mark at once the danger, and show God's indignation against disobedience. Disappointment of hopes—strife in families—and the irreligion and ruin of children are frequently the melancholy results of forming improper marriages, overlooking the requirements of God's law. In general, it may be affirmed that, when the marriage relation is thus improperly formed, the hope that the religious party shall improve the other is exceedingly faint, or is often doomed to bitter disappointment—and spiritual duties connected with the conjugal state cannot be suitably performed. The

blight of heaven often follows such connexions, and lasting and serious injury accrues to individuals and families. Let the young be particularly guarded on this subject. In a case where youthful passion too generally gets the start of judgment, and persons are prone to follow the impulse of inclination before asking counsel of the Lord, there is need of no ordinary caution. The conjugal state is honourable, and brings to the parties many comforts, when formed in the fear of the Lord, and with a single eye to God's glory and blessing. Let youthful professors who propose to enter into it be especially jealous of themselves. Let them ask direction from on high, and carefully follow it, and thus may they expect the blessing. Companions for life—both one in Christ—will be mutual helpers of each other's joy. Domestic happiness is often the reward of obedience; and to be "heirs together of the grace of life," is the high recompense of those who have been careful to marry only in the Lord.

4. Two or three plain additional directions, *in relation to the manner of maintaining intercourse with others, so as to render companionship profitable*, may be of benefit to the young.

First of all, *Beware of forming hasty friendships*. A maxim of one of the wise men of Greece was, "That that person was to be accounted happy, who had found, during life, one true friend." While it must be admitted that the power of Christianity has effected what the most refined heathen philosophy never could accomplish; still the young should lay it down as a fixed principle, that it is not easy to find friends that are worthy to be trusted in all cases, or that will remain steadfast under every trial. The young should watch against an excessive fondness for company. They should firmly resolve rather to live and walk alone, than to join themselves to improper companions. They should learn to delight in retire-

ment, as furnishing opportunities for reflection, and study, and devotion. In domestic society, and in intercourse with relatives, they should look for satisfaction and delight; and here they should study both to derive and confer benefit. Beyond this endeared circle let them range with special caution. Let them select their companions with watchful care, and be especially guarded, lest their affections or passions should get the start of judgment, and lead them, without due consideration, into connexions that are improper. The Saviour's maxim is, "Beware of men," and this is peculiarly important to the young, in reference to the choice of companions.

Secondly, The safest way in intercourse *with others, is to be reserved at first*; and afterwards, to *become free and confidential*, when you have made trial of the worth of those with whom you associate. You will thus avoid committing yourself to those from whom you may afterwards see reason to withdraw. You will secure your retreat from connexions which may turn out to be unsuitable. Your attachment will be stronger, and more productive of mutual benefit, when it arises from ascertained worth; and, based on judgment and experience, it may reasonably be expected to yield satisfaction and happiness.

Thirdly, *Remember to consult diligently those in whom you may repose implicit confidence, in relation to the choice of companions.* Your parents, who have your welfare at heart, have a paramount right to be asked on the subject. The young are very prone to overlook parental advice in a matter of this kind; and not unfrequently, the friendship formed without it, or even with a consciousness that godly parents would disapprove of it, is a source of bitter and lasting misery. Attend, likewise, to the counsels of a faithful minister; and, as you have opportunity, solicit them for your guidance, before your affections

are engaged, and you have contracted intimacies which you may find it difficult afterwards to dissolve. Above all, consult the directions of the inspired Word, and seek counsel from God. He alone can preserve you from all possible danger, and can infallibly direct your steps. Let your companions be chosen, and your friendships formed, as under his All-seeing eye, and so as to meet his approval. Let the friends of God be your bosom friends. Thus will you walk with wise men, and yourself become wiser; and your fellowship with the excellent of the earth will be an eminent means of conducting you to the highest of all privileges—fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

Lastly, You should aim to render your intercourse with companions *profitable to them and to yourself*. As there is danger to the young in an excessive fondness for company, so there is no little danger *in company*, of receiving injury ourselves, and of inflicting injury upon others. The social habit, if not under proper restraint, may lead to the dissipation of time, to a taste for amusements and frivolous engagements; and may thus hinder secret devotion, and unfit the mind for the serious and active duties of life. The young, by indulging the social propensity to excess, or by not watching to turn social intercourse to some profitable account, may become tempters to their fellows, and may themselves receive irreparable injury. Things which are in themselves lawful are frequently inexpedient; and there are few things that have a greater tendency to enervate the mind, undermine vital piety, and lead into courses of dissipation and frivolity than the intercourse of companions, when it is not conducted on strictly religious principles. The author is acquainted with a case, in which an estimable minister, on beginning

* See 1 John i. 3.

his labours in a large town, was drawn to take part frequently in evening convivial parties, which were held in the houses of his people, for the avowed purpose of religious conversation; but from which, he contracted the love of intoxicating liquors, until his constitution gave way, and he came to a premature grave, leaving behind him a widow and children unprovided for.

Let the young consider social intercourse as a talent which they are under solemn obligations to occupy for the honour of Christ, and the benefit of others. The observation of the excellent Hervey when, towards the close of life, he had discontinued his visits to the houses of the neighbouring gentry, and he gave as his reason, "I am resolved to go into no company that does not afford entertainment for my Master, as well as myself"—will form a good rule for your conduct. Be select in your companions, and when going into company, seek to bring the great Master of assemblies with you. Guard against frivolous conversation, and avoid, as a most pernicious habit to yourselves and others, scandal and idle gossip. The conversation of Christians in company should be *spiritual*, such as characterized the fearers of the Lord in the days of Malachi, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his name."* The speech should be "with grace, seasoned with salt." The tongue, which is man's glory, should be employed in honouring God, edifying the hearers, and exciting and animating the hearts of Zion's travellers.

If any difficulty is experienced in keeping out vain conversation, or in bringing in suitable discourse, a good rule is to introduce the Scriptures. Conversa-

* Malachi iii. 16.

tion upon the great mysteries revealed in the bible will always be found profitable. The "decease" to be accomplished "at Jerusalem," was the theme of conversation of the most august assembly that ever convened on earth—that which met on the Mount of Transfiguration. While the assembled disciples talked together of Christ's resurrection, the Saviour himself appeared in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you." Intercourse on such themes will still minister grace to the hearers, and will introduce to that highest of privileges—the gracious presence of Christ in the assemblies of his people.

The intercourse of the young in company should, finally, be *prayerful*, and should *excite to works of usefulness*. Association, to be blessed, must be sanctified by the word and by prayer. Companionship should be improved as presenting favourable opportunities for united prayer. The fellowships formed and maintained by frequent intercourse at the mercy-seat promise to be lasting and happy. There, too, good designs cherished will propel to a course of holy and vigorous action. Christians in general, and the young especially, should consider, when they meet, what the Master—whom they profess to love—would have them to do. In united counsel and combination there is strength; and it is incalculable what benefits might accrue to the church and the world, were those who have made a Christian profession to improve their meetings together, by concerting plans for the revival of true religion, and for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world; and were they to go forth with the warmth imparted by fraternal intercourse vigorously to execute them. If these views appear too serious, if such intercourse seems too strict, we have only to remind the young, that they cannot be Christ's, if they do not aim in all places and on all occasions, to act for him; and to ask them to ponder the scriptural maxims that should regulate

all Christian intercourse, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel," "For our conversation is in heaven, whence also we look for the Saviour."*

SECTION II.—*Public Spirit—Engagement in Benevolent Exertions.*

A fundamental law of our holy religion requires all who profess it to live not to themselves. Universal benevolence is the spirit which it breathes, and its prevailing character. This spirit Christians are required to display. They are set up as "lights in the world," and as "the salt of the earth," and they are commanded to "do good to all men as they have opportunity, especially to them who are of the household of faith."†

The entire absence of a public spirit certainly indicates that the person has not imbibed the mind of Christ. Its weakness will show that vital religion is not prospering; and to have no hand in benevolent efforts, will prove that the heart is cold in relation to a work which must ever engage the believer's fervent prayers and ceaseless activities—the promotion of the Redeemer's glory in the earth. On the contrary, wherever personal religion is thriving, the heart will be enlarged; a public spirit will be cherished and displayed; and rising above selfish interests and aims, the individual will discover that he lives for others more than to himself, and that the interests of Christ's kingdom are to him far above all worldly ends, and all private personal concerns.

While a public spirit and benevolent exertion should constantly characterize the disciple of Christ, there

* Philippians i. 29; iii. 16.

† Galatians vi. 10.

are particular seasons—such as the present—when he is specially required to be thus distinguished. Opportunities, numerous and varied, are now presented for spreading the truth, and vigorous exertions and costly sacrifices are needed, for carrying forward the work. A great cause is pending between Christ and the world; and there can be no neutrality in relation to it, for he that is not with Christ is against him. Vast multitudes of the human family are in a neglected, perishing condition; and the Christian forfeits his claim to be considered a follower of the Saviour, who can look on, with callous indifference, and do nothing to save them. Ours is a day of excitement and energetic action. The field has been clearing for an engagement between the great contending parties, of the most singular character, and the most solemn results; and the hosts of darkness, and the friends of truth are rapidly taking their sides, and falling into ranks. The last half century has witnessed the origin and progress of schemes of Christian benevolence, that embrace in their wide extent the whole of the world's population. The miserable condition of men without the Gospel has been revealed; and every year the cry, addressed to the church from tribes of perishing men, has become louder and more importunate, "Come over and help us." The work to be accomplished—the relief of moral wretchedness at our doors—the revival and extension of the Church, and the evangelization of Jew and Gentile, is of such magnitude, as to demand the consecration of all the energies and resources of the church. The importance of the *division of labour* is, moreover, now so generally admitted, and the nature of the work itself is so fitted to furnish employment for talents of every kind, that there is ample scope for all, and none can refuse to take a part in this enterprise of mercy, without incurring aggravated criminality.

If ever there was a time in which the church was

more loudly called than another to "arise and shine, because her glory was come," that time is the present. If there ever was a period which specially requires that Christians should shake off sloth; rise above selfishness; live not to themselves, and learn to spend and be spent for the promotion of Christ's cause, it is the day in which we live; when truth and error are struggling for the mastery, and the King of Zion is coming forth to claim the nations all for his inheritance. Neglect this work, and not only will the guilt of disobedience to the plainest and most solemn commands of the Saviour be incurred, but doors of opportunity will be closed, and the enemy, aroused to tenfold activity, will triumph. Arise, on the contrary, to a proper sense of the duty which present privileges and obligations demand, and a mighty impulse will be given to the propagation of the truth, and results the most salutary and glorious will follow self-denied and sustained exertions.

Earnestly desiring that the rising youth of the Church may be led to take an influential part in the work to which they are specially called in their day, we shall notice briefly *the distinguishing features of a public spirit*, and then *the obligations* of the young to cultivate and display it.

1. A public spirit, first of all, is *opposed to all selfishness and indolence*.

We must willingly deny ourselves for the good of others. We must relinquish ease, and part with what may appear to be necessary for ourselves, and choose a course of toil and painful sacrifices, in maintaining a cause which we esteem better than life. Feeling that we are not our own, and that nothing that we have is properly ours, we cheerfully surrender all to Him, *whose we are, and whom we serve*, and regard it as our great privilege to be employed in his work. In the light of the Saviour's glory, which we seek to

advance, we will appear as nothing; and embracing the whole family of mankind in the range of an ample benevolence, our own private concerns and interests will be felt to be of little moment. Rather, we shall account it our highest interest to be servants of all, and to become all things to all men for their good, and to live only to Him who loved us, and gave himself for us. A public spirit is such a spirit of self-denial and unceasing activity, as influenced the great doctrinal Apostle, when he declared, "To the Jew, became I as a Jew, &c. I am debtor both to the Jews, and to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; both to the wise and unwise." "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." *

2. A public spirit is exercised in taking *a deep interest in all that concerns the house of God, in all that pertains to the condition of fellow-men, and to the Redeemer's glory.* The emphatic declaration of the Saviour, expressive of his own jealous concern for the Sanctuary was, "THE ZEAL OF THINE HOUSE HATH EATEN ME UP." The person who has, in any measure, imbibed the mind of Christ, will grieve for the corruptions of the church, mourn over her divisions and desolations, and seek her prosperity above his chief joy. Whatever of personal effort and outward means, he has it in his power to contribute for the house of God, he will willingly furnish. He will labour to heal the breaches of the Sanctuary; and as all blessings are dispensed to our world by means of the spread of pure religion, and in connexion with the ordinances of the church, he will seek the universal establishment of the church. He will not take rest to himself, and he will give the Lord no rest, "till He establish and make Jerusalem

* Romans i. 14. Acts xx. 24.

a praise in the earth." The distresses and wants of humanity cannot but affect the heart of a good man; and a person of a public spirit will not only learn to feel for others' woe, but will be prompted to active exertions to relieve them. Where there is wrong to be redressed, or suffering to be alleviated, he will be ready to give himself to the service. The injuries of the slave, the groans of the oppressed, the wants of the needy will affect his heart; and he will stand prepared to devote his time, and to contribute his substance and his personal efforts to mitigate or terminate the miseries of fellow-men. Towards those in prison, and suffering for the truth's sake, he feels and acts as bound with them; and in whatever form human misery meets the view, he is constrained to energetic action, in endeavouring to lighten the load, remembering that he himself also is in the body. And as moral miseries are immeasurably greater and more destructive than those which are material and outward, true benevolence will aim chiefly to apply moral and spiritual remedies for the maladies which sin has caused, and to banish sin from the world. It will labour to pluck up the root, and thus to destroy the poison-tree, and remove all its baleful fruits. It will try to cast the purifying salt into the fountain, that thus the waters may be healed, and that there may be no more barren land or death. Genuine Christian benevolence will find ample range in the work of instructing the ignorant, in seeking the removal of great systems of error and idolatry, and in diffusing the light of heavenly truth throughout the world: and in other departments of the enterprise of mercy, the man of a public spirit will seek and obtain congenial employment. It is "more blessed to give than to receive." This will be assumed as a fundamental maxim with those who have the spirit of true Christian philanthropy, and their whole lives will be its constant and appropriate illustration.

3. A public spirit is, in fine, *conformity to the example of Christ*. His was unwearied, devoted, self-sacrificing benevolence. His bowels of compassion yearned for the afflicted and the wretched: He was frequent in scenes of sorrow, and suffering, and bereavement; around him were often collected groups of the diseased, labouring under various maladies, and He healed them all. He had compassion upon the multitudes, when they were in want, and though He himself was often an hungered, He opened the stores of his benevolence liberally, and supplied them. His journeys on foot through the land of Judea, his manifold privations, his enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself, and all the complicated sufferings to which He willingly submitted, when prosecuting his mission of love, attested the lofty benevolence that characterized the Man, our Elder Brother. He has left us an example that we should follow his steps. In the life and character of Christ is the pure, perfect model of benevolence, and philanthropy, which, while it displays the heart of God towards sinful, miserable human beings, embraces in its expansive regards man's most important interests, the sufferings of his body, the evils of his outward condition, the moral diseases and wants of his soul, and his immortal hopes and destinies. What a lovely copy to transcribe! This spotless model, Christians are called to imitate; and these are unquestionably the most ennobled of the species, who are most nearly conformed to its prominent features, and who follow the Saviour in the public spirit which He so wonderfully displayed, 'in a life of pure and self-denying benevolence.

1. The OBLIGATIONS which lie upon the youth of the Church to cultivate a public spirit, and to engage actively in works of benevolence, are numerous and weighty. The maxim of the devoted COTTON MATHER, deserves to be adopted as a settled

principle of great value, by all Christian youth, in entering on a religious profession, "*A power and opportunity to do good, not only gives a right to the doing of it, but makes the doing of it a duty.*" This power and opportunity you have, and for their use you are solemnly responsible. To you have been entrusted, not one, but many talents. Your early dedication and Christian instruction, the Bible which from childhood has been put into your hands, and your connexion with the Church of Christ—these require that you should bear much fruit to God, and that you should be extensively useful to men. Within the Church, your consistent example should lead others to confess the power of true religion, and your zeal should provoke many. In the world, you should shine as lights; and you will remember that when Christians are enjoined to be "perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect," the direction is enforced by the example of the Divine benevolence. God sends his rain, and causes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, upon the just and the unjust. The young should early "determine to do all the good they can, and to labour to leave the world better than they found it."*

Limited influence, under a right direction, will frequently be productive of most salutary effects; and holy resolutions formed early, and after due deliberation, have often left a permanent impression upon the character, and led to the execution of works of lasting utility. Of this we have a striking example in the justly-celebrated JONATHAN EDWARDS, whose remarkable "*Resolutions,*" already referred to, may be said to contain the germ of his future eminence. In a less distinguished, but still important rank, may be mentioned HARLAN PAGE, of America, whose early lively impressions of the power of Divine truth, and

* James's Christian Father's Present—p. 223.

whose youthful resolutions to be wholly devoted to Christ, impelled him to a career of humble but extensive usefulness for which hundreds—the fruits of his self-denied and unwearied labours—had reason to bless God.”*

2. The young, should, moreover, consider that it is of the highest consequence that a *spirit of active benevolence should be cherished and exercised early*. It has been observed even about little children, that if they manifest a selfish disposition early, they are rarely distinguished for generosity or benevolence in future life. Youth is the appropriate season for cultivating a public spirit; and if this fair flower does not appear then, in few cases will it flourish or produce fruit afterwards. Let the youthful professor be selfish or indolent, and he will rarely give himself afterwards to make sacrifices for the good of others, or enter with alacrity upon a course of benevolent exertion. To be a blessing in the world when in it, and to be regretted and lamented when removed from it, is an honourable object of youthful ambition. It has been beautifully remarked, “Selfishness is its own curse—it is a starving vice. The man that *does* no good, *gets* none. He is like the heath in the desert, neither yielding fruit, nor seeing when good cometh—a stunted, dwarfish, miserable shrub.”†

3. Consider that, as professed disciples of Christ, *you are placed in the world for the purpose of doing*

* The Memoirs of Thomas Cranfield, and Sarah Martin, in humble life; and of the Countess of Huntingdon, and Mrs. Fry, in a more exalted station, supply striking instances of genuine Christian philanthropy and devotedness. The two former are given in the publications of the Tract Society; and the principal outlines of the character and labours of all the four, and of other excellent individuals, are presented in “*James’s Earnest Church*,” a work which deserves to be attentively read and seriously pondered by the members of the Church. It will amply repay a diligent and frequent perusal.

† James’s Christian Father’s Present—p. 226.

good, and there are numberless occasions in which a spirit of benevolence may be exercised. Christians are redeemed *out* of the world; but they are placed in “this present evil world,” that they may exemplify the Divine benevolence, and serve their generation by the will of God. With the Gentile world, bowing down to dumb idols—the Jewish people still in unbelief—the votaries of Antichrist wondering after the beast—and multitudes of the ignorant, and unconverted, and immoral in Christian lands—what loud calls to benevolent exertion are presented to the Christian? In view of all this moral misery, and surrounded by the sufferings of humanity, and by the desolations of the sanctuary—with the ignorant to be instructed—the wretched to be relieved—and the Church to be revived—how can a person pretend to be a follower of Christ, and remain selfish or apathetical? Young disciples! you should consider it as your errand into the world to do all the good in your power. You should labour to turn many to righteousness, and you should feel, that if you act differently, you forfeit all claim to Christian character, and are unworthy to wear the Christian name. A selfish Christian is an anomaly. A “slothful servant,” who hides his talent in the earth, and aims not to benefit others, is pronounced a “wicked servant.” Seek that your character may be free from the least imputation of this vice. By the manifestation of a public spirit, aim to show yourselves worthy of that Master, whose name alone is excellent; and declare, by continual benevolent efforts, that you are employed in the works of which He so much approves, that you have chosen the course in which He so greatly delights.

4. *The highest interest and honour of the young, are inseparably connected with a public spirit, and with benevolent exertion. There is the “luxury of doing good;” and the happiness that flows from the exer-*

cise of genuine benevolence, is of the purest and most ennobling kind. "To speak truth, and to do good," were, in the esteem of the heathen, most godlike qualities. "Virtue," it has been said, "is its own reward;" and it rarely fails to bring with it a present recompense. The consciousness of living, not to one's self, but to Him to whom we owe all; to relieve the distressed, and enjoy the blessing of him that was ready to perish, and to witness any fruit arising from the seeds of benevolence that were sown, in self-denial and tears, furnish a richer enjoyment, than all the possessions of the world can confer. In doing good, we become "co-workers with God." We co-operate in the plans of the Divine benevolence; and a portion of the blessedness which is allotted to faithful servants enjoyed here, is the happy result. This, the benevolent Redeemer taught his disciples, is at once true blessedness and honour, "Whether is greater he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? but I am among you as one that serveth." "It shall not be so among you, but he that is greatest among you, let him be your minister." Compared with the honour of turning one sinner to God, or of spreading the truth, and advancing the Redeemer's glory, how mean and contemptible are all the distinctions of rank among men; all the accomplishments of the gay, all the applause of the learned, or the powerful!

5. We only mention farther, that probably no exertions, made in a right spirit, for the advancement of God's glory, and the benefit of fellow-men, however feeble, ever fail to *yield some precious fruits*. The Divine assurance, when diligence is enjoined, is, "*Your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*" "*Ye shall reap in due time, if ye faint not.*" God owns the work of faith, and labour of love of his servants, and he is not unfaithful to forget them. The man of a public spirit, who lives not to himself, enjoys a

present reward in his own bosom, and blessings from on high often distinguish his lot. The promises contained in the xli. and cxii. psalms, are fulfilled to him and his seed after him. By "liberal things" he stands. What he gives to the poor, is regarded as "lent to the Lord," and it shall be repaid to him afterwards, in double and treble measure.

In the field of benevolent exertion, we sow in hope; and though we cannot expect to reap so soon as we have sown, we may certainly calculate upon the promised harvest. The "day of small things" must never be despised; and we must, like the husbandman, have patience in waiting for the return. But it will assuredly come, and though a different hand may reap, from that which sowed, yet the promise is that "they that sow and they that reap shall rejoice together." Men of a public spirit who engage actively in God's work receive precious fruit in various ways. The objects of benevolence whom they have aided or relieved, as with Job, rise up and bless them. Evils that had long existed are lessened or banished—works are set on foot, for the revival of the church and the benefit of the world, which go forward, scattering blessings around them, and attracting around them an increasing, holy instrumentality; and prospects of extended usefulness are opened up, which gladden the heart.* God usually owns

* "Perhaps every proposal that may be made will be like a stone falling into a pool: one circle and service will produce another, till they extend, who can tell how far? Those who devote themselves to good devices, and who duly observe their opportunities to do good, usually find a wonderful increase of their opportunities. The gracious providence of God affords this recompense to his diligent servants, he will multiply their opportunities of being serviceable; and when ingenious men have used themselves to a little contrivance in pursuing the best intentions, their ingenuity will sensibly improve, and there will be more expansion in their diffusive applications. Among all the dispensations of a special providence in the government of the world, none

the works of men that have a mind to work, that cherish the spirit of devotedness, and that co-operate in his plans of benevolence. Their designs are accepted, and their labours are blessed, when those of greater mental power, and more extensive worldly influence, prove abortive and yield no valuable fruits. The consciousness of having done something in one's day to benefit the church, and to leave the world better than we found it, is a great reward. The works of God's faithful servants follow them, when they die in the Lord. They furnish the evidence of their acceptance—they shall be honourably mentioned in the judgment—and they are the measure of their future glorious reward. How exalted the sentence of final approval, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" How bright the glory, and ennobling the honour, "They that be wise shall shine as the stars, and they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever!"

We offer a few *plain hints* concerning the cultivation and manifestation of a public spirit. The young are in danger not only of neglecting the proper season, but of wasting the energies of their minds in idle wishes, or abortive plans, and of losing their pains by desultory efforts.

1. To cherish a public spirit, and be instrumental in doing good, the young should betimes consider seriously *their talents and opportunities*, and what work may be specially required of them, and they

is less interrupted than the accomplishment of that word, "Unto him that hath shall be given." I will say this, O useful man! take this for thy motto, "*Habenti dabitur*"—'To him that hath shall be given—and in a lively use of thy opportunities to do good, see how remarkably it will be accomplished. See what accomplishment of that word will at last surprise thee, 'Though thy beginning be small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase.'"—*Cotton Mather's Essays to Do Good*—p. 52, 53.

should thoroughly betake themselves to its performance. They should dread lest they be found loiterers or slothful. They should aim to do good. They should frequently ponder the inquiry, "What is there that I may do for the service of the glorious Lord, and for the welfare of those for whom I ought to be concerned?"* In general, it will be found that where such a spirit of enquiry is entertained, and when such opportunities and circumstances are duly considered, the person will either be directed into a new path of benevolence, untrodden by others, or will be instrumental in effecting something which others have not accomplished.

2. *Be fertile in expedients to do good, and always ready for any work which may be presented.* Consider your time, and opportunities, the numerous claims of Christ's cause, and of those whom you may benefit. There is work enough for all, and for each. The divine direction is, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."† We must sow plentifully, if we would reap plentifully. Should we be disappointed of fruit in one work, let us betake ourselves to another; and what our hand finds to do, let us do it with alacrity, and do it with our might. In general, opportunities will not be wanting to men of a public spirit. We must never excuse ourselves from engaging in a good work on the ground that it is not the piece of service which we could have wished. Our rule is, when God calls, and his cause demands our service, to say with all readiness, "Lord, here am I, send me."

Our Lord's beautiful illustration applies here. Luke xvii. 7, 8, 9, 10. He here impressively teaches

* Cotton Mather's *Essays to Do Good*.—p. 51.

† Eccles. xi. 6.

that our Divine Master has for his servants, and for the same servants different pieces of work—in the field—in the house—in personal attendance upon himself; and that their duty is to hold themselves always ready for any service to which He calls, and to do it in the lowliest self-denial, and that they are to expect the full reward only when their work shall have been completed.

3. A principal feature of a right public spirit is *genuine and unaffected humility*. If we would do good, we must be willing to take the lowest place in the work of benevolence. We will rejoice in the benevolent exertions of others: in the work itself, and not in the applause and fame of it; we will seek pleasure, and, like the forerunner of our Lord, we will say, with gladness of heart, when we see our Master's cause advancing, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" The holy angels, who are constantly employed in executing their Lord's pleasure, make no mention of their works. They veil their faces and cover their feet, while, with expanded wing, they hasten to perform the Divine commandments. How much greater reason have we, who mingle impurity with our best services, to make no mention of our works, to claim no honour on account of them, and to confess when we have done all, "*we are unprofitable servants, we have done but what was our duty to do!*"

4. Finally, those who would receive the reward of the faithful servant, must not shrink from *danger*, or be discouraged by *difficulty*; and they must *resolutely persevere to the end*. It is the observation of John Newton, that hardly any work has been begun, which is calculated to be of use in the world, but the enemy has thrown difficulties in the way of its execution. Trials and impediments are to be expected whenever we set about any work that tends to advance God's glory, or to benefit fellow-men. Yet we must never

hold back, or give over, because of these. They are oftentimes permitted to test our spirits; and if we relinquish our work because of difficulties, it will be the sad evidence that our heart was not in it. We must never weary in well-doing. "He that endures to the end shall be saved." The warrior is not crowned till the battle is fought, and the victory is achieved. Rest is for the faithful servant only after finished labour. You must aim to hold on the way of diligent persevering exertion, to gird the loins anew for sustained labour, and to anticipate the prize only when the battle is fought, and the course finished.* Study to *do much in a short time*. You may be called away from all earthly labour in youth, and may have to tenant an early grave. You will do well to remember habitually, that when your days are numbered, the estimate of your character will not be taken, so much from *the time you have lived*, as from *the works which you have done*. To have lived and laboured for Christ, to have served our generation by the will of God, is a cheering retrospect for a dying bed, and often supplies bright hopes for eternity.

The Apostle Paul presents an eminent instance of public spirit in the days of primitive Christianity. A fire of purest flame, the love of benevolence, glowed with intense ardour in his bosom, and urged him forward in his glorious career. He laboured more abundantly than all his fellows. He triumphed over the greatest obstacles. Forgetting things behind, and reaching to the things before, he "pressed to the mark of the prize of his high calling," and rested not till, his course finished, he grasped the glorious

* When the late William Ladd, after labouring several years with little apparent success, complained in desponding tones of the obstacles that arrested his progress, Dr. Payson said to him, "Brother Ladd, do something every day." These words were thenceforth his motto. He did something every day, and ultimately prospered.

crowns, and obtained the object of his fervent aspirations—"an exceeding great, even an eternal weight of glory." The history of the apostle of the Gentiles, from his conversion, is throughout the record of an instance of the loftiest and most heroic benevolence, and of its blessed fruits, both to himself, and to countless thousands who have shared in them in past ages, and who will yet share in them, till the end of time.

Reformers, martyrs of Christ, distinguished ministers, and missionaries, and Christian philanthropists supply likewise impressive examples of public spirit and of benevolent exertion, which the young will do well to study carefully, and to transcribe in their conduct. The world has been greatly more indebted to Christian men, in different stations of life, who have given themselves to do good, than to the most admired philosophers and poets, the most distinguished warriors and statesmen, and the most illustrious sons of science. The names of Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, of Cargill and Renwick, of Whitefield and Brainerd, of Wilberforce, and Howard, and Chalmers, will be held in deserved and lasting honour, when those of famed legislators and renowned scholars shall have perished; and the works which they originated, or carried on, will remain, multiplying blessings to the world to distant ages. Let the young follow them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises. Let them display the public spirit, and emulate the devoted benevolence of such honoured servants of God. Thus will their own characters be ennobled, their works will be owned and honoured; and while they themselves shall enjoy a bright reward here and hereafter, they will be acknowledged as instruments of blessing to many others in their own day, and after they have rested from their labours.

SECTION III.—*Promoting the Cause of Christian Missions.*

Although the subject of Christian Missions comes under the head of benevolent effort, which has been illustrated in the last section, yet because of its great importance to the youth of the church, we have deemed it better to devote to it a separate consideration. The present day has been justly termed "*the era of Missions,*" when the various sections of the church, awaking from a long slumber, have looked with sorrow and compassion upon the miseries of perishing men, and have recognized the great duty of sending them the gospel, which alone can effectually relieve them.

It is true that the vast proportion of the world's population is yet immersed in the darkness and degradation of Pagan idolatry; that Christianity, even in lands where it is professed, is greatly corrupted by the superstitions of Popery, and other evil systems; and that the descendants of Israel yet abide without a king, and teraphim, and a priest, ignorant of their own Messiah, and opposed to the only way of salvation.

Yet it is matter of holy gratulation that this state of moral degradation is seen and lamented by an increasing number of devoted men throughout the churches; and that an undertaking has been commenced, which aims to banish idolatry, and error, and oppression from the world, and which is destined to go forward, till it ushers in the blissful universal reign of Messiah the Prince; and till righteousness and praise shall spring forth before all nations.

The universal diffusion of Christianity may properly be affirmed to be the *great duty and privilege* of the Christian church. There are indeed other

duties to which she is called by her high vocation, such as being the depository of divine truth, the preservation of a pure order and discipline, and training her children for the work and enjoyments of the Upper Sanctuary. But still the universal establishment of the dominion of her exalted Head in the world is her special and eminent duty, the performance of which is essential to the proper discharge of all her other duties, and is inseparable from the participation of her most desirable privileges. The Jewish church was, in its nature and design, of limited extent and temporary duration. The Mosaic economy, under which it was constituted, was intended to be a wall of circumvallation and separation, to preserve the church from surrounding idolatry and corruption, until the Desire of all nations should come to his holy temple; and till He who was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the salvation of his people Israel, should arise as the sun of righteousness, having salvation under his wings. When the Saviour came in human nature, the shadows disappeared at the manifestation of the glorious substance. "The middle wall of partition" was broken down. The Jewish ritual having served its purpose, gave place to an enlarged and more spiritual economy; one prominent feature of which is that it embraces the whole family of man, and offers a full and unfettered salvation to the people of every kindred and tongue. Under this, the concluding dispensation, the joyful predictions of Jewish seers were to meet their full accomplishment. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us

go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”*

The Christian church is constituted, by her Divine Head, the instrument of accomplishing the divine purpose of her own enlargement; and just in proportion as she exhibits this character, and labours in this important vocation, will she herself enjoy the blessing from above, and be a blessing to the world. Like the *leaven* “hid in three measures of meal,” and acting on the surrounding mass till “all is leavened,” so this sacred Institution is designed to influence surrounding society, to leaven individuals, communities, and civil and ecclesiastical systems, till all come into willing subjection to Christ the Lord. Small and insignificant at first as the grain of mustard-seed, it is yet under the law of perpetual growth and increase, and shall one day become a great tree; the men of every nation and clime coming with desire and joy to lodge under its branches. The truths which the church is to confess, and her living members are, for a long time, as “a handful of corn” upon mountain-tops—few, thin, and apparently blighted, but these grains shall hereafter grow, and shake with prosperous fruit, “like the trees of Lebanon.” “They that come of Jacob shall take root, and bud and blossom, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” The command of Zion’s king enjoins upon the church the great duty of self-extension, and is accompanied with the gracious assurance of universal triumph and prosperity. Isaiah liv. 2, 3, “En-

* Isaiah ii. 2, 3, 4.

large the place of thy tent; let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitation; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand, and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.”

If the truth is to be universally diffused, and the kingdom of Christ to be established throughout all the earth, by the instrumentality of the church, then it is evident that all her members should regard themselves called to this great work. Here is employment for all, and for every individual. Not upon ministers alone—the accredited heralds of the Cross—devolves the duty of making known God’s light and saving health throughout the nations. All that claim to be denizens of Zion, or that expect to enjoy her privileges, should regard themselves as especially enlisted in this service, and should cheerfully devote themselves, and all that they have, to its performance. The work is so vast, and the glory that will redound to the Redeemer so great—and the blessings that will accrue to the world, from its accomplishment, are so many, and so important—that it demands all consecrated and sustained energies, all disposable means, and above all, the heart prayerfully and in faith resting in this labour, as a source of the highest satisfaction and delight.

It was the display of this spirit and character that so eminently distinguished the days of primitive Christianity. The flame of missionary zeal then burned with intense fervour upon the altar. Apostles, ministers, people, were all under a holy impulse of the Spirit, to communicate, as widely as possible, the tidings of redeeming love. To be a Christian then, was to be a public servant of Christ, called and devoted to make known his renowned fame to all nations. Not only were all the primitive disciples “of

one heart and one mind," striving together for the faith of the Gospel, but all were animated with the same spirit of holy zeal, to push forward the standard of their Prince, and to bring all into subjection to his powerful sceptre. The effects that flowed from this devoted spirit, and from the self-denied labours of the primitive church, were most striking and salutary. In less than *forty years* after the Divine Founder of Christianity had ascended to the throne of his glory, the heralds of the Cross had carried the tidings of salvation to the utmost bounds of the Roman empire, which then included the greater part of the known world; and it could be literally said of the preachers of the Word, "Their line is gone into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." The success of the Gospel at that joyful era was connected with the spirit of lively zeal, and holy devotedness, not less than with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. What wonders would have been accomplished for the evangelization of the world, if this spirit had continued in the Church! What might even now be accomplished, were it again restored!

The baptized youth of the church have a peculiar call to engage with holy alacrity and activity in the propagation of the glorious Gospel. To it they owe all their distinction and privileges. They have come under vows to live to Christ, and to labour for the advancement of his glory. It is their singular privilege to be born in a day when missions to the Jews and Gentiles are in operation in almost all sections of the church, and when the missionary undertaking embraces the whole habitable globe, in the grasp of an expansive benevolence. Their station in the church, at such a period, involves a solemn and very weighty responsibility. To spread the light of Divine truth throughout regions of moral darkness, and to add new crowns to the many which encircle the Redeemer's head; this is surely the greatest work on earth,

worthy to occupy our loftiest thoughts and aspirations, and to engage our constant energies.

The missionary enterprise is admirably fitted to enlist the prayers and exertions of the young. There is something elevated and ennobling, in the highest degree, in bringing the world into subjection to Messiah the Prince. The buoyancy, activity, and warm feelings of youth can find full scope here; and the work is such that we cannot engage in it, without being morally, intellectually, and spiritually benefited by it. The liberal soul *shall be made fat*. In watering others, we are ourselves watered. While seeking and labouring for the conversion of the world, we become co-workers with God, and take part in accomplishing the glorious design which occupied the counsels of the Godhead from eternity, and the fulfilment of which will bless the nations, and will yet bring countless multitudes to inherit the blessedness of heaven.

In a day like the present, when the duty of spreading the Gospel is universally admitted, and when new and unexpected opportunities are continually offering, the youth of the church cannot refuse to take a part in the missionary enterprise, without aggravated criminality. This were to belie the profession of being servants of Christ; it is to falsify the avowal of loving him supremely; and while the great work will go forward, even should the members of the church withhold more than is meet, they will be regarded as a drag upon the mighty movement, and the kingdom will be given to others that are worthy. The young must learn to esteem it their highest honour to be connected with the missionary undertaking. They must early begin to take a deep interest in the work. What cause on earth is so fitted to interest the young? They must give to its promotion their time—the first and most active of their days—they should consecrate to it their money,

and bestow on it their most strenuous exertions; and in whatever department of the missionary field they may be called to labour, they should enter upon it with cordial affection, and entire devotedness.

Fully persuaded that engagement in the missionary undertaking is conducive to the best interests of the youth of the church, and that it is the great work to which the Lord is specially inviting them, we shall briefly notice their OBLIGATIONS to yield themselves to it; and then we shall advert to some *modes of exertion* which appear to us necessary to give to the work of Christian missions increased efficiency and prosperity.

1. Without referring to the predictions of ancient seers concerning the future universal establishment of Messiah's kingdom, and the preparatory instrumentality which the church was to employ for their accomplishment, we have, in the opening of the Christian economy, the plainest directions on the subject; and *the duty of the followers of Christ to disseminate the Gospel to its widest extent, is enforced in the most positive and forcible terms, and under sanctions the most solemn and affecting.* Our Lord's parting command, when He had finished his great work upon earth, and was on the eve of ascending to his mediatorial throne—"GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD; PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE"—declares the propagation of the truth of Christ to be the all-important mission of the Church to a perishing world. It is evident that this precept was designed to be of universal and perpetual obligation. Not to the Apostles personally was it alone addressed, for they could not themselves go forth into all the world; and the promise of the Redeemer's gracious presence in their work till the end of time, could not, in the nature of the case, pertain to them exclusively. Nor was the injunction only laid upon the proper legitimate successors of the apostles—the

ministers of the word—for the message was to be delivered to “every creature,” in every part of the earth, and to the end of time. The command rests, in all the plenitude of its obligation, upon the church in all lands, and in all circumstances—upon all its ministers, and upon all its members—for all should spread abroad the savour of Christ’s name, and every man should say to his neighbour, “Know the Lord.” This is a principal design of the institution of a church upon the earth; this is the great work of its ministry, and a paramount and indispensable duty of its membership. Just in proportion as the duty is recognized, and the work faithfully performed, may the fulfilment of the blessed promise be expected, “*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.*” The Redeemer’s gracious presence with his servants, and in the assemblies of his people, his power in holy ordinances, and a special blessing upon the church’s ministrations, are inseparably connected with the work of propagating the Gospel throughout the earth.

That this was the will of the Divine Founder of Christianity, and that upon the progress of this blessed work his heart was intensely set, is farther evident from the terms in which He addressed the assembled disciples in another of the last interviews which he had with them on earth. He “opened their understandings,” and as He let in a supernatural light into their minds, and told them of his sufferings and consequent glory, He intimated his will, “*That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;*” and He immediately subjoined the promise of the Spirit to endue his servants with all fitness for the arduous undertaking.* It is thus completely obvious that the blessed Author of our holy religion designed its

* Luke xxiv. 45—50.

universal dissemination—that He constituted his professed disciples, in all ages, his instruments for accomplishing this benign purpose—and that the charter of their highest and most endeared privileges was issued in connexion with the faithful performance of the work which he had assigned them. To neglect the work of Christian missions, therefore, is to rebel against the authority of the ascended Redeemer—it is practical disobedience to one of the plainest and most weighty of his commands—and it involves a forfeiture of the most excellent privilege which either the individual Christian, or the Church can enjoy—the Saviour's special gracious presence.

2. There can be no doubt that the *primitive Christians understood our Lord's command and commission, in the sense that all were bound to diffuse his truth as widely as possible*, and to make known his saving health throughout the nations. The apostles waited at Jerusalem, according to our Lord's directions, for the promise of the Father. So soon as they received "power from on high," and the Spirit descended at Pentecost, like a rushing mighty wind, they opened their commission, and began to preach every where that men should repent. The *manner* of the Spirit's first glorious effusion indicated the character of the work in which Christ's honoured servants were to be occupied. "Cloven tongues" as of fire rested upon each of them, and they were endued with the miraculous gift of tongues. They were thus at once qualified for being missionaries of the Cross to men of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and the most difficult part of their training was immediately surmounted. The Spirit's powerful effusion then, as it has at every subsequent period in which it has been experienced, impelled the servants of God to care for perishing souls, and to labour for the extension of Christ's kingdom. And when the fervent zeal of the primitive Christians was in danger of decay, when the

first overpowering impulse of the Pentecostal visitation had subsided, persecution was permitted to scatter them. Thus were they awakened to a thorough sense of their duty to go as evangelists to men of every country and clime. Upon the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen, they went as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word. The divine appointment of the first Gentile mission, the call addressed to the Apostle Paul to come to Macedonia, to seek the evangelization of Europe, and even the persecutions of the same eminent servant of God, contributed to the enlarged spread of the truth. The Gentile churches everywhere were actuated by the fervid zeal of missionaries of Christ; they regarded the command of their Founder and Head as imperative and paramount; and they regarded the grand design of their constitution to be the propagation of the news of salvation in the regions of surrounding darkness. From them sounded forth the word to all the regions round about. They "held forth the word of life." They shone as "lights in the world;" and their unwavering aim, which they pursued with steadfast resolution, was to make known to all men the light of the Redeemer's glory. Would we display the character of the primitive church, and share in their eminent privileges? would we give evidence that we have been baptized with the Spirit from on high? Then we must exemplify the temper and conduct of those who, receiving the first copious showers of divine influence, accounted it their great work, and their highest honour, to make known God's salvation throughout all nations.

3. The *state of the world* at present, together with *their own high privileges*, should impel Christians of every class to embark in this enterprise of mercy. The moral condition of the world, as it presents itself to the eye of the Christian philanthropist, is that of a vast wilderness; and his work is to open streams of

fertility in the desert. The world is one great *Lazar-house*, and his office is to bring into it the Great physician, and to apply the *balm* that heals every moral malady. It is a wide-spread charnel-house, and death in all shapes and in the most loathsome forms is there. The Christian's mission is to go, like the Hebrew seer, into the valley of vision, and to preach to "the dry bones," that they may hear the word of the Lord, and to call down the Almighty Spirit, that they may be quickened. The world's population still presents to the afflicted eye of the Christian, the sad spectacle of millions upon millions of the human family, sitting in the region and shadow of death, under the dark and cruel dominion of the god of this world. There are *six hundred millions* of Pagans—*six or eight millions* of Jews—*one hundred and thirty millions* of Mahometans—*one hundred and twenty millions* of Romish idolaters,—and besides, there are vast multitudes of the corrupt Eastern churches, and of mere nominal Christians where the clear light of the gospel shines. This is the territory into which the Christian soldier is to go, and achieve conquests for the Captain of salvation; this, the mighty host, against which the armies of Christ are to go forth, conquering and to conquer, until all opposing power shall be broken to pieces, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

In another aspect, the present state of the nations invites and encourages to Christian effort. Long-established systems of idolatry have lost their power over the minds of men. Every thing is in a process of transition throughout the nations. The days of superstition and idolatry are numbered, and the time is rapidly approaching, when the idols shall be utterly abolished. The moral condition and wants of distant countries are every year becoming better known. Rapid methods of communication have

brought remote nations into closer contact, and are preparing a highway for the spread of the gospel. International interests have connected different and formerly hostile tribes as one family. The moral Governor of the universe has been transferring the sovereignty of large portions of the Pagan world to Protestant powers, as if to point out, in the most distinct and emphatic manner, the duty of those who have the pure light of revelation, to diffuse it universally. Every where, the field for evangelistic exertion is opening more widely year after year; and God is continually pressing upon the church, the great duty of rising to claim possession of the utmost parts of the earth as her Lord's covenanted inheritance.

Contemporaneous with these important changes *without*, a great change has been progressing *within* the Church—a movement which fairly indicates that her great work is the conversion of the world. This important undertaking has taken possession of all minds. The claims of the missionary enterprise have now been recognized by almost all sections of the visible church. The desire of extension and enlargement has been universally felt. Truth has been separating from error; and the opposing powers of light and darkness are standing in arrayed hostility, meditating new conquests, or prepared for a final conflict. Antichrist is pouring forth the missionaries of idolatry and debasing superstition into all lands, as if about speedily to realize its long-indulged dream of universal dominion. These efforts of the enemy have aroused the dormant energies of the friends of truth; and the visitation of the Spirit from on high has quickened them, as the wants and miseries of a perishing world have been brought to light, to make vigorous and unwonted attempts for their relief. In all departments of Christian society, the work of Christian Missions—at home and abroad, among Jew and

Gentile—is the absorbing theme of contemplation, conversation, planning, and action. It is heard from the pulpit, is proclaimed from the platform, females in their retirement are working for its advancement, and young men are taught to dedicate to it the prime of their days. It enters as an essential element into the training of the candidates for the ministry; it has taken possession of no inconsiderable part of the literature of the age, and some of the noblest efforts of the Christian press are devoted to the cause of the world's evangelization. What does all this indicate? Does it not clearly declare the purpose of Him who rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, that the Gospel of the kingdom should be preached to all nations? Does it not admonish the Church of its high responsibility, and stir her up to the great duty of proclaiming God's salvation throughout the world?

4. We only add, that *the spiritual benefits*, which shall accrue to ourselves and others from evangelistic efforts, furnish a powerful motive and encouragement to engage in them. In all ages, those have been eminently blessed who have devoted themselves to the work of advancing Christ's kingdom in the earth. The Church has been increased and prospered when labouring to extend the blessings of Christianity to the destitute and perishing—the votaries of superstition and idolatry. The most honoured servants of God have been missionaries of the Cross, who were willing to spend and be spent, in gathering souls to Christ. Such were the apostle of the Gentiles, and his fellows in the days of primitive Christianity, and Elliot and Brainerd, and Swartz and Martyn, and Carey and Morrison, and Williams of modern missionaries. Revival in the Church has sometimes preceded, and perhaps more frequently been the fruit of prayerful exertions for the diffusion of Christianity. Ministers have become more faithful and devoted

pastors, by binding themselves to advance the missionary cause. People have been awakened to a deeper sense of the worth of their own souls, and of the value of the great things of salvation; and the contributions which they have tendered for the spread of the Gospel have, instead of diminishing their means, actually served to increase them; and have, besides, nurtured in themselves a liberal spirit, which is true riches. The congregations that have done most for the propagation of the Gospel have been thereby prospered and blessed. They have experienced that it is "more blessed to give than to receive." Imparting to others, they have been themselves built up and increased. The dews of heaven have descended upon them in copious abundance. Contentions have ceased—and walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they have been multiplied. The reason why spiritual blessings have thus been enjoyed as the fruit of missionary effort is evident. Those who make them in a right spirit, manifest conformity to a principal feature of the character of Christ, who went about doing good. They obey a leading direction of his blessed will. They exhibit a mind like his, who has his highest joy in seeing "the travail of his soul"—and as the excellent reward, they walk in the light of his countenance, and share the honour of being co-workers with him, in the accomplishment of his high designs of mercy.

From such views, the Church, under a sense of singular privileges, and in a day of wonderful events, should recognize her obligations to seek the conversion of the world. She should hear the call of her glorious Head, "*Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is arisen upon thee.*" The youth of the church, especially, should regard it as their highest privilege to dedicate themselves to the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the earth. No

work in which they can be engaged is more important; there is none in which they will be more highly honoured. Let them consecrate to it their youthful energies, and they will assuredly reap a present reward, and hereafter enjoy the unspeakable distinction of being owned as instruments of bringing all kindreds and people into subjection to the Lord's Anointed.

To the young, who recognize it as their duty to aid the cause of Christian missions, we suggest a few hints, which may tend to the advancement of this important undertaking.

Much as is spoken or written on the subject of the world's conversion, it is always to be remembered, that exertions of this kind are only in their infancy, and that the church has yet to learn much, both in relation to the principle and practice of evangelizing the nations. Very few of the associations engaged in missionary labours, have yet celebrated their first jubilee, and by far the largest number date their origin at a much later period. What has been attempted we regard as valuable; not as by any means exemplifying, on the part of the church, either a due sense of the magnitude of the work, or of its obligations to prosecute it, or a proper consecration of the resources of the church, to accomplish it; but as a hopeful commencement, betokening greatly enlarged exertions in future. If we would embark in this undertaking, from a proper regard to the command of Christ, under a right feeling of our solemn responsibility, or with any reasonable prospect of the desired success, we must aim to create a new era in the history of the missionary enterprise; we must give a new impulse to the work, and bring to it vastly increased means; we must diligently and constantly labour to cause "righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations."

Among those things which appear to us indispen-

sable to sustain and carry forward enlarged missionary efforts, we notice—

1st, *More fervent prayer—individual and united—for the conversion of the world.* When our blessed Lord taught his disciples to pray, and gave them an inspired model, to which all their prayers are to be conformed, he placed among the first of the petitions which it contains, the request, “*Thy kingdom come.*” He has impressively taught us, that the conversion of the world should occupy a principal place in all our prayers; that it should be sought above any blessings that we ask for ourselves, and that the fulfilment of it should be a matter of daily concern. The Saviour himself, as our exalted Advocate in glory, makes continual intercession on this subject. “For Zion’s sake,” he declares, speaking with interest and delight in this work, “will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”* The imitation of his blessed example, He has made obligatory upon all his faithful followers. Verses 6, 7, “I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence: And give him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

Those who profess Christ’s name, are constituted “the Lord’s remembrancers.” They are to put him in mind of his covenant-engagement, plead his promises, and cease not to wrestle importunately in prayer, until Zion’s enemies are brought down, and Jerusalem becomes the joy of the whole earth. The emphatic command, contained in the second Psalm, is of the same import, “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utter-

* Isaiah lxii. 1.

most parts of the earth for thy possession.”* And of similar purport too, the prediction in the seventy-second Psalm, verse 15, “Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised.” These declarations evidently imply that the church is to ask earnestly, and importunately supplicate for the conversion of the nations. In connection with the faithful performance of this duty, the Divine guarantee is given, that the heathen shall be converted, the uttermost parts of the earth become the Redeemer’s inheritance, and that his praise shall be celebrated in all nations.

It may be added, that wherever eminent success has attended évangélical efforts, there has been this spirit of fervent, persevering prayer. So was it in the apostolic times, and at the period of the Reformation; and the most honoured of modern missionaries, such as Swartz and Brainerd, have prevailed for the conversion of the heathen, more by their earnest pleadings than by all their other labours. As the revival in “the valley of vision” immediately followed the prophet’s earnest call to the Spirit to come from the four winds, and not his preaching to “the dry bones,” so the church will be revived, Israel gathered in, and the heathen converted, when the spirit of importunate supplication shall universally pervade the church.

There is the highest reason why all other instrumentality should be proved to be useless without prayer; why the blessing should be withheld till the church is stirred to mighty wrestlings, for the conversion of Jew and Gentile. God will not give his glory to another. Prayer is the expression of faith putting the work into the hands of Omnipotence, and confiding in Him to accomplish it. When Christians are excited to plead earnestly, and to give the Lord

* Psalm ii. 8.

no rest, they "move the hand that moves the heavens." In answer to the church's supplications, the Spirit shall yet be poured out like the flood upon the dry ground. "The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

Have we not reason to fear that, in many modern missionary efforts, there has been undue reliance upon other means, to the neglect of prayer? Do not the fewness and coldness of the church's prayers for the evangelization of the world, give sad indication that we are not yet awakened to a proper sense of the importance of the missionary undertaking? It should ever be remembered that as exertions without prayer are *infidelity*, so prayer without corresponding efforts is *hypocrisy*. Let the young set themselves to remedy this evil. Let them learn to plead, and to engage others to pray much for the coming of Christ's kingdom. Let them give to this matter the position which the Hearer of prayer designed that it should occupy; let them place it at the head of all their supplications, and let all their efforts be prayerful. The fire of consecrated zeal enkindled at the mercy-seat will propel them to holy and sustained activity. God will accept and bless prayerful exertions; and those who become the Lord's remembrancers will be acknowledged as the instruments of establishing and rendering Jerusalem "a praise in the earth."*

2. *A more devoted spirit in the church* is essential to the advancement of the missionary cause. We must regard the Redeemer's glory as the great end in

* An excellent means of promoting a right missionary spirit, and of bringing down a blessing upon missionary efforts, would be to have a *concert of united prayer* among the young, which might be observed *weekly*, or at least *once a month*. This has been found a happy method of advancing the cause of Missions in America and elsewhere.

all things. Christians must learn to live not to themselves, and to be willing to spend and be spent for the establishment of Christ's kingdom. They must practise habitually lessons of self-denial; and regarding the world as made by Christ, and for Christ, - they must consider their work in the world as that of bringing back a revolted province to subjection to its rightful Lord. Low worldly aims and ends must be discarded. We must overcome the world by faith, and be crucified to it by the power of the cross. Thus shall we be prepared to estimate aright the wretchedness of the world without the gospel, and to feel the weight of our obligations to labour continually for its amelioration. Devotedness in ministers and candidates for the ministry would impel them to go forth as labourers, to gather in the spiritual harvest. A similar spirit prevailing among the members of the church would lead them to devise "liberal things," to pray with all earnestness for the conversion of sinners, and cheerfully to contribute all in their power for the accomplishment of an end so important and glorious. The young are the most suitable instruments for exciting and increasing such a spirit throughout the church. Self-denial manifested by them in relinquishing the world's allurements, and in devoting such worldly things as they possess to the advancement of Christ's cause, will have a salutary effect upon others. The fervour of youth will give vigour to benevolent undertakings, and the example of baptized youth acting in the spirit of their baptismal engagement, as soldiers following the Captain of their salvation, as He goes forth conquering and to conquer, will animate older members of the church to embark with new life in missionary work, and to prosecute it with resolute perseverance. The young have it certainly in their power either to give a new and powerful impulse to the missionary cause by their devotedness, or to im-

pede it by lukewarmness and indifference. Oh! let them consider that the church greatly needs to be excited to redoubled exertions in this cause—that a rich blessing will be the fruit of their consecrated zeal, and that a blight and curse must follow the want of it. Let them gird up their loins for their work. Let them stand forth before the church and the world, as single-hearted and devoted servants to perform it. Thus will they influence others to take part in the sacred enterprise. Christ's cause will be greatly advanced, and many may be brought to say of them, as in a day of revival, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

3. *Enlarged liberality in the church* is required for the prosperity of the missionary undertaking. The offerings of Christian benevolence must be on a scale commensurate to the magnitude of the undertaking. The power of Christian love expands the heart, and genuine zeal for the propagation of the gospel will root out of it, the love of the world, and will lead Christians to regard it as a high privilege to dedicate their substance to the establishment of Christ's kingdom. When the tabernacle was to be erected in the wilderness, the offerings for this purpose were so readily furnished, and so abundant, that proclamation had to be made that the gifts should be stayed. Afterwards when David had made preparation for "building a house to the Lord, exceeding magnificent," the princes and people presented freely the offerings of a liberal benevolence, gladdening the heart of the aged monarch, so that under the power of a singular effusion of the Spirit, he exclaimed, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."* The introduction of the Christian

* 1 Chronicles xxix. 14.

dispensation was distinguished by eminent liberality. When the Spirit was plentifully poured out at Pentecost, one of the happy fruits was that the converts willingly parted with their goods, and regarded their worldly substance as given them only for supplying the wants of the poor, and for the furtherance of the gospel. Indeed, at all times in which true religion has flourished, and the cause of the truth has advanced, a spirit of enlarged liberality has characterized those who have been honoured as approved instruments in this good work.

In our own day, although large sums have been contributed to the treasury of Christian benevolence, yet the Church has much to learn on this subject. In the great majority of cases, the offerings of Christians for the spread of the gospel have been irregular, fitful, given under the impulse of some temporary excitement, and bearing no proportion either to their own weighty obligations, or to the wants of a perishing world. The consequence has been that the cause of missions has been feebly sustained, the most favourable opportunities have been neglected, and through the love of worldly things, the Church has incurred the curse of Meroz, in not coming forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty. New principles must be adopted and acted upon, in relation to the pecuniary support of schemes of benevolence, if we would see the earth's darkness dispelled, and the cause of Christ triumphant. The members of the church must be brought to regard it as not *optional*, but as a sacred *duty and privilege* to contribute freely, for the spread of the gospel. Contributions must be furnished with systematic punctuality, according as God has prospered, and so as to afford evidence that they are the fruits of grace powerfully working in the heart, the *sacrifices* of faith and love. Indeed, much, very much will depend upon the pecuniary means that are furnished for the diffusion of Christ-

ianity being *systematic* and *liberal*. It would not be difficult, we think, to show that the rule which the youthful patriarch Jacob proposed to himself, when he vowed at Bethel, was founded in moral principles, and might still be adopted by Christians, "Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth to thee."* The tenth part of all a person's income devoted to the spread of the gospel, would be a suitable return of gratitude to Him to whom we are indebted for all that we possess. There are many cases in which so much might be readily given; and if devoted to God in a proper spirit, his blessing would rest in double measure upon the remainder. In some instances, this would obviously be too small a proportion of property to devote to God; but as an ordinary rule, if it were generally given, there would be a vast accession to the funds of Christian benevolence. If to this there were added, after the manner of God's ancient people, the "first fruits" of all our industry and possessions, and the young would dedicate their first earnings to the promotion of Christ's cause, the treasury of the church would be furnished with ample means for the universal diffusion of the gospel.

The *necessity* of enlarged liberality in the church, for the spread of Christ's cause, is manifold and pressing, and motives for exercising it are numerous and weighty. If the heathen are to be converted, the Jews gathered in, and the ignorant and irreligious reclaimed, the Bible must be translated and printed, missionaries, in large numbers, prepared and sent forth, on the principle of taking nothing of the Gentiles; and many other appliances of external means are needed—all of which will involve a large and sustained expenditure of money and personal effort. Yet the work brings with it its own, and that a very high

* Genesis xxviii. 22.

reward. One soul converted, will infinitely counter-balance all the effort and expense incurred in supplying the means of salvation; and were the contributions of the church to be instrumental in plucking a single brand out of the burning, it would be a full remuneration for all that has been cast into the Christian treasury. We have the amplest assurance that such offerings will not be in vain. God's word cannot return void; and all past experience justifies the remark, that whenever means have been readily furnished for the evangelization of the world, there has resulted precious fruit, in the conversion of sinners to Christ.

The enemies of truth, moreover, freely contribute in a manner to put Christians, who hold the truth, to shame for their niggard parsimony, in supporting and propagating Christ's cause. Much more is furnished by Hindoo idolaters, to minister to the pomp and splendour of a festival of some Pagan deity in India, than some of our largest missionary institutions collect in a whole year. The funds that are willingly furnished, and every year increasing, to societies engaged in spreading throughout the earth the abominations of Antichrist, greatly surpass what the various Protestant churches contribute for the dissemination of the truth as it is in Jesus. A liberal spirit is, besides, *a great blessing to its possessor*, as withholding more than is meet from Christ's cause, never fails to draw after it poverty, in the fullest sense of the term—barrenness and unfruitfulness of spirit; and in the end not unfrequently outward poverty.

The Scriptures clearly declare, that the time is approaching when a spirit of enlarged liberality shall be poured out upon the church. The "abundance of the sea" shall be converted to Christ. Men shall "consecrate their gain" to the God of the earth. Princes shall come out of the land of Egypt, and

shall "submit themselves with pieces of silver." The "nations shall bring their riches and honour to Zion." So soon as this enlarged liberality shall distinguish the church, she shall break forth on the right hand, and on the left, and her seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and cause the desolate heritages to be inhabited. May the young in our day learn to "devise liberal things!" So will they be blessed themselves; their example will provoke others to spend and be spent for the promotion of the Redeemer's glory, and the missionary enterprise will achieve new triumphs throughout the world. The tide of enlightened zeal and holy benevolence, will swell and enlarge, until the most distant lands receive the glad tidings of the Gospel; and the happy consequence will be, that the idols shall be utterly abolished, and righteousness and peace shall spring forth before all nations.

4. The youth of the church should seriously consider whether they are not *called to give themselves as agents in the missionary work*. Greatly as we require an increase of pecuniary support, a devoted instrumentality for propagating the gospel is much more needed. When the Saviour would have the tidings of his mission heralded throughout Judea, He directed his disciples to "pray the Lord of harvest" to send "faithful labourers into his harvest," and He added this emphatic reason, "THE LABOURERS ARE FEW." Alas! that this should still be the melancholy record, in relation to the world's conversion, "*The harvest is great, and the labourers are few.*" Comparing the number of evangelical missionaries that are at present labouring in Pagan lands, with the vast population that is immersed in idolatry, how inadequate the supply! how disproportionate the means of *moral amelioration*! One missionary of the cross to every *million*, or million and a half of heathen, even were the missionaries dispersed throughout all countries in

the world, is all that the church has hitherto sent, to proclaim to an enslaved, perishing world, the tidings of salvation! What are these among so many? And when it is, moreover, considered, that vast regions, such as Tartary, Affghanistan, Tibet, many parts of the extended empire of China, and by far the larger part of the continent of Africa, have not labouring in them a single herald of the cross; the destitution of the heathen, and the criminality of the church, in not sending to them the means of salvation, will appear yet more appalling. As in attempting to reduce a fortress of a powerful enemy, it would be regarded as madness to send a soldier to fire a random shot or two against the walls, instead of despatching a well-equipped and sufficient force; so the church has been similarly culpable in only sending to the heathen a few ill-sustained labourers, instead of a numerous and well-prepared host. No vigorous assaults upon the strongholds of the enemy can be made in this way; and instead of wondering that the success of missionary exertions has been so limited, the only wonder is that any success whatever should have followed attempts so desultory and inadequate. The church must betake herself to an entirely different mode of warfare, if she would be instrumental in reducing the nations to subjection to the Lord's Anointed. Her resources must be tasked; the means of salvation must be liberally supplied to perishing men; well-trained missionaries, in sufficient numbers, must be sent forth into every country that is under the dominion of the Prince of darkness; and we must never rest satisfied till all lands, and the men of every tribe shall have been made to hear the joyful sound.

One of the greatest obstacles existing at present within the church, to vigorous exertions for the world's conversion, is the reluctance or refusal of persons who acknowledge the claims of the missionary

cause to give themselves to the work. Some magnify unduly the difficulties that retard its accomplishment. A large number of the members of the church seem to have no proper sense that they are under any obligations to give their personal exertions in this cause; and some rate the qualifications so high, as to shrink back, as if they could do nothing whatever in the matter. It is to be feared that all this proceeds from wrong conceptions of the nature and claims of the missionary enterprise, or from real apathy or unbelief. The first Christians—under the powerful impulse of the Spirit, without outward resources, destitute of many of the qualifications on which so much stress is laid in our day—went forth into all the world, and preached the gospel to every creature. Their grand qualifications were glowing and supreme love to the Saviour, and deep, heartfelt, absorbing concern for perishing souls; and wherever these are still possessed, there will be, in some degree, the desire entertained to be instrumental in collecting jewels for Immanuel's crown. Some of the most distinguished and most successful of modern missionaries, such as Carey, Morrison, Williams, Moffat, &c., have arisen from humble stations of life, and enjoyed few advantages of education in boyhood: and not a few of those who are now in the field, were at home the humble teachers in the Sabbath School. It is related of the celebrated Socrates, that when, on a certain day, his pupils vied with each other in the presents which they offered as a token of gratitude and respect to their master; and at the last, a poor boy said he gave himself—the philosopher declared that he esteemed this present above all the rest. Thus the most costly and valued gift that can be presented on the missionary altar is the devotement of faithful labourers to the work.

The baptized youth of the Church should be trained by parents with such an object in view, and they should readily offer themselves for such a noble ser-

vice. At least they ought seriously to consider the claims of perishing men as addressed to them personally, to consider whether their own duty may not be to dedicate themselves to this good work. God accepts of persons according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. The woman of Samaria who met the Redeemer at Jacob's well, was a successful evangelist to the men of her native place, and so was the cured demoniac of Decapolis. Did the youth of the Church feel, like them, the strength of love to Christ, and the weight of their obligations to the Saviour, they would be prepared to become volunteers in the armies of the Lord of Hosts; and might be of incalculable use in calling forth the slumbering energies of the Church, and in promoting the evangelization of the world. It is melancholy, indeed, to consider that while Christian parents send their children to distant countries, and the young of Christian families shrink not from going even to unhealthy climates for some merely worldly objects, there should be so much fear, or apathy, or reluctance, in consecrating personal efforts to the conversion of the world. Let the young strive to wipe away this reproach from the Church. What have they to fear, in yielding themselves to the Lord, to do his work, and to advance his glory? The natural elements—the influence of climate—the hearts of all men are in his hand. He can give suitable qualifications—and He will do it, to all who unreservedly devote themselves to him. His all-gracious promise, “Lo, I am with you always,” is surely sufficient for every want, and for every difficulty. Confiding in it, the young should give themselves up to the great enterprise of bringing a rebel world under the dominion of Christ. This undertaking will reflect on themselves unspeakable honour. They will enjoy success in their work, under the blessing of the Best of masters; and hereafter theirs may be the reward of those who turn

many to righteousness, and who shall shine as the stars, and as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever.

Lastly, *The exercise of a missionary spirit at home, in evangelistic exertions to reclaim the wretched and perishing in one's own neighbourhood*, is important as an element of enlarged success in the missionary work. The advancement of the Redeemer's glory in the conversion of souls is the great object of missionary exertions; and love to souls—a love by which the heart bleeds and is bowed down, in view of the miserable condition of perishing men, and which intensely desires their spiritual renovation, is the right missionary spirit. Now, surely a human being under guilt and moral pollution in the circle of our friends or acquaintances is in as wretched a condition as a Pagan in India or China; and the salvation of a soul in our families, or at our doors, should be esteemed as valuable as the conversion of a soul in some remote part of the world.

We must divest the missionary enterprise of all that is romantic and sentimental, and deal with the solemn realities of the eternal loss, and the eternal salvation of souls. Unquestionably he has no right missionary zeal, who, while he talks of the evangelization of the nations, neglects to seek the salvation of his own household, or leaves souls to perish around him, without making any efforts to rescue them from destruction. Genuine love to Christ will impel us to endeavour to bring all with whom we have influence to the Saviour. To pray fervently for the souls of relatives and acquaintances; to devote one's self to efforts for instructing the ignorant, and reclaiming the wretched; and to cherish an inextinguishable desire to be instrumental in the conversion of sinners, will supply the best evidence that we are actuated by a right missionary spirit. We will thus *begin at home*, but never think of confining our exer-

tions there. A person thus engaged, will embrace the world in the circle of a lofty and expansive benevolence. His exertions on the field of neglected humanity around him, will train him for more extended effort. He will be, in the best sense of the phrase, "a missionary of the love of Christ" to perishing men, and through his labours, he may have many recovered souls, "for a crown of rejoicing" in the day of the Lord Jesus. Such an humble, devoted, and successful labourer was HARLAN PAGE, the prayerful instrument of promoting revivals in America; and such was the single-hearted amiable DAVID NASMITH, the originator of Town Missions. Let the young imitate these examples of Christian philanthropy. Let them, obeying the Saviour's urgent command, go to the streets and broad ways of a thronged population, to gather in the blind, and halt, and lame; let them go again to the highways and hedges, and, with still more urgent importunity, "compel them to come in." They will thus evince a true Scriptural zeal for the advancement of the Redeemer's glory; they may be prepared to give themselves for the work of distant missions; and should they remain at home, they may, notwithstanding, be the means of delivering souls from death, and of leading others to devote themselves to the work of Christian benevolence. The Sabbath School—the evangelization of our native country, and of our own neighbourhood, and revivals in the church, will furnish ample opportunities of exertion, and supply at the same time, the best means of training and drawing forth a missionary spirit.

The cause of Christian missions is, under these views, recommended to the special attention of the youth of the church. It is not going too far to say, that this is eminently the work of God—that on which his heart was fixed from all eternity—that which led to the most wondrous sacrifice that ever

the universe witnessed, and that to which He renders all the movements in the kingdom of providence subservient. This, too, is the present great work of the church; that to which her exalted Head is loudly summoning all her ministers and members—the neglect of which will be followed by sure tokens of his displeasure, while its *performance* will result in countless blessings to the church, and to the whole family of mankind.

The baptized youth of the church—her youthful members—should account it their greatest honour and privilege to have a part in this glorious undertaking. The world, created by Christ, was designed to reflect his glory; and one day, through all the extent of its wide population, to resound with his praise. To whom should we look, with deeper concern, and more confident expectation, than to the young who are dedicated to God, that they will labour diligently, prayerfully, and perseveringly, for this desirable consummation? On you it devolves, Christian youth! to create a new era in the missionary undertaking. Yours it is to be among the first to “bring the King back.” Yours is the work, as consecrated priests of God, to bear forward the ark of Divine truth to its resting place in the millennial church. We are fallen in no ordinary period. Events, thickening everywhere, betoken that the day of the Lord’s power is at hand, when He shall utterly overthrow and destroy terror-stricken enemies; when He will take to Him his great power and reign, and when the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Be it yours, in the spring and vigour of life, to enter with all alacrity upon this work of faith and labour of love. Dedicate to it all your talents, your fervent prayers, pecuniary means, and personal exertions. Try to bring others to the same spirit and conduct. Resolve to labour to the end of life, whether at home or in a distant land, to bring sin-

ners to Christ. Your labour will not be in vain in the Lord. What you sow, you shall afterwards reap. A great and glorious harvest will at length reward your toil, and self-denial, and sacrifices. The nations of the saved shall bring their glory and riches to Zion; and as the redeemed converts from Jew and Gentile shall enter the heavenly Jerusalem, or as the tidings of their conversion are borne thither by the ministering spirits that take the deepest interest in the progress of Christ's kingdom on earth, the joys of eternity shall be enhanced. They that sow and they that reap shall rejoice together; and in the triumphs of Christ's cause on earth, the ransomed in heaven shall share in the joy of their exalted Lord, and shall drink "rivers of pleasure at God's right hand for evermore."

SECTION IV.—*Filial Respect for Parents.*

If the young would give evidence that they are influenced by the fear of the Lord, and would enjoy his abundant blessing, they must study carefully to obey "the First Commandment with promise." The faithful performance of *relative duties* is the sure result of gracious principles in the heart—the evidence at once of their existence and power. Of all these duties, there are none whose obligation is more stringent, and whose observance is productive of more valuable fruits, than those of children towards their parents. The law of nature enjoins filial respect and obedience; children derive their earthly existence from their parents; and they owe them much more, because of their love, compassion, and tenderness, than they can ever properly appreciate or repay. The young should early and frequently consider that to their parents as instruments, they are indebted, not only for the care that was necessary for their

preservation in infancy and childhood, but for the training of their minds, the habits, intellectual and moral, by which they are distinguished—their condition in life—religious instruction—and the hopes and prospects of a blessed immortality. None could do for them what Christian parents have done. To be insensible of the obligation to honour them, and to be neglectful of the duties which they owe them, is unnatural, and rarely escapes the marked punishment that follows as the award of unnatural crimes. What the law and light of nature declare, the precepts of divine revelation enjoin, under the most weighty motives, and by the most solemn sanctions.

The precept which prescribes the duties of children is placed at the head of the Second Table of the Decalogue. The terms *father and mother* are employed, as the appellations of *superiors* in other relations, as if to show that filial honour and obedience are to be as a model to other inferiors, in the performance of their respective duties; and a *promise* is annexed, to show the reward which a special providence confers upon filial obedience.* The reiterated counsels of the Word to children declare the authority of God, the Everlasting Father, in this matter, and intimate the indispensable obligation and importance of this class of duties. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” “Children, obey your par-

* There is an admirable propriety in placing the fifth commandment at the head of the precepts of the Second Table; and in enjoining *filial duties* as the first, and as comprehensive of all relative duties. The philosophy of the Decalogue far transcends that of any mere human code of morals. As the gyrations made by throwing a stone into water extend outwards, and cannot be made to reverse their movements, so the performance of *filial duties* influences all other relations; and if these are neglected, no others may be expected to be properly discharged. Society, civil and ecclesiastical, for the sake of its own best interests, requires to attach much importance to the due performance of *filial duties*.

ents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.”* “Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.”†

It is worthy of special remark, that the Saviour—our blessed and all-perfect example—particularly presents this feature in the most attractive aspect. The filial submission of the Saviour is a most prominent part of his character. At Nazareth, in childhood and youth, he was in subjection to his own parents;‡ when about his heavenly Father’s business, and fulfilling the high designs of his mission, He is notwithstanding often in the company of his mother; and amidst his last unspeakable agonies, He manifested towards her the highest filial tenderness and concern, by committing her to the fostering care of the disciple whom He loved. Children, who would “follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes,” must, like Him, love and reverence their parents, and express their regard and affection by all filial obedience and submission.

The significant promise appended to the precept furnishes at once a reason to enforce the command, and a motive to impel to obedience. Children are required to obey, “That their days may be long upon the land which the Lord their God gives them.” This promise was not designed to apply exclusively to the Israelitish people. To Christian youth likewise, it holds out the assurance of a present reward in keeping God’s commandments. The apostle Paul expressly applies the assurance to Christian youth under the New Economy—only altering the terms of the promise—“*That thou mayest live long on the earth.*”§ Temporal blessings follow filial respect and

* Ephesians vi. 1. Colossians iii. 20. † Deut. xxvii. 16.

‡ Luke ii. 51.

§ Ephesians vi. 2, 3.

obedience; and where the duty to parents is performed from a right principle, under the Divine favour, benefits are enjoyed for this life and the life to come. We are not warranted, it is true, to maintain that long life and outward prosperity are always the portion of dutiful children. God sometimes calls away his faithful servants from the scene of their labours, and confers upon them a heavenly reward, instead of an earthly portion. It may seem good to his sovereign wisdom to try them with poverty and disappointment, to teach them that their rest is not here, and to wean their affections from the world. But it may be safely affirmed, that in the ordinary dispensations of Providence, outward blessings are bestowed upon those who are distinguished by obedience to the Fifth Commandment. Bad as the world is, it is an observable fact that children that have been dutiful and kind to their parents, have very frequently had their temporal interests promoted. They are often employed as trust worthy by men who have themselves no sense of true religion; and the remark is not uncommonly made, that such are worthy of confidence, and their character is estimable, because they were faithful and kind to their parents. A special gracious providence is evidently around dutiful children—protecting and preserving them—making for them, not unfrequently, a remarkable provision—carving out for them their lot, and blessing their condition in life. This is the voice of the Moral Governor of the world, proclaiming the rewards of filial obedience, and confirming the gracious promises of His Word.

It were, moreover, easy to show that the faithful discharge of duties to parents has a salutary and powerful influence upon all other relations. This is, to a large extent, the common sentiment of society, and it is abundantly verified in actual experience. Loving and dutiful children prove the best husbands or wives, the kindest masters, the most faithful ser-

vants, the best parents, the most devoted friends. And if they are afterwards called to occupy public official stations, they will discharge the duties of them with fidelity, integrity, and honour. Eminent ministers and missionaries, office-bearers of the church, and civil rulers, have been previously wise children, that honoured their fathers, and were a joy to their mothers. The fruit of faithful parental training was first returned in affection and obedience to parents themselves. While thus blessing the knees that nursed them, and the paps that gave them suck, they were themselves doubly blessed. By the performance of a great fundamental duty in youth, they were prepared for more extended usefulness. The virtuous principles and affections that first put forth their tender buds in honouring parents, ripen and bear precious fruit, in dispersing benefits to a larger extent in society. Dutiful children become benefactors of mankind; and even after they have fulfilled their destiny on earth, frequently do their works follow them. Future generations arise and call them blessed. Their memories are embalmed in the esteem and gratitude of posterity; and their bright example is the means of leading others in the paths of virtue and happiness.

On the contrary, how often do unkind and disobedient children prepare a severe retribution for themselves! God has said, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father and mother." "Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith it is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer."* The curse often rests upon their minds. They are discontented and miserable; or if they have, for a time, success in sin, it is only to procure for them more fearful plagues in future. "Disobedience to parents" is numbered among the hateful crimes

* Deuteronomy xxiv. 11, 16. Proverbs xxviii. 24.

of the Heathen, that draw down upon them the signal vengeance of the Almighty. This sin is greatly aggravated under the clear light and abundant privileges of the Gospel. There enters into it, indeed, so many evil ingredients, that we need not wonder that it is peculiarly heinous in the eye of Him who has the endearing title of the "Everlasting Father;" and that He pursues it with severe punishment. It has in it the basest ingratitude; it manifests the worst species of cruelty; it is the height of selfishness; it is rebellion against all proper authority, human and divine; and it presents such an example of wickedness, that it seems every way right to hold it forth as a crime peculiarly detestable, and to mark it out for signal vengeance. Accordingly, its baleful fruits are often seen in disobedient children being left to the courses that work their ruin here and hereafter. Sometimes society marks them for infamy, and avoids them. If they become parents, not unfrequently their own children rise up to avenge on them the injuries which they inflicted on their parents; and going on in hardened rebellion, they live without God, and perish without hope. On earth there are few things more sad, than for a child to plant stings in the bosom of the parents to whom he is indebted for his earthly existence; and "to bring down" a parent's "grey hairs with sorrow to the grave," is marked in the Divine record, as it is often exhibited in providence, as the consummation of human wickedness, as it is the sure precursor of fearful vengeance.

We notice a few of the duties which Christian youth owe to their parents—the faithful performance of which will be their distinction and honour.

First, Children should honour their parents, *by loving them sincerely, and showing them, on all proper occasions, outward tokens of esteem and respect.* They owe them the tenderest affection. They are among the nearest objects which they have on earth, and

they should always be among the *dearest*. To them they owe continually the love of gratitude; and right self-love will lead them to esteem and cherish those whose image they bear, whose care and kindness preserved and nurtured their infant existence, and to whom they are indebted for innumerable benefits. Filial affection should discover itself by manifesting concern for the honour of parents, and by showing them outward respect. God pronounces those “*accursed*,” who “set light by father and mother.”* In a very early portion of the Scriptures, this course is exemplified in the case of Ham, who mocked at his father’s sinful infirmity; he himself, and his posterity for many generations, are, on this account, pronounced accursed; while Shem and Japheth, who discovered toward their father affectionate regard, even when he had fallen, are pronounced blessed.† “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.”‡ These declarations warn the young against all neglect of parents, all coldness of affection toward them, all contempt. True filial regard will manifest itself in conduct the reverse of all this. Cherished in the heart, it will never fail to show, on all proper occasions, tokens of esteem and affection. How beautifully is this exemplified in the history of Joseph! What a lovely instance does this distinguished servant of God present of filial concern and affection! In youth, he readily goes on a distant and perilous journey at his father’s bidding; amidst his elevation in Egypt, and in his intercourse with his brethren, he never fails to make inquiries concerning “the old man” their father. He cannot rest satisfied till he brings him down to share his honours. When he arrives there, he falls on his neck, and embraces him; speaks of him with the highest

* Deut. xxvii. 16.

† Genesis xx.

‡ Proverbs xxix. 17.

respect to Pharaoh ; brings his son to him to receive his last benediction ; waits at his dying bed, and bestows upon him the highest honours of sepulture when dead. Solomon, the most magnificent of the kings of Israel, when raised to sovereign power, testified his love to his mother, by showing her the highest honour ; “ The king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king’s mother, and she sat on his right hand.”* Children should show their love to their parents, by caring for their bodies and souls, by regarding them always with filial veneration, by honouring them before others, and by performing towards them all offices of kindness. This is their honour as well as their duty, pleasing to God, and to themselves profitable.

Secondly, They should *readily obey their counsels and commands, and submit meekly and patiently to their reproofs.* Thus they principally honour them. While minors, and under the paternal care, they are “to obey them in the Lord;”† in all things, that do not contravene the commands of God, or that do not interfere with obedience to the highest Master. “As a son serveth his father,” is a phrase that implies loving ready obedience. Children are to seek the counsel and advice of their parents, and to hearken to it, in relation both to things temporal and spiritual. Judicious parents, from their experience and their interest in their children’s welfare, are the best fitted to counsel and direct in matters of importance; and children should feel it to be not less their interest than their duty, to seek and to follow their counsel.

On one subject particularly, they should never overlook consulting their parents,—*in choosing companions for life, and in disposing of themselves in marriage, as*

* 1 Kings ii. 19.

† Ephesians vi. 1—4.

well as in other important changes of their condition and circumstances in the world. In a case where their affections are so readily and strongly engaged, and where their happiness for time and eternity is concerned, it is of vast moment to the young to have suitable direction. Next to counsel sought from on high, children will find here a wise and faithful parent's advice invaluable, and it should never be despised or disregarded. By seeking it, they acknowledge parents as their superiors, and they provide best for their own future happiness, and for the peace and welfare of families. The *examples* of sacred Scripture recommend the practice of this duty. Isaac submitted to the direction of Abraham in choosing a wife; and Jacob afterwards obeyed his father and mother in a similar case; and he even recognised the consent of Laban, though an unnatural kinsman, as influencing his determination. * The conduct of the youthful patriarch, in these instances, evidently meets the divine approval. On the other hand, the practice of Esau, in contracting marriage without asking advice of his parents, and in opposition to their mind, is recorded as an instance of filial disobedience, as an evidence that he was "a profane person," devoid of regard to God or religion, "which was a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah." † A striking and decisive proof of true wisdom, or of the folly that tends to ruin, is thus furnished. "A wise son heareth his father's instruction; but a scorner heareth not rebuke." "A fool despiseth his father's instruction; but he that regardeth reproof is prudent." ‡ Let the young learn early to value the advice of their parents. Let them study to choose or follow no course which is opposed to their mind. When parents exercise their authority

* Genesis xxviii. 29.

† Genesis xxiv. 35.

‡ Proverbs xiii. 1; xv. 5.

in correcting children for faults committed, and in directing and commanding contrary to their inclinations, they should readily yield their will to that of their parents, and render a cheerful submission. The apostle Paul, in enjoining submission to the sovereign appointments of God, under afflictions, enforces the precept, on the ground that children owe a reverential subjection to their parents, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits and live?"* In truth, by the habit of ready submission to parental control, the young will themselves be gainers to an inestimable degree. They will learn self-denial, they will be preserved from many snares into which they might readily fall, and they will be the better prepared for the performance of the great duty, which is comprehensive of many others, bowing to the divine appointments, and submitting to God's will in all things.

Thirdly, Children should *pray* for their parents. The best proof they can give of filial affection, the best return they can make for parental kindness is to bear them on their spirits at the throne of grace, and to invoke blessings from heaven upon their heads. To godly parents, there are few things more consolatory and supporting, than to be assured that they have an interest in their children's prayers; and even to others, such prayers may be the means of conferring benefits the most important. In some instances, irreligious parents have owed their conversion to the prayers of their children; and in many other cases, filial intercessions have drawn down blessings, temporal and spiritual, upon their parents. When children are in the habit of praying for their parents, they will thus be excited to the performance of all

* Hebrews xii. 9.

other duties, which they owe them. And then, how sweet to have the experience of God blessing those to whom we owe so much,—objects so interesting and dear, in answer to our prayers! Few sights in our world are more solemn and affecting than that of pious children, at the afflicted and dying bed of their parents, pouring out their hearts to God, in their behalf. This is a full return for all parental anxiety and labour on their account. Christian youth who thus act are themselves singularly honoured; and the best blessings are often, in this connexion, doubly and trebly enjoyed by those who are taken away, and by those who remain. To the aged patriarch Jacob, it was promised, as a singular favour, that “Joseph should put his hands upon his eyes,”* ministering to him in old age, when “the lookers out at the windows” would be darkened, and perhaps closing his eyes in death. This action, so simple and expressive, and doubtless performed in prayer, exhibits a beautiful example of filial obedience and respect, as the whole character of Joseph is a singularly impressive illustration of the rewards of filial piety and affection.

Fourthly, Children should consider themselves called to *cherish and assist their parents when in want and old age*. This part of filial regard is beautifully exemplified in the invitation of the same distinguished servant of God to his father, to come down to him to Egypt, “Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast. And there will I nourish thee, lest thou and thy household, and all that thou hast

* Genesis xlv. 4.

come to poverty.”* The same duty is strikingly inculcated in the blessing which the Israelitish matrons invoked upon Naomi, upon the birth of a son to Boaz and Ruth, “He shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age.”† If such a duty was plainly enjoined, and practised with divine approbation, under the former economy, how much greater the obligation to its performance under the clearer and more spiritual dispensation of the New Testament! To their parents, children are indebted for support, and protection, and nourishment in helpless infancy. They made provision for them in youth, when they could make none for themselves; whatever they have of temporal enjoyments in life, they owe, in a great measure, to parental instruction, and guidance, and forethought; and if parents have been faithful in bringing up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” their children are indebted to them for benefits which the return of outward gifts can never repay. Kindness to parents, in providing for their wants, relieving their poverty, alleviating their trials, and nourishing their old age, is a debt, from the payment of which children can never be absolved. Gratitude, regard to God’s authority, and to their own best interests, demand that it should always be readily acknowledged and fully discharged. It may be added, that there are few duties, the performance of which so manifestly brings with it its own reward. The blessing of parents doubly given to children who are their help under infirmities, and the stay and comfort of their declining years; and the consciousness of having *requited*, in some measure, those who were the instruments of their existence and the guardians of their youth, afford grounds of pure pleasure and sweetest satisfaction to the mind. The example, moreover, of such filial regard is one of the

*Genesis xlv. 9—11.

†Ruth iv. 15.

most useful and impressive lessons which can be taught to posterity, and those who have shown it, often reap, in their old age and infirmities, in the kindness of their own children, the fruit of their tenderness and concern for their parents.

Finally, The youth of the church *should walk in the ways of godly parents, and cherish their memories.* As there are few things more melancholy than to witness the children of Christian parents neglecting good instruction, and forsaking the ways in which their parents have walked—as there are few courses which are more evidently marked with tokens of the Divine displeasure, and which are more fraught with ruin, so to walk in the way which faithful parents have recommended and exemplified, is at once lovely and blessed. This is represented by the royal Preacher as the first expression of “the fear of the Lord,” and as, at the same time, beautiful and attractive, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.”* The instances of children walking in the footsteps of godly parents, that are recorded in the Scriptures, are evidently held forth to special commendation. Of Isaac and Jacob, the son and grandson of Abraham, it is related that they dwelt with him in tents, “the heirs with him of the same promise.” The descendants of Jonadab, long after, are held up as an example to a whole nation, because they obeyed the commandment, and walked in the ways of their father; and as the fruit of their filial obedience, blessings are guaranteed to them for many generations. “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you:

* Proverbs i. 8, 9.

Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever." *

It is on the principle that children walk in the steps of godly parents, that God exhibits himself to them as the source of all comfort and blessing, under the endearing title of their "*fathers' God.*" "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." † A course of piety is styled, "the way of the God of our fathers," as not only that which He enjoins, but as that in which our fathers walked, and found peace and comfort; and blessings are sought and realized in walking in the same path. With this view, did David, the monarch of Israel, give his parting charge to his son and successor, "And thou, Solomon my son, Know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind." ‡ And, in the same spirit, did Solomon, and the many thousands of Israel, invoke God's presence and blessing, at the dedication of the temple, "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; let Him not leave us, nor forsake us." § "The God of our fathers," we have reason to expect, will be with us, to enlighten, sustain, and prosper us, when we adhere to the path which they pointed out to us, and in which they themselves travelled to glory. While we should love and obey Him as our God and Portion, and never forsake our own and our fathers' Best Friend, we may rest assured, that as He was with them, so He will be with us, guiding and protecting us, and crowning us with loving-kindness and tender mercy.

The memory of faithful parents, when they are gone, should ever be embalmed in the hearts of children. They are entitled to live in those whom they

* Jeremiah xxxv. 18, 19.

† Exodus xv. 2.

‡ 1 Chronicles xxviii. 9.

§ 1 Kings viii. 57.

nursed for God, and trained for religion and virtue ; and the best way in which children can show that they cherish the memory of departed parents—that they bear in mind their counsels and example, and regard with affection their names and conduct—is to walk in their ways. Like them, let them value the Bible, and intercourse with God in secret. Let them perfume the family altar with the incense of their prayers and praises, aim to have their “conversation in heaven,” and in the punctual and faithful discharge of all relative duties, to keep a “conscience void of offence to God and to man.” The place in the sanctuary of godly parents, and their sphere of usefulness in the world, should be filled by children, esteeming it ever their honour to imitate and emulate their parents, in a life of godliness and integrity. Young persons will reap honour, and unspeakable benefit, from walking in such a course. Their fathers’ God will bless them ; their piety will be increased and invigorated ; their example, in following the good instructions which they early imbibed, will deprive the infidel and the scoffer of their bitterest taunts against religion ; and their conduct may be the means of attracting many others to the paths of virtue.

The instances of the children of distinguished servants of God walking in their parents’ footsteps are not a few ; and those that have been deemed worthy of special record, serve to illustrate the eminent blessing that has followed such a course. The sons of Philip Henry, and President Edwards, and Dr. Morrison, not only inherited a large portion of the sanctified talent of their parents, but were honoured to advance the Lord’s work, in which their parents greatly delighted. Not a few of the faithful ministers and elders of the church, have been the sons of ministers, and of other faithful servants of God ; and through all ages, the children of the righteous have, to a large extent, been the most devoted members of

the church, and the best benefactors of the world. A living American author states, that the descendants of JOHN RODGERS, the first martyr in Queen Mary's reign, *of the tenth and eleventh generations*, yet occupy a distinguished place among pious persons in America. "With a single exception, the oldest son in the family has been a clergyman; some of them eminently distinguished for learning and piety; and there are few families now in this land, a greater proportion of whom are pious than of that family."*

While a fact like this furnishes a great encouragement to Christian parents to educate their children for God, it evidently holds forth an abundant blessing to the young who walk in the footsteps of godly parents. God's gracious promise is, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." "As for me, this is my covenant with you, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."†

We would affectionately and earnestly urge the youth of the church to consider the duties which they owe to their parents, and to betake themselves faithfully to their performance. They are a principal part of the work prescribed to them in the precept which is impressively designated, "The First Commandment with promise." Whether they would enjoy peace and satisfaction in their own bosom, the favour and esteem of good men, or manifold benefits in providence and grace, or by their example, be a blessing to others, "let them first show piety at home," by requiting well their parents. Children should begin early to walk cheerfully in the path of

* *Burles's Notes on Isaiah*—Vol. III. p. 253.—Cumming's Ed.

† *Isaiah lix. 21.*

filial obedience; and throughout life, while parents continue in the world, they should ever discover towards them all reverence and respect. No alteration of circumstances—no change in their condition in life, will free them wholly from the obligation of this primary duty. Even in houses of their own, and when heads of families themselves, they are bound to love, and pray for, and cherish their parents, and to provide for their wants, if they thus require their care. In cultivating this spirit, and in exemplifying it, upon all proper occasions, they employ the sure means of conferring benefits upon their own households. Joseph, when in an elevated station in the land of Egypt, brought his two sons to his aged father, and obtained, as he sought, his blessing. The blessing of godly parents, who have been repaid with filial regard, will descend upon children's children; and the lesson imparted by the heads of Christian families to their children, by their honouring and cherishing their parents, and walking in their ways, is among the most important and impressive that they can possibly communicate. The *promise* appended to the precept which enjoins filial reverence and obedience, in fine, extends to every relation in life. It embraces the whole outward condition, and guarantees peace within, and prospects for the future, cheering and ennobling. Filial duties, on the other hand, neglected, no other relative duties will be properly performed. Whenever this principal part of "piety at home" is duly exemplified, we may confidently expect integrity and fidelity in other relations; and the blessing which the Divine Lawgiver annexes to filial obedience, will sweeten trials, animate in duty, set upon the head, and furnish, here and hereafter, a crown of beauty and honour.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

“Prepare to meet thy God.” Such is the emphatic counsel which God’s Providence, equally with His Word addresses to the young. This voice from the throne of God should be heard and pondered, and constantly obeyed; for we are liable every day to be summoned into the presence of our Judge, and to have required from us a minute and particular account of all the deeds done in the body. “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.” “So then, every one of us must give account of himself to God.” Every human being must meet with God. At death, the disembodied spirit will stand in His immediate presence. It will appear in the character which, through life, has been put on, and in this it will stand to be judged; and according as the individual then presents himself to the inspection of infinite purity and rectitude, so will be his final condition of happiness or misery.

The consideration of death and judgment may seem to be a gloomy subject for the young, restraining their mirth, and marring their enjoyments; and hence is it that so many defer the consideration of it, and amidst the plans of youth and the active pursuits of mature life, scarcely bestow on it a passing thought. Conduct of this kind must, however, be regarded as the worst species of infatuation and madness. Preparation for death is indispensably necessary for the young, as well as for others. Life is always uncertain—a vapour which appears but for a moment, and then vanishes away. Death is certain—and to the youngest, fairest, and healthiest, it may be near. To the young, the probability is much greater that they shall die soon, than that they shall live to old age. From an accurate com-

parison of tables of mortality, it has been ascertained that nearly *one-half* of the whole human family die before they reach the age of *eighteen* years, and that more than one-half the remainder die before they arrive at the age of *forty*. The young ought, therefore, seriously to reflect on the uncertainty to them of life, and all its pursuits and pleasures. They should think how liable they are to be called away in the midst of their unexecuted purposes, how speedily they may be required to render an account of the talents that were entrusted to them, and of their improvement—how soon they may have to part with life, and take up their abode in eternity. Apart from the pain of dying, and from the interruption of plans and pursuits, and the dissolution of earthly relationships, which take place at death, there is much that is momentous in the termination of the present state of existence, and in the entrance into the world of spirits. The maxim of the Grecian Sage* was, “No one should be called happy till his death.” And a wisdom infinitely higher than any which springs from this world, has declared, “He that endures to the end shall be saved.” All the pleasures and enjoyments of life are illusory and deceitful, if not absolutely ruinous, which are incompatible with dying in the Lord; and that profession of religion is vain which does not last till the close of life, and which does not abide the testing trial of death and judgment. To a person of the most limited intellect, and of the least reflection, it is obvious that we are *born for eternity*. The present life is but the bud and germ of being, the future is the full fruit and maturity of human existence. Just as the soul excels the body, and the interests of eternity transcend the concerns of time, so must it be important to make provision for the new condition into which we are shortly

* Solon.

to enter. The full and unequivocal testimony of Sacred Scripture is, that death makes no change in the moral nature or distinguishing features of character of the individual. His habits, mental and moral, remain unaffected by the change, and his active dispositions, good or evil, continue to develop themselves more fully in the state into which death introduces him. Death is simply a change of condition or place; and all that was essential to the character that has been superinduced continues, when the partnership of soul and body has been dissolved. "As the tree falls, so it will lie." Is it not then of unspeakable importance to have that character now formed which will meet the approval of the Judge at his coming? Is it not most desirable, before the arrest of death, to have acquired a meetness for the society, employments and enjoyments of the blessed, into which at death the saints are introduced? Compared with such preparation, all other purposes and works, when considered aright, must appear utterly insignificant. What is the applause of a world, when contrasted with the wrath of an angry God? Can riches, or all the objects of earthly enjoyment profit in the day of wrath? What will it avail to have been powerful, successful or admired, if death finds the person unprepared, and if eternal woe will be his portion? The young should reflect on these things—and the consideration of them should urge them to receive and obey our Lord's solemn direction, "Be ye always ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

SECTION I.—*Wherein Preparation for death consists.*

It has been frequently said, that to “*learn to die well, is to learn to live well.*” It is preposterous in the highest degree to defer this great work till the future, by presuming upon youth and health, and in the vain expectation of years to come. While much diversity in relation to the time and outward circumstances of death, may take place with the young as well as others; there are some things essential to a happy death and a blissful eternity. To be in Christ, to die in the Lord, to be a partaker of grace, and to have the graces of the Spirit in exercise,—to have a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light: these are indispensable if we would be conquerors in death, and would afterwards be partakers of the joy of the Lord. If the young would reach this happy consummation, and have death, however and wherever it may reach them, “gain,” they should prepare for it:—

1. *By frequent serious thoughts upon the end of life, and upon the change through which they are to pass in dying.* “It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after this the judgment.”* This is a settled divine constitution—the fixed unalterable purpose of the Eternal. Never was it interfered with, save in the case of two much-honoured servants of God—Enoch and Elijah; and we have no reason to think that in any subsequent instance, till the end of time, will it be again infringed. The young should habituate themselves to meditate on death, not from the morbid feeling of cherishing dark and gloomy thoughts, but to give a right tone and direction to the business of life, and to facilitate the preparation for their dissolution. From the proneness of youth to keep out of view the thought of death, and from the

* Hebrews ix. 28.

temptation to which the young are peculiarly exposed to be engrossed with objects of sense, and present earthly pursuits, the neglect of things spiritual and eternal, they have special need to reflect betimes upon their mortality. Such reflections should mingle with all their engagements, and influence their whole disposition and conduct. It is related that Philip of Macedon, lest, amidst the engrossing cares and pomp of royalty, he should forget the condition of humanity, caused a herald to proclaim every morning before his chamber, "Remember, O King, that thou art mortal." A similar warning voice should each day be listened to by the young. They should familiarise themselves with the thought of death, that when the messenger comes they may not be taken by surprise. This thought should be entertained till it exert a practical and subduing influence upon the whole inner man, and upon the whole conduct. Their work in life should be such as, at death, will be approved of God, and such will, on reviewing it, yield satisfaction to the conscience. Their state of heart and mind should be befitting their appearance in the presence of the Judge; and the consideration of laying aside what is mortal, and putting on immortality, should elevate and animate them in all duty, comfort them in all trials, and enable them to overcome the world. Reflections on death thus entertained will be as the girding up of the loins, to await the Lord's coming. The day of death will not overtake us unawares, because the work of life is, in some measure, finished. We shall be "satisfied with length of days," * and be prepared to enter into the promised and expected rest of the righteous.

2. By a *lively faith exercised in Christ*, the young are prepared for death. Of the Jewish patriarchs—"the elders who obtained a good report"—it is signifi-

* Psalm xci. 16—Margin.

cantly and beautifully said, "*These all died in faith.*" It had been before recorded of the same distinguished servants of God, that "*they lived in faith.*" This holy principle was the grand distinction of their character, that which, like the seal on the plastic wax, impressed its own permanent likeness upon their minds and actions. The same connexion still obtains, and it may be safely affirmed, that it never will be broken. A life of faith will end in a death of faith; and his warfare and work finished, which was performed in humble reliance on the Saviour, the Christian soldier shall receive "the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul." The faith which is saving, has Christ the Lord for its great Object, as He is its blessed Author and Finisher. In Him is laid up all that the soul needs, in Him are deposited "all treasures of wisdom and knowledge." By faith we embrace Him as "all and in all;" in Him we have "righteousness and strength;" and He "of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

By faith we look to him and are saved; we come to him weary and heavy laden, and obtain rest; we lean upon him for strength and support; we commit our spirits and all our interests into his hands, and out of his fulness we receive grace for grace. The entertainment of such views, and the growth of such principles, are, in the highest degree, important and salutary in life, and for death it is the grand preparation. Jesus, our blessed Lord and Redeemer, has "the keys of hell and of death." In his own death, He conquered the destroyer, and when He rose and ascended to glory, "He led captivity captive." When as a conqueror He fell, He achieved a victory for his people over all evil. He "destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, even the devil." "He was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him"—that is, believe on him

—“will He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.”* Having himself trod the dark valley, having endured the agony of dying, and encountered all that can render death terrible, He is fitted to sustain and comfort his people in death, and to give them the victory. His assured promise is, “I will come and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”† What can be so supporting and joyful as this? If Jordan was driven back in view of the Ark of the Covenant, and when the priests’ feet touched the waters, and Israel passed over in safety, how much greater are the safety and triumph of those who have lived a life of faith upon the Son of God, when they come to die? The Friend in whom they have confided will not then forsake them. When they pass through the waters, He will be with them. He will support them under weakness and pain; lighten the dark valley with his presence and glory; swallow up death for them in victory, and minister to them “an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom.” The principal acts of faith with which the servant of God is familiar in life, such as fleeing to Christ as a refuge, relying upon his power and faithfulness, drawing out of his fulness, and committing the soul to him, constitute the grand preparation for death. The merciful Saviour cannot fail any that trust in him. What his people commit to him, He will assuredly keep, till the day of his glorious appearance. Death will introduce the spirit of the believer into the glorious presence of Him who led and fed him all his life long; and faith exercised in difficulty, darkness, and conflict will issue in everlasting triumph and unmingled felicity; “*When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness; I shall see thy face in righteousness.*”‡ How excellent a life of faith! how blissful its termination!

* Hebrews ix. 28.

† John xiv. 2.

‡ Psalm xvii. 15.

3. The young make preparation for death, *by cultivating universal holiness*. Faith that is saving “purifies the heart,” and so does the hope of salvation. “Every man that hath this hope purifies himself as God is pure.” This is, indeed, the proper work of the great principle, which is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* It discerns the enormous evil of sin, and excites a keen and thorough hatred of it. It beholds the matchless beauty of holiness, and delights in it as its proper element. Whoever in faith names the name of Christ will depart from iniquity. Moral purity is indispensable to happiness in dying. The sting of death is sin. That which torments the mind in the retrospect, in the hour of dissolution, is the bitterness of former transgressions; and that which rends it with inconceivable agonies in the prospect, is the thought of condemnation at the judgment-seat, because of sin unpardoned. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” This is the fixed and unalterable law of Heaven. Into the presence of Infinite Purity, there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, or causeth abomination, or is unclean. The cultivation of holy dispositions, and the practice of holy actions, are the surest and best preparation for a happy death. Thus the soul becomes assimilated to the mansions of perfect purity, and puts on a meetness for the employments of the blessed, and the exalted pleasures which are at God’s right hand. It is attracted to the upper world as its kindred element, and rejoices, amidst the dissolution of the earthly tabernacle, to put on the house which is in heaven. “The pure in heart shall see God.” Sprinkled by atoning blood, and transformed by the renewing of the Spirit, they are prepared for receiving the unspeakable discoveries of the Divine glory—and this vision is to them *beatific*—the endless source of in-

* Hebrews xi. 1.

conceivable felicity. Nothing but a holy character will abide the trial of death; none but holy works will then meet with approval. Holiness, the meetness for future felicity, must be assumed here; in its very nature it is progressive and expansive; and if we would possess it, we must be active in its cultivation. The saints who are admitted to glory, have "washed their robes and made them white." While "the blood of the Lamb" is graciously provided for them as a laver of cleansing, and the blessed Spirit is the great Agent of purification; in sanctification, believers become "co-workers with God." They *wash their own robes*, that they may be pure. Their thoughts, desires, duties, whole walk, all that distinguishes them, are these "robes," originally defiled, and liable continually to contract new stains. These they bring daily to the Great Fountain of purification. The blood of the Lamb is efficacious to remove all defilement, and to cleanse from all sin. Habitual application to it will disengage the heart from earthly objects, and will fix the affections on things above. Let the young earnestly seek after an increased measure of holiness. Let them use the word and ordinances to promote purity of life. Let them value, and fervently desire perfection in holiness; and thus will death, however it may come, be to them great gain. All imperfection for ever gone, they shall be holy, as God is holy; and together with perfect purity, they shall enjoy inconceivable and endless felicity.

4. *Abounding in the work of the Lord*, is an eminent preparation for death. The faithful servant receives his reward when his labour is ended. Death introduces him to the rest that remains for the people of God. Rest implies the cessation of labour; and the holy, blissful rest that the saints enjoy in passing out of the body, carries in it the idea, that, up till the time of their exit, they have been actively and de-

votedly employed in the work of their exalted Master. The commencement of heavenly felicity is the approving sentence of the Judge, "WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT." If we would hear this joy-inspiring declaration addressed to us, we must aim to be always abounding in the work of the Lord. Sometimes, even when the thought of death is not present, this will be found the best preparation for the great change. If talents are faithfully expended, so as to obtain an increase, we shall be ready to account for them when our Lord cometh. The watchful servant is pronounced blessed, when his Master calls him to go forth to meet him; the slothful, on the other hand, is declared to be "wicked," and is dismissed to endless misery. Devotedness to Christ is itself a principal element of happiness in life, and is the grand preparation for the highest happiness at its termination. We must continue the warfare till the end, and the victory will reward all; we must finish our course, and the crown of righteousness will be compensation sufficient for all losses, trials, difficulties. Heaven will be enhanced, by its being rest after labour; satisfaction and felicity after tribulation and anxiety. The young should see that they are in reality employed in the Lord's service; they should aim always to abound in the work of the Lord, and they should seek to be found in it to the end. The service of God will itself purify and elevate the heart, stamp dignity on the pursuits of life, and prepare the individual for the higher work of the upper Sanctuary. Following the counsel of a celebrated Jansenist—the young "should study to labour to the end; *eternity will be long enough to rest.*" The Divine direction and promise should be taken as at once the motto of the conduct, and the pledge of a blissful reward; "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

* Revelation ii. 10. '

5. *Waiting for the Lord's coming*, is, finally, a chief preparation for a happy death. The Scriptures hold out the coming of Christ as to the Christian, the joyful termination of all his trials, the end of his faith, the consummation of his highest hopes. This is the beginning of his glorious recompense of reward, the morning-dawn of his state of unspeakable and unending bliss. The Saviour assures his people that He will come again—in affliction and trial, to turn their sorrow into joy—at death, to receive them to himself, that where He is, there they may be also. This is ever represented as the fulfilment of the believer's most enlarged expectations, the completion of his character and felicity. He sees his Saviour now through a glass darkly. He shall then behold Him face to face. While here, by reason of imperfect vision, his views are beclouded, his sanctification incomplete, his joys interrupted, and his victories partial. When, however, that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. The Saviour's presence will dispel darkness, vanquish all enemies, and fill the heart with unutterable joys. It will realize to the believer all his fervent desires, and gloriously complete the work of grace in his heart. When absent from the body, He will be present with the Lord. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is."* Such being the high purposes to be accomplished by Christ's coming, is it to be thought strange that to the saints it should be a subject of frequent meditation and earnest expectation? They are represented as loving his appearance, waiting for his coming from heaven, waiting for his manifestation, and looking for and hasting to the day of the Lord. They are exhibited as standing "with their loins girded," and their lights burning, and like men who wait for their Lord, when He will come. Their love

* 1 John iii. 2.

to Christ may be tested by the presence or absence, the strength or weakness of this feeling. Just as we desire the presence of a beloved object, and regard with interest his return, so when the Saviour, the beloved of the soul, is absent, the thought of his coming will be frequently entertained, and the desire of it cherished. So many and so excellent are the purposes subserved to the Christian by the Saviour's coming, that, in a right frame of heart, it cannot but be to him a subject of the deepest interest and most fervent affection. The revelation of his ineffable glory, the termination of the believer's conflict with sin and all evil, perfection of character, the enjoyment of the highest felicity—these are the immediate blessed consequences of meeting with the Saviour in death. Into his glorious presence, the dissolution of the tie that unites soul and body will introduce the faithful servant. The Saviour himself will lighten the dark valley, and dry up the river of death; and His glory bursting upon the disembodied spirit, will usher it into "fulness of joy," and everlasting pleasures. *Waiting* for the Saviour's appearance, implies steadfast belief in its certainty and nearness, loving expectation of it, and daily preparation for it. We should order the business of life, so as to have all prepared for "the coming of the Son of man." This will overcome the dread of dissolution, render a dying scene happy, and minister an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ. It is related of the eminently pious Janeway, that when a foolish report prevailed through the neighbourhood wherein he resided, that *Dooms-day* was at hand, he said with much solemnity and evident joy, "And what if it were already come? I protest before God, I would rejoice with all my heart; and the thought of that day, and of my appearing with my Lord at His coming, has often filled me with greater happiness than all things in the world besides." Thus let the

young wait for the coming of the Lord. Thus they will "die daily." Thus shall they be enabled to say, with fervent aspirations of heart, when they stand on the brink of the unseen world, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus;" and when the Saviour whom they have loved and served receives them to his blissful presence, they shall exclaim with wrapt wonder and astonishment, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*

SECTION II.—*Death of a Pious Youth.*

The young, to whom these counsels are addressed, should always keep in mind one solemn consideration—they may be cut off in the morning of life. They may be called to take up their lot in eternity before they have reached the years of manhood, and while occupied in forming plans for future labour or enjoyment. Many of the human family die in youth; and those to whom these words come, should frequently reflect that there is a strong probability that this may be their condition. Instead of repeating what has been elsewhere advanced, concerning the importance of ordering the life so as to be prepared for death, whenever it may come, we present the happy death of a pious youth, removed before he has been long in the conflict, to enjoy the blessedness of complete and everlasting victory. We are too prone to associate with death what is gloomy and distressful; and when the person who is taken away is a godly, promising youth, we are apt to regard his removal

* Isaiah xxv. 9.

as a subject of painful regret. The endeared friends, from whose circle he has been separated, mourn his loss as to them irretrievable. The expectations that were fondly cherished, of extended usefulness from his life, are doomed to disappointment; and to our weak and limited vision, the church and the world appear to suffer much by the removal of one who was fitted to confer on them many benefits, just as he was entering upon his career of active benevolence. We speak of such a dispensation as *mysterious*, and we feel, as if by it some great calamity had been inflicted. But, in all this, we overlook the abundant honour and unspeakable blessedness, which are conferred upon him whose departure we deplore. Our loss is his unspeakable gain; and whatever of trial or divine displeasure his death may be to survivors, to himself it is the possession of endless felicity.

Besides the ordinary privileges that are connected with the death of the righteous, there are some that are peculiar to the youthful servant of God. He is greatly honoured, by being so soon called to the service of the upper sanctuary. His translation to glory speedily follows his calling; his regeneration is succeeded by his advancement to the stature of "a perfect man" in Christ; and scarcely had he enlisted as a soldier in the army of the Captain of salvation, and girded on the armour of righteousness, when he becomes a crowned conqueror, and grasps the palm of completed victory. The spiritual discoveries made to him in the morning of the new birth, usher him into the perfect day. The glass through which he saw darkly is laid aside, and, instead of it, there is now full-face vision. The warm youthful desires that went out after Christ and salvation, obtain their highest gratification; and the excellence of character after which the aspirant to glory incessantly longed, and for which he laboured, is fully realized; "When He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see

him as He is." To "depart and be with Christ," the believing youth feels to be "far better." For a time he may lawfully have indulged the love of life. He desired to live that he might serve God. His heart was wedded to the work of his exalted Master; and even when the hand of affliction is laid upon him, and there are intimations given him of death, he may have wished to be restored, that he might see more of the Lord's loving-kindness in the land of the living; that he might be instrumental, to a greater degree, in advancing the Redeemer's glory. When, however, he is made sensible that his days on earth are numbered, he is enabled to rejoice in the prospect of dissolution, and to triumph in the hope of glory. He knows that the "pleasures which are at God's right hand" in heaven, vastly surpass any enjoyments of which he could partake here; and the service in the Father's house above, is inconceivably more exalted than any which he could render on earth. There is no night there. There is no darkness, no interruption of labour, no pain, fear, or any thing that can mar satisfaction, or diminish delight. The spirits of saints made perfect, serve God day and night. "I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."* Material means of worship are gone; there is no special place where the Divine presence may be enjoyed, for it is every where in the world of glory; there is no restriction in holy services, for it is a perpetual "Sabbath-keeping" for the people of God; and the services of devotion are no longer distinct and separate. The whole man is engaged in active spiritual work, and God's glory is seen to be all in all. God is fully manifested. His blissful presence is continually enjoyed. The fulness of the Godhead

* Revelation xxi. 22.

is seen in Christ, the Elder Brother. Perfect communion with God is realized, and the highest and holiest desires receive their amplest gratification.

The near view of such blessedness supports the youthful believer when flesh and heart are failing, and cheer his spirit in the hour of dissolution. Death is unstinged. Mortality is swallowed up of life. The promised presence of Christ, now actually enjoyed, dispels the gloom and terror of the valley of the shadow of death. "At evening time there is light," causing heartfelt joy within, and gladdening the heart with the prospect of being admitted to full and wondrous felicity. The dying youth "knows whom he has believed," and he is assured of his safety. His soul is filled with peace that surpasses understanding, and he is animated by the earnest and foretastes of future glory. He breathes the fragrance of heaven; and as he speaks in the language of Canaan, of the Blessed Object of faith, of the excellence of faith and holy obedience, and of the sure and everlasting mercies of the Lord, his heart is enlarged; and sorrowing friends hardly know whether to weep for their loss, or to exult in his felicity, now almost complete.

The struggle is at length over. The youthful believer falls asleep in Jesus; and attending angels convey his sanctified soul to mansions of glory. Earth and its scenes, conflicts, cares, trials, are for ever gone; and a crown, a kingdom, an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory are now his unchangeable and eternal portion. Absent from the body, he is present with the Lord. The joy of actual fruition far exceeds all that hope could anticipate, or imagination, in its loftiest flight, could ever reach. Welcomed to the heavenly rest, by holy angels that surround the throne, and by the spirits of glorified saints that have gone before; and, above all, by the Lord of that country, his own exalted and much-loved Master, in

conscious and transporting happiness, his former trials are forgotten. His saintly character is fully matured. He is numbered with the spirits of just men made perfect; and he enters upon the ennobling employments and enjoyments of heaven, with enraptured wonder, and admiration, and delight. Waving his palm of victory in honour of the Redeemer, and arrayed in white raiment, he is advanced to serve before the throne. He shall go no more out. He has entered on a career of most dignified service, and of unbounded and endless felicity. "THE LAMB WHICH IS IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE SHALL FEED THEM, AND SHALL LEAD THEM TO LIVING FOUNTAINS OF WATER, AND GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES." In the view of a death so triumphant, and of such a glorious recompense of reward, should we not resolve to follow Christ fully? Ought we not to say—in the fervent desire and resolution of the heart—"*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*"

As exemplifying the power of true religion in sustaining in death, we subjoin a few instances of the sanctified and happy departure of servants of God, who were almost all removed early, having eminently served their generation by the will of God:—

The case of the truly illustrious Dr. PAYSON of America, may be noticed as an instance of a servant of God, whose death was most joyful and triumphant, and whose works will long be a blessing in the church. The son of a clergyman, his early conversion, there is reason to think, was the fruit of parental fidelity. In the prime of youth, he surrendered his heart and all his faculties to the service of the Master whom he had chosen; and his was a life of eminent prayerfulness, successful effort, and devotedness to the great objects of the Christian ministry. His death, at the comparatively early age of thirty-eight,

most triumphant, notwithstanding severe sufferings, exhibits the high rewards of youthful devotedness, and discovers the incomparable joys of true religion.

“I feel desirous,” he remarked from his bed of pain, “that you might see that the religion I have preached can support me in death. You know that I have many ties which bind me to earth; a family to whom I am strongly attached, and a people whom I love almost as well; but the other world acts as a much stronger magnet, and draws my heart away from this. Death comes every night, and stands by my bedside in the form of terrible convulsions, every one of which threatens to separate the soul from the body. These continue to grow worse and worse, until every bone is almost dislocated with pain, leaving me with the certainty that I shall have it all to endure again the next night. Yet while my body is thus tortured, the soul is perfectly, perfectly happy and peaceful; more happy than I can possibly express to you. I lie here, and feel these convulsions extending higher and higher, without the least uneasiness; but my soul is filled with joy unspeakable. I seem to swim in a flood of glory which God pours down upon me. And I know, I *know* that my happiness is but begun; I cannot doubt that it will last for ever.”

“A young man just about to leave this world, exclaimed, ‘The battle’s fought! the battle’s fought! the battle’s fought! but the victory is lost for ever!’ But I can say, the battle’s fought, and the victory is won! the victory is won for ever. I am going to bathe in an ocean of purity, and benevolence, and happiness, to all eternity.”

A friend said to him, “I presume it is no longer incredible to you, if ever it was, that martyrs should rejoice, and praise God in the flames and on the rack.” “No,” he said, “I can easily believe it. I have suffered twenty times, yes, to speak within bounds,

twenty times as much as I could, in being burnt at the stake, while my joy in God so abounded, as to render my sufferings not only tolerable but welcome. *The sufferings of this present world, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.*" At another time, "God is literally now my all in all. While He is present with me, no event can in the least diminish my happiness; and were the whole world at my feet trying to minister to my comfort, they could not add one drop to the cup. It seems as if the promise, 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,' was already fulfilled in me: as it respects tears of sorrow, I have no tears to shed now, but those of love, and joy, and thankfulness."

About a month before his departure, he thus writes, "Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I should date this letter from the land of Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The sun of righteousness has gradually been drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as He approached; and now he fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float as an insect in the beams of the sun; exulting, yet almost trembling, when I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, that God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm."

The Rev. JAMES HERVEY, who likewise died in comparatively early life, when speaking of his dissolution, said, "But do not think that I am afraid to die—I assure you I am not. I know what my Saviour

hath done for me, and I long to be gone." To his medical attendant, who advised him to spare himself, he replied, "No, no, you tell me that I have but a few moments to live, Oh let me spend them in adoring our great Redeemer! How thankful am I for death, as it is the passage through which I pass to the Lord and giver of eternal life. Oh! welcome, welcome, Death! Thou mayest well be reckoned among the treasures of the Christian. *To live is Christ, but to die is gain.* Here, Dr. Stonehouse, is my cordial. What are all the cordials given to support the dying, in comparison with that which arises from the promises of salvation by Christ? This, this supports me." About two hours before his departure he said, "The great conflict is over; now, all is done;" after which he scarcely spoke any words intelligibly, excepting now and then "Precious salvation."

The devoted Christian philanthropist, HOWARD, said to Admiral Priestman, a few days before his death, in a distant land, "You endeavour to divert my mind from dwelling on death, but I entertain very different sentiments. *Death has no terrors for me; it is an event I always look forward to with cheerfulness, if not with pleasure.*" The ground of this cheerfulness in the view of dissolution was, doubtless, the declaration which he requested might be the only inscription on his tomb, "CHRIST IS MY HOPE."

The dying sayings of the eminent and pious HALYBURTON, are full of the Christian's joyful confidence and triumph in death. To some around his bed of affliction he said, "The greatest kindness I can show you is to commend serious religion to you. Now get acquaintance with God. The little acquaintance I have had with God within these *two days*, has been better than ten thousand times the *pains* I have *all my life* been about religion." In a letter to his nephew, dictated shortly before his decease, he urges

him to "make earnest of religion, and not to rest content with a dead, dry, barren profession. I can tell you, that *since I came to this bed of languishing, I have found a full proof that religion is a real, useful, noble, and profitable thing.* . . . I never found so much goodness when I was in health and prosperity, as I find now in sickness and languishing." Subsequently he said, "My bones are riving through my skin, and yet all my bones are praising Him. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! I am now a witness for Christ, and for the reality of religion. . . . I have peace in the midst of pain; and Oh! how much of that I have had for a time past? my peace has been like a river—not a discomposed thought." When drawing near his end, one remarked to him, "Blessed are they that die in the Lord." He replied, "When I fall so low that I cannot speak, I'll show you a sign of triumph, if I am able." And when he could no longer speak, he lifted up his hands, clapped them in token of victory, and shortly after departed.

Dr. DODDRIDGE wrote shortly before his decease, "It is a blessed thing to live above the fear of death; and I praise God, I fear it not. The most distressing nights to this frail body, have been as the beginning of heaven to my soul. God hath, as it were, let heaven down to me, in those nights of weakness and waking." Nearer the time of his joyful dismissal, he said several times to Mrs. Doddridge, "I cannot express to you what a morning I have had; such delightful and transporting views of the heavenly world is my Father now indulging with as never words can express."

The godly SAMUEL RUTHERFORD, a few hours before his departure said, "I am a sinful and miserable man; but I stand at the best pass that ever a miserable man stood at, "Christ is mine, and I am his." The illustrious JAMES RENWICK, the last of Scotland's covenanted martyrs, who obtained his glorious crown

at the early age of twenty-six, on the day of his execution said, in the presence of his mother and sisters, when giving thanks after some refreshment, "O Lord, thou hast brought me within two hours of eternity, and this is no matter of terror to me, more than if I were to lie down in a bed of roses; nay, through grace to thy praise, I may say I never had the fear of death since I came to this prison; but from the place where I was taken, I could have gone very composedly to the scaffold. Oh! how can I contain this, to be within two hours of the crown of glory!" His last testimony concludes with these words, "I may say to His praise, that I have found His cross sweet and lovely to me; for I have had many joyful hours, and not a fearful thought since I came to prison. He hath strengthened me to outbrave man, and to outface death, and I am now longing for the joyful hour of my dissolution. Farewell beloved sufferers and followers of the Lamb! . . . Farewell sweet societies and desirable general meetings! Farewell night-wanderings, in cold and weariness for Christ! Farewell sweet bible, and the preaching of the gospel! Farewell sun, moon, and stars, and all sublunary things! Farewell conflicts with a body of sin and death! Welcome, scaffold, for precious Christ! welcome heavenly Jerusalem! welcome innumerable company of angels! welcome general assembly and church of the First Born! welcome crown of glory, white robes, and song of Moses and the Lamb! and above all, welcome, O thou blessed Trinity and one God! Oh! Eternal One, I commit my soul into thy eternal rest."

DAVID BRAINERD—the most prayerful and devoted of modern missionaries, when worn out in the prime of life by his exertions for the conversion of the heathen—speaks thus of his hope in death:—

"Monday, Feb. 11. I was in the most solemn frame of mind that almost I ever remember to have

experienced. I know not that death ever appeared more real to me, or that ever I saw myself in the condition of a dead corpse, laid out and dressed for a lodging in the silent grave, so evidently as at this time. And yet I felt exceedingly comfortable; my mind was composed and calm; and death appeared without a sting. I think I never felt such a universal mortification to all created objects as now." At a later period, he writes in his diary, "Oh, how sweet were the thoughts of death to me at this time! Oh! how I longed to be with Christ—to be employed in the glorious work of angels, and with an angel's freedom, vigour, and delight! And yet how willing was I to stay a while on earth, that I might do something, if the Lord pleased, for his interest in the world."*

Who would not say, in pondering such records of the peace and joy in death of approved servants of Christ, "BLESSED ARE THE DEAD THAT DIE IN THE LORD?"

SECTION III.

Final Condition of a Child of the Kingdom cast out.

The death of the impenitent and disobedient is, in any view, fearful. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." They are cast out into outer darkness. They fall "into the hands of an angry God." They go to inhabit unquenchable fire; and pain and torment without alleviation, and wrath without mix-

* The account of a number of these cases of happy death, are given in a useful little volume entitled "*Lessons for the Living from the Experience of the Dying*," by William Blatch, published by Mr. Johnstone, Edinburgh. For the selected narratives of the deaths of eminent Christians, and of leading infidels, which it contains, it deserves to be attentively read by the young.

ture become their sure and everlasting portion. But while death under the curse is inexpressibly terrible to any human beings, to the young who received religious instruction, and were in infancy dedicated to God, it is invested with circumstances of peculiar terror. Our Lord, who has authority to execute judgment, and who fully knows the power of God's wrath, employs language of the most dread import on this subject. "Many shall come from the east, and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* "The first shall be last." These words imply that a special doom awaits the careless and unbelieving, who neglected or contemned the precious means of salvation, and that whatever degrees of misery in the future world are in reserve for the ungodly, the lowest is for those who, though dedicated to God in infancy, and the subjects of faithful parental instructions, yet misimprove the day of their merciful visitation, and walk frowardly in the way of their heart. The ways of departure from God are many and diversified. Some of the young who perish for ever may have early cast behind their back all good instructions, and launched away into the paths of profligacy and ungodliness. Others may have only been known as neglecting religious duties, without being remarkable for any peculiar vice. They may have lived without God, and without Christ in the world, while they assumed the mask of a religious profession, without any real change of heart, or any principle of grace within. In all these cases, the arrest of death is exceedingly fearful, and the final condition is miserable beyond description or conception.

The young person who has entered on this fatal

* Matthew viii. 11, 12.

course—who, neglecting religion, rejoices in his youth, and walks in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes—should always consider that his thoughtlessness will not stay the arrest of death. He has no lease of life. He may be cut off suddenly; and any day, when he is busied in the pursuit of pleasure, or of earthly things, it may be said to him, “Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee.” In the midst of his heedlessness, the mandate that seals his doom may be issued forth—the messenger of death may receive his commission—and he may not stay the summons. A mortal disease lays its hand upon his frame, and triumphs over every attempted remedy. The mind, if conscious, reviewing the past, has only the appalling remembrance of opportunities and privileges misimproved, or of sins committed; and, anticipating the future, sees only before a certain fearful looking for of judgment. If wandering or disturbed, it is shut out from all sympathy and communion with anxious and weeping friends that surround the bed of death; and rendered inaccessible to all religious instruction and comfort, that they might administer. Youthful strength is speedily prostrated—youthful beauty is turned into corruption. In the fearful struggles of parting humanity, the soul finds no rest—all refuge fails. If aroused to a momentary concern about salvation, it is sought too late,—“As they went to buy, the door was shut.” The day of opportunity is spent and passed for ever. The despairing cry of the fainting and failing spirit is, “THE HARVEST IS PAST, AND THE SUMMER IS ENDED, AND I AM NOT SAVED.” At length the countenance is changed, and the youthful sufferer is sent away: but whither—O whither? “*What shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel?*” No language can speak, or imagination conceive half its horrors. Evil spirits—its tempters—henceforth to be its tormentors, receive the disembodied spirit, to conduct it away to endless sorrows. It appears

at the tribunal of its offended Judge, and receives there the sentence of its final doom. The dread words—“*Depart from me, ye cursed*”—awaken unspeakable and undying remorse within, and light up fires that never can be quenched. It is sent away to tenant everlasting misery—but the greatness and intolerable nature of that misery, no language of man or angel can fully declare.

Without dwelling at length on a theme which is too solemn and awful for description or utterance, we may merely notice a few circumstances concerning the state at death, and the future misery of impenitent youth, which may serve to exhibit the fearfulness of their condition:—

First, *They will be called to a most strict and particular account, and judged for all the deeds done in the body.* “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”* “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”† When the Lord of these servants will come to reckon with them, an account must be rendered of all the talents that were intrusted to them. The sins of youth will be brought to light—the most secret thoughts and actions manifested in the brightness of noon-day. Ways of ungodliness and folly will be fully exposed and openly condemned. Talents misimproved will ensure rejection and punishment. The slothful servant who hid, instead of improving his talent—who is not charged with squandering it, but only of not laying it out for his Master’s honour—is pronounced wicked, and is sent away to utter darkness. The character will then be unmasked; and in what

* Ecclesiastes xij. 14.

† Ecclesiastes xi. 9.

fearful deformity must that appear which was never changed? The Lord, the Judge, will then *mark iniquity*; and who shall stand? Let the young who are now inconsiderate and thoughtless, ponder how they shall stand in judgment; "To whom will ye flee for help, and where will ye leave your glory?"*

Secondly, *God cannot but be greatly displeased with them.* All sin is in God's sight, "the abominable thing" which his "soul hates." Evil cannot dwell with him; nor shall fools stand in his sight. But the sins of the young, who were baptized in his great name, and who were the subjects of Christian instruction, and who yet remain impenitent, are particularly aggravated, and must incur the largest share of Divine indignation and vengeance. They are sins against light. They have been committed amidst abundant privileges, mercies, and warnings. They imply a fearful slighting of the Divine goodness, contempt of his authority, and open and impious rebellion against him. Besides disobedience to God, they contained in them disregard to parents, and ministers, and means of grace; and they are often the means of seducing others into sin, and of hardening them in courses of ungodliness. Shall not the Lord be avenged on such as commit these sins? Like the idle shepherds whom He threatens to cut off, God declares of the young who, having received a religious education, remain careless, "My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me."† They slighted all good instruction, and rejected his ways, and He casts them away as objects of his special vengeance. They are spued out of his mouth, and become a terror to themselves and all around them.

Thirdly, *Their punishment is retributive.* God awards them as their iniquities deserve. He gives them according as they have acted towards him.

* Isaiah x. 3.

† Zechariah xi. 8.

Their habitual language was, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thee." The most fearful part of the commencement of their torment will be the sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed!" "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." All that constitutes future misery may be said to be retributive. With the froward, the Lord shews himself froward. They loved darkness rather than light; and He sends them away to outer darkness. They loved transgressors, and with them is their portion for ever. The tares are bound in bundles, and are cast into a furnace of fire. They contemned God, and were disobedient. He despises their image, and appoints tribulation and wrath, indignation and woe to every soul of man that doeth evil. How tremendously awful will be the sinner's condition, when, for all the evil that he has done, God visits him, and causes his transgression to come upon his own head!

Fourthly, *The lost creature will be fully conscious of his miserable condition, and that through all eternity.* Memory will be clear, and conscience, once stupefied, will be thoroughly awakened. The "worm that never dies" will gnaw for ever, while unquenchable fire will scorch without intermission. The anguish of lost sinners will be increased, and their torments aggravated by the distinct remembrance of all the privileges which they abused, and of all the opportunities which they misimproved. They will recollect, with bitterness for ever, how near was brought to them the offer of mercy—what prayers and pleadings they contemned—the sins they committed, and the wondrous goodness that they slighted and trampled under foot. The remembrance of these things will add ten-fold horrors to their misery. Objects are joyful or painful by contrast—and how painful and overpowering must be the contrast between the misery of the damned, and the instances

of Divine long-suffering, compassion, and goodness which were shown them on earth!

Finally, *Their sufferings will be without alleviation.* It will be wrath without mixture—torment without end. There is not “a drop of water to cool their tongue.” In the pit of woe, God’s mercy is clean gone, and “He has forgotten to be gracious.” The day of long-suffering and sparing mercy has fully expired. The outcast sinner has fallen into the hands of an angry God. He has become the victim of inflexible justice. He lies down in torment, and wrath to the utmost is his portion for ever. The condemned sinner will suffer all that it is possible for a guilty creature to endure, consistent with the preservation of his existence. Even his being itself will be intolerable. His lot is in “outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.” He is cast away into fire “prepared for the devils and his angels,” as if only the dread punishment allotted to rebel spirits were adequate to express the Divine indignation against impenitent sinners of the human family. *Eternal Death* is his fearful doom. He dies one moment as a prelude to his dying the next, and so on through ages of endless duration. But who can declare these unspeakable horrors? Let the thoughtless and impenitent youth now lay them to heart. Let them flee from the “wrath to come.”

“There in utter darkness, far
Remote, I beings saw, forlorn in woe,
Burning continually, yet unconsumed.
And there were groans that ended not, and sighs
That always sighed, and tears that ever wept
And ever fell, but not in mercy’s sight.
And still I heard these wretched beings curse
Almighty God, and curse the Lamb, and curse
The earth, the resurrection morn, and seek
And ever vainly seek, for utter death.
And from above the thunders answered still—
Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not.”

Pollok’s Course of Time, B. V.

SECTION IV.—*The Devoted Youth admitted to his glorious Reward in Heaven.*

When, by faith, Moses relinquished the honours and pleasures of a court, and refusing to be “called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,” cast in his lot with an oppressed and degraded people, it is said, “he had respect to the recompense of the reward.” This was doubtless, in part, the Divine blessing which is bestowed on the righteous in this life, but it was chiefly the blessedness reserved for the saints in the kingdom of heaven. This includes deliverance from all evil—the fulfilment of the highest desires—a full compensation for all privations, toils, sufferings that are endured in the way of duty—and the realization of all delightful and ennobling prospects. Divine grace revealed this blessed portion to the heart of Moses, and gave him the earnest of its enjoyment. The effects were powerful and lasting. Compared with the inheritance of the saints, earthly treasures appeared to him of no value. A state of contempt and affliction with God’s people seemed every way preferable to all the pleasures of sin; and even the worst part of a true profession—“*the reproach of Christ*”—outweighed the revenues of an earthly kingdom. The glory of the reward which he deliberately chose, and to which he looked forward, eclipsed all worldly splendour—animated him in the most arduous and perilous services—imparted to him eminent meekness under great provocations, and finally, enraptured his heart, as he beheld the land of promise from the mountain where he died, and rendered his departure triumphant and glorious. But whatever were the joys of anticipation to Moses, those of full fruition inconceivably surpassed them. The “recompence of the reward” was to him greater than all that faith

had ever previously discerned—it vastly transcended all that he had heretofore conceived.

Thus also “the Crown of righteousness,” which is conferred upon the Christian, when he has finished his work on earth, and as he enters his rest in heaven, far exceeds all that he could ever conceive of, while engaged in his pilgrimage. It is an exceeding great, even an eternal weight of glory; a glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive. A steadfast belief and distinct apprehension of this blessed reward is a powerful motive to holy obedience. Believers, as risen with Christ, are enjoined to set their affections on things above. They are assured of a glorious rest after labour. When Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory. The excellency of primitive Christianity was displayed in the firm confidence and lively expectation of future bliss. This impelled the first Christians to the most energetic exertions, and sustained them under the greatest privations and sufferings. This enabled them to rejoice in tribulation, and to triumph in death. “They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven, a greater and enduring inheritance.” *

Christians in our own day will generally be found to be devoted, and to “shine as lights in the world,” according as they seek those things that are above, as they lay up treasure in heaven, and have their hearts there also. That we may present a constraining motive to holy exertion, and to the cultivation of the Christian temper, we notice, in conclusion, some views of the final condition in glory of the faithful servant, when his service on earth is ended, and he has taken his place among the “spirits of just men made perfect.”

* Hebrews x. 38.

We will suppose that he is removed in youth, that he is called away early from a sphere of usefulness, and that he enjoys the reward of glory, after a brief term of service on earth. Whatever sorrow the death of a youthful saint may occasion to endeared friends, whatever fond anticipations were cherished of his future and extensive usefulness, and how great soever may be the regret entertained, that a fair flower of promise was nipped early, death is to him great *gain*, and the immediate and eternal consequences of death are most joyful and blessed. Not to speak of the delight of the sanctified spirit, in having attained that excellence of character which was to him the subject of earnest aspiration, and frequent intense study, not to mention the overpowering and enraptured surprise with which the conscious spirit enters its blissful rest—the hour of greatest weakness being succeeded by the highest enjoyment—we advert only to a few views of the ingredients of future happiness, which appear specially adapted to animate and elevate the young soldier of Christ, and which exhibit the pre-eminent excellence of his eternal portion.

First, *It will be a great recompense for all his sufferings, a blessed reward for all his service.* There is a reward for the righteous even on earth. In keeping the Divine precepts, there is a great reward:—but still the reward in heaven so far excels any that could be enjoyed here, that it is represented by such terms as almost seem to exhibit it as the only reward. It is a “Crown of life,”—“the palm” of conquest. Believers are “kings” on earth, but they are not *crowned* here. They are even now “conquerors and more than conquerors,” but they obtain the palm only when their warfare is ended, and the victory complete. In this life, they are assured of a “hundred-fold more,” instead of all they forego for Christ; but in the world to come, their reward is “life everlasting.” This honour and enjoyment, which will vastly transcend

all that eye could see or heart conceive, is designed to compensate for all the privations and trials which Zion's travellers endure in their way to heaven. There God is, in the fullest sense, his people's "EXCEEDING GREAT REWARD." He is their up-making, soul-satisfying, and everlasting portion. The servant, that faithfully occupied his "one pound," receives authority over "*ten cities.*" Even the cup of cold water given to the least of Christ's servants for his sake will be rewarded. God will never forget the work of faith and labour of love of his saints. How blissful their state, when all that they have done and suffered in Christ's cause will be remembered and rewarded! Their reward will greatly excel all that is earthly. It will be most gracious—inconceivably surpassing all their deserts—and it will excite their wonder and admiration for ever. God is not "ashamed to be called their God, because He hath prepared for them a city." "An everlasting kingdom" will be given them, instead of some temporary possessions or honours which they relinquished on earth; a mansion in the Father's house, in place of their wandering condition and poverty here; a seat upon the throne with Christ, instead of contempt and sufferings, which they once endured for his name's sake. As they receive this reward from the hand of their exalted Lord, the ecstatic feeling of wonder and admiration will take place of every other, and this will swell their bosoms for ever and ever. "*Lord, when saw we thee an hungered?*" They are conscious of having done nothing to merit this honour. Nothing that ever they did is worthy to be named in the presence of the throne; and throughout eternity, disclaiming all worth or desert in themselves, they will cast down their crowns before Him that sits on the throne, and exclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"—"Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb for ever." What an elevating consideration to animate to holy activity and diligence,

and to willing sacrifice in Christ's service is "the great recompense of the reward" that is reserved for the righteous in the kingdom of their Father!

Secondly, *The godly youth, dismissed by death from his labours on earth, is immediately present with the Lord.* The apostle's hope is the blissful expectation of all the saints, "When I shall be absent from the body, I shall be present with the Lord." The assurance given by the dying Saviour to the expiring malefactor, is virtually tendered to every faithful servant of God, in relation to the concluding period of his earthly existence, "*This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" Soon as the sanctified spirit is disengaged from its earthly companion, it is carried by angels to "Abraham's bosom." It beholds the Redeemer in his full-face splendour and glory—it sees him as He is—and shall be eternally with him. No tongue can adequately declare, or heart conceive, the bliss that is wrapt up in admission to the glorious presence of Christ. Faithful servants, while here, fervently desired that they might enjoy his gracious presence, and behold his glory. At times, they realized the object of their aspirations. They had glimpses of his glory, and they could declare, "God is in this place." But the vision was clouded and transient, and the visit of love was temporary. In heaven, they will see him no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face. The vision shall be joy-inspiring, transforming, and beatifying. They shall be satisfied, when they "awake, with his likeness, they shall see his face in righteousness." "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is." In the person of Christ, the redeemed introduced into heaven will behold the Man their Brother; and at the same time, by faith they will see the fulness of uncreated Deity dwelling "*substantially*" in him. This will be the unclouded, eternal light of glory; and in its attractive splendour, every object of intellectual delight

and spiritual vision will be perceived and enjoyed. In the New Jerusalem there is no night; and the blessed inhabitants have no need of the sun, nor the moon, nor a candle, nor any light; for the "glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Knowledge will be perfect, when holiness is complete. The presence of Christ with the saints in heaven is the pledge and assurance of familiar and blissful intercourse. Distance or separation exists no longer. They are "jewels" of the Redeemer's crown—they are gathered to his bosom. The Lamb in the midst of the throne leads them and feeds them. They sit with him as honoured guests at his table in his Father's house, and they drink new wine with him in his kingdom. Thus they enjoy fully what they had often intensely desired here. They see the Lamb slain—their Friend and Elder Brother in all his beauty—without any intervening veil or cloud. They value his blissful presence, and they are with him for evermore.

How greatly does such a privilege transcend all the highest views, which the most gifted individuals could entertain here! If Newton, the prince of philosophers, could say near the end of life, that he seemed to himself like a little child, standing on the shore of a great sea, and gathering up a few pebbles, while the vast ocean of truth lay before him still unexplored—may we not exult in the prospect of being exalted to a state, where the least in the kingdom shall know immensely more than the most eminent son of science on earth—where the understanding and heart will at once be full of light, and where the Saviour's glorious presence will unfold the deepest mysteries, and make all bright with unfading glory!

Thirdly, *There will be enjoyed the companionship of perfected saints and of holy angels.*

It is recorded of an ancient sage, that he rejoiced in the prospect of immortality, because he would, in

passing out of the body, enjoy the society of Plato, and Socrates, and other renowned philosophers. How much higher should be the Christian's joy, in the assurance that he shall, in heaven, have companionship with the family of God, consisting of holy angels, and the adopted ransomed children—saints made perfect! A large part of their spiritual enjoyments here, consisted in intercourse with the virtuous and the good. They were gathered into one body, and made members of the same household of faith. They loved, and were loved; they had an interest in the prayers of God's people; and in prosecuting schemes of usefulness, they had the presence with them of some who were "the light of the world," and the co-operation of many others of the "excellent ones of the earth," with whom they were personally unacquainted. The communion of saints supplied to them while on earth sources of the sweetest and most hallowed delights; and it was, besides, the immediate way of conducting them to the highest possible privilege—communion with God himself. "*These things have we written unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.**" But, however excellent was this intercourse on earth, there were drawbacks in the enjoyment, which will be unknown in heaven. The saints while here were imperfect. They are often parted by distance and other causes. Death divides them, and there are many obstacles to their free and full intercourse—many impediments to the success of their holiest enterprises. None of these things operate any more in glory. They are gathered into the "General Assembly and Church of the First-born," and enjoy, in the presence of the Lamb, holiest intercourse with his glorified members. The social principle is refined and exalted to the

* 1 John i. 3.

highest degree, and finds its appropriate exercise in the companionship of the blessed for evermore. There would seem to be no reason to doubt that the saints in glory will *mutually recognise each other*. Their faculties are purified and enlarged to the utmost—and the love which bound them to fellow-saints on earth, and the memory which caused the past often to predominate over the present, we have every reason to believe, will impart the liveliest interest to the intercourse of saints, now gathered home to the Father's house. The employments and enjoyments of the saints in heaven are uniformly represented as social; and this they could not properly be, without mutual recognition. The scene on the Mount of Transfiguration, displayed saints on earth and saints in heaven mutually acquainted, in the manifestation of their Lord's glory; and much more may we expect that the redeemed, when gathered home to heaven, will fully know each other, amidst the full effulgence of the Sun of righteousness. Faithful ministers rejoice in the prospect of their believing people being to them "a crown of rejoicing" in the presence of the Lord Jesus at his coming; and this surely implies their knowledge of the travail which they had in their spiritual birth—their joy in their obedience of faith, and their triumph in the future meeting and recognition in glory. This exalted companionship enhances greatly the future reward of the righteous; and to the generous heart of the devoted youth, removed early to the heavenly rest, it forms one of its most pleasing prospects. The fellowship of the church on earth—at best, but mixed and imperfect, and liable to interruption—is exchanged for the communion of the most exalted beings in the universe. Amidst perfect love, and complete holiness, there is nothing to interrupt friendship, or mar intercourse. The affections and faculties, refined and expanded to the highest measure,

are capable of embracing the loftiest schemes of benevolence, and the saints in glory become joyful co-workers with God and one another, in carrying them forward. No longer will any enemy oppress them, nor obstacles impede their progress. There will be no distraction or division of counsels; and concurring for ever in plans of boundless benevolence, they will share celestial pleasures with brethren in Christ, and will join with the whole redeemed family, and with holy angels, in advancing the Divine glory, and diffusing felicity through all eternity. "They shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom." "They shall come to Zion with singing and everlasting joy upon their heads; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Fourthly, *The saints in heaven will be engaged in honourable and dignified employments.* What these shall be, in our present imperfect state, we are unable to describe. But every thing that we are told of the saints' condition in heaven, warrants the idea that their work there will be most ennobling. We have no reason to think that theirs will be a state of passive contemplation and praise. They *rest not* day nor night, yet their work is not laborious or oppressive. They are *actively* employed in the immediate presence of the Lord whom they love, and enjoy his blissful approval continually. What hinders, that as they were here trained to do good, heaven should be the designed sphere of their holy activities for ever? And who will say that in that vast world, there is not full scope for the diversified tastes and habits of all sanctified intellects? The saints *reign* with Christ in glory. They have authority over many things—each of them inherits the kingdom. When they praise, it is with "harps of gold;" implying that they are precious and durable, as they are attuned to the sweetest melody. They wave their

palms in honour of the Lamb, enjoying the fruits of completed victory—and they follow the Lamb as He leads them to “fountains of living water.” If the youthful believer feels that God’s work, even in its lowest departments, is most honourable; if, as the venerable Apostle, even when he had assurance of glory, was desirous to stay that he might do Christ service on earth, he is so wedded to his work as to experience reluctance at first in the view of quitting it, how great must be the joy of employing consecrated powers for ever in lofty activities for the promotion of God’s glory! Obedience here—absolute and complete, will be their highest felicity. In heaven, every subject will be a crowned king. In the immediate presence of their exalted Sovereign—and with affections enlarged, and joys unutterable, they will, each in his place—in the sphere for which grace on earth trained him—serve day and night in the celestial temple, and throughout eternity, co-operate in promoting the Divine glory.

Finally, Their joys will be *unspeakable and everlasting*. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”* Beyond all the most elevated descriptions of heaven—beyond the most lofty conceptions of future glory which we are able to form here, will be the eternal felicity of the redeemed of the Lord. When the Apostle Paul was caught up into paradise, and was favoured with a near view of the heavenly glory, he heard “unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter.” † In no terms of human language, that can be understood on earth, could he communicate ade-

* 1 Corinthians ii. 9.

† 2 Corinthians xii. 4. ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι—so the original words may be better rendered.

quate conceptions of the glory that was manifested, or of the blissful condition of the inhabitants of heaven. No wonder that the venerable apostle was thus non-plussed, for the objects of enjoyment and delight, are infinite in their nature, and the faculties and capacities of the redeemed in heaven are elevated and expanded, far beyond any example or comparison that is furnished from earth. God is seen face to face, in transcendant and ineffable glory; and all the bright and wondrous objects that cluster around his throne are beheld without any interposing medium, without a cloud or interruption for ever.

The saints in heaven see as they are seen, and know as they are known. The glass is laid aside; they need no light of the sun or the moon, or candle, or of any created medium of vision, for the Lord is their "everlasting light, and their God their glory." Like as the *shadow* of things spiritual and Divine, under the ancient economy, gave place to the *very image* of these things, when the Redeemer came, and under the Gospel, so in heaven there will be enjoyed the *living, lasting substance*—as far surpassing the highest privileges of grace on earth, as the animated form does the most faithful likeness of the painter.

Till the day shall fully declare it, all attempts at exhibiting the inheritance reserved for the righteous in the kingdom of their Father must fail. It is enough to say that it will be such as is not unworthy of God to confer, and as is not unbefitting the saints to receive; such as will furnish an adequate display of the exceeding riches of his grace, and as will be an honour suitable to the lineage and dignity of the children of God, when they are freed from all corruption, and brought home to their Father's house to abide for ever. Speaking of this felicity in contrast with present affliction and trial, and as the glorious end of faith and of suffering, the Apostle Paul designates it, "*a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight*

of glory." * Every word here is intended to heighten our conception of this unspeakable happiness, and as if the most fertile language in the world, could furnish no terms suited to express fully his conceptions on the subject. The word for glory in the Hebrew Scriptures signifies *weight*, and the saint's felicity is besides said to be a "weight of glory"—an "exceeding weight"—a "far more exceeding"—and an "eternal weight of glory." The consummation of this happiness is, that it can know no diminution or change, and that it will never have an end. Millions of ages passed, and it will be but beginning. From the glorious presence of the Lord, the saints will go no more out. Progression marks the works of God on earth, and why should not this, too, be the law of his eternal kingdom? The happiness of the redeemed will not only be unending, it will be fresh, renewed, and increasing perpetually, world without end.

Here we must close. We see yet but through a glass darkly. But when our work shall be done, and our warfare ended, then are we assured that, in the blissful presence of their Lord and Redeemer, and in the full enjoyment of God—Father, Son, and Spirit; and in communion with glorified saints and holy angels for ever, we shall receive a reward for all our labours and trials in our Master's service on earth, such as will furnish a theme of perpetual wonder and eternal praise. The servants of God, gathered from all nations, and clothed in white robes—the glorious palm-bearing company—will exclaim, with a loud voice, as they willingly ascribe to sovereign grace all the glory, "SALVATION TO OUR GOD, WHICH SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB."

May the young be animated by the prospect of this blessed "recompense of reward," to choose the best

2 Corinthians iv. 17. καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρους δόξης.

part which can never be "taken away," to dedicate themselves and all their talents to Christ's service, and to live as strangers and pilgrims on earth, setting their affections on things above, and continually looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God!"

ALEX. GARDNER, PRINTER.

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

1. The Divine Commendation of Abraham; or, Parental Duties, and the Blessings resulting from their Faithful Performance.—18mo. pp. 276.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

“This admirable work is characterised throughout by a spirit of deep and unaffected piety, careful and successful observation of men and manners, prudent and sound discernment of what is right. It is written in a felicitous style, and recommends itself at once to the feelings of the reader.”—*Fife Sentinel*.

“We have here, by a pious and talented servant of God, a FAMILY BOOK, as a Manual for Parental direction and encouragement; and from the faithful and affectionate manner in which it is written, it would give us great pleasure to learn that it is to be found in thousands of habitations throughout our land.”—*Scottish Guardian*.

“The volume itself is very scriptural and excellent.”—*Presbyterian Review*.

2. The Faithful Minister's Walk with God, removal by Death, and Future Glory.—8vo. pp. 66.

3. The Christian Magistrate.—8vo. pp. 124.

4. The Duty of Nations favoured with Divine Revelation, to promote Scriptural Education, in Two Discourses.—8vo. pp. 105.

5. Life, Letters, Characteristics, &c. of the Rev. John Livingstone—with Historical Introduction and Notes.—18mo. pp. 290.

“This is one of those rare pieces of Autobiography for which the Church of Scotland is remarkably distinguished. It is a solid, striking, and edifying production, full of incident, tragical and tender. There are some sixty pages of Introduction, with an appendix which occupies nearly half the volume; but the perusal of which will probably leave most readers with a feeling of regret that it is done.”—*British Banner*.

