

THE OBERLIN EVANGELIST

SERMONS BY CHARLES G. FINNEY

VOLUME III

1845 - 1848

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Sermons by the Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY

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THE SIN OF FRETFULNESS

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"Fret not thyself because of evil doers." --Psalm 37:1

Fretfulness is a state of mind the opposite of that meekness and patient endurance which the gospel enjoins on all.

In discoursing from these words, I shall show--

I. WHY WE SHOULD NOT FRET BECAUSE OF EVIL DOERS.

II. HOW TO AVOID IT.

I. Why we should not fret.

1. Because, in fretting at the evil doing of others we do evil ourselves. Many persons seem to think that they do well to fret when others sin: for as much as they think it is meet to manifest holy indignation and zeal for the Lord of Hosts; and would say with Jonah, I do well to be angry. But such persons ought to remember, that in fretting at others for their sins, they are abusing God themselves. And surely this is a good reason why they should abstain from fretting, if by so doing, they are but adding sin of their own to that of the individual on account of whose sins they fret.

2. Another reason why we should not fret because of evil doers is, that it will do no good. It certainly can do us no good to fret. It cannot benefit him at whom we fret. It does not tend to the glory of God, nor in any way to the advancement of his kingdom. Why then should we fret?

3. The third reason why we should not fret because of evil doers is, that it will only add mischief to mischief. It will do us great evil; it will destroy our own peace; it will break up our communion with God; it will quench the spirit of prayer in our own hearts; it will bring us into condemnation; it will destroy our confidence in God, and destroy our respect for ourselves; it will in every way tend to the injury of our own souls.

Again, it will do great evil to others. It tends greatly to the injury of the one at whom we fret, and but exasperates and tends to make

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him fret in return. It has no tendency to reform his heart, but rather to aggravate his wickedness.

Again, it tends to the injury of all who witness our fretting. It is a stumbling block to them. And perhaps our fretting is a greater stumbling block to them than the evil doing of those at whom we fret. Fretting at the evil doing of others tends only to mischief. It is dishonorable to God, and a manifest want of confidence in him. It tends in every way to the injury of his kingdom.

4. If we manifest a sweet and patient spirit towards evil doers, it tends greatly to do them good. It also tends greatly to prevent the harm of their evil doing. If when they do evil we do well, and manifest a christian spirit, our christian temper, in some measure at least, is a set off against their evil doing. If they dishonor God by evil doing, and we highly honor him by the manifestation of a heavenly temper, we do all we can to retrieve the injury done to the kingdom of God by the evil-doer. His evil doing tends to stumble those around him--our well doing in manifesting a heavenly temper tends to the removal of the stumbling block. Bystanders will say, to be sure here is one that has done a great evil, but another has manifested so excellent a spirit in view of it, as on the whole to strengthen my conviction of the necessity and excellence of the religion of Jesus.

5. Another reason why we should not fret is, that the evil doing is suffered to occur under the providence of infinite wisdom and love. God has chosen not to prevent it, but on the contrary to suffer it rather than to change the administration of his government, in such a manner as to prevent its occurrence. God has looked upon it as the least of two evils; and we ought to consider that no evil is done which could have been wisely prevented. No evil exists under the government of God but what is suffered as the less of two evils. That which daily occurs is permitted in order to prevent greater evil; and on the whole, it was wise and benevolent to suffer that thing to occur rather than to have interfered for its prevention. Why then should we fret about it?

6. Another good reason why we should not fret at evil doing is, because provision is made to overrule it for the glory of God and the highest good of his kingdom. "The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." All the evil in the universe has been taken into account in the great plan of God for the promotion of the highest good of bring. He saw that in the wisest possible moral system all evil could not be prevented: consequently what he could not wisely prevent he overruled for his own glory. We

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can easily see in a great many instances, how God does overrule, as a matter of fact, the most flagrant transgressions for the promotion of his glory. Take the conduct of Judas in betraying Christ, and the wickedness of Satan in that affair. These were among the most flagrant transgressions the world ever saw, and yet they were instrumental in laying the cornerstone of man's salvation. God has taken occasion from these transgressions highly to honor himself and to benefit the universe. Now although we cannot see the particular manner in which God does this in every instance, yet we may rest assured that every sin that ever does occur or ever can occur shall in some way be overruled for the promotion of the glory of God. No thanks to the sinner. He intended no such thing. He is perfectly free and responsible, and deserves to be punished just as much as though there were no overruling providence to bring good out of his intended evil. But the fact that it will be thus overruled, is a substantial reason why we should not fret about it.

7. Another reason is, it is Satan's object to make us fret. He understands very well the injury that we shall receive from it ourselves, and the great evil of fretting to the government of God. He is an enemy to human happiness, and loves to disturb our peace. He loves to stumble others and to see God dishonored; and understands full well that few things are more hateful in the sight of God and destructive to all good than fretting. It is therefore a prime object with him to promote as much fretfulness as possible. But shall we gratify the Devil?

8. Another reason why we should not fret is, that the very evil doing at which we fret, is often allowed in providence, as one of the means of perfecting in us the grace of patience. Mother, did you ever consider that the trying conduct of your children is often designed to perfect the grace of patience in your soul? The Apostle says-- "Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience: let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." The things at which we are so prone to fret all occur under the government of God, and are all parts of those means which God is using to perfect holiness within us.

9. The evil doing of others affords a good opportunity to glorify God. If in view of the evil doing of others, we manifest a God-like temper, this is highly honorable to God. What can be more lively than for a man under severe trials, to manifest the temper of Christ? When did Christ himself ever shine more gloriously than under his severest

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trials? The temper which he manifested, was more glorious to God, and reflected more of the divine beauty of his character, than was manifested perhaps under any other circumstances. So when we are greatly tried with the evil doing of others, God has given us an opportunity of manifesting most of the divine temper to the world around us.

10. It evinces unbelief to fret. If we but realize that the hand of God is concerned directly or indirectly in every thing that occurs; if we but firmly believe this, we shall not fret at the occurrences around us. No man who practically believes in the universal providence of God, will fret at the occurrences around him any more than he would fret at God himself. He will perceive that fretting at these occurrences, is but fretting at God, and that scolding because of this evil doing, is virtually scolding at God. It is certain that God is in some way concerned in everything that occurs. Not so concerned, as to diminish in the least, the blame worthiness of the evil doer; but yet so concerned in it, that in a sense, God has done it. "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" "I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." I know that people very little realize that they are fretting at God himself, when they are fretting at his providence, yet such is the fact, and but for their unbelief, they would at once perceive it.

11. Fretfulness is an expression of self-will. No man frets at what occurs around him, if his will is swallowed up in the will of God. If a man has a will of his own, and is set on having his own way, he will fret at anything that crosses his path, and opposes his inclinations. But if his will is lost in the will of God, he will recognize the universal providence of God, and having no will of his own, he will sweetly submit to all the providences around him. He will blame the sinner and justify God, in suffering the evil doing rather than preventing it. He will look on it as something which has been permitted for wise and benevolent reasons, and will consider it highly absurd for him to fret at anything which occurs under the providence of the infinitely wise and benevolent God.

12. It is un-Godlike to fret at evil doers. God never frets, and why should we fret? And yet it concerns him rather than ourselves, to resent wickedness. If any body is injured vengeance belongs to him, and not to us. But if he has good reasons for not fretting at what occurs, surely we need not fret about it. For it concerns him infinitely more than it does us. When any trial falls in our way, we should always ask ourselves, now what is God's state of mind in view of this

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thing? Does he get out of patience, and suffer himself to fret? Who would not be shocked at the idea of God's fretting at anything that occurs? Why then, should we fret?

13. Fretting destroys our own peace. Who does not know that the indulgence of the least fretfulness instantly breaks up the peace of our minds, brings a cloud over our spirits, and throws our souls into darkness? What christian does not know this by his own experience? It is remarkable how easily our peace is destroyed. The least rising of impatience if indulged but for a moment, brings the spirit into rough waters, stirs up the sediment, and makes it for the time, like the troubled sea.

14. Fretting is also destructive to the peace of others. A fretful man is a great nuisance to all around him. Fretting seems to be contagious. If parents fret at their children, the children are almost certain to fret in return. If husbands fret at their wives, or wives at their husbands, the other is almost certain to fret in return, and thus the peace of a whole household will be continually destroyed by the wickedness of one fretful member.

15. Fretting grieves the Holy Spirit. He will not live where there is a fretful spirit. We are shocked and grieved if we go to a neighbor's house and find them in a fret. We feel embarrassed and uneasy, and if we find them out of humor, we retire in distress and disgust. And will not the Holy Spirit be grieved away and retire from us, if we suffer ourselves to fret in his presence?

16. It is destructive to our influence to fret. A fretful person can have very little christian influence in any community. A fretful parent never governs his family well. A fretful minister, a fretful neighbor, in short, any one that frets, destroys his christian influence.

The common sense of mankind teaches them that fretting is the opposite of a christian temper. And no man can have much confidence in the piety of another who is in the habit of indulging fretfulness. Many a professed christian parent has lost all christian influence over his own household, by indulging in this sin. Visit any family you please, where the parents, either or both of them are professors, and are in the habit of fretting, and as a general rule, you will find their children unconverted. The family have been stumbled by them, and they remain in their sins.

It destroys man's influence with God, to fret. A fretful professor of religion can never prevail with God in prayer. The whole influence of a man's prayers, and exertions, and labors to convert others, will be lost on them, if he is known by them to indulge in fretfulness.

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17. Indulgence in this sin, compels others to abhor us. Scarce anything is more hateful than fretting. And our nature is such, that although we may pity fretful persons, yet we cannot but abhor them. God both pities and abhors them, as he pities and abhors the devil. A mother who frets at her children, is never beloved by them. A fretful father is never loved by his family, but always secretly hated. A fretful husband or wife is never loved by the other party. If a man has a wife who is in the habit of fretting, he will find in time, that he neither respects nor loves her. Although he may be benevolent towards her, yet he cannot regard her with complacent love, but secretly loathes her, on account of her fretful temper. It is just so with the wife. If she has a fretful husband, she may fear him, she may pity him, but with complacency she cannot love him.

18. Fretting compels others to dread our presence. The presence of a fretful person is always to be dreaded. Scarcely anything is more annoying and loathsome than a fretful spirit. The children always dread the presence of a fretful father or mother, or of a fretful brother or sister; insomuch that if a fretful member of the family is away from home, his return is secretly dreaded.

19. Another reason why we should not fret is, God will take care of the evil doers. The verse immediately following the text, says: "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." They are in the hands of God. He will take care so to dispose of them, as to promote his own glory. We need not therefore fret ourselves because of their evil doings.

But again, their evil doing is of but short continuance. The verse just quoted, says: "they shall soon be cut down like the grass." The triumphing of the wicked is short, and his evil doing in this life is but for a moment. God will remove him just as soon as he sees it wise to do so. When he can no longer overrule his wickedness to promote the general good, he will cut him off and put him out of the way. We often wonder why evil doers live so long, and are suffered through so many years to provoke the majesty of God, and to scatter fire-brands, arrows, and death through the world. But we have no reason to wonder at this, for God sees the end from the beginning, and suffers them to live and do evil just so long as He can make their evil conduce in some way to some good, and no longer. And should they live a thousand times as long as they do, and do a thousand times as much mischief as they do, this would be no reason why we should fret, for God will husband the whole matter in a manner promotive of the highest good of beings.

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20. Another reason why we should not fret at evil doers, is because they are among the "all things that work together for good to them that fear God." How often can we see that the trials into which we fall, the temptations of Satan, and the wickedness of men around us, are working together on the whole, for our edification and growth in grace. We thus learn many lessons which we could learn in no other way. What christian has not thanked God for making Satan in many instances so useful to him? Or if Christians have not done this, what christian has not reason to do it? I can plainly see that from my greatest trials, I have often learned the most useful lessons of my life. And I have often been led to thank God for all the abuses and temptations of wicked men and devils.

21. Another reason why we should not fret is, the things at which we fret, are not worth fretting about. By this I do not mean that the sins of evil doers are not great and grievous sins, and in themselves greatly to be hated and deplored; but I mean that on the whole, considering the overruling providence of God and all the circumstances of the case, they are not worth fretting about. Did we see the end from the beginning as God sees, we should no doubt see this to be true. If they were worth fretting about, God would fret about them. But if he is perfectly calm and unruffled by them, if he has no good reasons for impatience and fretfulness in view of them, we may rest assured that there is no reason why we should fret at them.

22. The last reason I will mention is , that fretting makes us the very sport of Satan. Indulging fretfulness gives it all the power of habit, and when once the habit of fretting is formed, Satan is almost sure of his prey. He knows full well, that at any time he can seduce us from our steadfastness, and bring us into bondage. And such an enemy is he to our peace, and to our souls, as to take an infernal satisfaction in spending his leisure hours in causing us to fret. He loves to throw us into a tempest of fretfulness, and then tell it in hell, and excite a laugh in the infernal regions, at the fact that we profess religion, and yet are so easily provoked to fretfulness.

II. I come now to show, how to avoid fretfulness.

1. Sink into the will of God. Acknowledge and consider the universal providence of God. And know, that he is working all things after the counsel of his own will. Sink therefore into his will, and learn to be sweetly and universally submissive. This is a sure antidote against fretfulness.

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2. Have faith in the wisdom and benevolence of the providences of God. Settle down with your whole soul on the truth that every thing that does or can occur, occurs under the direct or indirect control of infinite wisdom and benevolence. Let this be settled as an omnipresent truth, stable as the foundations of the universe, that nothing ever did, or ever will occur in the universe of God, that is not suffered, and in some sense brought about by the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness; that all this is perfectly consistent with the liberty and blame-worthiness of evil doers.

3. Be self-possessed. It is of great importance to cultivate the habit of being calm and self-possessed, under the various trials with which we are surrounded. It is often important not to suffer yourself to speak a word till you have had time to think, and lift up your heart to God in prayer. Sometimes when I have felt it a duty to say something (to a person of an irritable temper) which I feared might induce fretfulness, I have found it useful to preface what I had to say with the request that he would not answer a word, nor speak on the subject, till he had had time for reflection and prayer. In such cases it is observable that persons will seldom fret when they come afterwards to converse upon it. Whereas had they made immediate reply, they would probably have been overcome by their temper.

Christian parents would often find it useful when they have anything to communicate to their children which they know will be a great trial to them, to request them before they make the announcement not at the time to make any reply, and even obtain a promise from them, that until they have had time for reflection and prayer they will not say a word. By being self-possessed I mean that a person should cultivate the habit of considering the reasons why they should not be irritated by circumstances around them.

4. Another excellent antidote against fretting is, duly and habitually consider the aggravation of your own faults. No man frets at the faults of others who duly considers his own. Only be well aware at all times, of what your own character and faults have been, and it will teach you to be very compassionate and considerate with respect to fretting at the faults of others.

5. Reflect much also upon the forbearance of God. I love to consider the infinite calmness of the divine mind, in view of all the provocations which he has to anger. His infinite patience, long-suffering and kindness to evil doers, is what I love to consider. It is of great importance to all christians to habituate themselves to deep reflection upon the divine character and conduct in this respect.

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6. Reflect much on the meekness, forbearance, and long-suffering of Christ.

Nothing is more calculated to prevent or subdue a fretful spirit, than to inquire how would Christ behave under these circumstances. Under all the abuse which wicked men and devils heaped upon him, he was never known in the least degree to fret. And how would his apostles have been shocked had they at any time witnessed impatience in him! And how must they have admired and adored the sweetness of his temper, his meekness and long-suffering in the midst of all his trials; his kind and compassionate treatment of his greatest enemies. And when they heard him on the cross praying for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," how could any thing prevent their fretting at evil doers, if the remembrance of this temper in Christ would not do it?

7. Avoid all undue excitement as far as possible.

We are too apt to imagine that religion consists in highly excited emotion and feeling. Whereas it consists altogether in the state of the heart or will. A highly excited state of the sensibility is often a very dangerous state. Cultivate therefore as far as possible a spirit of calmness, if you would avoid fretting. I have always observed in myself and others, that when highly excited even on the subject of religion, the feelings are easily diverted into a wrong channel. God's mind is calm. Christ generally manifested great calmness of mind; and what christian is there who does not know that when he is most sunk into the will of God, and is most truly religious and consecrated to God, his mind is most like a sea of love, calm like the heart of God. See the christian on a death bed, lying at the very gate of heaven. See the calmness of the countenance, the mildness of the eye, the sweetness and calmness of the temper, the even balance of the pulse; every thing bespeaks a mind full of holy calmness. Cultivate that state of mind, it is a great antidote against fretting.

8. Learn not to look altogether on the dark side of things; consider the virtues as well as the vices of those around you. Dwell on the good and not altogether on the bad qualities of those with whom you associate. It is a dangerous thing for us to dwell too much on the evil doings of those around us. I have often been struck with the tendencies of certain minds, and the results of certain courses of conduct. Many of the Adventists and other come-outers and radicals of the present day, seem to be taken up altogether with considering the great wickedness of the church and of the world; and this has manifestly led them away from God. Great multitudes of them seem

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not at all to be aware of it, but as sure as they are ever saved, just so sure must they come to a knowledge of the fact that they have fallen away from God. And if I am not entirely mistaken, the way in which they have fallen, has been by considering so exclusively the wickedness of the world and church, as finally to get into the spirit of anathematizing both. Said a good brother who had been acquainted with one of the principal defenders of the doctrine of Annihilation-- "Until I saw him I could not understand how he came to fall into that error, but when I heard him preach I understood it. It was manifest that he had the spirit of annihilation in him. He seemed to see nothing but the dark side of the picture; and the evils that were in the world seemed to engross his thought." Now let me say this is a dangerous and wicked state of mind, and if you would avoid fretting, learn to look on the bright side of the picture, and see the good that is in the world, and learn what God is doing to promote the happiness and holiness of man. Consider the virtues of those around you and whatever is praiseworthy. Understand what Paul says in Phillipians 4:8, "Finally brethren, 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 of these things."

9. Make due allowances for the circumstances, education, &c., of evil doers. Considering the circumstances under which they act, their want of light, and many other things often times greatly moderate the tendencies of their conduct to make us fret.

10. Remember that it is God and not you against whom sin is committed. The government of the universe is not committed to you. The kingdom is the Lord's--all things are his. He has made all things for himself--even the wicked for the day of evil; and you need not by any means take on yourself the responsibility of managing his affairs, nor suffer yourselves to fret because things do not go as you would have them. He will take care to secure the ends of his own government, without your getting into a passion about it.

11. Don't suffer yourselves to dwell much in thought on the evil doings of those around you. If you are abused don't dwell on it. Pray for the evil doer and dismiss it from your thoughts, lest it be to you too great a temptation.

12. Pray for evil doers. You never can fret at a man for whom you are sincerely and earnestly praying. Fretting at an evil doer and earnestly praying for him, are things inconsistent with each other.

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13. Labor to save their souls, and cultivate compassion toward them. If you are deeply engaged in pulling them out of the fire, if you are exercised with great love and compassion for their souls, you will not be apt to fret at them.

14. Beware of trusting to mere resolutions made in your own strength, that you will not fret. Such resolutions are as good as air. They promise much in the absence of temptation, but are of no value at all in the time of trial.

15. Reflect on the wickedness of fretting at evil doers. Consider how absurd and wicked it is for you to add sin to sin. How ridiculous it is because another sins, for you to get mad about it, and thus perhaps commit a sin of a more aggravated character than that about which you fret.

16. Realize the uselessness of fretting. Do but consider that it is of no use at all for you to fret.

17. Also consider the great evil of it. It is only making matters worse; for what will those around you say? This surely: "One man has committed an evil and others are fretting about it." And thus the last evil is worse than the first.

18. Consider what an excellent opportunity it affords you of honoring God. Consider that the greater the provocation the more highly may you honor God by manifesting a right spirit. This is what God does. The more provoking the conduct of his enemies is, by so much the more does he take occasion to honor himself by the exhibition of a proper spirit in view of it. If their sin is great, his patience and forbearance are shown to be equal to the trial, and remain calm. Now consider that when evil doers do the worst they can, it affords you the most excellent opportunity of exhibiting the spirit and temper of Christ. If you do so, you will honor God more highly by how much the more provoking and outrageous is the conduct of evil doers. If you will take this view of the subject, surely you will not fret, but rather praise the Lord for these opportunities to glorify his name.

19. Consider the comparative lightness of your trials after all-- what they amount to when compared with the trials which Christ, and the Apostles and martyrs have had. Their admirable spirit under these trials, was the most convincing argument that could be used in favor of the religion of Christ. Now what are your trials compared with theirs?

20. Labor to improve these trials to the glory of God. As I have just said, they afford you an excellent opportunity for doing so. Now

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make up your mind that by the strength of God and by his grace, you will improve these occasions to his glory.

21. Labor and pray for such a development of the sensibility, such calmness, meekness and quietness of spirit as shall enable you on all occasions to possess your soul in patience.

22. Consider the declared design of these trials. The Bible everywhere represents them as designed for the trial of our faith. Understand that here you are in a school of discipline, preparing for scenes of usefulness in another world. And understand, that although you may not now see the wisdom of those dispensations which try you, yet when you come to be removed to those spheres of influence and usefulness, for which you are preparing, you will perceive the perfect wisdom of God in making you pass through these fiery trials. God does nothing in vain. All these things are parts of the necessary discipline through which we must pass. This world is a great school, and every servant of God must take his degree. He cannot be discharged from these conflicts until by them he is prepared for glory.

23. Learn with the Psalmist to set the Lord always before you. Persons are very apt to fret at little things when they would not at great events, because in the less they see not, while in the greater they do see the providence of God. Learn then to let this be an omnipresent consideration, that in all things, great and small, the hand of God is present. Set him always before you, and let your mind be filled with the idea, that in every thing that occurs, in some sense God is present.

24. Lastly, learn to appropriate the grace of Christ to the complete suppression of this sin of fretfulness. The providences that develop the spirit of fretfulness, are designed to show us our weakness and the need of the grace of Christ to perfect the grace of patience in us. That which you need therefore, is to learn to lay hold on Christ in such a sense as to be kept from the commission of this sin. The Apostle said--let us draw near to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Now grace is designed to help against the commission of sin. As, under the providences of God, one of our weaknesses and defects of character is developed after another, we should from time to time apply to Christ, and believe for the entire overcoming of the temptation and defect.

REMARKS

1. Certain persons are constitutionally much exposed to the commission of this sin.

(1.) Those who have large development of order are exceedingly liable to fret, when brought into contact, or when intimately

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associated with those of an opposite development. Here is a man who has order large; he has a place for everything, and everything in its place. He can arise at night and put his hand on any book or tool that he wants to use. Now if he is associated in business with those around him who are of an opposite tendency, who have a place for nothing, and nothing in its place, it will be a grievous trial to him. If such an one has a wife of an opposite tendency from his own, whose kitchen looks like bedlam, and whose house, from the garret to the cellar, is in a state of disorder, he must have great grace, or he will live in a continual fret. There is a woman, whose development of order is large; her person and her house are but exhibitions of the perfection of order. Her meals are ready at a certain hour and moment. She has a time and place for everything, and everything is at the proper time, and in its proper place. Now suppose her husband throws off his dirty boots, and leaves them in the middle of the floor; he spits all over her carpet; throws his dirty clothes all about; wipes his dirty feet on her andirons, and does every thing else under the law of disorder. Now, unless he can be reclaimed, and taught a different course of conduct, she might almost as well live with the devil as with him. He leaves the doors open, and everything is out of place, so far as his influence extends. His children have his tendencies of mind. The help in the kitchen are influenced by his example; and thus the poor woman is thrown on the rack, and is tried from morning till night. It is very difficult for such persons to live together, and yet the providence of God has brought them together, and afforded them a good opportunity of manifesting in these relations, the spirit and temper of Christ; the one to exercise patience, and the other to mend his ways.

(2.) Those who have a strong sense of right and wrong, if thrown into the society of those who have but little sense of right and wrong, are strongly tempted to impatience. They are often amazed, and grieved, and disgusted with the want of principle, the loose morality, the want of conscientiousness and justice of those around them. They feel their indignation enkindled, and sometimes are strongly tempted to rebuke them in a manner and spirit that would do more hurt than good.

(3.) Dyspeptics are very much disposed to the commission of this sin. An acid stomach naturally tends to an acidity of mind, and where persons have weak digestive organs, they need much grace to keep them from fretting.

(4.) Nervous persons have also strong tendencies to fretfulness. Persons also of a bilious temperament. You see a person of a sallow

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countenance: and manifestly bilious tendencies, be careful in all your intercourse with him. He cannot in general endure, what others may, without fretting. In all your treatment of such an one, be kind and considerate, be compassionate and forbearing, else you will tempt him to sin against God in this respect.

(5.) An unsubdued will, greatly exposes a person to the sin of fretfulness. When the will has not been subdued in childhood or youth, persons are extremely apt before they are aware to get into a passion if their will is crossed. They are impatient whenever they cannot have their own way in anything and everything.

(6.) A largely developed sensibility, exposes one to temptation in this respect. Those persons whose feelings are deep and quick on every subject, need to be much on their guard, lest when suddenly assailed with temptation, they should fret. There is a great difference among persons in this respect. Some persons are constitutionally much more mild and amiable than others. Some are constitutionally disposed to take almost everything easily, while others have naturally a quick, irascible temper. Their resentments are naturally quick and strong. This class of persons need peculiar grace, or they will frequently dishonor God by the indulgence of an evil temper.

2. I remark again, it is of the greatest importance to guard against fretfulness as a habit. Some persons have indulged in it until they really deserve to be indicted as common scolds. They really are a nuisance in community. I know a man who was a professor of religion, yet so much had he given way to this tendency to fretfulness, that he would sometimes break out into such a passion as really to curse and swear. Such a professor of religion is a deep disgrace to the cause he professes to love.

3. I remark again, that those of an irritable temper, often fail, on account of striving to overcome this propensity by mere legal efforts, by the force of their resolutions, prayers, and watchfulness, instead of committing themselves in this respect, to the keeping of Christ. Christ is your keeper. You will never keep yourselves. Unless you commit yourselves to Christ to be kept from the commission of this sin, all our resolutions will be of no avail. You will fall as often as you are tempted, until you will be disheartened.

4. This leads me to remark again, that many persons have fallen into great discouragements with respect to the possibility of ever overcoming the temptation.--They have prayed against it, they have fought, and watched, and resolved, and wept, and agonized, and tried and fallen, and resolved again, and so often have their prayers been

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repeated without avail, that they have sunk down in discouragement. Now let me say to such persons, when you have used all your own stock and exhausted your own strength, till you are worn out with attempts to keep yourselves, I hope you will learn to trust in Christ. Christ will keep you, if you will let him, if you will not push him back, and undertake to keep yourselves. You may not be conscious of doing this, but be assured you do not appropriate the grace of Christ, nor really consent to give yourself up to be kept by him, or he would keep you.

5. Again, God in his providence is continually developing the weakness and imperfection of his people, that they may see their need of one mightier than themselves to save them. Do not then be discouraged, when by his providence he tries you, and develops your need of a Savior. But learn to lay hold of and appropriate the grace which is provided as your remedy.

6. Lastly, I love to reflect on the fact that God's plan embraces all events, that his plan is perfect, that he will do all his pleasure; that he can do all his pleasure, that the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. That therefore we need not make ourselves wretched and unhappy, and vex our souls on account of anything that occurs in the universe, but compose our minds in view of it all, as God composes his; concern ourselves to do our own duty, and not suffer ourselves to fret about the conduct of others. Let us try to reform them, and try to do them good, pity and pray for them, but by no means suffer their evil doing to cause us to do evil, and to dishonor God. Always remembering not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

GOVERNING THE TONGUE

January 29, 1845

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." -- James 1:26

In remarking upon these words, I will notice--

I. THE RULE BY WHICH THE TONGUE IS TO BE GOVERNED.

II. THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH IT IS TO BE GOVERNED.

III. SHOW THAT WHERE THE TONGUE IS NOT GOVERNED, THERE IS AND CAN BE NO TRUE RELIGION.

I notice--

I. The rule by which the tongue is to be governed.

1. The rule is that of perfect, disinterested, and universal benevolence or love. This is the unalterable law of right. Whatever responsible act of a moral agent is not conformed to this, is wrong; whatever is conformed to this, is right. Love, or benevolence is the fulfilling of the law. This is the one and only rule to which all responsible actions of all moral beings are always and universally to be conformed. This is the rule by which the tongue is to be governed. The tongue is directly and by a law of necessity governed by the heart or will. It cannot move unless moved by the will. It cannot be either good or bad without the will's consent and impulse. No other power can govern it, nor can any other power prevent its being used in conformity with the action of the will.

2. The same rule stated in other language is, that of entire consecration to God and the good of being. This is only good willing or benevolence expressed in other language. Entire consecration to God and to the good of being, is an act or state of the will. It is the will in the attitude of devoting, consecrating, offering up the whole being to the promotion of universal good. Entire consecration is the rule by which the tongue is to be governed. It should be consecrated

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by the heart to the glory of God and the good of being, and used for no other purpose whatever.

3. The Scriptures recognize this truth. "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Idle words in the sense of this text are useless words, words not spoken to edification, nor with a design to glorify God and benefit man. Some commentators over-looking the rule by which the tongue is to be governed, have supposed by idle words in this passage, are meant slanderous, or false, or censorious, or bitter words. But the language is plain, and should be understood in its plain natural sense; for then and only then does it come up to the manifest rule by which the tongue is to be governed. That the tongue is to be governed by the rule of universal love, or entire consecration to God, none can rationally doubt. All words then spoken for any other end than to promote the good of being are idle words, and are sin against God. To bridle the tongue then is to so check and rein it in, and control it, as that its use shall be wholly conformed to the law of God.

II. The conditions upon which it may be governed.

1. The first condition indispensable to the government of the tongue in accordance with the rule as above stated, is perfect love in the heart, or in other words, that the will should be in a benevolent attitude--that the glory of God and the good of being should be its supreme aim, design, or choice. I have said that the tongue is governed by the will, by a law of necessity. The will is free, but the tongue is not free. It is connected by a physical or necessary law, with the action of the will. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth not only does but must speak, if it speaks at all. All our physical powers so far as they are directly under our control at all, are connected with the action of the will, by a law of necessity. At the bidding of the will they move, or cease to move. Now where then [there] is perfect benevolence of heart, no power that is under the control of the will can be used in any other than a benevolent manner. When the heart is in the attitude of supreme, disinterested benevolence, the tongue is used and cannot [but] be used for the glory of God and the good of being. But if this be not the state of the heart, the tongue cannot be used benevolently. All use of the tongue is idle and sinful when the heart is not in a benevolent state. No matter how much the tongue might edify men or glorify God, its use is an idle use so far as the speaker is concerned, if his aim be not benevolent. A man might teach mathematics, philosophy, or theology with a selfish

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heart, in which case the use of his heart [tongue] is sin, because his intention is sin. It is not conformed to the law of love, but is under the influence of selfishness. If God overrules this selfish use of the tongue to promote his own glory, no thanks to him who thus uses his tongue, for he means no such thing. His object is to glorify himself, to get a good name, or a piece of bread. It should always be understood that any use of the tongue is sinful when the heart is not in a perfectly benevolent state.

2. The spirit of entire consecration is an indispensable condition to the government of the tongue. As I have already said, this is only another way of stating the same rule, and this condition is only another form of stating the spirit of the same condition. If the heart be entirely consecrated to God, the tongue will be, and must be, and cannot but be consecrated also; but when ever the heart is not entirely consecrated, the tongue if used at all, is used idly, with selfish intentions and not for the glory of God.

3. It is an important and often indispensable condition of governing the tongue that we abstain from very strong excitement. If the feelings become very strongly excited, they are very apt to control the will. At this point all virtue ceases of course. The will acts virtuously, only when it obeys the law of the intelligence, or in other words, the commandments of God as they are revealed in the intelligence. When the feelings instead of God through the intelligence give law to the will, there is no virtue. People are very apt to imagine that they are virtuous in proportion as they are governed by strong feelings; whereas exactly the reverse of this is true.

I have said that when feeling becomes very strong, it is very apt to control the will. The will then acts purely in obedience to the impulses of feeling, under no other law than that of obeying the most strongly excited emotions. Now if the will in obedience to feeling governs the tongue, it is not governed by the law of love or benevolence. Be sure there is always feeling and sometimes strong feeling when there is true benevolence, and as the result of true benevolence. But the law of benevolence and not of feeling, should control the will and consequently the tongue.

Farther, when the mind is strongly excited we are apt to speak extravagantly and often falsely in fact, without ourselves at the time realizing it. We behold things through a medium which magnifies greatly. We almost of course represent them as they appear to us,-- which is usually a misrepresentation. For my own part, I can say that

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I seldom get strongly excited on any subject without having occasion afterward to repent of something that I said during my excitement.

4. A deeply considerate or reflective state of mind is indispensable to the proper government of the tongue. The man who speaks without consideration and without thinking, speaks idly and at random. Surely if he would speak for the edification of men and the glory of God, he needs to have his thoughts about him and to think well before he speaks.

5. Another condition is a sense of the divine presence. Let a man set God always before him, and realize that he is speaking in the presence of God, and he will bridle his tongue. His words will be few and well chosen. He cannot trifle, realizing that he is in the presence of the great, heart-searching God, nor will he speak falsely, censoriously, bitterly, or unnecessarily. Only let his heart be full of love, and let him have a conscious realization of the divine presence, and the law of love shall ever dwell upon his tongue.

6. Another condition of governing the tongue is the appropriate grace and strength of Christ. Indeed Christ must be in him, working in him to will, to say, and to do, or he will never govern his tongue. He must put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man. He must abide in Christ and Christ must abide in him. He must live a life of faith in Christ Jesus. He must walk in the Spirit and entirely mortify the deeds of the flesh. He must know what it is to yield up his whole body, "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."

7. He must have faith to lay hold of and appropriate the grace, strength, and promises of Christ for the complete subjugation of his tongue to the law of love. He must believe in Christ and receive Christ as the keeper of his tongue as well as of all his other powers. He will never govern his own tongue: he will never in this respect keep himself. He must have faith to lay hold of that class of promises which pledge sufficient grace to secure the entire consecration of all his powers to God.

8. He must have moral courage to dare to keep silence when he ought to keep silence. It is generally considered very odd and uncouth, unsociable and hateful for a man to keep silence when he has nothing important to say. The state of society seems to demand that to be good company, he must discharge from his tongue a perpetual stream of words. Volley after volley of sense or nonsense must be poured forth, or people will inquire, What ails you? You seem to be very silent, very unsociable; you seem to be brooding over

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some distressing subject; you need cheerful society and recreation, amusement or light-reading--something to give your tongue an impulse. Now in these days of incessant babble when the world is full of talk about beaux and belles, and novels and politics and every thing else, who does not know that it requires a good deal of moral courage to be silent when not called to speak for the glory of God and the good of man?

(a.) You must have moral courage to dare to speak when you ought, and what you ought. Men are often placed in circumstances where it is no small trial for them to speak what the circumstances demand--to reprove sin and hold up the truth in love. Now the proper government of the tongue, demands not only that we should abstain from speaking what we ought not, but that we should always speak when and what we ought. But to dare to do this, often requires no small amount of courage.

(b.) Again, you need moral courage to be as singular in all places, and at all times, as conformity to the law of love would make you. How eccentric a man would be called in these days, who should use his tongue neither more nor less nor for any other purpose than the glory of God and the good of man demand.

III. Where the tongue is not governed, there is and can be no true religion.

1. In proof of this position I cite the text. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

2. It is not intended that an occasional fall in the use of the tongue, proves that one has never been converted and is at no time truly religious; but that when he does not govern his tongue, he has at that time no true conformity to the law of God, and consequently no true religion. His heart is not then in the attitude of benevolence. It if were he could not misuse his tongue. But if he be not benevolent, he is not at the time truly religious. Again,

3. When the tongue is not habitually governed in accordance with this rule, there is no habitual benevolence--consequently no habitual true religion, which if the Bible is true, is the same thing as to say, there is no true religion at all. For the least that can be said of a true christian, is that he does not habitually sin; that holiness is the rule and sin only the exception. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is

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no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 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."

4. I have already said that a benevolent heart will secure and by a law of necessity must secure a benevolent use of the tongue; that is, in such a case the tongue will be and must be used for the glory of God and the good of being. Where it is not so used, it is a palpable matter of fact that the heart is not right with God. Nothing can be more certain than that a spirit of idle talking is inconsistent with a benevolent state of the heart.

REMARKS

1. The Bible represents the government of the tongue not only as indispensable to true religion, but as its most difficult duty. Thus James, in chapter third, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is tamed and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

2. The Bible says much upon the necessity of bridling the tongue. I will only quote two or three passages in addition to those already quoted. Eccl. 5:2, 3; "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few. For a dream

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cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by the multitude of words." Prov. 10:19; "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise."

3. If every idle word is sin, what multitudes of professors are living in sin! Great multitudes of professors give themselves up to unrestrained indulgence in talking, as really and fully as the great mass of sinners who make no pretensions to religion. Rely upon it, they will never go babbling on to heaven. Idle talkers and vain jesters are not among the ransomed of the Lord.

4. What a world of evil would be put away if the tongue were governed by the law of love. It is indeed "a world of iniquity; it often setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell." The tongue is the great instrument of excitement. We excite ourselves and we excite others by talking. All the busy play of passion, and all its monstrous developments are aroused, and quickened, and thrown into overwhelming commotion by the idle use of the tongue.

Let the tongue be governed by the law of love, and what a change would be made in families and neighborhoods, in cities and towns, in all human society! What a change in our halls of legislation!

5. The government of the tongue is indispensable to entire sanctification; that is, no man is entirely sanctified unless he entirely governs his tongue by the law of love. Let this always be understood and kept in mind by those who profess to have attained, or who are aiming to attain to a state of entire sanctification.

6. It does not seem to be generally understood and believed, that every idle word is sin. Many who profess to keep a conscience void of offense, and to be from day to day not conscious of sin, seem manifestly often to use their tongues in a manner not conformed to the law of love. Who can believe that all the heedless and idle talking that we hear among professed Christians is for the glory of God and the good of man, or that it is even intended to be?

7. Idle words are as really sinful, as false, censorious, or profane words. I say they are as really sinful. They may be vastly more sinful, or they may be less sinful according to the light enjoyed. One man may be in the sight of God vastly more guilty for levity in conversation than another for profanity. The degree of guilt depends upon the degree of light before the mind. There is great want of consideration upon this subject. If the most ignorant man tells a falsehood, or is profane, we cry out against him; and if he is a member of the church, we excommunicate him. Now this is all well; for the most ignorant man knows better than to lie or to be profane.

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But others, with greater light than he, may be equally guilty and equally deserving of excommunication, for an idle use of the tongue.

8. From this subject we see the necessity of judging our character in the light of this test. Every day and every hour we should examine ourselves in the use of our tongues. We are almost incessantly using them, and unless we keep the rule in view by which they are to be governed, a world of iniquity will accumulate upon our souls before we are aware of it.

9. This subject is of great importance to families. The necessity of governing the tongue should be constantly inculcated in every family. Observance of this rule is indispensable to the life and power of family religion.

10. The indispensable necessity of governing the tongue, should be urged in common schools, and in all places where children and youth are associated together. If children are allowed to make an unrestrained use of their tongues in respect to levity and unrestrained talking, a most important part of their education is omitted. What though they are taught that they must not lie, or be profane, or vulgar, or licentious in conversation, this is of little use, unless they are taught that their tongues are to be governed entirely by the law of universal love.

11. This subject is of great importance to ministers of the gospel. I have heard it said of some ministers--"When I see him in the pulpit I think he never ought to come out; and when I see him out, I think he never ought to go in." There are some ministers--I hope not many--who preach well and solemnly; but when out of the pulpit, they are very much given to levity, to jesting, and trifling conversation, insomuch that their idle talk out of the pulpit completely nullifies the spiritual power of their preaching in it. My brother, unless you use your tongue for God's glory out of the pulpit, you have no right to expect to be blessed in the use of it in the pulpit. Take care what you say, always, and in all places, and be sure you do not have the spirit of levity, and an idle, gossiping state of mind; for if you have, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and the people will see it. Your Christian and ministerial influence will be destroyed, and you will become a stumbling-block to souls. O! a trifling minister--what a curse to human society--what a dishonor to God!

12. The tongue is a great occasion of backsliding. Let a man but open his mouth and give up the rein to the tongue in any company and at any time, and he will soon find that when he has done talking he cannot pray. Let him try it. I have no doubt that many professors of

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religion have grieved the Spirit of God an hundred and a thousand times by idle words--have found themselves away from God and without the spirit of prayer, with gross darkness covering them, yet do not realize the cause. Ask them what they have done to get away from God, and they say they can't tell. If they would but reflect upon the use they have made of their tongues, they would find cause enough. Let them take their pens and attempt to recall and record all the idle words, and they will soon be convinced that innumerable sins have accumulated upon their souls, and shut out from them the light of heaven.

13. An unbridled tongue is not only a great snare to him who uses it, but is a great temptation, a snare, and a curse to those who listen. One man or woman given to much talking, may divert the attention of hundreds of minds from God; may engage multitudes of tongues in replying to their incessant babble; and indeed a world of words, idle as the wind, if not hateful and blasphemous, may be occasioned by some one great talker. A great talker, in the common acceptance of that term is a curse to any family, to any neighborhood, to any church, to any community, to the world. His unruly tongue must be restrained, or he will scatter around him, fire-brands, arrows, and death.

14. From this subject we can see the great evil and the great sin of what are termed social visits. Who does not know that it is almost impolite to talk otherwise than idly on those occasions? To introduce and confine yourself to religion or any other topic of serious import, designed for the glory of God and the general good of man, would be considered excessively ill-timed and out of place. The fact is, that social parties are designed for the unrestrained indulgence of the tongue. They would soon cease to be attended if no other conversation were allowed than what is for the glory of God and the good of man. How often, think you, would the gay and thoughtless multitude assemble in social parties, if no other conversation were allowed but such as is in accordance with the law of God?

It is amazing to hear professors of religion defend and plead for what they call the cultivation of the social powers. It is manifest that they often mean by this nothing more nor less than the cultivation of that idle gossip, that chit chat, idle, frivolous course of conversation, pursued in what are called social parties. How any person that even pretends to be consecrated to God can give up his tongue, his time, and his powers to be used in that manner, has always been mysterious to me since I have know any thing about religion.

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15. Many persons never keep their tongues still, long enough to be converted. They talk so incessantly, that if at any time the Spirit of the Lord comes near and strives with them, they grieve him right away by their idle talk. They ought to understand that the Spirit comes to convict and persuade; that is, to make men think, and see things in their true light. They should know that without serious thought and deep, intense reflection, they will never turn to the Lord. Thus the Psalmist says, "I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." "Thus saith the Lord--consider your ways." God complains of his professed people, that "they will not consider." How can they consider, when they cultivate the habit of giving incessant license to their tongues? Many impenitent sinners seem never to have thought that they should restrain their tongues, and speak only when and what duty calls them to speak.

16. It is a great evil to be thrown into the society of a great talker. He will neither think himself nor suffer you to do so; but babble on incessantly, like the running of a brook. If for a moment you try to think, some impertinent question, some trifling thing which you neither know nor care about, is thrust into your face, and demands a reply. O, if such men once knew the luxury of deep and silent thought, and would sometimes retire within themselves and let others think, they would do the world a favor.

17. Great multitudes of professors of religion seem unable to grow in grace and become established in religion, because of the idle use of their tongues. This sin must be overcome; it must be put away. Professor, it is too hard for you to attempt it in your unassisted strength. No man can tame the tongue, but Christ can tame it. Christ governed his own tongue, and can govern yours if you will give it up to him and let him become its keeper. Will you do it? When will you do it? Will you do it now? Will you consecrate your tongue to him with the full understanding that you shall never use it any more but for the glory of God, any more than you would use it to blaspheme his holy name? Do it, my brother, my sister: do it now!

DEPENDENCE ON CHRIST

February 26, 1845

"Without me ye can do nothing." -- John 15:5.

In discussing this subject I shall show--

I. THE MEANING OF THE TEXT.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING AND BELIEVING IT.

IV. THE PRONENESS OF THE HUMAN HEART TO OVERLOOK AND PRACTICALLY DENY IT.

I. The meaning of the text.

The context shows that Christ means to affirm an impossibility, for he says, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Now whatever metaphysical or philosophical distinctions we may be disposed to make here, it is plain that Christ intended to affirm the impossibility of doing any thing without him or independently of him. This inability extends to every thing, but the context shows that he means in this passage to affirm it only of holiness or goodness.

II. What is implied in it.

The text implies that we are not required to do anything without him. If it be impossible to do any thing without him, it cannot be our duty to do it; for it can never be a man's duty to do what is impossible.

Again, that every command implies a corresponding promise, that is, if we are required to do any thing by Christ, the very requirement is a virtual promise or proffer of all the aid we need to make it possible for us to perform it. Indeed, the command in itself is an implied proffer of all needed help.

It is often said that the commands of God are addressed to us as moral agents, and that as such, because we are moral agents, we are bound to obey, irrespective of any assistance from God. Now rightly understood this language is correct; but it is extremely liable to be

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misunderstood. The enquiry is, What is implied in moral agency? There is a difference between acting morally, and simply having the natural powers requisite for such action. A man may have eyes, but without light he cannot see, and is therefore under no obligation to see. So a man may possess the powers of a moral being, but without light on the subject of duty he is not prepared for moral action. He is a moral being in the sense of having the requisite natural powers; but light is the indispensable condition of bringing these powers into action, or in other words light is the indispensable condition of moral agency. His moral powers can be exercised on no subject until he has light upon it. He is under no moral obligation further than he has light. A heathen who has never heard of Christ is under no obligation to believe in Christ, and in respect to Christ he has not the responsibilities of a moral agent. He possesses those faculties which will render him responsible as soon as Christ is made known to him; but without some knowledge of Christ, he can be under no moral obligation to believe in him.

Light therefore, is a condition of moral agency, and, of course, of moral obligation. If supernatural light is needed, then supernatural light is the condition of moral obligation: if merely natural light or the light of nature is sufficient, then that is a condition of moral obligation. If the light of the written word of God is sufficient, then that is a condition. The kind and degree of light requisite to impose moral obligation varies upon different subjects. The mere light of nature may be sufficient to impose obligation in reference to a great multitude of duties; but on many of the great questions of the gospel, the light of divine revelation is needed to impose moral obligation, for without this revelation, the mind can know nothing of these duties.

To a right apprehension of many truths of the gospel, the illumination of the Holy Spirit is needed, and without his influence the mind does not and cannot comprehend the length and breadth, and depth and height of these truths, cannot apprehend them in any such sense as that an individual can embrace Christ and know either the Father or the Son without the Holy Ghost.

Now when Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing;" he doubtless means to affirm that without divine light shining upon the pages of inspiration and upon the works of God--without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, holiness is impossible to us. The assertion of the text therefore implies that divine light is proffered to us, and that this light is given by Christ.

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Again, the text implies the absolute Deity of Christ. If Christ is not God it is absurd and false for him to say, "Without me, ye can do nothing."

III. The importance of understanding and believing the doctrine of the text.

1. If we do not understand that we are dependent on Christ, we shall not and cannot believe it. It is impossible to believe what we do not understand. This is sometimes doubted, but if properly understood, the proposition must be self-evident. We cannot believe unless the mind apprehends that which is to be believed. Yet I may believe a fact without being able to explain the philosophy of the facts. For example, I may believe the fact that Christ died for sinners without being at all able to understand the high policy of Jehovah's government upon which the doctrine of atonement is based, or which rendered his death necessary. Now I am not required to believe any thing respecting the philosophy of the atonement, but simply the fact—a thing which I can understand. It may be gratifying and useful for me to search out the philosophy of it, but it is not at all necessary to my salvation that I should believe any thing more than the fact of the atonement. So I may believe thousands of facts and truths, the philosophy of which I cannot comprehend; but I am not able nor am I required to believe any thing more in any case than I can understand. The doctrine of the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, I can understand; that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God; but the exact sense in which these are three, and the sense also in which they are one, I cannot comprehend, nor am I under any obligation to comprehend it, nor to believe any thing more respecting this or any other doctrine than I can comprehend.

It is therefore of great importance with respect to the doctrine of our dependence upon Christ that we should understand the fact as a fact. Whether or not we are able to understand the philosophy of this dependence is of no consequence. It is enough for us to understand that such is the fact, that without Christ we can do nothing.

2. To understand this doctrine is more than to admit it. I may admit a thing in theory which after all I don't understand. I may admit multitudes of truths, yea any and all the truths of the gospel without really understanding one of them. The truth of our dependence upon Christ is generally admitted, but not so generally is it rationally understood.

3. Properly to understand it is to realize it—to perceive it's truth; and have in the mind a felt realization of it's truth.

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4. To believe this truth is more than to hold it in theory. A man may hold in theory the whole Confession of Faith, he may defend it, may argue in favor of it, and suppose himself to believe it, while in fact in the gospel sense he does not believe a word of it. Many who professed faith in the doctrine of the Second Advent of Christ, have held it and defended it as a theory, but manifestly have not believed it. Faith is the yielding up of the mind to be influenced by truth apprehended by the intellect. It is the mind's confiding, trusting, receiving a truth. Now nothing is more common than for persons to hold and defend a truth in theory which they do not really believe. To believe the doctrine of our dependence upon Christ is to commit or surrender the mind up to the influence of this truth--to repose on Christ--to confide the soul really to his keeping.

5. To believe this truth implies the continual remembrance of it. It implies that we hold the mind in the attitude of dependence and trust. Suppose I am leading a little child by the hand, I give him my finger and lead him along upon the brink of a frightful precipice. I tell him, Without me you will fall. Now if he believes this, he will hold fast to my hand. His mind will be in a constant attitude of depending, trusting, holding on to me. Now this illustrates what I mean by believing in our dependence upon Christ. The mind that believes in this will not attempt to do any thing without Christ.

But take another illustration. Suppose here is a man who has but one leg. He never attempts to walk without a crutch. When he sits down, he lays his crutch by his side, or sets it up within reach. Whenever he attempts to walk, the very first movement of his mind is towards his crutch. Just so with the mind that believes in the doctrine of dependence upon Christ. It is just as natural for this mind to throw itself upon Christ, in the performance of every duty as it is for the lame man to throw himself upon his crutch.

Again, not to understand and believe this is real infidelity in respects to Christ. It is a real rejection of the gospel of Christ and of Christ himself. No man understands and believes the gospel in any saving sense, who does not understand and believe his universal dependence upon Christ.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine renders the soul proud and presumptuous. If a man depends upon his own powers, unenlightened by the Spirit of Christ, he is depending upon the bruised reed of his own resolutions, and must inevitably find himself in perpetual condemnation.

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Again, to reject this doctrine is to dishonor Christ greatly, and as I have said, to discard his gospel entirely.

Again, to reject or overlook this doctrine leaves the soul to neglect due watchfulness. If a man is not sensible of his constant dependence upon the indwelling Spirit of Christ, he will not feel the necessity of watchfulness and prayer so as to retain the Spirit of Christ.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine fosters self-righteousness. If a man gets the idea that without the divine support and enlightenment, he performs acts that are acceptable to God, this is one of the worst forms of self-righteousness.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine makes us the sport of temptation. A man is certain to be overcome if he attempts to resist temptation in his own strength, just as certain as a man of one leg would be to fall if he should attempt to run without his crutch.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine leads to ultimate discouragement. When persons make attempts to stand in their own strength and find themselves continually overcome, they are soon led to doubt seriously whether there is any such thing as standing before the power of temptation. Finding themselves perfectly impotent in their own strength and not believing in Christ as they ought, they fall of course.

Again, the understanding and belief of this truth tends to results opposite to those just mentioned. To believe this truth causes the mind to be careful not to grieve the Spirit of Christ. It renders the soul humble and empties it of all its proud, self-righteous dependence upon self. It naturally engages the soul to love Christ, to honor him, and watch carefully against doing any thing that might displease him. It strips the mind of all dependence upon its own resolutions and unaided efforts; it teaches the mind where to go in the hour of temptation, and throws it upon Christ its all-sufficient support; keeps the soul out of bondage, begets gratitude, fixes the attention and thoughts upon Christ and engages the soul to live by faith in him.

IV. Notice the proneness of the human mind to overlook and deny this truth.

In some sense everyone knows it to be true, and yet few realize its truth in any such sense as to make a practical use of it. This is evident partly from the fact that they do not think of it. They do not realize it as the lame man realizes that he cannot walk without his crutch. His dependence upon his crutch is with him an omnipresent reality. He always thinks of it whenever he attempts to walk. Now if

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an individual really receives this truth, it will be to him an omnipresent reality. The fact of his dependence on Christ will be so deeply settled in his mind that he will just as naturally and certainly turn to Christ for support as the lame man turns to his crutch.

But another evidence that few realize and believe this truth, we have in the fact that so little gratitude is felt and manifested to Christ. If our dependence were an omnipresent reality, we could not fail, having performed any duty, to feel our obligation to Christ for having wrought in us to will and do this thing. We should not take the credit to ourselves, but be grateful to him.

Another evidence that this truth is not believed by many, is the fact that they are so little afraid to sin against Christ. It cannot be that they would be so reckless of sinning against him if they believed themselves absolutely dependent on him for all their own right actions. Suppose that you were entirely dependent upon someone to lead and uphold you every step you take; could you suffer yourself to abuse your guide and supporter?

Another evidence we have in the fact that there is so little praying against temptation, so little looking to him for grace to support and strengthen us at every step. The Bible teaches that God works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure--that all our springs are in him--that he is our life, and that there is no good in us only as it is wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ. Now that there is not much hearty confidence in these truths, even in the church, manifests itself in many ways. For example, there is but little prayer comparatively for restraining grace, for upholding grace, for the indwelling and energizing of the Holy Spirit. There is but little of the spirit of thanksgiving for the constant aid and agency of the Spirit of God.

Again, if for a short time Christians are kept from a besetting sin, they soon cease to thank him for sustaining grace, and lose a sense of the fact that he is truly keeping them above it. They think they have so overcome the temptation to that sin, that they are dead to it, and their tendency in that direction has ceased. Their taking up this notion often makes it necessary for Christ to withhold his restraining grace, in order to remind them that not they but he has kept them from falling. Thus he teaches them by bitter experience, what they will not learn from his word, that without him they can do nothing.

Again, when persons are kept for any length of time from any particular besetting sin, they soon cease to pray against it, and to pray for Christ's help to restrain it and keep it down. This shows that they overlook the fact that Christ is every day and all the time holding up

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their feet in the path of obedience, and that they would instantly fall but for him. When they thus cease to pray and watch against sin, Christ lets them fall, to remind them of their dependence. But why should he remind them of it if they are not prone to forget it?

Again, in proportion as they are kept above sin, they are prone to lose a sense of the fact that the grace of Christ upholds them. If they are supported just enough to feel the keen force of temptation and the necessity of cleaving to Christ continually, they do not lose a sense of dependence; but if Christ only for a short time lifts them so high that temptation does not seem to touch them, they immediately become forgetful of their dependence, wax self-confident, dishonor and grieve his Spirit, and fall into temptation.

Again, as we do not see, nor hear, nor directly feel the hand that supports us, we are constantly prone to forget that we are supported. The influence which Christ exerts is not a physical but a moral one. It is the power of truth and persuasion, the power of divine light which sustains the mind. Now as we do not directly see the agency of Christ employed in sustaining us, we are very apt to overlook the fact that his invisible agency is our constant support.

Again, thoroughly to learn the lesson of our dependence upon Christ so that it shall be an ever-present reality to us, is one of the most difficult things in the Christian religion. There is nothing more contrary to the natural pride and independence of human nature. There is not a doctrine of the Bible which we are more prone to disbelieve and practically reject than this. It may be admitted as a theory forever, without being ever believed.

Again, it is one of the most difficult things, always to remember practically that we cannot take one step in the path of obedience without depending on Christ, anymore than a lame man can take a step without his crutches

Again, Christ has more trouble with us on this point than perhaps any other. It is easy for him to support us if he could persuade us to depend upon him. He can easily guide us if we will keep hold of his hand. He can easily carry our burdens if we will suffer him to do so. He can work in and for us all that we need with infinite ease, if we will but trust in him and surrender up our mind to his influence. In short, the greatest practical difficulty in the Christian religion, lies in the right understanding and belief of the doctrine of our dependence upon Christ. I say a right understanding and belief, because to believe this in one sense and in a particular form, is Antinomianism: to understand and believe it in another sense, is sheer

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legality. Legality rests in Christ as an atoning sacrifice, but not as an indwelling, upholding, all-sustaining, and controlling Spirit. It receives an outward but not an inward Christ--a Christ in heaven, but not a Christ in the heart; a Mediator between God and man, an Advocate on high, but not a present sanctification in the soul. It is receiving him in the latter sense which constitutes the right belief of our dependence upon Christ. Indeed, he must be received both as an atoning sacrifice--a risen, reigning, glorified Redeemer--a Mediator and Advocate with the Father; and also as an indwelling, sanctifying, constantly operating, upholding, guiding, renovating Spirit. He must be received by the mind's own faith, to dwell in the inward sanctity of our own being, there to exert a constant sustaining and sanctifying influence, to work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Unbelief as it respects this doctrine, in the form in which I now state it, is the occasion of all our failures and of all our sins. It is a want of apprehending this doctrine, and of thoroughly embracing it that leaves so many souls in bondage to worry and flounder along in the state described in the seventh chapter to the Romans, without ever finding their way to the experience of the eighth chapter.

REMARKS

1. As I have already intimated, many hold this doctrine in theory, who never realize or practically believe it.

2. To this class of persons, this doctrine is a fatal stumbling-block. Holding as a theory the doctrine of their dependence of Christ, and yet not actually depending on him, inevitably leaves them in sin; for their theory prevents their making any effort to help themselves, and their unbelief prevents their casting themselves upon Christ, so that they settle down into Antinomianism, in the form so generally witnessed among professors of religion. They make their dependence their excuse for not obeying God; whereas, did they really believe this doctrine of dependence, and actually cast themselves on him, they would do their duty. Now this class of persons are laboring under a great delusion. They suppose they truly believe the doctrine of their dependence upon Christ, whereas, they only hold it as a soul-crippling, God-dishonoring theory, and therefore it is to them a most fatal stumbling-block.

Again, the real belief of it as a gospel fact, will secure a real as opposed to a theoretical dependence upon Christ. If a man believes his dependence upon Christ because the Bible asserts it; if he believes it as a truth of the gospel and a revealed fact, he will of course believe farther than this, that in Christ, and with the help of Christ, he can do

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all things required of him. The Apostle Paul says, that of himself he was unable even to think any thing as of himself; but adds in another place, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me." Now it is very manifest, that if the doctrine of dependence is embraced as a truth of revelation, the other fact will also be embraced as alike revealed; viz: That we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us. The belief of this will of course secure obedience to Christ.

From what has been said, we may learn what the true doctrine of natural ability is, namely, that every moral agent is really able to do whatever God requires of him; that when God requires us to believe in Christ he gives us so much light as renders us able to believe; that when he requires us to repent, he gives us so much light that we are able to repent; but that we are not able to work out that which is good by virtue of possessing the powers of a moral being, independently of divine light.

Again, we may see what is meant by the assertion that Christ is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Every moral agent, in just so far as he is a moral agent, is enlightened by Christ.

Again, it is of very little use to speculate about the philosophy of divine influence in the soul, or the manner in which Christ upholds and sustains us. The fact is the thing to be believed, and although I have myself speculated much, and often very much to my own injury, upon the mode of divine influence, still I am convinced that to lay hold of the fact without concerning ourselves to understand the mode of divine operation is the great thing to be attained to.

Again, we need to settle it as a fact of as much stability as the fact of our own existence, that we shall and can do nothing if the divine support is withdrawn; and yet that it is always so proffered to us that we are perfectly responsible for every duty enjoined in the scriptures.

Again, it is of the last importance that we understand what it is to depend constantly on Christ. Now we can acknowledge our dependence without depending. I can hold in theory and in fact that I am dependent, without being willing to be dependent; without the act of depending, without casting myself upon Christ, and settling down upon him. Now depending is an act of the will or heart. It is, as I have said, a holding on to Christ. It is an ever active state of mind. It is a cleaving to him, and is as really an act of the mind as it is to hold on to the hand of a fellow-being. The child upon the precipice who holds

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onto my hand, must hold his mind in a state of dependence, or he cannot hold on to my hand. Did his mind let go of me, the muscles of his arm would instantly relax, and he would let go of my hand. Now a depending and holding on to Christ, is as really an active state of the will as if we used our hand to hold on to him. This needs to be understood, and a want of properly understanding this is the reason why persons do not abide in Christ. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Now to abide in Christ, is for the mind to cleave to him, to depend on him not as an outward and distant Savior or atoning sacrifice, but as a present, inward, in-dwelling support, a help at hand, a God as near to me as I am to myself. This is the true idea of depending on Christ. Without this dependence we can do nothing; with it, we do all things. Brethren, think of this?

WEIGHTS AND BESETTING SINS

March 12, 1845

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." --Hebrews 12:1

In discussing this subject I shall,

I. SHOW WHAT RACE IS HERE SPOKEN OF.

II. WHAT IS AT STAKE.

III. THE CONDITIONS OF WINNING IN THIS RACE.

I. What this race is.

In this text the apostle manifestly alludes to the Olympian and Isthmian games which were celebrated in the East, and with which his readers were familiar. As these games were extensively known, he often alludes to them, to illustrate the truths of Christianity. These games originated in the policy of government, to develop the physical powers of their subjects, and give them the greatest possible efficiency. Before gunpowder came into use, success in war depended much more than it now does upon the physical power and dexterity of an army. Armies then met hand to hand with swords, spears and war-clubs, bows and arrows, and crossbows, and all those weapons to wield which required great physical energy and strength. Consequently it entered into the policy of governments to cultivate physical development as much as possible. For this purpose schools were established for training men to run foot-races, to handle the spear, the sword and the shield, and engage in all those exercises which serve to develop the muscular system to the utmost. In order to give great popularity to this system of exercises, these games were established and sustained by the highest civil authorities; even kings attended their celebrations. Great preparations were made for months and even years beforehand, by the most careful training of the competitors. Some of these games were foot races, it being in those times a matter of great importance that men should be able to run with great speed and for a long time. Alongside of the whole race-

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ground, seats were erected rising one above another, affording accommodations for an immense number of spectators. Indeed the great mass of the population of whole kingdoms was assembled on these occasions. When these seats, forming a vast amphitheater on either side, were all filled with spectators they might be called a "great cloud of witnesses."

The competitors in these games, of course made great preparations for running. Their dress, if indeed they wore any, was so arranged as to give every muscle the fullest play. Every thing was carefully avoided that might in the least prevent the freest and fullest exertion of their entire strength. They laid aside every [e]ncumbrance; exercised themselves daily; observed the utmost temperance in all their habits; in short, neglected nothing that was supposed to be conducive to their utmost speed.

Several things were to be attended to in running the race.

1. They must start right, or according to rule.

2. They must run the race through. If they started right, ran according to rule, and came out ahead of their competitors, they were crowned. Otherwise not.

Now in this passage the apostle manifestly alludes to these races, with which, comparing the Christian life, he calls it a race. The Christian life is also sometimes called a fight or battle. It is a great conflict, waged with the world, the flesh and the devil. The apostle's design is to bring out the truth that in order to be successful in winning the race, we must make the utmost exertion.

It is the Christian race then that is here spoken of, or that struggle with the world, the flesh and the devil, with which every Christian is familiar, and through which he must pass to win the crown.

II. I am to show what is at stake in this race.

The prize is a crown of eternal glory. It includes all that is honorable and glorious in heaven--to share with Christ in his glory;--to sit down with him on his throne; to become kings and priests unto God;--to be God's adopted children and have mansions in his palace; to sit at his table and enjoy all the honors and blessedness of sonship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

III. The conditions of winning in this race.

The first condition mentioned in the text is, that we lay aside every weight. This race or conflict is mental, not physical; it belongs to the mind and not to the body. We enquire therefore what is to be

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regarded as a weight or unnecessary incumbrance in running this race; I answer,

[1.] All unnecessary business. By this I mean any kind or degree of business to which we are not manifestly called by the providence of God. Any business in kind or amount to which we are manifestly called by the providence of God, and to which we attend with a single eye to his glory, is not inconsistent with our running the race, is not to be regarded as a weight, but as a part of our business and duty as Christians, and therefore as part of the race itself. But when a man engages in any business, however great or small, to which he is not thus called, he then takes an unnecessary burden upon himself. It is a dead weight upon him--nay, he cannot run at all with this business upon him because it is selfishness, and he has already apostatized from God and gone over to the serving of himself.

He has no right to do, say, or be any thing more or less than that to which God calls him. If he undertakes any selfish business, or takes any more or less upon him than duty to God requires, he is then out of God's service, and consequently can no more win in this race, than a man could win in the Olympic games if he ran right the other way, instead of running towards the goal. Let it be forever remembered that for a man to undertake any business in kind or amount which according to his best judgment is not for the glory of God and is not designed for his glory, is actual apostasy from God, and is a weight that must be laid aside or the soul cannot be saved.

2. Whatever draws unnecessarily upon our time is a weight that must be laid aside. All our time is God's; all to be consecrated to him. Whatever is suffered to occupy a day, an hour, or even a moment of our time that is not demanded by our duty to God, is a weight that just so far hinders our progress in the Christian race. Suppose a racer in the Olympian games should suffer himself to be hindered by the compliments of the spectators; suppose he should stop to receive and return the salutations of his friends and acquaintance as he passed along; and thus lose time and distance instead of tasking his powers every moment--could he win the race? Now it should be forever understood that whenever a man suffers his time to run to waste, or to be desecrated from the service of God--whenever he suffers his time to be occupied with any other than God's business, he then takes upon himself a weight that must be laid aside, or he will never win the race.

3. All engrossments of every kind to which we are not called by the word, or Spirit, or providence of God, are to be laid entirely aside as weights. We have no business to be engrossed with any thing to

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which we are not called by God himself, whose servants we are. Our whole time, talents, powers, and all are his. The employment of our thoughts, and all our powers is to be entirely for him.

Whenever therefore we take on our hands or on our minds any engrossments to which God does not call us, we have forsaken the service of God, and are employed by somebody else, or in other words we are engaged in serving ourselves instead of God. But this again renders it just as impossible to win the race, as it would be in the Olympic games if the racer should run in the opposite direction from the goal.

4. Whatever demands our attention, to which we are not called by God himself, is to be given up as a weight.

God demands that we give our whole attention to his business, to glorify him, to obey his commands and promote his interests. We have no right therefore to give any part of our attention to that to which he has not called us. Anything therefore that unnecessarily takes up the attention of our minds, that is, every thing that is not a part of God's business, must be laid aside as weights.

5. Whatever engrosses our affections is a weight, and must be laid aside, or we can never win the crown. God demands that our supreme affections should be placed on himself. Whenever we suffer them to be engrossed by any other object whatever, we have then encumbered ourselves with a weight that must be laid aside.

6. All unnecessary cares and burdens are to be considered as weights which must be laid aside. The real wants of human beings are exceedingly simple. And in general they have but few cares, unless they unnecessarily take them upon themselves. And we have no right to load ourselves down with a multitude of cares and burdens that don't belong to the service of God. Any cares and burdens to which God calls us, we may lay on him who careth for us. But where we engage in matters to which he does not call us, and when we take burdens which he does not impose on us, it is tempting God to pretend to lay these on him. We must therefore assume no cares, and no burdens that we cannot cast on the Lord. Whenever we voluntarily undertake that which is a matter of perplexity, carefulness, and anxiety to which he does not call us, we are out of God's business.-- We have taken burdens that we cannot bear and win the race.

7. All unnec[e]ssary furniture and equipage are to be laid aside as a burden which we cannot bear. See! that woman has to be engaged from morning till night, to see that the useless articles of furniture and trumpery with which her house is filled, are cleaned and

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dusted, and in good order. She runs from room to room with her dusting cloth, or calls her hired help from room to room, to see that her chairs and bureaus, her sofas and her side boards, and a hundred other things for show and not for use are kept in due order. A great house, much furniture, a small family and little company, and a multitude of things never really needed and seldom used. O! what a burden that woman has taken upon herself, and certainly God has not called her to it. Now can she have all this unnecessary care on her mind and get to heaven? I trow not. And see that man; how he struggles to get along in his Christian race with that mass of useless equipage on his back! Surely God is not so cruel as to task him to run with such a load.

8. The care of all unnecessary property is to be laid aside as a weight.

By unnecessary property I mean that which is not and cannot be managed for the glory of God and the good of souls. I have often thought of a remark of the celebrated Mr. Law. In discoursing upon the folly and wickedness of endeavoring to be rich, he says that a man who labors to lay up one hundred thousand pounds sterling is just as unreasonably employed as if he were endeavoring to lay up one hundred thousand pairs of boots and spurs. It would require all his time to keep them from molding, rusting, and spoiling. He would never wear but few of them and they would occupy his whole time in preserving them. Just so with one hundred thousand pounds; a man can never use it, and it is a great deal of trouble to take care of it. He must occupy nearly his whole time in his counting room and with his books, notes, bonds, and mortgages, and musty papers, and what profit can his one hundred thousand pounds be to him? Why, it is only a burden which if he attempts to carry, will ruin his soul. All property therefore which is above a bare competency, and over and above what is sacredly consecrated to the service and glory of God, held and used for him, is a weight that must be laid aside, or it is impossible to win the crown.

9. All unnecessary articles of dress are to be regarded as weights. Where a man or woman has a large wardrobe to over-haul, and see to, much wearing apparel to be cleansed and aired, and altered, and attended to, it engrosses the thoughts, takes up the time, is an object of care, and a weight that must be laid aside.

10. Fashion is another weight that must be laid aside. What a multitude are busy a great part of their time, as the different seasons follow each other in rapid succession and as the ever fluctuating

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fashions are introduced, in altering their dresses, making changes, getting new ones and disposing of old ones, running here and there shopping, conversing about the newest fashions, the most tasteful colors, the best milliners, and mantua-makers and tailors, and all the world of gossip and folly which engages the world of fashionables. Who can run the Christian race with a mind filled with such things as these? Who does not perceive at once that persons thus engaged are not consecrated to God? God has never called them to this service and these engrossments. This is selfishness and must ruin the soul. And it is impossible ever to win a crown of glory by living such a life as this.

11. Unnecessary attendance upon company is often a great weight. It is often a great tax on a person's time to receive such a multitude of calls and complimentary visits, and have so many protracted conversations inflicted upon us as is often the case. Christians should always make their arrangements, so as to dispense as far as possible with all unnecessary company. They should be ever ready to exercise hospitality to the utmost of their ability, should receive their friends and be cordial in entertaining strangers, but withal should discountenance all unnecessary drafts on their time in any way whatever. It should be remembered that all waiting on company, receiving and entertaining company, or making visits for company's sake, to which we are not manifestly called by the providence and will of God, is a weight that must be laid aside.

12. All unnecessary reading is also to be laid aside. By unnecessary reading I mean all reading that is not necessary to our highest usefulness and well-being. Every thing that is over and above this we are not called to, by the will of God. It absorbs our attention, is a waste of time, and often much worse than a waste, as it encumbers our minds with a multitude of things that are inconsistent with our highest holiness and usefulness.

13. All unnecessary conversation is to be regarded as a weight. It is surely a great burden to be obliged to keep our tongues from running. Many persons seem to talk for talk's sake, and to gratify a loquacious spirit. And they will often intrude upon you with some protracted conversation about nothing or that which is as good as nothing, greatly to the hindrance of your spiritual life. Now it should be remembered that our tongues are to be used only to the glory of God, and to the use of edifying, that for every idle word we must give an account in the day of judgment.

All unnecessary conversation should therefore be avoided as entirely inconsistent with growth in grace, and with running our

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spiritual race. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

14. Every thing in short to which we are not providentially called and which is not therefore a part of our duty as Christians, would be regarded as a weight and be laid aside. Whatever is inconsistent with or not conducive to our highest usefulness should be regarded as a weight, and at once laid aside.

15. There is another thing to which I must call attention that may be regarded as rather of a delicate nature, I mean all untimely and unsuitable love affairs. Few things more completely engross the mind than love affairs among young people. Now, whenever circumstances are such that the providence of God makes it a duty to seek a wife, or to become a wife, these things are lawful, may be committed to God and attended to without distraction. But whenever the affections are engrossed with such affairs, where there is no call in providence to such a course, it is a grievous weight that must be laid aside. Oh! how much time is spent in brooding over such matters, in reading letters, and in all the multitude of engrossments of thought and feeling, and all the powers of the mind. These things must be laid aside, they don't belong to the service of God, because in the case supposed, there is no providential call for the mind's being given up to such matters; indeed where the mind is thus given up without consulting God and without being called in the course of divine providence to turn the attention in this direction, it is a real abandonment of the service of God, and making provision for the flesh. It is a real heart apostasy. It is an endeavor to please ourselves and not God. To win the crown in this way is impossible. Indeed the object is not to win a crown of glory, but to win a lady; to win a wife or a husband, and that too, not for the glory of God, but to make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

[2.] A second condition on which we can win in this race is that we lay aside all our besetting sins. A besetting sin is one to which on account of our constitution, or circumstance or both, we are peculiarly exposed, and into which we most easily and most frequently fall. Among these are;

(1.) Ill temper. This is one of the most easily besetting sins of most people. On account of their constitution or health or circumstance it is remarkable to see how many persons frequently become angry. This is a sin which so easily besets many persons, that they seem to be thrown out of balance, and to get angry, and often

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times to be filled with wrath on the slightest occasions. This must be laid aside.

(2.) Fretfulness is another easily besetting sin. This is anger but in a milder form. It is a peevish, passionate state of mind. Many persons who will seldom be filled with wrath or manifest what is generally called anger, are, nevertheless, extremely given to fretting. This must be laid aside.

(3.) Covetousness is another easily besetting sin. This is selfishness in a peculiar form. Some persons seem to lust after or to covet every thing they see, especially every thing that is a little superior to what they have themselves. A horse, a carriage, a farm, a house, a dress, or anything which exceeds their own things, they covet; little realizing that this is an easily besetting sin. Now all these desires indulged, are entirely inconsistent with running the Christian race. And whoever will notice the operations of his own mind, will find they always destroy his peace of mind, and communion with God. And whenever men indulge the wish of having this, or that, or the other thing, to the possession of which God does not call them, they are always out of the way, and should thrust such temptations entirely aside, or they can never run the Christian race.

Some persons seem never to be satisfied with what they have, but are always lusting after more and better things, just as long as any of their acquaintances have them. As the scripture says, "They enlarge their desire as hell." Now God often gives them their desire, but sends leanness into their souls. Have you never observed this, that when you have set your heart very much on having something which you did not possess, when you get it, it is a snare to your soul, engrosses your thoughts and time, and leads you away from God?

(4.) Another easily besetting sin is avarice. Avarice is a disposition to hoard up property. Some persons are so much disposed to this sin, that an opportunity to make a good bargain, a speculation, is a great temptation to them. There is a constant tendency in their minds to selfishness in this form. But this must be restrained and put away, or we shall never get to heaven.

(5.) Dishonesty is another easily besetting sin. Some persons find it extremely difficult to be upright and honest in what they say and do. They are tempted to little, petty frauds and over-reaching in almost every thing, and frequently fall before these temptations. They are not sincere and honest with themselves in their religious matters, nor upright with God. In short, they strongly tend to a hypocritical

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state of mind. We cannot run a Christian race successfully without putting this entirely away.

(6.) Falsehood is another easily besetting sin of many people. They do not seem to possess a truthful spirit. They do not appear to love truth for its own sake, but are very prone to give a false coloring to almost every thing they say. The lights and shades are thrown in at their own discretion, in such a way as to make a false impression. Now this sin so easily besets some people, that I never know exactly what to believe from what they say.

(7.) Trespassing on other's rights, is another easily besetting sin. It is astonishing to see what a tendency there is in some minds to trespass on other's grounds, by crossing their field perhaps with a team without permission, leaving down their fences, and committing trespasses on their rights in a great variety of ways, apparently without the least compunction of conscience. They go into their neighbor's land and get timber for wood and other purposes without leave, which is really stealing. Indeed it is surprising to see to what an extent many persons will go in disregarding the rights of those about them. They seem to be supremely selfish, and almost supremely reckless, and to go just as far as they think they can without its destroying their character, or reacting on them in a lawsuit. A person of this spirit can no more get to heaven than Satan can, unless he lay aside this state of mind, and cherish a most sacred regard for his neighbor's rights.

(8.) Unfaithfulness in business is another easily besetting sin of many persons. They are not faithful to God in their own business, and never pay that sacred regard to it which their duty to God requires. They do not seem to understand that they are the clerks and agents of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he expects in them the most entire promptness and faithfulness. They are exceedingly loose, and reckless, and inattentive to business. If they are employed by others as clerks, agents, or laborers, either within doors or without, they are eye-servants, feeling little or no responsibility, attending to nothing only for the sake of wages. They are thus exceedingly unfaithful to their employers and to God, and never can get to heaven with such a state of mind as this. It is sheer selfishness and injustice, and anything but religion.

(9.) Slothfulness is another easily besetting sin of many persons. Multitudes are really too lazy to be religious. Every where in the bible the Christian life is represented as a race, a conflict, that to which the utmost attention must be given, and about which all the faculties of

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the mind are to be strenuously employed. It is represented as a life of the utmost activity; as much so as the foot races and conflicts in the games to which the text alludes. Now can a slothful person get to heaven? No. All the winds, and waves, and tides of this world's influence set right towards hell, and nothing but girding up our loins and addressing our whole being to the work, will ever enable us to stem the tides, overcome the obstacles, win the prize, and plant our feet on the hills of glory.

(10.) Tale bearing is another besetting sin of many persons. God has said, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among the children of my people." There are some persons that seem to be so big with every secret which they may chance to know, that they are in agony till they can run about and tell it. They are in the habit of running up and down to tell the news. They are literally tale-bearers. They carry not the newspapers, but the unwritten gossip of the village and the neighbors. Such a person is a pest to society and a sinner, and must lay aside this easily besetting sin if he would ever get to heaven.

(11.) Evil speaking is another easily besetting sin. By evil speaking I mean, speaking of the real or supposed faults of others behind their backs; speaking that which is to their discredit, without being plainly called to it by providence. This is really slander in the spirit of it, whether the things spoken are true or false. It is totally inconsistent with the law of love, in doing by others as we would they should do to us. Consequently it is a sin, and with many an easily besetting sin. It must be laid aside or the race can never be won.

(12.) Levity is another easily besetting sin. Some persons, and indeed many persons are so much given to jesting, tittering, laughing, and idle gossip as not only to dissipate all the solemnity of their own minds, but to be sore temptations to all around them. Levity of mind is exceedingly inconsistent with the Christian religion. Triflers do not get to heaven. Let that be always remembered, and if you are given to this folly, lay it aside or you will lose your soul.

(13.) Envy is another easily besetting sin of many persons. When they see others rising above themselves in wealth, influence, intellectual or moral improvement; when they see others more beautiful, more humble, or more esteemed than themselves, they lust to envy. This shows a state of mind entirely inconsistent with the love of God and our neighbor. It must be entirely laid aside, denounced, and repented of as sin, or it can never be forgiven.

(14.) Jealousy is an easily besetting sin of many persons. By this I mean a suspicious temper. Some persons are exceedingly given to it.

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They seem to be constantly on the watch to see if they are not in some way slighted, if some other persons are not preferred to them, if something is not kept a secret from them which others are led to know. This state of mind manifests itself in a thousand ways, and is always a hateful temper, and must be laid aside as a besetting sin.

(15.) Ambition is an easily besetting sin of many persons. This sin takes on a great many forms. It often manifests itself among students, in a desire to rise above others in their class in the esteem of their teachers, in intellectual developments. It is a hydra-headed sin, and seems to be common to a great many persons, from the emperor on his throne, down to the slave who labors in his chains. You will see it in the common school, the college, the theological seminary, the pulpit, at the bar, on the bench, behind the counter, on a military field, everywhere where human beings are. This must be put away.

(16.) Intemperance in eating, is an easily besetting sin of great multitudes of persons. When a person eats more in quantity, or that in quality which is inconsistent with the laws of life and health he is guilty of intemperance. Intemperate eating is as really a sin, as intemperate drinking, and as really inconsistent with salvation.

(17.) Intemperate drinking. There is such a thing as drinking water intemperately, at times and in quantities which are exceedingly injurious to health. All use of stimulating drinks which is inconsistent with the most healthful operations of all the functions of life, is intemperance. God commands us to be temperate in all things. But it has come to pass in these days, that nothing is regarded as intemperance, but some of the most flagrant forms of it; such as the use of intoxicating drinks. Whereas the fact is, that probably ten times more intemperance exists in other things, than in the use of intoxicating drinks. Let it be remembered that every violation of the laws of life and health, to which we are not called by the providence of God, is intemperance. A man may be so circumstanced as to be under the necessity of both eating and drinking things that are not naturally wholesome, of exercising or resting under circumstances that will violate the laws of life and health. But when providence calls to this, it is not sin, and therefore is not the sin of intemperance.

(18.) Pride in vanity and dress, is another easily besetting sin. Persons are always guilty of this, when they put on that which they would not indulge in, were they expecting to receive a personal visit from the Lord Jesus Christ.

(19.) All fleshly indulgences are sins, and with most persons easily besetting sins. We are required to make no provision for the

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flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God, and not for the sake of gratifying our appetites and passions. Self-indulgence is always selfishness and always sin. The spirit of self seeking, and self-indulgence must be put away, and whatever we do must be done from a higher motive than to please and gratify ourselves.

20. Unbelief is another easily besetting sin; none more common, and none more fatal than this. How infinitely strange it is, that this should be an easily besetting sin. It shows the great degradation of fallen human nature. That we should so basely distrust infinite truth, and disbelieve him whom we acknowledge cannot lie. This is the grossest of all absurdities, and the most unreasonable of all abominations in the world, and yet seems to be the most easily besetting sin of all mankind. But it must be put away, or damnation is certain.

21. Every neglect of duty must be put away, or we cannot be saved. Some persons are ready to acknowledge that such and such things are their duty, but they will make the acknowledgment with entire indifference, while they neglect the duty. Now this course is as fatal as death itself. How can they be saved who acknowledge their obligations, and yet refuse to discharge them? who make their religion consist rather in confessing that they do not do their duty, than in discharging it? This will not do. Christ will not be satisfied with our confessing what we ought to do, and that we do not do it. Shall we recklessly turn away from what we ought, and do that which we ought not to do? It is true that confession is a duty; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh, shall have mercy.

[3.] The third condition on which the race may be won is that we start right.

The first thing is to be born again. Unless persons are truly regenerated by the Spirit of God, they run in vain. For in fact, they are not in the way. They are running in a wrong direction altogether, and of course will run in vain.

[4.] The fourth condition is that you run lawfully.--You must keep the commandments of Christ. You must live a life of faith on the Son of God. You must learn to walk by faith and not by sight. Christ everywhere makes obedience to his commandments the only evidence of acceptance with him. The Apostle says, and in other places it is asserted, that they that run in a race are not crowned except they run lawfully, that is, according to the rules of the races. Nor shall we win

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the prize unless we comply with Christ's directions. He is the judge. So run therefore that you may obtain.

[5.] The fifth condition of winning the prize is perseverance to the end. The Bible every where conditionates salvation on perseverance in holiness to the end of life. So does the text--"And run with patience, that is, perseverance, the race that is set before us." Let this be ever remembered.

[6.] The sixth condition is deep earnestness and honesty in religion. No man will, according to Christ's direction, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, make this the first and the great business of his life, unless he is deeply honest and in earnest on the subject.

[7.] The seventh condition is entire consecration of our lives to the service and glory of God. Nothing short of entire consecration is real honesty and hearty sincerity in the work.

REMARKS

1. It is fatal to encumber ourselves with any thing that is inconsistent with a holy, spiritual life. Any thing that is inconsistent with our daily walking with God, is entirely inconsistent with our obtaining salvation.

2. From this subject we can see the madness and folly of great multitudes of professors of religion. What would be thought of a racer in the Olympic games who should load himself down with sand, or clay, or iron, or copper, or silver or gold, or should impede the action of his muscles by tight dressing and lacing? Or suffering his time or thoughts to be engrossed with things entirely inconsistent with his making the utmost exertion. Now it appears to me that a great many professors of religion misapprehend the true nature of religion, and what is indispensable to their ever obtaining a crown of glory. Here is one man running the Christian race with an enormous load of unnecessary business on his back; and here is a woman attempting to run the Christian race laced up in such a manner as to be entirely unable to make any exertion. Should she attempt to make any extraordinary exertions, she would fail for want of breath. She has loaded herself down with trinkets and every thing that is inconvenient for the race set before her. There is a man with his enormous pockets full of silver and gold, with an immense bundle of papers under his arm, a tin chest of bonds and mortgages, certificates of bank stock, and multitudes of things strapped on his back. There is another trying to run the Christian race, and driving a whole company of negro slaves before him. He is determined to get to glory, and not to leave

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his slave property behind. There is another with a monstrous brewing establishment, and another with a whiskey distillery on his shoulders. And in short, we see the racers coming on to the ground, with every variety of fantastic encumbrance on them--with all the weights and besetting sins that the devil could desire them to have, in order to prevent their winning the prize. Now let me say that the conduct of such professors of religion is not only most unreasonable, but so highly ridiculous as to be a mere burlesque on the Christian religion. It is the greatest libel and stumbling block that can be conceived.

3. Until you are prepared to make every needed sacrifice, to cut off a right hand and pluck out a right eye if it causes you to offend, you are never likely to win in this race.

4. You see the importance of counting the cost. It will cost you much to be truly religious. You can obtain a hope. You can pass for a Christian. You can gain a reputation with a worldly church, of being a disciple of Christ. But mark well what I say and what Christ says, except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be a disciple of Christ's. Selfishness under every form and in every degree must be cut up root and branch and put away entirely and forever, or you will make shipwreck of your soul.

5. From this subject we see the misery of creating such a multitude of artificial wants among mankind, and the necessity of simplifying as much as possible all our business and all our domestic arrangements, so as to leave the mind as unembarrassed as possible, and to give ourselves as much time as we need to cultivate that deep spirituality which is indispensable to salvation.

6. We see the folly of undertaking responsibilities to which we are not plainly called by our Heavenly Father. These are not things with which we should encumber ourselves, let them be what they may. We should never suffer ourselves to be brought into circumstances of responsibility, to which we are not plainly called in providence. If we do, these will assuredly be stumbling blocks to us. We cannot pray for the blessing, and direction and support of God; and without his direction and support we shall fall, and make shipwreck of our souls.

7. The doctrine of this discourse is not to be admitted merely as a matter of theory, and we cannot get to heaven by merely saying this is true, and we ought to do so and so, and then go as we have done. But let it be understood, we must really and in fact lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience--or, as it should have been rendered, perseverance, the race that is set

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before us. To acknowledge the obligation and not to comply with it, is fatal. Let this always be understood; when we acknowledge our duty, we must do it, or we have no right to expect the crown. Beloved, let us see to this.

REJOICING IN BOASTINGS

March 26, 1845

"But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil."
James 4:16

In discussing this subject I shall show,

I. WHEN ONE MAY BE SAID TO REJOICE IN HIS
BOASTINGS.

II. THE WICKEDNESS OF SUCH BOASTINGS.

1. When we have a self-complacent spirit. For example, when we feel a self-complacent joy in view of our worldly prosperity; when we look on our worldly prosperity as resulting from our own providence, prudence, economy or goodness, without giving the glory to God as the Author and Giver of every perfect gift. When we do not recognize him as not only ordering the outward circumstances, but as giving such directions to our thoughts and efforts as to secure this prosperity. If our worldly prosperity has been brought about in a manner consistent with honesty and Christian integrity, God is of course to have the glory of so working providentially without us, and so working by his Spirit within us to will and to do, as to have secured this result; so that the glory belongs to him. It is grace which has secured this result, and what have we that we did not receive? and who has made us in this respect to differ from others? Why then should we boast, and be self-complacent? Why should we take credit to ourselves, as if these things were not a gift? Whenever we do so, we rejoice in our boastings. But if our worldly prosperity has resulted from any dishonesty whatever, then of course to indulge in self-complacency, is not only to rejoice in our boastings, but to rejoice in our villany.

2. To indulge in a spirit of self-complacency on account of our influence in the world is rejoicing in our boastings.

First, because if our influence is great and good, grace working within us, by the Spirit, and providentially without us, has secured this result, and all the merit we can claim is that we yielded, or

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suffered ourselves to be persuaded by the infinite entreaties and persuasion of God to do our duty. Being as it were over-persuaded, we yielded, and when our reluctance was overcome, we consented to take the course that has given us this influence, and in this sense alone have we any reason to be self-complacent.

But in how much higher sense does all the glory belong to God, who from his own self-originated goodness set himself to persuade us, and persevered until he did persuade us to take such a course as secured this influence. What reason then have we for self-complacency? Verily, none at all. And whenever we indulge it on account of our influence we rejoice in our boastings.

But if our influence is evil, to be self-complacent in that, is not only to rejoice in our boastings but to boast of our shameless wickedness.

3. When we are self-complacent on account of our intellectual attainments. If they are great, or whatever they are, it is a gift of God. He created our intellect. He has so arranged his providences as to give us opportunity to cultivate it. He has also by his providence without, and his working within, secured the application of our minds in such a manner as to develop our intelligence. And now in what sense have we a right to be self-complacent? Have we studied hard? It is because he has so constituted us, so arranged his providences, and all the circumstances of the case, as to persuade us to study hard. He has overcome our sluggishness, and pressed us onward by ten thousand influences without and within us, and secured this result. And now, do we take the credit to ourselves? verily this is rejoicing in our boastings.

4. When we indulge self-complacency in regard to our spiritual attainments, we rejoice in our boastings.

But I am almost ready to say that these things are incompatible: that is, that self-complacency in respect to our spiritual attainments, would demonstrate that we have made no spiritual attainments at all. But it is undoubtedly true that sometimes persons who have made some spiritual attainments, afterwards become self-complacent, and develop a disgusting amount of spiritual pride, or which is the same thing, rejoicing in their boastings. But why should we be self-complacent on account of any degree of spiritual attainments? We were totally dead in trespasses and sins. God began a work within us by first convicting us, creating desires, setting aside our cavils with all long-suffering, and persevering in the midst of all our obstinacy, rebellion, and sin, and using the most persuasive means to obtain our

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consent to be spiritual at all. He has never gained one step with us only by pressing us with truths and providences, so arranging his providences without and so enlightening us by his Spirit within, as to overcome our utter reluctance, enmity, and spiritual death, and after a protracted struggle, at last to gain our consent to follow him and be saved. His Spirit has never succeeded in making us spiritually-minded, any farther than he has anticipated all our movements toward himself, by first moving toward us, and beginning to call up our attention and press us with such considerations as to overcome our apathy, enmity, and unbelief, and finally succeeded in bringing forth the voluntary result of our present degree of spirituality. Prompted by his own sovereign goodness, he has thus moved on us, worked in us to will and to do--surrounded us without and enlightened us within, and at last got our consent. Now I ask, how much reason have we for self-complacency? And in how low a sense can it be said that we are worthy of praise? True we have been free. But it is also true that our liberty has been abused and used only in opposition to God, until finally overcome with his persevering and overpowering persuasions. True, we have done our duty at last. But why have we done it? Because God in the abundance of his grace has persevered till he has over-persuaded us, and finally wrung out from us our consent.

But observe in how much higher sense does the glory belong to God than to us. Verily instead of being self-complacent we have reason to take to ourselves the utmost shame that it should cost God all this effort to overcome our reluctance, and persuade us to do our duty. Are we to ascribe glory to ourselves, to be self-complacent, to plume ourselves, and rejoice in our own goodness? It is infinitely more reasonable to hide our faces in the dust, and to say we are unprofitable servants. We have only done that which it was our duty to do, and even that we have not done only as we have been overcome by the persuasions and pleadings of infinite and persevering goodness.

Again. When we give ourselves up to rejoicing in our spiritual state, instead of rejoicing in God, we always rejoice in our boastings. I have seen persons who seem to me to be watching their spiritual state, and to be contemplating their own feelings, with a kind of self-complacency, from day to day. They remind me of a peacock when he struts in the sun-beams, and turns his head from side to side and views his gorgeous tail. He seem to delight himself in his own beauty and to be taken up with rejoicing in the glory of his own appearance. He struts and seems to say, "What is so beautiful as this? Am I not the

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most beautiful of birds? And have I not more reason to carry my head high than any others of the feathered tribe? Indeed I am quite satisfied with my own exquisite beauty." Now some persons seem to be taken up in the same way. They have worked themselves into a kind of ecstasy; have got certain views, as they say, of Christ that have brought their sensibility into a very happy state. They seem to be saying, "God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, that I am not in bondage like this legalist." In words they ascribe the glory to God, just as the Pharisee must have done who is contrasted with the publican. It must be that in theory at least he ascribed his pretended goodness to God; else he could not have thanked God that he was so good, for why should he have thanked God unless in theory at least he ascribed his righteousness to God? "God," he says, "I thank thee that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican." Now I have seen some that appeared to be precisely in this state of mind from day to day. Instead of rejoicing in God, they seem to be taken up with their own state of mind. They are contemplating what they call their own peace and their own goodness. The state of their sensibility is with them the chief subject of attention, and source of self-complacency. While they are practically inefficient in the kingdom of God [and] are doing nothing to pull sinners out of the fire or to sanctify the saints, they still have a wonderful degree of self-complacency on account of their state of mind. Now this is nothing but rejoicing in their boastings. How infinitely different from the publican, who, standing afar off, and not daring so much as to lift up his eyes to heaven, smote upon his breast and cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." By this I do not intend to teach that a man must be conscious all the while of committing sin in order to be accepted of God, or that a sense of our sinfulness is in itself an evidence that we are accepted of God. But I do mean that a person in a right state of mind is never taken up with a self-complacent view of his goodness. But his rejoicings are always in God and never in himself.

Again, when we cherish self-complacency on account of our usefulness, we rejoice in our boastings. If we have been useful, to whom does the glory belong? If any good has been done through us, by whom has it been done? Has God done this, or have we done it? If we have so much as intended to do any good, God has begotten and perpetuated in us this intention. If this intention has been carried out, and has secured the desired result, why do we glory? It is God who has worked within and without. He has moved us to these efforts, and he has secured these results. What though we have been free, yet he

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has over-persuaded us to use our liberty as we have. Nothing but the most strenuous efforts on the part of God have ever secured in us an effort to do any thing good. He has overcome our reluctance, he has put away our slothfulness, he has quickened our death, and surrounded us, within and without, with such influences as to lead us in this way in spite of all the natural tendency of our minds in an opposite direction. Surely, if any good has been done, the glory belongs to God. Shame and confusion of face belongs to us, that it has been so difficult for God to persuade us even to intend any good. What though we did at last intend it: what though he finally prevailed on us: let us take shame rather than praise to ourselves. Surely God has done it. He has worked in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, and with great pains taking, has, through us, wrought some good results. And are we indulging ourselves in self-complacency in consequence of some good which has resulted from our labors? Shame, where is thy blush? All such rejoicings are rejoicings in our boastings.

Again, we rejoice in our boastings whenever we congratulate ourselves on account of the high stand we have taken on any moral question. If the stand we have taken be right, who has secured this result? Where should we have gone if not led and overcome by grace divine? Has not God paved all the way, guided us by his eye, lifted us up with his hands, and brought all the influences to bear, both within and without us, that have finally over-persuaded us, and brought us to take right grounds? And are we the persons to be self-complacent? What if a man who was bent on murder should with the greatest possible pains-taking be persuaded to relinquish his object, and then plume himself on his virtue in abstaining from the bloody deed? Ought he not rather to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" It was in my heart to have committed this horrible deed, and hadst thou not over-persuaded me by thy goodness, confounded and broken me down, and turned me away from this infernal project, my hands had now been red with a brother's blood! Be sure the glory all belongs to God."

So it is with whatever right ground is taken by us on any subject. Instead of being self-complacent, it becomes us rather to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It was in our hearts to have said and done any thing else than what was right--to have taken any other stand than a right one. But, O Lord, thou hast persuaded us, and we have suffered ourselves to be persuaded.

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Again, whenever we complacently regard ourselves as the objects of divine favor, we rejoice in our boastings. Suppose God blesses us, gives us his Spirit, makes us useful, enlarges us in any respect, and we feel self-complacent on this account, and rejoice in it as if he had blessed us on account of our own goodness, and intended to bear a testimony of our favor; this is rejoicing in our boastings. Why may not the veriest sinner that was ever converted take the same ground, and say that God has converted him because he was so good, or the veriest backslider that was ever reclaimed say that God has given him reclaiming grace because he was so good, and acceptable to God in his backslidings? The fact is, whenever we regard God's favors as a testimony of our own goodness, or as being bestowed on us on account of our own worthiness, we are always rejoicing in our boastings. All favors bestowed on us, are bestowed for an infinitely different reason, only for the sake of him who died for us and rose again.

Again, when we fail to recognize the fact that it is not for our sakes, but for his own name's sake that we receive any thing from his hand better than hell, we are rejoicing in our boastings. We have deserved nothing but a dire damnation, and he takes particular pains to say to us, it is 'not for your sakes, be it known unto you that I do these things, but for my great name's sake;' and whenever we fail to recognize this truth, and indulge a self-complacent spirit on account of any favors received, whether temporal or spiritual, we are always rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, whenever we fail to recognize the fact that he works all our goodness in us, and that too in spite of our natural obstinacy, and determination to have our own way. When I speak of his working love or goodness in us, I do not mean to imply that we are not free, moral agents. I do not mean that we are not in a sense co-workers with him, for we really are, voluntarily; and the way in which he works in us is as I have already intimated, by over-persuading us, over-coming us by his powerful persuasions, and drawing us by these in an opposite direction from that in which we should have gone, if we had been left to ourselves, so that in every instance, in which we are conscious of doing our duty, we are to know assuredly that we should not have done it unless God by his grace had secured this result in us in spite of all our natural obstinacy and tendency in an opposite direction.

Again, whenever we fail to recognize all the good done to others through our instrumentality as being so absolutely God's work

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through the agency of his Spirit in us and with us that we have no ground whatever for the least glory or self-complacency.

Again, whenever with self-complacency we compare ourselves with others in any respect. It is reported of Whitfield, that on seeing a poor drunkard reeling along the streets, he exclaimed with tears, "But for the grace of God, there goes George Whitfield." Paul could say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Now in whatever respect we may be better than others, in better circumstances outwardly, or in a better state inwardly, we have no reason whatever for boasting. "Who hath made you to differ from another? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" says Paul. "But if thou didst receive it, why boastest thou thyself as if thou hast not received it?" If we are better than others, it is only because God has in his wisdom and benevolence secured this result. It was not because we were any better by nature, for we belong to the mass of fallen humanity. We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others, we are only brands plucked out of the burning, are only a little clay, taken from the common lump and molded by the potter, and are in no respect better, more praise-worthy than others, even the vilest of mankind, only as divine grace has overcome our downward tendency, and over-persuaded us until we have been subdued, and at last given our consent to be thus molded. Brethren, did you see that vile drunkard lying there in the ditch? Did you see his bloated face, his blood-shot eyes, his almost naked carcass rotting in the gutter? As soon as he could speak did you hear him swear and blaspheme? Did you find him the very image of every thing that is loathsome and abominable in human nature? Now mark me, brother; but for the grace of God that is yourself. Had not the grace and sovereign goodness of God surrounded you, wrought within you and without you, to secure different results, you had today been like him, or perhaps even worse. And if you are not as degraded and wicked and miserable, as any sinner either in or out of hell, no thanks to you. You have no reason for self-complacency. God has brought this about, and all that you can say is that he wrought you over with his grace and his providence, within and without you, till he at last secured your consent.

Woman; are you priding yourself on your modesty, chastity, your comeliness without, or purity within! See that vile harlot. She sits before you on the curb-stone of one of our great cities. She is drunk. She has lost her bonnet, her shoes. She is ragged, polluted, disgraced, profane, a wretch too loathsome to look upon, and too degraded to be thought of without disgust. Now mark me, but for the

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sovereign grace of God you had been in that harlot's place. To be sure you have been free and voluntary in all your ways. But O! had not sovereign grace been busy arranging all the elements without you, and keeping up a busy play of thought and motive within you; had not God plied you with ten thousand moving considerations, arranged all his plans from eternity, laid all his trains, pressed every consideration and brought about things as he has until he has really persuaded you and overcome your reluctance, where had you been but in the gutter, in a brothel or in hell today? And now mark me again, in what respect soever any man or woman is any better in character or in any better circumstances than the damned in hell, the vilest of the vile, the most dissolute of the dissolute, the most profane of the profane, the most abominable of the abominable, it is owing to the grace of God only. Grace has persuaded you to all this, and all the virtue you have is, that after great reluctance, you have barely suffered yourselves to be persuaded. Now is it for you or me to be self-complacent, to boast ourselves above others, to take the Pharisee's place and thank God on account of our own goodness? Shall we boast of our prudence on our worldly affairs, or of our efforts in our spiritual affairs? Shall we look around on the world of mankind and breathe out a selfish complacent breath, or shall we cry out, "God be merciful to us, sinners." "But for thy glorious sovereign and preserving grace, we should have been as wicked and as miserable as any of the damned in hell."

Whenever we take credit for being better than the worst, or less miserable than the most miserable, whenever we indulge the least self-complacency in the comparison of ourselves with any other human beings, or even with any devils in hell, we are rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, when we ascribe to our own wisdom or prudence any success which may attend our efforts in any direction, we are rejoicing in our boastings. Who has developed this wisdom and prudence? And who has directed us in this way, and secured this result? Verily God! And to him belongs all the glory.

Again, when we ascribe to our own virtue the avoidance of any crime, we are rejoicing in our boastings. Whenever we say we should not have been guilty of such and such a crime, or that we should have done thus and thus, which is better than others have done, and have the least self-complacency in these sayings, we don't know ourselves. We are abusing God. We are rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, when we have the slightest confidence in ourselves we should do any good, that we should avoid any crime, in short, when

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we have the slightest confidence in ourselves, in any respect whatever, we are rejoicing in our boastings. For surely we can be depended on for nothing but to sin, and only sin, and that continually, if left to ourselves. And in just so far as we fail to recognize this fact, we rejoice in our boastings. If we imagine that there is anything within us that is any part of ourselves, or for which we have the least occasion to boast, that can secure us against any crime however horrid, we are deceiving ourselves, and are rejoicing in our own boastings.

Again, when we have any confidence at all in the efficiency of our own resolutions, and purposes of good. Whenever we comfort ourselves with the idea that these purposes of ours, will secure any good result whatever unsustained by the grace of God, we are deceived and playing the fool, and are rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, whenever we fall short of recognizing the fact that in us apart from grace, there dwelleth no good thing--that whatever attainment we may have made in holiness, still holiness could not live in us except as it is constantly sustained by the divine presence and energy, we deceive ourselves. If we imagine that any attainments in holiness are so thoroughly made, that any virtue is so lodged within us, that it will live a moment if the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, we are deceived. And whenever we comfort ourselves with any such ideas as these, we are rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, when we overlook the fact that all our tendencies are downward, away from heaven, away from God and towards the depths of hell, we are deceiving ourselves.

Again, whenever we fall short of what the most spiritual saints call self-annihilation, in respect to everything that is good, we are rejoicing in our boastings. By self-annihilation in this connection, is not meant that we are not active agents in obeying God; but that our activity and free agency are so overruled and directed by the grace of God, working without and within us, as to secure a result which is the opposite of what had taken place, but for this divine agency.

II. Show the wickedness of rejoicing in our boastings.

1. It is wicked because it is rejoicing in a most pernicious falsehood. It is infinitely far from true that we have any good reason for self-complacency. On the other hand it is true that we have infinite reason to be ashamed of our wickedness, our great and astonishing aversion both to do and to be any thing which we ought to do or be. And for us to rejoice in ourselves, is a rejoice in our

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boastings. The least degree of self-complacency in us, is infinitely inconsistent with reason and truth.

Again, it is wicked because it is unjust to take credit to ourselves. The praise belongs to God. All goodness originates with him. He has at the greatest expense and with the greatest pains-taking barely secured our consent; and shall we after all this persuasion pride ourselves for being barely overcome by his strong persuasions and influences, so that we merely consent to do our duty?

Again, this is wicked because it is really robbing God of his glory; that is, it is attempting to rob him, and is taking credit to ourselves where the credit belongs to him only.

Again, for us to take the credit to ourselves, is denying the work and grace of the Holy Spirit.

Again, it is overlooking and denying the providence of God without and the grace of God within, that has secured all these results.

Again, it is a virtual denial of the Bible. For the Bible takes the ground that we have no reason for self-complacency, but infinite reason for humiliation and self-loathing.

Again, all self-complacency is spiritual pride, is infinitely unreasonable and odious in the sight of God. It is setting aside the gospel and is opposition to God.

REMARKS

1. It is very important to understand the views of inspired writers on this subject. Hear Paul. "I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Again, "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," and not by my own faith. Inspired writers seem fully to have recognized the truth of this discourse, and everywhere insist that God works all our good works in us; that it is God that worketh in us to will and do of his own good pleasure; and in short, that it is sovereign almighty grace that secures all human virtue.

2. There is a great deal of rejoicing in our boastings. It is amazing to see how much of this there is of which persons are not themselves aware. The egotism and filthy boasting with which the world and even the church are filled, must be infinitely disgusting and abominable in the sight of God.

3. It is to be feared that there is a great deal of this boasting in spirit, where there is but little of it in form. Often, no doubt, much is ascribed in words to the grace of God, of which men give the glory to themselves and not to God.

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4. No person gets clear of rejoicing in his boastings, unless he apprehends what it is to be "in Christ Jesus;" to live by the faith of the Son of God. To have that faith, patience, love, meekness, gentleness, goodness, and all the graces of Christ developed within himself until he understands what it is to put off self and put on Christ in the sense of becoming dead to his own goodness, and alive only in the life and activity of Jesus Christ.

5. Again, I remark that just in proportion as persons become really holy, they are indisposed to take any credit to themselves. Nothing is more offensive and infinitely abominable, shocking, and disgusting to a sanctified soul than self-complacency. Every shade and every degree of it is loathsome as the very filth of hell.

6. It is often very difficult to speak exactly the language of our own feelings and sentiments on this subject. We find Paul, as it were, often over-hauling himself. When he has spoken of himself as being good, or as having done any thing good, he speaks as if he would take it back, and say--not I, not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me.

7. From this subject it is easy to see how Christians get into darkness. Whenever they indulge in the least self-complacency in any respect, they sin, grieve the Spirit of God, and get into darkness. Oftentimes they seem to be entirely ignorant of the cause of their darkness. They look around and ask wherein they have sinned. Finding nothing in their outward conduct to accuse themselves of, they are at a great loss to account of this spiritual desertion. Now if they would but direct their minds to thoughts and feelings indulged, they would often learn that they have been at least dividing the glory and praise of their goodness with God. They have been stealing from God. They have been secretly filching a jewel from the diadem of Christ, and would fain place it as a crown on their own head.

8. Spiritual pride, or rejoicing in our boastings is one of the most common forms of backsliding. How few persons there are that can bear prosperity, temporal or spiritual, without indulging in self-complacency, and thus grieving away the Spirit of God. This no doubt, more frequently than any thing else, causes the young convert to stumble. He stumbles without knowing at what he stumbles. He becomes spiritually proud without observing it. He rejoices in his own boastings, and falls, and sadly dishonors God.

9. Revivals of religion are more frequently put down by this sin than by any other. The minister and the lay brethren are powerfully moved by divine grace, and bestir themselves. God pours out his Spirit and a revival ensues. Directly they begin to be self-complacent.

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God is blessing their labors. They begin to tell what I have done, and what I have done, and how God blessed me in this labor and in that -- how this sermon, and that exhortation, and that prayer, and that fast had resulted thus and thus. And perhaps ever and anon there is a little puff in the newspaper, and a self-complacent sending out and trumpeting of our own fame, that the world and the church may hear. The Spirit of God is grieved; he turns away his face; he withholds his hand. Young converts stumble, sinners return to stupidity, the church return every one to his own way, and desolation drives its ploughshare over the fair heritage of God.

10. Many persons apparently good have so rejoiced in boastings, that God seems to have left them. This has been true of ministers oftentimes--of those who have labored as evangelists, awhile successfully--of many laymen who have once known what it was to prevail with God. They have rejoiced in their boastings until God has forsaken them. He has thrown them aside, and there they lie and rot; and if they escape the depths of hell, it will be only by the persevering grace of God.

11. This subject ought to be a warning to all classes.

12. We are never right only as we lose sight of self, and rejoice only in the Lord, and glory only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Persons are never so nearly right as when they have the least apprehension of being right--as when they have the least thought of their own comeliness and virtue--when they are the most completely empty of all thoughts of their own goodness, and their minds are most entirely absorbed with the consideration of the goodness of God, and when all the powers of the mind are directed away from the contemplation of self, and most engrossed with the work of the Lord, the goodness and the infinite grace of God.

13. Persons who are really in a sanctified state, are not occupied with rejoicing in themselves. If they are really sanctified, it is impossible that they should be thus engaged in self-complacent rejoicing. For when sanctified, they are really emptied of all self-complacent rejoicings, and filled only with a sense of the adorable and sovereign grace of God. And with the utmost loathing and abhorrence of themselves, as for themselves they can say with all their hearts, "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." "By the grace of God alone, I am what I am."

THE CHURCH BOUND TO CONVERT THE WORLD

No. 1

April 9, 1845

"And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:18-20.

In discussing this subject I shall endeavor to show;

I. WHAT THE COMMAND TO TEACH ALL NATIONS, MEANS.

II. ON WHOM IT IS OBLIGATORY.

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.

IV. CONDITIONS OF OBEDIENCE.

V. THE CAUSES OF FAILURE.

VI. THE GREAT GUILT OF FAILURE.

I. What does the command, "Go and teach all nations," mean?

In the margin of your bibles, you will read, go and disciple or make disciples of all nations. This is undoubtedly the real meaning of the original. The word teach in the nineteenth verse, is not the same word which is rendered teach in the twentieth verse. The true meaning of the command is, Go and make disciples or christians of all nations.

II. On whom is this command obligatory?

1. It was addressed by Christ to those of his disciples who were then present, but doubtless was intended for all christians, for it is not at all likely that Christ expected the disciples then present to do all this work. He doubtless meant to devolve the responsibility upon all christians, to rest upon their consciences in all coming time until the work should be done.

III. The third inquiry is, What is implied in this command?

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1. The command itself implies ability to obey it. Every command of God implies this in the strongest manner. It should be remembered that God is perfect in both love and wisdom: therefore he cannot be so unjust as to demand of us an impossibility, nor so ignorant as not to know the real limits of our powers.

2. But again let it be observed that Christ assumes our ability to obey this command on the ground that he has all power in heaven and in earth and has promised to be with the church in this work. In the eighteenth verse he says, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." The command follows; "Go ye, therefore, that is for this reason, because I have all power in heaven and in earth, go and make christians of all nations; and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." We see then that Christ assumes our ability on the ground that he has all power in heaven and earth, and promises to be with us always even unto the end of the world; pledging his divine agency to work within us to will and to do, and without us to open the way providentially for our labor, and withal, to work by his Spirit in those to whom we publish the gospel. Thus Christ exerts his divine power in heaven and on earth so far as it is needed in accomplishing this great work.

3. The command implies that the great work of the church militant is, to make disciples of all nations; in other words, to convert the world to God.

4. It implies that this is their only work, that the only business they have on the earth is to glorify God in the world's conversion. They are to do or say nothing, and be nothing, more or less than is conducive to this end. To this their whole being, time, influence, and possessions are to be consecrated. In that solemn parting hour, Christ doubtless meant to give them his whole mind in these few last words; Go, apply yourselves directly to the conversion of the world, and finish the great work which I have begun. I have given you the example; let your eye too be single, and your devotion unwearied and entire.

IV. I am in the next place to consider the conditions of obedience to this command.

1. The first condition which I mention is, hearty and entire consecration to this work. The church will never accomplish it, until they go forth in the true spirit of the requirement, being devoted with a single eye to this work as Christ was. By this it is not intended that every christian should be a preacher of the gospel, for there are a great many kinds of work to be done. Preaching is but a small part of

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the labor. Printing, and writing, the mechanic arts, agriculture, commerce, merchandise, and in short all the useful employments of this world are to be employed by the church as parts of this great work. But they are all to be pursued with the same end, that is, to convert the world.

Again, not only must ministers be consecrated to this work, but lay-men and women also. Whatever the immediate occupation of each individual is, let him pursue it with the same singleness of eye, and entire consecration to the great end of the world's conversion that ministers are bound to have in preaching the gospel. Every body understands that ministers ought to preach for the glory of God, and ought to consecrate themselves to the work of the world's conversion, that this is their great business, and that they really apostatize in heart from their work whenever they fail of giving themselves up heart and soul to it. Now this is true of ministers; and it is equally true of all christians. That Christian who tills his ground, or stands behind his counter, or writes, or prints, or does any thing else, is bound to be as entirely consecrated to the glory of God and the world's conversion, as the minister ought to be, and unless he is he can never be saved. Lay-men and women judge right in respect to what is required of ministers in this matter, but they should understand that precisely the same is required of them. Until this is recognized by the church at large, and until the followers of Christ in every sect consecrate themselves to this work, with as single an eye as that which ministers are bound to have, the work can never be performed.

2. Another condition is, union of effort. By united effort I mean the opposite of sectarian effort. By union among christians I do not mean that they must all be in all respect of one opinion, but that they should be one in heart, and in respect to doctrinal opinions be agreed in all the fundamental points, also be agreed in tolerating each other, and allowing each other the most perfect liberty of opinion in respect to all points not fundamental. They must agree to differ on minor points without controversy or jangling. They must love each other so intensely and labor for the world's conversion so sincerely as not at all to stick on any of the minor points of christian doctrine. If the church waits till all her members think alike on minor points, the world will never be converted; or if she expects to convert the world while cut up into sects and jangling parties, she is entirely deceived. A sectarian church can never convert the world to God, any more than so many Bramins could. If they convert them to their respective parties, this is by no means converting them to God; it only makes

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them sectarians. I am humbly of opinion, that until union prevails in the church in the sense above described, the world can never be converted. But more of this in another place.

3. Another condition of obedience to this command is, the realization of individual responsibility. The fact is that there is a strange shrinking away in this matter. Christians do not seem to realize that every man and woman of them is pledged on the solemnity of an oath to do his and her utmost to convert the world to God. In making a profession of religion they pledge implicit obedience to Christ. Now this is his last, and I may say, his great command. This is, as it were, a summary of all his requirements. It is the condensation of the whole of gospel duty, to convert the world. Now to the accomplishment of this end, every christian of every age stands pledged. His whole being, influence, time, property, talents, resources, every thing he has or is or can control, are pledged to this work on the solemnity of an oath. Nothing less than this is implied in pledging obedience to Christ and in making a public profession of religion. Now how is it that so few professors of religion have this idea standing out in strong development before them as the great idea which they are to aim constantly at realizing? Until this comes to be the omnipresent idea of the church, the great thing at which not only the whole but every individual aims, and which all endeavor constantly to accomplish, the world will never be converted. Every christian man, woman, and child, must address himself and herself decidedly and exclusively to this work, or it will not be done.

4. The church must not expect to effect this wholly, or even principally through the instrumentality of a learned ministry. It is perfectly absurd for the church to expect ever to send forth a sufficient number of men, learned in the common acceptance of the term, to convert the world, Some learned men are indispensable to the accomplishment of this work. We need learned men to translate the Bible, to write books, and critical commentaries, to bring forth every thing that belongs to the literature and philology of the Bible. These men have their places and their use, and are very important, and indeed indispensable to the accomplishment of this work. Yet really but little more than this can be expected of that part of the ministry which is devoted to the literature of the Bible. They have not time nor are they the men to go right forth and reap the harvest. They are as it were engaged in manufacturing the tools and preparing them for the work. They are stationed here and there to do a multitude of things which the less learned cannot do. But it should not be for a moment

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supposed that colleges and theological seminaries are going to provide men enough for the world's conversion. The fact is that laymen and women must come up to this work and make personal and direct effort, and really preach the gospel; or to use a less objectionable phrase, they must in every way suited to their circumstance, tell the story of the cross, and press the truth upon the consideration of men. The colleges and theological institutions have their places, and in their place they are very important. They are designed to furnish the indispensable number of learned men for the accomplishment of this work. But these men of learning after all, if the world is converted, will be found only as one to a thousand or ten thousand of the laborers that are to be employed in this field.

5. Nor need the church expect to accomplish this work wholly or perhaps even mainly through the instrumentality of any ministry whatever either learned or unlearned. There are no doubt hundreds and thousands of men who are not learned in the common acceptation of the term who are men of sound minds, ardent piety, good judgment, great discretion, who may be safely put into the ministry, who ought to be put in and who must be put in before this world can be converted. But even these will not be enough. The colporteur system needs to be extended a hundred or a thousand fold. Indeed laborers should be sent forth and shed over the world like the leaves of autumn until the church, men and women, go everywhere, as in the early ages, proclaiming the word of life. Every one who has read the Gospels and Acts of Apostles attentively, knows that the Apostles all labored for a considerable number of years in and about Jerusalem, while the laymen and women went every where preaching the gospel. There had to be a great struggle at Jerusalem to prevent the light being put out altogether in Judea. The whole influence of the Apostles was needed there for several years. But when the persecution arose about Stephen, the infant church, except the Apostles, were scattered abroad. These under God were the means of diffusing the knowledge of Christ and the savor of his name in all directions.

6. Another condition of obedience to this command is, the exhibition of brotherly love and christian confidence. Christ in his last prayer made this the condition of the world's conversion, and it manifestly is so. "Neither pray I, says he, for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they may all be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Where

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Christians manifest no mutual attachment and little mutual confidence, all their theorising will only pass among mankind for mere theory. The gospel in their hands will never get hold of the mass of men until the world are compelled to say, "See how these brethren love one another." Christians will neither have nor deserve the confidence of the world till they both have and deserve the confidence of each other. If they will not confide in one another who shall confide in them? This question is natural and inevitable, so that I regard it as an indispensable condition of the world's conversion, that the church manifest every where intense brotherly love and perfect Christian confidence. This is so in every community. You will find the wicked every where impressed with a sense of the importance of the gospel in proportion to the union, affection, and confidence of Christians among themselves. If professors of religion manifest but little attachment to each other, but little confidence in each other, the great mass of the unconverted are little or not at all impressed with the importance of religion; but if Christians are united, love each other with pure love, fervently, and show that they have the greatest confidence in each other, this impression arouses the world, and they begin immediately to enquire, What shall I do to be saved?

7. Another condition of success in this work and obedience to the spirit of this requirement is, confidence in the presence, power, and readiness of Christ to go right forward with the church to the accomplishment of this work. The Apostles and early Christians seemed to realize that Christ was in earnest in saying, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth; Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, and lo, I am with you even to the end of the world." They seemed to understand that Christ was really in earnest in this matter, and that he really was ready, able, and willing, and that his whole heart was set upon the work, and that he was indeed with them, giving efficiency to what they did. When they were persecuted and commanded not to preach or to teach in the name of Christ, hear what they say; "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them. Who, by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both

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Herod, and Pontius Pilate with the gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threat[e]nings; and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." Here is a specimen of the manner in which they regarded and treated opposition, and of their faith in Christ in respect to the performance of this great work. How could they fail of success?

8. Another condition of success is the practice of all needed self-denial. This is requisite in order to furnish the means and the devoted men and women to go forth to every nook and corner of the world where human beings are, and proclaim to them the gospel of salvation. We want men who are willing to take their lives in their hands, who have health and strength and heart to the work, and who can labor as some of our missionaries are laboring among the Indians, and as some of the African missionaries do, and as some others do in various parts of the world. We need hundreds and thousands of these men, men like minded, or rather men possessing a hundred fold more if possible of faith, patience and power than these already in the field. I would not find fault in general with the men that are engaged in this work, nor say any thing that should imply a want of consecration in them, but they are laboring almost single handed, greatly straitened for want of means, and their calls for help are unutterably agonizing. What do they tell us they could do under God in converting the world if they had the men and the means? But recently I saw an account of an address delivered by a British missionary from India, in which he affirmed that the obstacles throughout India to the spread of the Gospel were fewer than they were in England, that if twenty thousand missionaries could at once be set down in India they might go every where preaching the gospel to large and attentive congregations, in which not a man could be found that had ever heard the gospel before; that the land is all open, the fields are white and waving for the harvest, and nothing needed but men and means, and faith in Christ to fire the train and spring the mind, and as it were blow up the

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very kingdom of the devil. O what a call is this! O what a door is here opened for the church to enter and achieve the world's conversion!

9. Another condition is patience in the performance of this work. No man ever accomplishes any thing in the kingdom of God only as he suffers patience to have its perfect work. It is predicted of Christ that he should neither fail nor be discouraged till he had set judgment in the earth. Whoever gets out of patience and begins to scold and find fault, or become discouraged, will immediately grieve the Spirit of God and altogether defeat his own success. Many revivals have been prevented in this way. The laborers have not sufficient patience. They suffered themselves to get out of patience and to fret, perhaps to scold, complain, and find fault because things did not go as they would have them. This grieved the Spirit, and if there was a revival it was a revival of fault-finding and not of love.

10. Another condition is perseverance. They must learn to hold on and be of good courage till God strengthens their hands and their hearts in the work. Let me recommend to you Moffatt's account of the labors of the missionaries in Africa. That is certainly an admirable book, and the patience of Moffatt and his associates is worthy of all imitation. I don't know when I have been so instructed, so affected, and so rebuked as by reading that book. The admirable patience and perseverance of the missionaries is worthy of the churches' most attentive consideration. Often times on reading it I was ready to wonder that they did not abandon the field and conclude that God had not called them to that work. But no, they persevered against discouragements and embarrassments that would have overcome any but men filled with the spirit which they had, and consecrated as they were to the great work of saving souls. May God bless them forever and prosper them until all Africa shall know the blessed gospel, and Ethiopia stretch forth her hands to God.

11. There must be constant and prevailing prayer. Did God promise to enlarge his church and convert the world? He has annexed this condition; "Nevertheless for this will I yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." There must be constant prayer. It must be the prayer of faith, of sympathy with God. It must be the effectual, fervent prayer--that wrestling agonizing travail of soul that has power with God. This must extend through the church. It must be universally diffused abroad, and prayer for the world's conversion instead of being confined almost entirely to the monthly concert, must be the labor and burden of every day. The church must take the world on her hands and upon her heart. The minister and the laymen and

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women, all classes and ages of christians must really travail in birth for the world's conversion. It must absorb their whole attention; it must engross their thoughts, rouse up and set on fire their feelings, and pour itself out before God in a flood of agony before the world can be converted. Such prayer as is not commonly heard must be offered before this work can be done. We must have praying men and women, nay, the whole church must become a praying church, and be gathered around the mercy seat and lie on her face, and pour out her prayers with strong cryings and tears. This must be persevered in until they have come up to the full spirit and meaning of what God says, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." They must besiege the throne of grace with the promises in their hand. There must be a great lifting up of heart and soul and a thousand times ten thousand hearts must echo and echo, "Thy kingdom come, thy kingdom come," until this comes to be the universal cry of the church, until the heart of the church militant heaves like a volcano, and the gospel is like a burning fire shut up in her bones, and the promises are to them stable as the everlasting mountains; until she can plant her feet on them and stand and never retreat a hand's-breadth till the work is done.

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"And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:18-20

V. I am to show the causes of failure hitherto.

1. It is not for want of numbers. The church has always had numbers enough to have accomplished this work, if she had had a heart for it.

2. It is not for want of means. She has always possessed all needed means for its accomplishment.

3. It is not for want of a sufficient number of educated men to carry this work forward. The church has always possessed education enough, and the means of education sufficient to have accomplished this work.

4. It is not because God has not been ready.

5. Nor again is it for want of time, nor for the want of resources of any kind. All these things have always been at the church's disposal. But,

1. A want of faith has been the fundamental difficulty, a want of real confidence in the truth that Christ possesses all power, and is always present, ready and willing to grant all needed aid for success.

2. A want of entire consecration to this work. The few individuals living in different ages, who have been manifestly consecrated to this work, have really accomplished much. I have recently been reading an account of the spread and success of the gospel in every century since the commencement of the christian era, and it is greatly edifying to see what individual effort has done--to see

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how much individuals who have really been consecrated to this work have effected. The fact is that wherever a man or a woman has had faith, and the spirit of consecration to this work, they have effected much. And it is very plain from what they have effected, that nothing is needed but the general consecration of the professed church of God to this work to have accomplished it centuries ago.

3. Sectarianism has been one cause of failure, perhaps the chief. Sectarian ambition, jealousy, collision--these and innumerable other evils have clustered around this growing abomination. Nine tenths, and perhaps I might say ninety-nine hundredths, of both ministerial and lay effort has lost its power by reason of a sectarian spirit. Go where you please over this great west and over the east too, and what do you see? Why! in a small village with a population perhaps just enough to make one respectable congregation, you find half a dozen or more feeble churches, of diverse sects with as many half-starved, and deservedly half-starved ministers, keeping up their sectarian bars, and perhaps undesignedly keeping alive the very prejudice that prevents the success of the gospel. One man comes on to the ground to attend to the Presbyterian or Congregational interests in that place and region. Another must be thrust in to attend to the Close Baptist interests and another to attend to the Free-will Baptists interests. Next there must be two or three Methodist ministers to attend to the Episcopal interests and the Wesleyan Methodist interests, and the low church Episcopal interests; next, but not least, the New School interest, and the Old School interest, and among them all, they seem very generally to attend pretty thoroughly to the devil's interests. I mean that by this arrangement the devil's interest is really in the best way secured; not that they really intended any such thing; God forbid that I should make any such insinuation. They really mean, (as they profess) to secure the interests of their respective denominations. But in this way they most effectually hinder the success of the kingdom of Christ. In this way just those jealousies are kept up which grieve the Spirit, alienate the hearts of Christians from each other, weaken the hands of the ministers, disgust the impenitent, and please the devil. Now I have not the least doubt that in the great majority of cases, if not in nine cases out of ten, if all the ministers but one, in such villages should leave the ground, and let him belong to one of the evangelical denominations, I care not which, he could do more, perhaps ten times more than they can all do together. If they would all go off to the heathen, or to destitute regions in our own country, and spread themselves out, and never again think of their denominational

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interests, we should never again hear such things as going out to nurse the interests of this sect and that sect. They would give themselves directly to the work of converting the world to God, and almost infinitely more could be done than is done now.

This subject used to be the burden and agony of my soul before I came to this place. When I first came here I was resolved on using whatever influence I had to secure the adoption of a creed that should comprehend only the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, and also to secure a most perfect toleration of opinion on all minor points, so that all true Christians could unite. Then, if ever sectarians crept in, they should not do it under the pretense that their members were excluded from our communion. They should take the entire responsibility of introducing into this community that abomination from the pit, a sectarian spirit. Here we are thus far one congregation, and see what a crown I have around me; but what should we do if we were divided into a half dozen congregations, with as many ministers to stickle for their sectarian peculiarities? It would be the curse and the ruin of the place, of the Institution, and of the cause of Christ in our midst. I wish to make a strong impression on this subject, and I would that I could succeed in making the church feel that sectarianism is doing more to prevent the world's conversion a thousand fold, than all the Infidelity and Universalism and Romanism, and every other ism that curses the world together. I fear this is not duly considered. Let any one man create among a people sectarian jealousies and prejudices, and he can never promote true and undefiled religion there. There is much delusion on this subject. Many who do nothing but promote sectarian interests seem to be fondly dreaming that they are promoting the cause of Christ. They think they are making real Christians, and converting men to God, but they are deceiving themselves. If they are creating sectarian prejudice, if they are merely fostering denominational interests, they may be compassing sea and land, and making many proselytes, but they are making them two-fold more the children of hell than themselves.

The fact is that the spirit of sectarianism instantly cools individual piety; it curses churches; it ruins communities; it swallows up a great part of the ministerial influence of the church. In most of the villages throughout the land, where they should all unite in one congregation, and where if they would, they are abundantly able to support the ministry and do much for the spread of the gospel abroad, being cut up as they are into little churches, they must build each of them a house, a little house, that will hold two or three or four

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hundred people, and get a minister, and measure out to him his salt and his potatoes, and he must preach on the sabbath to some fifty or a hundred souls, and spend his week-time chiefly either on a farm, or in some other lucrative employment to keep his family in bread. Now what do my brethren think themselves engaged in? Is this the way for ministers to be used up? What! when twenty thousand ministers are at once demanded in India, and hundreds of thousands in other parts of the world? Why, men and brethren, we might better than not spare eight tenths of all the ministers in the land, if they would clear out, and but one stay in a place. I have long thought that I never would consent to settle down and give myself up to preach the gospel under such circumstances as I have named. I would never occupy a position where there were a number of ministers, and the work might as well and better be done by one. I do not believe that God can ever bless any such thing as this, and I am agonized and pained to my very heart to see this the general state of the church over the whole land. I have known that many of my brethren have felt with me, distressed on this subject. The remedy is at hand. Let the true spirit of the world's conversion only take possession of the entire ministry, and the days of sectarianism are numbered and finished. Then the present ministry may be spread over a field five or ten times as great as that which they now occupy, and even then much more fully meet the real wants of the people than they now do.

4. Another cause of failure has been that the church to a great extent has lost sight of the true spirit of what Christ says in the text. As I was presenting this thought not long since, to wit, that the church was commanded to convert the world, and through the strength and grace of Christ had power to do so, a brother remarked to me, Why this is new! This is entirely a new view of the subject. The church has not understood this. Now I would ask, To whom is it new? The brother to whom I replied did not mean that it was not the true meaning of the text, but that he and the church had not so considered it. I am afraid that it is new to hundreds and thousands of the professed followers of Christ. It would appear indeed that either they have not so understood it, or that they have really intended to disobey Christ. I suppose indeed that it has been lost sight of in a great measure. If I mistake not, Christians do not generally understand that the text requires them to make disciples of the sinners around them. But certainly this is its true meaning.

I fear many parents do not understand themselves to be required, even to convert their own children, and that churches do not generally

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understand themselves as being responsible for the conversion of the impenitent in their midst. But yet this is no doubt the truth of revelation. Who can deny that this is the true spirit and meaning of what Christ says in the text? If he commanded the church to make disciples or Christians of all nations, on the ground that he possesses all power in heaven and in earth, and will be with and aid them in this work, is it not our duty to convert those immediately around us? to make disciples of those in our own houses? who can deny it?

5. But not only has the command been lost sight of, but the annexed promise also, 'Lo I am with you.' The true spirit and meaning of what Christ here says seems not to be generally recognized and felt. Neither ministers nor lay-men seem to take hold upon and anchor down upon what Christ really here intended. It is as if he had said, "I possess almighty power; Go forth, therefore, and convert all nations; and I will be with you and give you success." It is true, therefore, that whenever we go forth to this work we should expect to accomplish it. We are to rest assured that Christ is with us, and that in his strength the work can be, will be, and must be done.

6. Another thing that has greatly hindered the work has been that too much has been expected from human learning, and not enough by any means from Christ or from the Holy Spirit. Human learning has its place, and its importance, but learned men are altogether too apt to place too much reliance on their learning, and too little on the Holy Ghost. This also is a great error. They are looking for a man of talents, a man of eloquence in the church, a man of learning, instead of a deeply spiritual, praying man. The choice that the churches make of men to preach the gospel, proves to a demonstration that they really place more reliance on human eloquence and learning than they do on deep spirituality, and the power of the Holy Ghost. Where have you known a church in fact lay the principal stress on the faith, the piety, and deep spirituality of the man of their choice? No; the first thing sought is talents; the second, piety, last of all, deep spirituality and great faith and power in prayer. Now they have directly reversed the true order. Until they practically lay the principal stress on the deep piety, faith and spirituality of the man whom they choose as pastor, they may expect curses from God rather than blessings. The fact is, God will not give his glory to another; and where this stress is laid on human learning, and the idea of spiritual influence is thrown so much into the background, God cannot secure to himself the glory, and therefore he will not work.

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7. The work has been greatly retarded by a want of deep sympathy with Christ. The church has not loved a ruined world as Christ loved it, and as the Father loved it. Why, when parents will love their children as Christ loved them, they will make such sacrifices for their salvation as Christ made;--nay, when they will but begin to approach this, they may expect their children to be soon converted. When the church really enters into sympathy with Christ, and so loves the world as to be willing to give themselves for its salvation, to live and to die for this purpose; when this spirit becomes common, and the church will go forth as Christ went, and live and labor as Christ lived and labored, and lay down their lives on the battle-field as Christ laid down his, then the work will be soon accomplished. I verily believe it might as well be converted in fifty years as in five hundred or five thousand.

8. But again, the church has been discouraged. She has had so little faith that her efforts by way of missionary labor have accomplished comparatively little. Her success has no doubt equaled her faith, and perhaps surpassed it, but still she has been so unbelieving that comparatively little has been accomplished. Little can be accomplished until she will believe the promises of God.

9. Conformity to the world in almost every respect has been another great, and I may say, growing impediment to the world's conversion. This subject branches out in so many directions, I can but just name it.

10. Another hindrance has been that the attention and efforts of the church are directed to mere outward reforms. At this I have often been unutterably pained. Instead of doing as the apostles did, directly addressing ourselves to the hearts and consciences of men; instead of beginning within to reform, the church has been to a great extent satisfying herself with a mere outward reform.

11. Worldly ambition in young men who are professors of religion has stood greatly in the way of the world's conversion. They are in such a state that they have come to look on the ministry as rather a drivelling business, and not recognizing themselves as pledged to convert the world, as soon as possible, they turn aside into other professions, and to other business, and leave the world and the cause of Christ to take care of themselves.

12. Another difficulty in the way has been clerical ambition. The whole history of the church shows this. In almost every age of the Christian church there has been a grasping after power, even among the ministers of Christ. They have become jealous of lay influence

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and have taken every thing into their own hands. It would seem that they would fain do the work alone, but they never can. That is the best and most successful minister who knows best how to bring the greatest amount of lay effort to bear on the world, and who actually accomplishes this. Ministers can do but a very small part of this work, and if they suffer themselves to become jealous of lay influence, and keep the lay-men and women still, and undertake to feed them and promote their piety without requiring them to consecrate their personal service to the work, they will surely find themselves greatly mistaken. It cannot be. It is contrary to the true nature of religion.

Every man and woman must have some spiritual labor constantly on their hands, or they cannot grow in grace. The great thing, it seems to me, which ministers ought to do is principally to plan labors for the lay men; to feed them with the sincere milk of the word; to give them spiritual food enough, and then press them up to perform the work.

I might mention a great many other causes of failure hitherto in this great work, but must not protract remarks under this head.

VI. I must proceed to the sixth and last head of this discourse, to wit, to consider in few words the guilt of this failure.

1. The truth we here insist on is this; that the blood of the world is in the skirts of the church. God informed the prophet that if he did not warn and do his duty to the wicked, the wicked should die in his sins, but his blood would he require at his hand. Now under the Christian dispensation the whole church are placed in the same position with the prophet in this respect. It was the prophet and the priest on whom principally the duty of warning the guilty devolved. But Christ has commissioned and commanded the whole church to do this. He has required her to teach and disciple all nations. This principle applied formerly to the prophet, must now be applicable to the whole church.

2. The great law of benevolence requires the church to do all in her power for the conversion of the world, and holds her guilty of the world's blood if she suffers it to be lost. Christ said of the church, "Ye are the light of the world. Ye are the salt of the earth." If therefore the world is not enlightened, it is the fault of the church. If it is not preserved from moral putrefaction, it is the fault of the church. If the name of Jesus is not familiar to every human being in every language and in every clime, it is the fault of the church. The church have had the time enough, have possessed all the requisite means, have had the promise of him who has "all power in heaven and in earth," to be with

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them, and give them all necessary aid. Where then is the blood of the world but in the skirts of the church?

I must close what I have to say with a few

REMARKS

1. This guilt attaches to every Christian to whom the command in the text has come, and who is not entirely consecrated to the work of saving souls. It is high time that every Christian should understand his duty in this matter, and the greatness of his responsibility. He should daily consider to what he stands pledged, and the guilt he will incur if he suffers himself to be diverted from the great work for the accomplishment of which he is permitted to live in the world.

2. When God makes inquisition for blood, what will become of those professors of religion who have turned aside from this work and are attending to something else? I have said that the ambition of young men and I might add, of many young men who ought to prepare for the ministry, has turned them aside into law-offices and land-offices, and merchandize, and all manner of worldly employments, because these courses of life open to them prospects of obtaining greater wealth or worldly influence. To say the least, they have manifestly not taken the position in which they might most successfully and directly prosecute the great work of the world's conversion.

Now, young man, when God shall make inquisition for the blood of souls, he will say to you, Where is thy brother? The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground. Where art thou? What hast thou done? Wherefore hast thou not given thyself wholly and directly to the work of the world's conversion? "Take this unprofitable servant; bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The same may and must be said of all Christians who have turned aside from this great work of their own interests, and left the world in its blood to sink down to hell.

From this subject we can easily see how great a mistake was made by the church soon after the death of the Apostles. Various causes soon came into operation that developed an ascetic idea of religion. This immediately diverted the church from the great end of the world's conversion to seek after what they imagined to be a higher state of spirituality. Soon after the Apostle's days, as we learn from history, and indeed to some extent while some of the Apostles were yet living, the idea had gained considerable currency that the world was coming to an end; that Christ's second advent was at hand; and

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that he was coming to judge the world. This idea doubtless had great influence in bringing about the state of things which I am just about to mention. They seem to have given up the idea of the world's conversion and supposed mankind to be, at least chiefly, devoted to destruction. Great multitudes retreated from the world and betook themselves to what they supposed to be a strictly religious life, practicing celibacy and various austerities, mortifications, and self-denials. They shut themselves out from society and lived in seclusion, seeming to suppose that to live in the world and associate with men as Christ and his apostles had done, was not consistent with the highest degrees of spirituality. They therefore betook themselves to an entirely different course of life, lost altogether the true idea of religion, and attempted to be spiritual without a particle of benevolence, or, in other words, without religion. They sought a spirituality that was anything but true Christianity. Instead of pressing the world's conversion with ardor, they began to build nunneries and monasteries and to establish institutions for the very purpose of secluding the spiritual ones from intercourse with the world. They shut themselves up in those places of spurious spirituality. Every reader of church history must be acquainted with the deplorable and fundamental mistake into what a great part of the church thus fell. Here, to a great extent, the efforts for the world's conversion ceased. Here a dark cloud shut down over the prospects of dying humanity.

3. From what has been said it is easy to see the mistake into which our Second Advent brethren of the present day have fallen. Many of them have given up altogether not only the idea of the world's conversion, and consequently all efforts to save the world, but have given up, and so far as their influence extends are endeavoring to persuade others to give up the idea and expectation of anymore sinners being converted at all. Now I would ask, by what authority do they shrink from carrying out the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, contained in the text? Suppose it were true that Christ is to come at any given time this year, or next year, is not the command in the text binding until he does come? And is not the annexed promise that he will be with us in this work good until the end? Has he said, "Go and make disciples of all nations until such a time and then cease?" I trow not. Now whether it be true or false that Christ is soon to come, it is a wretched mistake for them to give up efforts for the conversion of sinners.

4. Does not the command with the subjoined promise in the text authorize and require the church to go forth to the conversion of the

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world, with the expectation that the world will be converted? Suppose the church should now arise and address herself to this work and lay hold of the promise of Christ; can it be supposed that Christ would say,--O you are too late now. I shall not wait for you now to convert the world. I shall not go with you now. I said I would be with you to the end of the world, but I shall be with you no longer. You need not go forth to this work; it is now altogether too late." Who believes that Christ would take back his promise and fail to go forth with his church to the conversion of the world?

5. From this subject we can see the mistake of those Antinomians who are waiting God's time, and who are saying, "The time has not come to build the house of the Lord;" and are accusing us of going to work in our own strength if we attempt to promote revivals, and of trying to take the work out of the hands of God, of interfering with his sovereignty, of compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, &c. Why, what do they mean! waiting God's time! I have heard some of them talk in this way. They would insist that they must have an inward impulse or revelation to go forth to this work. They must wait to be sent of God. They don't believe in going out to convert sinners unless they are sent of God. Now what an infinite mistake is here! Has not Christ commanded the whole church to go; and now, shall she say she must wait for a revelation from God before she can go? Must she overlook the true letter and spirit of this command and promise, and wait for some other revelation? Indeed, there are certain individuals who it seems would fain persuade the church not to go until she is sent by the Spirit, not to move until God moves, and are telling those who would do something for the conversion of sinners that God has not required this at their hand, that they must remain quiet and rest until God moves them to this work. Now here is certainly a great error, a great and ruinous error. If God has required us in his written word to do any thing, are we to wait for any other revelation? If God commands sinners to repent, are they to wait for some other revelation of his will? If he requires Christians to go right forth and convert the world are they to wait eighteen hundred years and then continue to sing the lullaby, "wait God's time, don't run before you are sent"?

6. These notions of the Adventists and Antinomians are doing very much to retard the great work of converting souls to God. The Adventists seem not only wholly to have lost their confidence and interest in this work, but they have really shaken the confidence of a great number who are not Adventists, so far at least as greatly to have

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abated their zeal. I find it has come to be very extensively doubted whether the nations are really to be converted to God, or can be. The Adventists, many of them, have boldly proclaimed that it cannot be; that the nations must be destroyed and cannot be made the disciples of Christ; that to christianize the world is out of the question; that the world is too wicked to be christianized. They seem to have taken up a view of the Christian religion which is the exact opposite of our Savior's representation. They boldly proclaim--I have heard them proclaim, that the tendency of things in this world is to run out the Christian religion every where; to extinguish its light, and drive it from the world. But Christ's representation is exactly the reverse of this. He says, The kingdom of heaven, meaning by this true religion, is like a little leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened; that it is like a mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds, but when sown in the earth springs up and becomes a great tree. Daniel said it was like a stone cut out of the mountain, which rolled and grew as it proceeded until it became a great mountain and filled the earth. Now there are a vast many passages of scripture that thus speak of the kingdom of God, or of true religion in the world. These representations are exactly opposite to the representations of our Advent brethren. The only kingdom of God according to them, which can ever stand and prosper in this world is a kingdom set up all at once, filling the whole earth by the destruction of the wicked. Is this like leaven? a little leaven hid in three measures of meal till the whole is leavened?

But to return to the point which I stated in the beginning of this paragraph, viz., that these brethren had done much to dishearten the church, to shake their confidence, to create doubts in many pious minds on this subject, and thus to weaken the energies of the church when she has just begun to awake to the importance of this great enterprise. In whose skirts shall the blood of thousands that will perish in consequence of it be found? With my present views, nothing could persuade me to put a damper on the rising hopes of the church in this direction.

7. I am fully persuaded that nothing but the absence of love, or in other words, of true religion, is the occasion of the sectarianism that is dividing and cursing the church. Nothing is wanting but for the church to be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of brotherly love, and of sympathy with Christ in respect to the world's conversion, to unite her energies, and concentrate them on this great work. It is really amazing and agonizing that mere differences of opinion on points of

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minor importance, (as all are agreed,) should rend the church into parties, destroy her unity, and not only jeopardize, but awfully hasten and aggravate the ruin of the world.

The more I see of the working of things in the midst of us in this place, the more I am satisfied of the great error of division in the church in consequence of differences of opinion on points of doctrine not fundamental. Our Confession of Faith and Covenant were designed to embrace only those points of Christian doctrine that are supposed by us to be fundamental to the existence of the true church of God. We have by the blessing of God been enabled to live together now ten years as one church. Persons from nearly all the evangelical churches in the land have come and united with us. We have gone on without controversy and division hitherto, on the principle of the most affectionate toleration of theological opinions in respect to every thing not fundamental. We have not yet found any difficulty in the prosecution of this work. There has been now and then a sectarian spirit here who has felt uneasy, and has made occasional efforts to introduce sectarianism, and put up sectarian bars in the midst of us. But the religious sentiment of the community has hitherto looked coldly on all such efforts, and the really pious among us, whatever their peculiar shades of opinion, have hitherto seemed to be united in frowning down all sectarian movements. Now why may not this be so in every village and every town in the land? I can see no reason why this should not be so.

8. If the ministers of all evangelical denominations would so thoroughly wake up to the world's conversion as to agree among themselves that two ministers should not occupy any field that could be supplied by one, and the Christians should not be encouraged to separate on account of doctrinal views where their differences are not fundamental, and if ministers should determine that they would no longer suffer themselves to be settled over little feeble churches where Christians are divided by sectarian prejudices; if they would resolve that no more than one minister of an evangelical denomination should be spared to one field, and if they would insist on it that where a village or town is not too large for one congregation but one minister should be left to occupy that field, such a state of things as this, would be as life from the dead. It would be vastly better for every village and every town in Christendom that the ministers should take this stand, and if all the rest were in heaven, or in Hindoostan, or in any part of the universe, it would be better than for them to be huddled together, three or four ministers in reality

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supplying but one congregation or only souls enough to make one, and this too under such circumstances as must almost entirely exclude all true religion from the place. It does seem to me that ministers should resolve not to do this. When they find a town or a village occupied by a decidedly evangelical and pious minister where there are not people enough for more than one large and healthy congregation, they should refuse to settle under any circumstances to gratify the prejudices of a few sectarian spirits who wish to get up a church of another denomination. This is low business; it is anti-christian. No; such sectarian spirits should rather be rebuked.

9. But again, I have often wondered how ministers could think themselves in the path of duty, in thus giving themselves up to minister to sectarian prejudices and to nurse the interests of a party--of one sect, instead of going forth in the spirit of true catholicism to pull souls out of the fire. There is no describing in words the folly and anti-christian tendency of all such things as these. Just look at the church; see the ministers go from place to place, and where they find a few Presbyterians or a few Methodists or a few Baptists, they say, here are a few of our members; here we must plant a church. Here the interests of our sect must be nursed. They immediately set about gathering little churches, sticking up their stakes, putting up their sectarian bars and gathering around them all the paraphernalia of sectarianism. Now on comes a minister of another denomination and finds a few whose prejudices favor his sect, and he must gather a church, and then another minister does the same, and another, till you will see their little meeting-houses or other places of worship scattered here and there, with a few sectarian spirits gathered around a sectarian minister, all jealous of each other and making efforts as they say and as they suppose, to convert the world. Now what is the result? Why, one of these churches must have a protracted meeting. They must make an effort of a revival as the other congregations are perhaps gaining the advantage of them in point of numbers and influence. They must get the most eloquent preacher they can, and make an effort to build up their congregation, and establish their sect. The other churches look coldly on, and directly begin to feel, as if their church and congregation were in danger of being encroached upon, so they must begin a similar effort and have a protracted meeting. They must, if possible, get a more eloquent preacher than the other. They must bluster and pray and visit from house to house and appear to feel for souls; when it is greatly to be feared that the real spirit of their efforts and their prayers is, "Lord, build up our sect,

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make our congregation popular, add to our numbers so that we can more easily support our minister, and give us decidedly the most popular and wealthy congregation in the place, amen." By this time another and another of these little churches begins to move in the same direction and for the same reason. They thus act on each other till they all become inflamed with great zeal, and greatly provoke each other, not to love and good works, but to sectarianism and party efforts. The result of the whole may be, some real converts, a number of thorough sectarian additions to the different churches, but much disgrace in the estimation of a thinking but impenitent community. Now how infinitely better had it been for but one minister to have occupied this field, no matter of what peculiar evangelical denomination. How much better were it if ministers would give no countenance whatever to the division of Christians into different sects in a place where they might just as well all unite in one church and in one congregation. It is almost ruinous to the cause of Christ to make these divisions. It is a stumbling-block to the church, a curse and an abomination the world, and when God makes inquisition for blood, then let sectarians be ready to answer. But it may be asked, what shall ministers do? If but one minister is to occupy a field on which reside only inhabitants enough for one congregation, a great many ministers will be thrown out of employment? I answer, all the better; they can be spared to go to the heathen, or to betake themselves to other necessary and useful employments. Why shall the church be obliged to support such a number of ministers where one can do the work better than all of them?

10. Christians stand greatly in their own light in dividing themselves into different churches where a truly catholic spirit would enable them all to dwell together and unite and labor harmoniously for building up the kingdom of Christ. Why will they load themselves with the burden of supporting two, three, or even a half dozen ministers in a town or village where the work might be more healthfully accomplished by one? O! Christians are not aware how much sectarianism there is often times in their own state of mind, and how infinitely foolish it is for them to be so sticklish for dogmas in opinions confessedly not fundamental as to alienate the hearts of brethren from one another, to stumble the world and grieve the heart of Christ.

11. Another great evil is the influence of sectarian newspapers. This evil is a rapidly growing one. Each sect must have its great organ. As the sect increases, multitudes of smaller ones are got up,

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the conduct and policy of which is any thing but Christian. Generally they publish but one side on any question, and in multitudes of instances keep their readers entirely in the dark in respect to the real questions and facts about which they speak. There is scarcely any thing that appears more shocking and monstrous to me, more anti-Christian and God-dishonoring than the course taken by sectarian newspapers. It is not only grievous but truly shocking to see how often they are filled with misrepresentations. Now what is the effect of this, but to blind and mislead the different sects, destroy their Christian confidence in each other, sunder their hearts and their efforts; what but to chill and freeze and even drive the spirit of vital piety from among them. I have often asked myself, how can it be that the editors of these newspapers do not see, and that ministers do not see that to create such prejudices, to beget such misapprehensions, and to foster such a spirit in their churches is really to ruin them, to exclude all their real piety, and substitute nothing but bitter and sectarian zeal in its stead. With my present views, I would sooner have my right hand cut off and my right eye plucked out--indeed it seems to me that I would sooner have my heart torn from my body, than to put forth my hand to such a work as this, ministering to prejudice, alienating the hearts of brethren from each other, rending the church of God, nursing a party spirit. O! this is a work of death! When God shall make inquisition for blood, I say again, let those engaged in this work prepare to meet their God. My heart is full of this subject but I cannot enlarge.

12. Another thing has done much to retard the great work of the world's conversion. I mean a turning aside of Christians from their proper work, and from the direct effort to convert and sanctify the world to God, to various other matters of very questionable truth and tendency. I have been astonished to find that so many ministers have from time to time given themselves up to lecturing on phrenology, mesmerism, and such like things; have gone around the country and into our cities and collected large audiences and given them a course of lectures on these subjects, with nothing more than now and then an indirect allusion to God and Christ, and the salvation of the soul. It does seem to me that this is gross apostasy from the great work of the world's conversion.

13. It hardly need be said, and it grieves me much to be obliged to say that Christians, and even many ministers have been altogether too much diverted, especially of late, by party politics. Indeed, nearly all the reforms of the day have taken on to an alarming extent the type

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of a mere outward and of course temporary reform. Multitudes of ministers have forsaken the direct work of converting the souls of men to God, and have gone into various agencies for the promotion of these mere outward reforms. I greatly fear that such efforts, pushed as they are at the present day, are after all making clean the outside of the cup and platter, while the "ravening and wickedness" within is left untouched.

Now, beloved, let us for a moment come right back to the question. What have we to do? What is the business to which we are to address ourselves? Here the command and promise of the text lie in all their force before us. We are to act as if Christ had just for the first time sounded this in our ears, and the church ought today to address herself to the work with as much zeal and earnestness and consecration as she would if Christ had for the first time this day stood on the earth and given out this great commission; 'All power is given me in heaven and in earth; Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and Holy Ghost; and lo, I am with you even unto the end of the world.' Now let it be understood that no one who hears this command and does not obey in the true spirit and meaning of it, has a right to the name of a Christian, let him be who he may. If he does not consecrate himself to this work, if he does not hold on and persevere in doing what he can to accomplish it to the end of life, he has no sympathy with Christ, no regard for his requirements, and no title to eternal life.

TRUSTING IN GOD'S MERCY

May 7, 1845

"I will trust in the mercy of God forever and ever." Ps. 52:8.

In discussing this subject I shall enquire,

I. WHAT MERCY IS.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN TRUSTING IN THE MERCY OF THE LORD FOREVER.

III. POINT OUT THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH WE MAY SAFELY TRUST IN GOD'S MERCY.

IV. ALLUDE TO SEVERAL MISTAKES WHICH ARE MADE ON THIS SUBJECT.

1. Mercy as an attribute of God, is not to be confounded with mere goodness. This mistake is often made. That it is a mistake, you will see at once if you consider that mercy is directly opposed to justice, while yet justice is one of the natural and legitimate developments of goodness. Goodness may demand the exercise of justice; indeed it often does; but to say that mercy demands the exercise of justice, is to use the word without meaning. Mercy asks that justice be set aside. Of course mercy and goodness stand in very different relations to justice, and are very different attributes.

2. Mercy is a disposition to pardon the guilty. Its exercise consists in arresting and setting aside the penalty of law, when that penalty has been incurred by transgression. It is, as has been said, directly opposed to justice. Justice treats every individual according to his deserts; mercy treats the criminal very differently from what he deserves to be treated. Desert is never the rule by which mercy is guided; while it is precisely the rule of justice.

3. Mercy is exercised only where there is guilt. It always presupposes guilt. The penalty of the law must have been previously incurred, else there can be no scope for mercy.

4. Mercy can be exercised no farther than one deserves punishment. It may continue its exercise just as long as punishment is deserved, but no longer; just as far as ill desert goes, but no farther. If

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great punishment is deserved, great mercy can be shown; if endless punishment is due, there is then scope for infinite mercy to be shown, but not otherwise.

II. I am to show what is implied in trusting in the mercy of God.

1. A conviction of guilt. None can properly be said to trust in the mercy of God unless they have committed crimes, and are conscious of this fact. Justice protects the innocent, and they may safely appeal to it for defence or redress. But for the guilty nothing remains but to trust in mercy. Trusting in mercy always implies a deep, heartfelt conviction of personal guilt.

2. Trust in mercy always implies that we have no hope on the score of justice. If we had anything to expect from justice, we should not look to mercy. The human heart is too proud to throw itself upon mercy while it presumes itself to have a valid claim to favor on the score of justice. Nay more, to appeal to mercy when we might rightfully appeal to justice is never demanded either by God's law or gospel, nor can it be in harmony with our relations to Jehovah's government. In fact, the thing is in the very nature of the mind, impossible.

3. Trust in mercy implies a just apprehension of what mercy is. On this point many fail because they confound mercy with mere goodness, or with grace, considered as mere favor to the undeserving. The latter may be shown where there is no mercy, the term mercy being applied to the pardon of crime. We all know that God shows favor, or grace in the general sense, to all the wicked on earth. He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the unjust as well as on the just. But to trust in this general favor shown to the wicked while on trial here is not trusting in the mercy of God. We never trust in mercy till we really understand what it is--pardon for the crimes of the guilty.

4. Trust in God's mercy implies a belief that he is merciful. We could not trust him if we had no such belief. This belief must always lie at the foundation of real trust. Indeed so naturally does this belief beget that out-going of the soul and resting upon God which we call trust, that in the New Testament sense it commonly includes both. Faith, or belief, includes a hearty committal of the soul to God, and a cordial trust in him.

5. "Trusting in the mercy of God forever and ever" implies a conviction of deserving endless punishment. Mercy is co-extensive with desert of punishment, and can in its nature go no farther. It is rational to rely upon the exercise of mercy for as long time as we

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deserve punishment, but no longer. A prisoner under a three years' sentence to State's prison may ask for the exercise of mercy in the form of pardon for so long a time; but he will not ask a pardon for ten years when he needs it only for three, or ask a pardon after his three years' term has expired. This principle is perfectly obvious; where desert of punishment ceases, there mercy also ceases and our trust in it. While desert of punishment continues, so may mercy, and our trust in its exercise. When therefore the Psalmist trusts in the mercy of God forever, he renounces all hope of being ever received to favor on the score of justice.

6. Trusting in mercy implies a cessation from all excuses and excuse-making. The moment you trust in mercy, you give up all apologies and excuses at once and entirely; for these imply a reliance upon God's justice. An excuse or apology is nothing more nor less than an appeal to justice; a plea designed to justify our conduct. Trusting in mercy forever implies that we have ceased from all excuses forever.

Thus a man on trial before a civil court, so long as he pleads justifications and excuses, appeals to justice; but if he goes before the court and pleads guilty, offering no justification or apology whatever, he throws himself upon the clemency of the court. This is quite another thing from self-justification. It sometimes happens that in the same trial, the accused party tries both expedients. He first attempts his own defense; but finding this vain, he shifts his position, confesses his crime and ill desert, and throws himself upon the mercy of the court. Perhaps he begs the court to commend him to the mercy of the executive in whom is vested the pardoning power.

Now it is always understood that when a man pleads guilty he desists from making excuses, and appeals only to mercy. So in any private matter with my neighbor. If I justify myself fully, I surely have no confession to make. But if I am conscious of having done him wrong, I freely confess my wrong, and appeal to mercy. Self-justification stands right over against confession.

So in parental discipline. If your child sternly justifies himself, he makes no appeal to mercy. But the moment when he casts himself upon your bosom with tears, and says, I am all wrong, he ceases to make excuses, and trusts himself to mercy. So in the government of God. Trust in mercy is a final giving up of all reliance upon justice. You have no more excuses; you make none.

III. We must next consider the conditions upon which we may confidently and securely trust in the mercy of God forever.

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1. Public justice must be appeased. Its demands must be satisfied. God is a great public magistrate, sustaining infinitely responsible relations to the moral universe. He must be careful what he does.

Perhaps no measure of government is more delicate and difficult in its bearings than the exercise of mercy. It is a most critical point. There is eminent danger of making the impression that mercy would trample down law. The very thing that mercy does is to set aside the execution of the penalty of law; the danger is lest this should seem to set aside the law itself. The great problem is, How can the law retain its full majesty, the execution of its penalty being entirely withdrawn? This is always a difficult and delicate matter.

In human governments we often see great firmness exercised by the magistrate. During the scenes of the American Revolution, Washington was earnestly importuned to pardon Andre. The latter was eminently an amiable, lovely man; and his case excited a deep sympathy in the American army. Numerous and urgent petitions were made to Washington in his behalf; but no, Washington could not yield. They besought him to see Andre, in hope that a personal interview might touch his heart; but he refused even to see him. He dared not trust his own feelings. He felt that this was a great crisis and that a nation's welfare was in peril. Hence his stern unyielding decision. It was not that he lacked compassion of soul. He had a heart to feel. But under the circumstances, he knew too well that no scope must be given to the indulgence of his tender sympathies. He dared not gratify these feelings, lest a nation's ruin should be the penalty.

Such cases have often occurred in human governments, when every feeling of the soul is on the side of mercy and makes its strong demand for indulgence; but justice forbids.

Often in family government, the parent has an agonizing trial; he would sooner bear the pain himself thrice told than to inflict it upon his son; but interests of perhaps infinite moment are at stake, and must not be put in peril by the indulgence of his compassions.

Now if the exercise of mercy in such cases is difficult, how much more so in the government of God? Hence the first condition of the exercise of mercy is that something be done to meet the demands of public justice. It is absolutely indispensable that law be sustained. However much disposed God may be to pardon, yet he is too good to exercise mercy on any such conditions or under any such circumstances as will impair the dignity of his law, throw out a

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license to sin, and open the very flood-gates of iniquity. Jehovah never can do this. He knows he never ought to.

On this point it only need be said at present, that this difficulty is wholly removed by the atonement of Christ.

2. A second condition is that we repent. Certainly no sinner has the least ground to hope for mercy until he repents. Will God pardon the sinner while yet in his rebellion? Never. To do so would be most unjust in God--most ruinous to the universe. It would be virtually proclaiming that sin is less than a trifle--that God cares not how set in wickedness the sinner's heart is; he is ready to take the most rebellious heart, unhumbled, to his own bosom. Before God can do this he must cease to be holy.

3. We must confess our sins. "He that confesseth," and he only, "shall find mercy." Jehovah sustains such relations to the moral universe that he cannot forgive without the sinner's confession. He must have the sinner's testimony against himself and in favor of law and obedience.

Suppose a man convicted and sentenced to be hung. He petitions the governor for pardon, but is too proud to confess, at least in public. "May it please your Honor, he says, between you and me, I am willing to say that I committed that crime alleged against me, but you must not ask me to make this confession before the world. You will have some regard to my feelings and to the feelings of my numerous and very respectable friends. Before the world therefore I shall persist in denying the crime. I trust however that you will duly consider all the circumstances and grant me a pardon." Pardon you! miscreant, the governor would say--pardon you when you are condemning the whole court and jury of injustice, and the witnesses of falsehood; pardon you while you set yourself against the whole administration of justice in the state? never! never! You are too proud to take your own place and appear in your own character; how can I rely on you to be a good citizen--how can I expect you to be anything better than an arch villain?

Let it be understood then that before we can trust in the mercy of God, we must really repent and make our confession as public as we have made our crime.

Suppose again that a man is convicted and sues for pardon, but will not confess at all. O, he says, I have no crimes to confess; I have done nothing particularly wrong; the reason of my acting as I have is that I have a desperately wicked heart. I cannot repent and never could. I don't know how it happens that I commit murder so easily; it

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seems to be a second nature to me to kill my neighbor; I can't help it. I am told that you are very good, very merciful; he says to the governor; they even say that you are love itself, and I believe it; you surely will grant me a pardon then, it will be so easy for you--and it is so horrible for me to be hung. You know I have done only a little wrong, and that little only because I could not help it; you certainly cannot insist upon my making any confession. What! have me hung because I don't repent? You certainly are too kind to do any such thing.

I don't thank you for your good opinion of me, must be the indignant reply; the law shall take its course; your path is to the gallows.

See that sinner; hear him mock God in his prayer: "I trust in the mercy of God, for God is love." Do you repent? "I don't know about repentance--that is not the question; God is love--God is too good to send men to hell; they are Partialists and slander God who think that he ever sends any body to hell." Too good! you say; too good! so good that he will forgive whether the sinner repents or not; too good to hold the reins of his government firmly; too good to secure the best interests of his vast kingdom! Sinner, the God you think of is a being of your own crazy imagination--not the God who built the prison of despair for hardened sinners--not the God who rules the universe by righteous law and our race also on a gospel system which magnifies that law and makes it honorable.

4. We must really make restitution so far as lies in our power. You may see the bearing of this in the case of a highway robber. He has robbed a traveller of ten thousand dollars, and is sentenced to State's prison for life. He petitions for pardon. Very sorry he is for his crime; will make any confession that can be asked, ever so public; but will he make restitution? Not he; no--he needs that money himself. He will give up half of it, perhaps, to the government; vastly patriotic is he all at once, and liberal withal; ready to make a donation of five thousand dollars for the public good! ready to consecrate to most benevolent uses a splendid sum of money; but whose money? Where is his justice to the man he has robbed? Wretch! consecrate to the public what you have torn from your neighbor and put it into the treasury of the government! No; such a gift would burn right through the chest! What would you think if the government should connive at such an abomination? you would abhor their execrable corruption.

See that man of the world. His whole business career is a course of over-reaching. He slyly thrusts his hands into his neighbor's

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pockets and thus fills up his own. His rule is uniformly to sell for more than a thing is worth and buy for less. He knows how to monopolize and make high prices, and then sell out his accumulated stocks. His mind is forever on the stretch to manage and make good bargains. But this man at last must prepare to meet God. So he turns to his money to make it answer all things. He has a large gift for God. Perhaps he will build a church or send a missionary--something pretty handsome at least to buy a pardon for a life about which his conscience is not very easy. Yes, he has a splendid bribe for God. Ah, but will God take it? Never! God burns with indignation at the thought. Does God want your price of blood--those gains of oppression? Go and give them back to the suffering poor whose cries have gone up to God against you. O shame to think to filch from thy brother and give to God! not merely rob Peter to pay Paul, but rob man to pay God! The pardon of your soul is not bought so!

5. Another condition is that you really reform.

Suppose there is a villain in our neighborhood who has become the terror of all the region round about. He has already murdered a score of defenseless women and children; burns down our houses by night, plunders and robs daily; and every day brings tidings of his crimes at which every ear tingles. None feel safe a moment. He is an arch and bloody villain. At last he is arrested; and we all breathe more easily. Peace is restored. But this miscreant having received sentence of death, petitions for pardon. He professes no penitence whatever, and makes not even a promise of amendment; yet the governor is about to give him a free pardon. If he does it, who will not say, He ought to be hung up himself by the neck till he is dead, dead! But what does that sinner say? "I trust," says he, "in the great mercy of God. I have nothing to fear." But does he reform? No. What good can the mercy of God do him if he does not reform?

6. You must go the whole length in justifying the law and its penalty.

Mark that convicted criminal. He don't (sic.) believe that government has any right to take life for any crime; he demurs utterly to the justice of such a proceeding, and on this ground insists that he must have a pardon. Will he get it? Will the governor take a position which is flatly opposed to the very law and constitution which he is sworn to sustain? Will he crush the law to save one criminal, or even a thousand criminals? Not if he has the spirit of a ruler in his bosom. That guilty man if he would have mercy from the execution must

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admit the right of the law and of the penalty. Else he arrays himself against the law and cannot be trusted in the community.

Now hear that sinner. How much he has to say against his ill desert, and against the justice of eternal punishment. He denounces the laws of God as cruelly and unrighteously severe. Sinner, do you suppose God can forgive you while you pursue such a course? He would as soon repeal his law and vacate his throne. You make it impossible for God to forgive you.

7. No sinner can be a proper object of mercy who is not entirely submissive to all those measures of the government that have brought him to conviction,

Suppose a criminal should plead that there had been a conspiracy to waylay and arrest him--that witnesses had been bribed to give false testimony--that the judge had charged the jury falsely, or that the jury had given an unrighteous verdict; could he hope by such false allegations to get a pardon? Nay verily. Such a man cannot be trusted to sustain law and order in a community, under any government, human or divine.

But hear that sinner complain and cavil. Why, he says, did God suffer sin and temptation to enter this world at all? Why does God let the sinner live at all to incur a doom so dreadful? And why does God block up the sinner's path by his providence, and cut him down in his sins? Yet this very sinner talks about trusting in God's mercy! Indeed; while all the time he is accusing God of being an infinite tyrant and of seeking to crush the helpless, unfortunate sinner! What do these cavils mean? What are they but the uplifted voice of a guilty rebel arraigning his Maker for doing good and showing mercy to his own rebellious creatures? For it needs but a moment's thought to see that the temptation complained of is only a good placed before a moral agent to melt his heart by love. Yet against this the sinner murmurs, and pours out his complaints against God. Be assured that unless you are willing to go the full length of justifying all God does, he never can give you pardon. God has no option to pardon a self-justifying rebel. The interests of myriads of moral beings forbid his doing it. When you will take the ground most fully of justifying God, and condemning yourself, you place yourself where mercy can reach you, and then it surely will. Not before.

8. You must close in most cordially with the plan of salvation. This plan is based on the assumption that we deserve everlasting death and must be saved, if ever, by sovereign grace and mercy. Nothing can save but mercy--mercy which meets the sinner in the

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dust, prostrate, without an excuse or an apology, giving to God all the glory and taking to himself all the guilt and shame. There is hope for thee, sinner, in embracing this plan with all the heart.

IV. We now notice some mistakes into which many fall.

1. Many really trust in justice and not in mercy. They say, "God is just--God will do me no injustice--I mean to do as well as I can, and then I can safely leave myself in the hands of a just God." True, God will do you no injustice. You never need fear that. But how terrible if God should do you strict justice! How fearful if you get no mercy! If God does not show you infinite mercy, you are forever lost, as surely as you are a sinner! This trusting in God's justice is a fatal rock. The sinner who can do it calmly has never seen God's law and his own heart. The Psalmist did not say, I trust in the justice of God forever and ever.

2. Many trust professedly in the mercy of God without fulfilling the conditions on which only, mercy can be shown. They may hold on in such trusting till they die--but no longer.

3. Sinners do not consider that God cannot dispense with their fulfilling these conditions. He has no right to do so. They spring out of the very constitution of his government, from his very nature, and must therefore be strictly fulfilled. Sooner than dispense with their fulfillment, God would send the whole race, yea, the whole universe, to hell. If God were to set aside these conditions and forgive a sinner while unhumbled, impenitent, and unbelieving, he would upset his throne, convulse the moral universe, and kindle another hell in his own bosom.

4. Many are defeating their own salvation by self-justification. Pleas that excuse self, and cavils that arraign God stand alike and fatally in the way of pardon. Since the world began it has not been known that a sinner has found mercy in this state.

5. Many pretend to trust in mercy who yet profess to be punished for their sins as they go along. They hope for salvation through mercy, and yet they are punished for all their sins in this life. Two more absurd and self-contradictory things were never put together. Punished as much as they deserve here, and yet saved through mercy! Why don't they say it out that they shall be saved after death through justice? Surely if they are punished all they deserve as they go along, justice will ask no more after death.

6. Persons who in the letter plead for mercy, often rely really upon justice. The deep conviction of sin and ill-desert does not sink

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into their soul till they realize what mercy is, and feel that they can rely on nothing else.

7. Some are covering up their sins, yet dream of going to heaven. Do they think they can hide those sins from the Omniscient Eye? Do they think to cover their sins and yet it "prosper," despite of God's awful word?

8. We cannot reasonably ask for mercy beyond our acknowledged and felt guilt, and they mistake fatally who suppose that they can. Without a deep conviction of conscious guilt we cannot be honest and in earnest in supplicating mercy. Hear that man pray who thinks sin a trifle and its deserved punishment a small affair. "O Lord, I need a little mercy, only a little; my sins have been few and of small account; grant me, Lord, exemption from the brief and slight punishment which my few errors and defects may have deserved." Or hear that Universalist pray: "O Lord, thou knowest that I have been punished for my sins as I have passed along; I have had a fit of sickness and various pains and losses, nearly or quite enough, thou knowest, to punish all the sins I have committed; now therefore, I pray thee to give me salvation through thy great mercy." How astonishing that some men should hold such nonsense! How can a Universalist pray at all? What should they pray for? Not for pardon, for on their principles they have a valid claim to exemption from punishment on the score of justice, as the criminal has who has served out his sentence in the state's prison. The only rational prayer that can be made is that God will do them justice and let them off, since they have already been punished enough. But why should they pray for this? God may be trusted to do justice without their praying for it. I don't wonder that Universalists pray but little; what have they to pray for? Their daily bread? Very well. But the mercy of God they need not on their scheme; for they suffer all they deserve. Pleasing delusion; flattering enough to human pride, but strange for rational minds, and horribly pernicious! Restoration takes substantially the same ground, only leaving a part of the penalty to be worked out in purgatory, but claiming salvation on the ground of justice and not mercy. Mercy can have no place in any system of Universalism. Every form of this system arrays God in robes of justice, inflexible, fearful justice;--yet these men trust they say in the mercy of God! But what have they done with the gospel--what with all the Bible says about free pardon to the guilty? They have thrust it out of the Bible; and what have they given us instead? Only justice, justice; punishment enough for sin in this world, or at least in a few years of

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purgatory: sin a trifle,--government a mere farce,--God a liar--hell a bugbear and a humbug; what is all this but dire blasphemy as ever came from hell?

If we ask for but little mercy, we shall get none at all. This may seem strange, but is none the less true. If we get any thing we must ask for great blessings. Suppose a man deserved to be hung, and yet asks only for a little favor; suppose he should say so, can he be forgiven? No. He must confess the whole of his guilt in its full and awful form, and show that he feels it in his very soul. So, sinner, must you come and confess your whole guilt as it is, or have no mercy. Come and get down, low, lower, infinitely low before God--and take mercy there. Hear that Universalist. All he can say at first is, "I thank God for a thousand things." But he begins to doubt whether this is quite enough. Perhaps he needs a little more punishment than he has suffered in this life; he sees a little more guilt; so he prays that God would let him off from ten years of deserved punishment in hell. And if he sees a little more guilt, he asks for a reprieve from so much more of punishment. If truth flashes upon his soul and he sees his own heart and life in the light of Jehovah's law, he gets down lower and lower, as low as he can, and pours out his prayer that God would save him from that eternal hell which he deserves. "O," he cries out, "can God forgive so great a sinner!" Yes, and by so much the more readily, by how much the more you humble yourself, and by how much the greater mercy you ask and feel that you need. Only come down and take such a position that God can meet you. Recollect the prodigal son, and that father running, falling on his neck, weeping, welcoming, forgiving! O! how that father's heart gushed with tenderness!

It is not the greatness of your sins, but your pride of heart that forbids your salvation. It is not anything in your past life, but it is your present state of mind that makes your salvation impossible. Think of this.

You need not wait to use means with God to persuade him to save you. He is using means with you to persuade you to be saved. You act as if God could scarcely be moved by any possible entreaties and submissions to exercise mercy; Oh, you do not see how his great heart beats with compassion and presses the streams of mercy forth in all directions, pouring the river of the waters of life at your very feet, creating such a pressure of appeal to your heart, that you have to brace yourself against it, lest you should be persuaded to repent. O, do you see how God would fain persuade you, and break your heart in penitence, that He may bring you where He can reach you with

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forgiving mercy--where He can come and bless you without resigning his very throne!

To deny your desert of endless punishment is to render your salvation utterly impossible. God never can forgive you on this ground, because you are trying to be saved on the score of justice. You could not make your damnation more certain than you thus make it, if you were to murder every man you meet. You tie up the hands of mercy and will not let her pluck you from the jaws of death. It is as if your house were on fire, and you seize your loaded rifle to shoot down every man that comes with his bucket to help you. You stand your ground amid the raging element until you sink beneath the flames. Who can help you? What is that man doing who is trying to make his family believe Universalism? It is as if he would shoot his rifle at the very heart of Mercy every time she comes in view. He seems determined to drive off Mercy, and for this end plies all the enginery of Universalism, and throws himself into the citadel of this refuge of lies! O! what a work of death is this! Mercy shall not reach him or his family; so he seems determined--and mercy cannot come. See how she bends from heaven--Jehovah smiles in love--and weeps in pity--and bends from the very clouds and holds out the pierced hand of the crucified One--but no! I don't deserve the punishment; away with the insult of a pardon offered through mere mercy! What can be more fatal, more damning, more ruinous to the soul?

You see very clearly why all are not saved. It is not because God is not willing to save all, but because they defeat the efforts God makes to save them. They betake themselves to every possible refuge and subterfuge; resist conviction of guilt, and repel every call of mercy. What ails those young men? What are they doing? Has God come down in his red wrath and vengeance, that they should rally all their might to oppose Him? O no, He has only come in mercy--this is all--and they are fighting against his mercy, not his just retributions of vengeance. If this were his awful arm of vengeance, you would bow right soon, or break beneath its blow. But God's mercy comes in its soft whispers, (would you but realize it) it comes to win your heart--and what are you doing? You band yourselves together to resist its calls--you invent a thousand excuses--you run together to talk, and talk away all solemn thought--you run to some infidel or universalist to find relief for an uneasy conscience. Ah, sinner this can do you no good. You flee away from God--why? What's the matter? Is God pouring down the floods of his great wrath? No. no; but Mercy has come, and would fain gather you under her outspread wings where

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storms of wrath can never come. But no, the sinner pleads against it--cavils, runs, fights, repels the angel of mercy--dashes from his lips the waters of life. Sinner, this scene is soon to close. The time is short. Soon God comes--death shakes his dart--that young man is sick--hear his groans. Are you going to die, my young friend? Are you ready? O, I don't know, I am in great pain. O! O! how can I live so! Alas, how can I die? I can't attend to it now--too late--too late! Indeed, young man, you are in weakness now. God's finger has touched you. O, if I could only tell you some of the death-bed scenes which I have witnessed--if I could make you see them, and hear the deep wailings of unutterable agony as the soul quivered, shuddered, and fain would shrink away into annihilation from the awful eye--and was swept down swift to hell! Those are the very men who ran away from mercy! Mercy could not reach them, but death can. Death seizes its victim. See, he drags the frightened shrieking soul to the gate-way of hell; how that soul recoils--groans--what an unearthly groan--and he is gone! The sentence of execution has gone out and there is no reprieve. That sinner would not have mercy when he might; now he cannot when he would. All is over now.

Dying sinner, you may just as well have mercy today as not. All your past sins present no obstacle at all if you only repent and take the offered pardon. Your God proffers you life. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in your death, turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Why will you reject such offered life? And will you still persist? Be astonished, O ye heavens! Indeed if there ever was any thing that filled the universe with astonishment, it is the sinner's rejection of mercy. Angels were astonished when they saw the Son of God made flesh, and when they saw him nailed to a tree--how much more now to see the guilty sinner, doomed to hell, yet spurning offered pardon! What do they see! That sinner putting off and still delaying and delaying still, until--what? Until the last curtain falls, and the great bell tolls, tolls, tolls the awful knell of the sinner's death eternal! Where is that sinner? Follow him--down he goes, weeping, wailing, along the sides of the pit--he reaches his own final home; in 'his own place,' now and forevermore! Mercy followed him to the last verge of the precipice, and could no longer. She has done her part.

What if a S[s]pirit from glory should come and speak to you five minutes--a relative, say--perhaps your mother--what would she say? Or a S[s]pirit from that world of despair--O could such a one give utterance to the awful realities of that prison house, what would he say? Would he tell you that the preacher has been telling you lies?

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Would he say, don't be frightened by these made-up tales of horror?
O, no, but that the half has not been told you and never can be. O,
how he would press you if he might to flee from the wrath to come!

THE OLD MAN AND THE NEW

May 21, 1845

"That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:22-24

It will be my object in speaking upon this text to show,

I. WHAT CONSTITUTES THE OLD MAN.

II. WHAT CONSTITUTES THE NEW MAN.

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN PUTTING OFF THE ONE AND PUTTING ON THE OTHER.

IV. SUNDRY MISTAKES OFTEN MADE ON THIS SUBJECT.

I. What constitutes the old man.

1. There are two sources from which all human activity, or in other words, all mental life flows. I use the term, life, now, just as we do when we apply it to the body. In the latter case we mean by it the activity, or rather the active state of the various organs. This is life; its opposite, death, is the cessation of activity, and a passing out of that state in which action is the law of our existence into another in which absolute inaction is the law.

Applying the term life now to the mind, we mean to denote its active state; and our remark is that there are two and only two ultimate causes or springs of all this activity; one, fallen human nature; the other, the Spirit of God.

Mental activity is first developed through our connection with a physical body. The new-born infant has constitutional wants; its appetites demand gratification; and its mind is thus first aroused to exercise. Here human nature begins to develop mental activity. We would not be understood to imply that this first action of the infant is sinful; it manifestly is not unless the intelligence is so far developed as to take cognizance of right and wrong;--the Bible every where assuming that some knowledge of obligation must be present, or sin

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cannot be. All that we can say now on this point is that our earliest mental activity is prompted by our connection with the body; and that the constitutional demands of the body lead to indulgence which, though not sinful before any knowledge of duty exists, yet becomes the main-spring of foul selfishness when this knowledge is developed and in the very face of it we prefer to please ourselves rather than God.

Another source of mental activity is the Spirit of God. We do not mean by this that the Spirit is a necessary cause of mental action, in such a sense that the mind under the Spirit's influence acts of necessity and not freely; we only mean that the Spirit excites to action, and is the occasion of such action as would not take place without the Spirit. Thus the Bible represents God as working in us to will and to do, and Christians as walking with the Spirit, or after the Spirit and not after the flesh. The Spirit begets a peculiar kind of action, the very opposite of that produced by the workings of selfishness.

2. The old or first man, is the carnal mind, or principle of selfishness. It begins with caring for the flesh even before its action can have any moral character, and continues to care for the flesh ever after. Hence it is called a carnal mind, or a minding of the flesh. Its characteristic feature is that its own gratification is its supreme end.

3. It is called a "man" because it is the hidden source and cause of outward activity. It would seem as if the Bible language contemplated a hidden agent, working underneath the visible exterior of each individual, in the one class of character producing selfish action and in the other class, the opposite. These inward-working agents--the old man and the new--correspond to the ultimate intention of the will, and control all our proximate volitions in the same way that we see it done by the ultimate intention. Indeed, they are but other names for the same thing. The ultimate intention of course always governs all our voluntary conduct. We never can act without intending something; and all our lesser subordinate volitions are only the necessary result of our ultimate purpose, this ultimate purpose being always either to please ourselves or to please God.

4. My last remarks substantially include my text; viz., that the "man" in the sense of our text is the reigning disposition. It is that which the mind is disposed, or rather which the mind voluntarily disposes and sets itself to do. The mind deliberately chooses its great end of existence--chooses the kind of good it will seek, and then of course sets itself to secure this kind of good by every means in its

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power. Hence arises a disposition of the mind: the mind shaping its efforts--all its mental activity to secure the good of its own ultimate end.

5. This is also an ultimate and efficient intention. In the form of the old man it is a deep and hearty committal of the soul to self-gratification. It controls all the activity of all unregenerate men. You do not see the old man with the external eye, but by its ceaseless development we learn its character and omnipresent agency.

II. What constitutes the new man.

1. It is a spiritual mind, or a disposition to please God instead of self. It is right over against the carnal selfish state. The mind is fully committed to pleasing God, so that this becomes the chief end for which the individual lives and acts. The new man is thoroughly committed to do the will of God just as the old man is to do the bidding of his carnal impulses. The former lives for God; the latter for himself.

Besides these two ultimate ends, no other can be conceived. All voluntary agents will seek to please either God or themselves. All action, therefore, results from one or the other of these ultimate intentions. And this is true not only of all men but of all other intelligent beings--of angels and of devils.

2. These two dispositions divide all mankind into two classes. Hence there are, as we often say, two sorts of men; and so the Bible says. The Bible represents all men as either saints or sinners; holy or unholy; spiritual or carnal; children of God or children of the devil. It makes them either old men or new men; born of the flesh, or born of the Spirit. The old state is first in order, and all pass into the channel of self-gratification which leads directly to it, unless some may be enlightened and converted by the Spirit from the womb. With this exception all others begin a course of self-gratification from their birth, which becomes sinful as soon as they know that God forbids their making this the supreme end of their existence and yet refuse to obey God.

The new man is born of the Spirit--born from above; the Spirit of God continually begets his moral activity, leading him thoroughly to renounce self, and commit his whole being to do the pleasure of God.

3. The old man is corrupt according to and in compliance with the deceitful lusts. So says our text. By lust is meant in the scriptures all forms of sensual desire. It includes the entire circle of our physical propensities.--All these the old man commits himself to obey. He

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lives for their gratification. They are called deceitful for the obvious reason that the pleasure they promise in their gratification is always delusive. They flatter only to destroy.

4. The new man is sometimes spoken of as being the Lord from heaven, or Christ formed in the soul. So it is, not however in the sense of a physical creation, but in this sense; Christ by his Spirit begets, produces, a state of mind in which we voluntarily commit our whole being to God. Then we become like Christ, and it is therefore as if Christ himself were formed within us, his very Spirit and temper now reigning in our hearts, so that it seems as if Christ himself were there, and indeed he is there by his spiritual and most efficient presence.

III. We are to enquire what is implied in putting off the one and putting on the other.

1. Regeneration. This putting off the old man and putting on the new is precisely what the Bible means by regeneration. This is the change of heart of which the Bible speaks.

2. Perseverance is also implied. We are to continue in this state. Paul is writing to Christians and urges them to put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man. Of course he must mean that they should continue to do what they began to do at their conversion, and maintain in constant vigor that activity which then commenced.

3. It implies the death of the old man. This does not mean the annihilation of the appetites and the physical constitution: no, the former body still exists, and you must eat and drink for its support no less than before. It only means that all these appetites and propensities are held under the control of God's revealed will, to be indulged only in accordance with that will. They are no longer our masters; we have no master but God.

Some on this point have run into great confusion; some have stumbled into grievous error. Holding the doctrine of physical depravity, they make the Apostle say--"Put away your constitutional appetites, annihilate the flesh; literally crucify its constitutional propensities." But the Apostle means only this:--Let them not control your moral activity. Hold them evermore subordinate to the will of God.

It should be observed that these physical appetites are not necessarily the source of our activity. We may act from love and obedience to God, these appetites still existing within us; for we may indulge them only because we rightly conclude that this will please God, and only so far as this seems to be the case.

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4. Putting off the old, and putting on the new man, implies entire consecration to God. It is equivalent to putting away all selfishness, and acting only and alone from real benevolence; renouncing the dominion of the flesh, and submitting to the dominion of the Spirit. This, of course, is entire consecration to God. There is no middle or third state. He who puts off the old man must put on the new man; for the mind will have some spring of action, some ultimate end to gain, some prime source of its activity. It must therefore turn from one of these to the other. In fact the mind never puts off the old man except that it may put on the new. We never really renounce self except when the Spirit draws us to choose God as our supreme portion.

5. Heavenly mindedness is implied. God and heavenly things are now its chosen objects of supreme affection, so that the mind now runs towards its chief love, as it did when this chief love was earthly good. There is now a heavenly state of mind by the same law which before produced a carnal and earthly state, namely, "Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also."

6. Consequently the conversation will be of heavenly things. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

7. So will the thoughts also be of heaven. The mind turns toward God with delight. O, how does it dwell on the great things of God in the night watches, reposing sweetly on his universal providence, on his revealed promises, on the bosom of his ineffable love.

8. The treasure is in heaven. No longer does the soul seek its chief good here. Its portion is above. A pilgrim and a stranger here, the new man seeks a better country, even a heavenly. Content to forego earth for the sake of heaven, he lets off his eager pursuit of things temporal; pursues them for a totally different end, so far as it seems his duty to pursue them at all; and really has no other God but Jehovah. His God is in heaven.

9. Selfishness is put away and Christ put on in all things. This is the very essence of the Apostle's meaning. The new man put on, is the yoke of Christ taken, the Spirit of Christ imbibed and acted out; the law of love, supreme to God, and impartial to man, becomes supreme; a spirit of self sacrifice ensues, and the individual no longer asks what will gratify me, but what will please God. Now he puts on Christ, and grows up into Him in all things, studying continually to conform every thought and act to the great law of his being--imitation of Christ and obedience to his will.

IV. We are to notice several mistakes into which persons are wont to fall.

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1. They try to reform the old man, not considering that he admits of no reform to any purpose. Just consider what the old man is--namely, a supreme intention to please self; and you will see at once that this intention can admit of no reform for the better. You may change its direction from one form of selfish indulgence to another, but such reform as this, though very common, is yet perfectly useless, for it leaves the heart as completely enslaved to sin as before. Thus, often men change the form of their selfishness without in the least changing its moral quality. A man removing from a community where one form of selfish indulgence is popular, to another where it is unpopular, will probably adapt himself to his new circumstances, and pursue the most productive form of selfish gratification. Why not? Selfish happiness is his object; why shall he not make the most he can of it, and pursue it in the most hopeful way? This change may seem to him perhaps to be conversion, especially if he substitutes a more refined for a grosser form of selfishness; a form on which moral and christian society frown, for one on which they smile. Yet in this very change he may be more thoroughly selfish than ever before; with this additional mischief, that he is now deceiving himself, and blinding his eyes for the fatal plunge into perdition. All he has done, is just an attempt to reform the old man. It is no real reformation. He may put on a new face--it is only a mask; a new coat, a Sunday suit, but this changes not the hidden man of the heart.

2. The old and the new man in many things conduct externally alike. Both eat and drink; both use the necessaries of life, but with this broad, fundamental distinction; the one has no higher, and no other end than self gratification; while the other both eats and drinks for the glory of God. The one aims only to please himself; the other only to please God. Both may eat when hunger prompts; both may find pleasure in the gratification of the demands of nature; but while the one has no higher end than the gratification, the other finds a double relish in the gratitude of his heart to God, the giver; eats, that thereby he may have strength to live for God; and takes no more and no other food than he supposes God would have him. This makes the broadest possible distinction between the old and new man.

Again, the old man and the new man both equally may marry, and be given in marriage; yet, observe, with this broad difference in the ultimate end had in view; the old man does it to please himself, and the new man to please God. The old man, remaining old, can do this from no other end than to please himself; the new man, "acting in

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the spirit of a new creature," can possibly have no other end than to please God.

Again, both attend apparently in the same way to the common business of life. Both may be behind the same counter, selling off the same lot of goods, at the same prices; yet one is there doing his own will, and the other doing God's will; the one pleasing his own self--the other pleasing his Master. Or, both the old man and the new may be following the plow, each to raise the same crop, yet each with a perfectly opposite ultimate end in view; the one to gratify self, the other to gratify God. Their motives and ultimate end are just as really different now as they will be when one of them shall be in heaven and the other in hell. Then, as now, the real difference will be only this; the one is supremely selfish; the other is supremely benevolent; the one caring only to please himself, and the other only to please God.

There are two students, pursuing the same studies, in the same class, attending the same recitation; they study equally well, and may appear externally in all points alike; yet one is the old man and the other the new; the former, striving to mount up over the heads of all his class-mates, panting for fame, seeking great things for himself; but the other has bowed his whole heart to God's will, studies only because God would have him, and seeks only to please God by doing all his will.

Or take still another view. There are two young men, both preaching the gospel; both pray apparently much alike; both have the external air of piety; yet the Omniscient Eye sees one of them supremely selfish, selfish in seeking heaven, selfish in preaching the gospel, selfish and supremely so in his prayers, for in all, his eye looks never beyond his own good. The other has crucified himself, lives now for God and for the good of his race, preaches and prays out of love to souls and love to Christ; this is a new man and the other is the old man.

3. Hence, the external developments being so similar, it is a common mistake not to distinguish between them. It is often impossible to know the hearts of others from mere external manifestations. For instance, you all come into this house of God to worship, apparently alike; how can I tell who of you come in the spirit of the old man and who in the spirit of the new?

Persons often fail to make this discrimination in their own case. They might know their own hearts if they would honestly and deeply search themselves, and take cognizance of their motives and of all the deep springs of their action; but often, very often they do not, and

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hence deceive themselves. They never go to the bottom of their own hearts.

4. For want of making this discrimination, hypocrites are prone to flatter themselves while yet in their own deep corruption. They put on a decent exterior and are often comparing their life with the life of real, and spiritual Christians, inferring hence that themselves are real Christians. Indeed they often take pride in making their own external conduct quite unexceptionable, and hope to get a double reward for this good life, the gratification of their pride here and heaven hereafter.

No mistake in religion is more common or more fatal than the one of which I am speaking. Whole masses of professors go after the world in seasons of declension, that is, as soon as they can do so without disturbing their hope of salvation. They want to be as good as most others, and this they seem to suppose will bring them up into heaven with the mass. This being secured, the more they get of this world the better. How purely selfish! In a revival they wake themselves up, often tardily, yet when they must, they yield to the general influence and come along; bustle perhaps full enough for their credit and seem to reform, but this is only an attempt to reform the old man and his deeds--nothing else.

5. You may see the mistake often made by sinners in condemning the conduct of Christians. They condemn Christians for doing the same things as they themselves are doing. They say, "You, professedly holy men, eat and drink, buy and sell, plow and study, just as we do; wherein are you better than we?" The mistake is, that the wicked do not consider that while the external course is the same, the motive and the moral character of the course may be in the one case right, and in the other utterly wrong. The wicked man has no right to assume that the Christian acts from the same motives as himself, merely because he pursues the same business. This may be, and often is arrant censoriousness.

6. Many mistake the apathy of the old man for the peace of the new man. The old man sometimes becomes apathetic, vastly calm and indifferent to passing events, and this seems to him like that deep calm which the Christian feels because his own Father is at the helm. Nothing can be a greater mistake. The sinner's soul is a perfect stranger to the Christian's deep heavenly, peace-begetting trust in God.

7. Many mistake the zeal and legal bustle of the old man for the holy fervor of the new man. Legalists are wont to become very

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zealous; they strive hard to do some great thing, and often make a splendid bustle, and you would think that verily they were about to convert the world in a twelve-month; now they look back upon these developments, and comparing themselves with active Christians they judge themselves to have the holy fervor and divine love of apostles and martyrs. Yet in fact their motives and spirit are just as unlike the real Christians as hell is unlike heaven. They are the Jehus of the Church; "come, say they, come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." Perhaps they really think that they outstrip most real Christians.

8. Often men mistake the impatience of the old man for the holy jealousy of the new man. The old man frets at sinners because they sin, feels indignant at such horrible wrong-doing; but point out to him his own sins, and press his conscience to repent and confess, and O! he does not think that wrong under his circumstances; he has nothing particular to confess. His heart is not quite so indignant against sin in himself as against sin in others. In his own case he sees various extenuating circumstances which more than alter, which quite reverse the case. Thus he reveals himself.

Yet he often takes credit to himself for holy indignation against sin. The real Christian feels a holy indignation; Christ felt it and often could not repress it; yet it was a holy jealousy for the honor of God, and not a fitful irritation against wrong doing because it might injure some of his own interests, or because it offended against his virtuous principles.

9. Often men fail to distinguish between the selfish sorrow of the old man and the godly sorrow of the new.

The new man remembers his former sins with great sorrow; his soul is weighed down within him and often his tears gush out in the very streets as he is reminded of his past deeds of shame and guilt; but not so the old man. He has a sort of sorrow for his old sins, especially if they have affected his reputation. But you do not see him loathing himself in his own sight for all his secret abominations. Yet he counts his own tears for sin, and thinks he has the sorrows of the real penitent.

10. Many mistake the selfish joys of the old man for the spiritual joys of the new man. The former however begin and end in selfishness; the man is pleased when good comes to himself, that is all. The latter rejoices in God, yea in God, his exceeding joy. He is happy when others get good, though himself has none.

11. Often people mistake the hope of the old man, for the hope of the new man. Each have their hopes. The sinner hopes to be happy

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in heaven--by what means is a thing of small care or thought to him. The Christian's hope is beautifully sketched by the apostle, "We know," he says, "that when Christ shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see Him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure." The hope of the new man rests on being holy, not merely nor directly on being happy. No. his glorious hope is that he shall be perfectly, universally, eternally holy. Give him this, and you gratify the ruling passion of his soul.

12. A mistake is often made of the turbulence and fanaticism of the old man for the holy firmness and faithfulness of the new. See that man finding fault--how censorious, how turbulent; he can denounce every thing in most unmeasured terms, yet under the self-soothing pretense of being faithful to his fellow men.--He means to clear his skirts of the blood of souls, so he traduces his brethren and measures off denunciations in a most terrible manner. Yet ask him why he does this, and he will refer you to Christ and to the prophets of old who had the word of the Lord shut up in their bones; and he says, did not Christ denounce? Little is this man like Christ that is trying to cast out devils through Beelzebub. With the very spirit of Satan, he would fain drive Satan out of his brethren!

Not so the new man. He is firm and faithful, but his spirit breathes gentleness and love. I do not say that every Christian is always bold and firm, nor that all who have been converted continue through life to act out the new man and him only; happy if it were so. But while they do act the new man, they are firm without malevolence; faithful without bitter denunciation.

13. The effervescence of the old man is mistaken for the unction of the new man. Yet the difference between the two is most radical. In each there is excitement, yet while the one is the boiling up of a selfish heart, the other is a holy unction from heaven.

14. The presumption of the old man is mistaken for the faith of the new. The former often talks of his great faith, assumes to have more than his brethren, but it is all presumption; he pursues such a life and has such a spirit that he has no right to trust God for anything but damnation.

15. Many mistake the self-will of the old man for the conscientiousness of the new man. They are obstinate, unyielding; yet it is only self-will--a committal of the will, and not the demand of an enlightened conscience.

16. The constitutional tendencies of the old man are mistaken for the spiritual developments of the new man. The natural humanity and

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kindness, for instance, of the old man are mistaken for gospel benevolence; conscientiousness of natural character, for that conscientiousness which is created, trained and expanded in the school of Christ.

REMARKS

1. None but a spiritual mind will really make the distinctions which I have been pointing out. No others care to make them; and moreover, the qualities of the new man can never be clearly apprehended without experience. Yet it is a vastly desirable attainment to be able to distinguish between what originates with self, and what originates with the Spirit of God. How rarely made! From my acquaintance with Christians, I think this point is but feebly developed. They don't distinguish between pleasing self and pleasing God. Yet no two things can be more opposite to each other, and none should be more carefully distinguished. In eating, in all labor, in study, we should be careful to know whether we are doing all to please God, or to please ourselves.

Some years since, my mind was greatly exercised on this point. Almost every waking moment the question would press upon me--Why am I doing this and why that? This led me to settle in my mind a thousand points of difficulty, and thus became of great service to my soul. How can we labor together with the Spirit of God in our own sanctification, unless we get hold of the real distinctions between holy consecration, and refined selfishness?

2. On this subject sinners constantly deceive and flatter themselves. They take credit for much that they do as good which is purely selfish. Thus they build themselves up on self-righteousness, but on a foundation which the last flood will sweep away and great will be the fall of it.

3. We see how and why sinners constantly misjudge Christians. They see Christians doing some of the same things externally which themselves are doing, and then they falsely judge that the Christian acts from the same motive as himself. Thus they take a flattering unction to themselves, and wrong both their Christian neighbors and their own souls.

4. The old man is constantly corrupt. There is nothing good in him. Paul might well say of the old man, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' No good originates there. You can say no good thing of the old man. He is wholly evil. You can place no confidence in him for anything really good. He is wholly selfish, and will do anything to carry his selfish ends.

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5. No evil can be said of the new man. Understanding by this term the new, regenerate heart, it does nothing wrong. The converted person may sin, but if he does, it is because the old man is not dead, but rises up and rules, gaining a temporary ascendancy.

6. The old man is exceedingly tenacious of life. It seems as if you might kill him a thousand times and yet he lives. You gain the victory over him; you crush him down and he seems breathless; you flatter yourself he is dead and buried, but ere long up he comes--the old disgusting carcass, breathing out its fouled stench; your spiritual strength becomes weakness, and perhaps under this baleful influence, you return like the dog to his vomit. Ah! that old man, how he will live and keep coming up; and so there will be a tendency to this more or less while we are in the flesh; we must watch, and often have to fight, and often kill our old man over and over again. Yet through Christ we may come off more than conquerors.

This leads me to say that a spiritual man is exceedingly jealous of the old man. He will always be watching his old enemy, and will never trust him at all. Yet, alas, even the spiritual are sometimes deceived by the old man and are lured into a selfish state before they are fully aware of it. But when they come to see it, O, how they loath the abomination! I have known persons so deeply disgusted with themselves for their own selfishness as actually to vomit. O, how horrid and how loathsome! That young man goes out to preach. He has prepared his sermon. But when he was studying it out and making it up, something whispered--"Now get in some choice and splendid paragraphs--this very classical and elegant expression, that fine philosophical illustration--show the people that you are a scholar and a genius." Well, he has made up his sermon and goes to the pulpit--spouts it off--takes good care to make a good impression for himself; at length returns to his home and his closet; there the truth flashes upon him--serving myself--serving myself--none else but self--not Christ, but my own great self! O! how he loathes this abomination! He is disgusted, and turns away from himself as if he had met the very devil! He is ready to vomit or even spit in his own face! O, young man, that is a bad business--such letting up of self--such a resurrection of the old man in your heart. Beware!

The converted man falls into selfishness, but let him see it, and how he loathes it! Horrible! Detestable! He would fain spue his very self out of his own soul!

Here you may see who is really the new man. No better test of the new life can be had than this.

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Beloved, how is this with you? Does the religion you possess make you new creatures in Christ Jesus, or does it leave your old selfishness still reigning, only somewhat dressed over perhaps, and fitted out sometimes in a Sunday suit; how is this? O, there is nothing that so perils the souls of men in this Christian land and in this passing age, as a refining the manners, and polishing the exterior of the old man, till he shall pass for that new man which is truly born of God, and molded into his divine image!

COMING UP THROUGH GREAT TRIBULATION

June 4, 1845

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." --Rev. vii:14, 15.

In discussing this subject, I shall attempt to show--

I. THAT GREAT TRIBULATIONS ARE THE COMMON LOT OF SAINTS IN EVERY AGE AND NATION.

II. WHAT THESE TRIBULATIONS CONSIST IN.

III. THE REASONS WHY GOD CAUSES CHRISTIANS TO PASS THROUGH SUCH SCENES.

I. Great tribulations are the common lot of saints in every age and nation.

It is most striking to observe how often and in how many various ways this fact is taught in the Bible. Everywhere throughout the writings of prophets or apostles, whether in its history or poetry, in the diaries of saints or in the precepts and promises of their Lord, the Bible teaches that the saints are moving on to glory through much tribulation. This fact stands out upon the very face of the Bible. You cannot read your Bible with any attention, without seeing it in bold relief on almost every page. It is every where implied; every where assumed. We are told how they passed through fiery trials; of Moses we are told that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin, as if to go with God's people must be of course to suffer affliction. But I need not stop to quote passages of which the Bible is full. Christ told his disciples that they must expect tribulation. All the great leaders of the Church in every age have found it true.

I am to notice,

II. Some of the things in which these tribulations consist.

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One is, persecution. In every age the wicked have persecuted the righteous. This persecution may take on different types in various ages according to external circumstances; yet it is still true--the wicked hate and persecute God's people. It is vain to expect, while the world lies in sin, that any body will live godly without suffering persecution. It may take the form of cold and sneering contempt; it may develop itself in the venom of slander, or in the malignity of opposition to the gospel; but shut in as it may be by external forces, it will still burst out somewhere and annoy the saints of God.

Another form is that of Satanic temptation. The true children of God must always expect to be tempted by Satan. He has small cause to tempt the wicked; generally he can lead them captive at his will with little trouble, so great is their selfishness and so controlling their constitutional tendency to self-indulgence; but let them attempt to break quite away from his grasp and they must expect a fierce and frightful struggle. Real saints always have conflicts with Satan, and especially when they are about to snap the last bond of his that holds them. Satan growls hideously when he sees them about to ascend the table land of promise beyond his control. At this point they should look for a fierce struggle.

Again, saints often suffer much from spiritual desertion. Saints in all ages have had seasons of spiritual desertion in which the light of God's countenance has been withdrawn. I do not mean that in these cases God abandons them so as not to be in them and with them, and so as not to be indeed a Father to them, seeking ever their best good. I only mean that for the best of reasons he hides his face, and leaves them to grope awhile in darkness and great agony. Some of the bitterest scenes of anguish I ever saw have occurred in such cases. One man I knew intimately who had lived for some time in unclouded communion with God, often enjoying visions of divine glory most enrapturing, but for some just cause God withdrew this light of his face, and his deserted child wailed and groaned in agony. He fell to the floor and rolled in anguish, refusing to be comforted. No physician ever saw a patient suffer more, or seem in keener pain.

I am aware that this is among the extreme cases; yet I have seen many of the same sort, and similar cases are by no means infrequent.

Abraham knew what it is to have a horror of great darkness come upon his soul; nor he alone. Many others know what this means. Saints in every age have known it.

These are among the most severe trials they have or can have. Often they would not suffer more in the flames of martyrdom than

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they do under these hidings of the face of God. The man whose case I just now mentioned might better have burned at the stake than have endured the agony he did. The history of the church has taught us abundantly that under any amount of outward losses and pains, the soul may still be calm and peaceful, nay joyful, if the light of God shine on it. What Christian would not promptly say, Give me the light of God's face, and then I can bear the loss of all things else. All are not so much to my present enjoyment each moment as my God.

Another portion of these tribulations consists in the Christian's struggle with his own weaknesses and infirmities. I allude now particularly to those which result from the flesh and from habits of sensual indulgence. It often happens that these pernicious habits, during a long career of indulgence acquire the rigidity and strength of iron. Hence it costs the convert a mighty struggle to overcome them.

Some years since a man came into this place and called to see me at my study, who had long been a slave to the habit of using tobacco. When he came to see the claims of God upon his conscience to exercise self-control and self-denial, he was thrown into a fearful conflict. He fell on the floor of my study, and groaned and wailed out in agony, "I am an undone man. I never can subdue this tyrant appetite." Nor is this a solitary or a very peculiar case. Every saint who attempts to overcome and hold in complete subjection to reason and the will of God all his constitutional tendencies to self-indulgence will find work enough for severe conflict. Indeed were the whole diary of some Christians to be written out on this subject, you would see the drawing of many a battlefield, and you might be amazed to learn that the subjection of the flesh costs so many struggles, tears, and groans, and so much prayer ere victory is gained.

The pastor of a church near Boston told me of one of his church members, a commodore in the navy, that in his struggles with one particular temptation, he often lay in agony whole nights, rolling on the floor and groaning like a wounded soldier in his blood, in such mental anguish and conflict as his athletic frame could scarce sustain. Yet he was a bold man, and could have faced the cannon's mouth undaunted. This was with him no quailing of timid sensibilities before imaginary evil; it was a real conflict with a hostile power of fearful strength in his own flesh.

Yet even in this case there is nothing very peculiar, certainly not in the nature of the conflict. Almost every person who has risen to adult years in the indulgence of his appetites, will find ample occasion for fierce struggles, groans, and agony.

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There is no help for these protracted and terrific struggles, but in Christ. When his mild but mighty voice commands these agitated waves of passion, (sic.) "Peace, be still;" suddenly there is a great and most blessed calm. O, how blessed if the whole church might learn that in Christ there is victory over both the flesh and the devil--indeed over every enemy that can rise up against our souls.

Again, many of these tribulations are occasioned by the perversion of the sensibility and the weakness of the intellect.

The sensibility have been grievously perverted by a long and greedy indulgence in sin, it becomes inevitable that God should compel its development in some other direction. Perhaps it is sometimes inevitable that he should wither our sensibility to some specific form of sinful pleasure by making us drink the bitter dregs of that same cup. He gives us the grief and disappointment which belong to that kind of indulgence and thus wakes up a different class of sensibilities. Through this pathway of flame, we may enter the haven of spiritual peace. How much it sometimes costs our Spiritual Teacher to bring us quite over from loving earthly good intensely, to loving as intensely the solid good of his presence and favor!

The intellect too, long crippled or perhaps knotted up by sin, must with much pains be unraveled and developed, and often in the school of tribulation. How many of God's people can testify that afflictions have made them really think as they never thought before, and consequently take views of truth never before taken.

Again, we must not omit to notice that many of the Christian's tribulations results from impaired health, poverty, losses, disappointments. With this fact every one is abundantly familiar. It enters into the experience and observation of every day life.

We are next to consider--

III. The reason why God causes his children to pass through such scenes.

These tribulations are often, properly speaking, unavoidable. By this is meant that the state of the world being what it is, nothing less than a miracle can entirely prevent the occurrence of tribulations. Thus, the world being as wicked as it is and as absolutely under the dominion of the devil, it would need as many miracles as there are saints and particular events, to shield every saint continually from being persecuted by the wicked.

The same substantially may be said of all those trials which result from the usual course of nature and of providence; for example, from sickness, losses, bereavements.

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But again, very many of these trials are sent from the hand of God as parts of our needful discipline.

The spirit of a child of God needs to be subdued. The Bible represents God's people as being like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, in which case of course, they need to be "broken" before they can be safely used in the service of their Master. It should be observed, however, that this expression is used of the corrupt state of the ancient Jewish church, and therefore, as used by Jeremiah, may denote a really unconverted state. This seems probable, especially because Ephraim is immediately afterwards represented as praying--"Turn thou me, and I shall be turned:" and then as saying, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented." We may however plainly infer from the passage, that if God's real children apostatize into a rebellious state, God will follow them with his discipline till he breaks them into a submissive and docile spirit. Of course he can be satisfied with nothing short of this, and never ought to be.

Those of us who have children understand this. You know it costs you much trial and many tears often before you have completed the painful work of thoroughly subduing your children, as far as you can carry on the process. How much more then when God takes up the same sort of labor, and pushes it to the radical cure of the heart; when he does not stop short as you sometimes do with mere external reform;--and much more still, when it is considered that you wisely undertake your task while your children are yet young and consequently pliable; while God often and indeed usually has to carry his course of discipline into the rigorous and fixed habits of adult years. He takes up a fresh case perhaps after years of woefully perverse training, after the worst of sinful habits are formed, and knit together into the very fibers of the soul. O what a work is this to tear out these strong roots of sin, and wrench off these attachments by which the soul has suffered itself to be bound to sinful pursuits and pleasure! No wonder it should cost the saint of God many a trial ere he can say; "My soul is even as a weaned child." To subdue self-will is therefore the first step in this needful discipline

On this point however it should be well considered that this struggle will be long or short--will be sore, terrific, heart-rending, or will terminate soon in the sweetest submission, according as the individual shall attempt to do it mainly in his own strength, or shall take hold by faith of the promised strength of God. Let him fight out this battle alone by dint of resolutions, vows, mental struggles, and he will find toil enough to crush and weary out an archangel; but let him

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look up submissively and confidently into the face of his Savior, saying, "Save, Lord, that I perish not,"--let him throw his arms round the neck of this Heavenly Helper, and before he is aware the work is done, and his "soul is like the chariots of Amminadab."

The next object is to correct and duly develop the sensibility. After the will has been subdued in conversion, and yet even more thoroughly by a process of subsequent trial, the sensibility may be still but imperfectly rectified. It may have been long trained to a course of monstrous development, so as to exhibit a really monstrous enlargement towards some forms of sinful pleasure. The consequence of this must be a constant tendency to fall under temptations in that direction.

The only remedy is for God to subdue and purify the sensibility. This he does in part by trials. He throws the Christian into deep waters; gives him gall and wormwood to drink; stirs up and draws out all the keenest sensibilities of the soul, until its old habitudes are thoroughly broken up. He pushes on this work, overturning and still overturning; fouling every fountain of sinful pleasure, quickening the sensibility to other moods of action; pushing the law-work of conviction until the soul really feels the bitterness of sinning, and turns with irrepressible loathing from those pleasures which it has so long trained itself to relish. The convicting power of the Spirit, cooperating often with afflictions from God's providence, brings the soul into deep trouble; the searching process goes on and develops more and more the fearful fact that the sensibility is too keenly alive to earthly good and far too insensible to heavenly; still God pushes the trial, until the sensibility seems to let go the earthly and be satisfied with the heavenly. In a certain respect, this process renews the scene of the soul's first conversion: the individual is brought to loathe those sinful pleasures he once relished so keenly, and then he turns with all his heart to those pleasures which flow immediately from God's own right hand. Smitten by the law till sinful pleasures are embittered, he turns to the gospel of infinite grace and finds that now his soul can feel in view of these blessed realities.

The sensibility of most wicked men is not developed at all towards the great law of God. Keenly alive to every thing else, they are really dead to this. Its precepts and its penalties alike affect them not. Why? Because their sensibilities are strongly developed towards selfish pleasure and towards worldly objects, but little or perhaps none at all towards these spiritual objects. Hence such persons need to be searched and smitten all the pieces and their souls agonized with

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conviction, before they will let off their keen sensibility to sinful pleasure and throw their souls out in another and opposite direction. This work is not usually if ever finished at the soul's first conversion. The radical cure of the sensibility demands yet another, a longer, often a different process. As a matter of fact, God very often secures this result by afflictions. Almost all Christians who have had much experience in the divine life can testify to this. They know how God has dried up the current of their sensibility towards selfish good till he has left them nothing but himself to love, and then has drawn out their hearts towards himself until they felt that this is bliss enough for them.

It is a sweet consideration connected with this point, that like a kind-hearted parent, God always prefers the milder mode of attracting the soul, rather than the more painful one of compulsion. The latter is adopted only as an alternative when the other utterly fails. It is only when the love and the cross of Jesus fail to touch and command our sensibility, that God pours wormwood into our cup of idolatrous pleasure, and compels us to give him our hearts.

It often happens that Christians under trial fail to understand the philosophy of God's dealings with themselves. Hence they are greatly stumbled. Yet if they would study their own moral state and the manifest result of tribulations as developed in a thousand cases under their own eye, they would see that often the design is simply to discipline and rectify the sensibility.

Another reason for sending tribulations is to develop the intelligence. Unconverted men often think they know much on religious subjects, while in fact they know almost nothing. They are mere children. Perhaps their minds have never been thoroughly roused to action on any subject. Hence the necessity of great intellectual development. For this end how often does God make use of great tribulations. What Christian has not observed that when God would really wake up his intelligence, he first throws his soul into a state of deep agitation and agony, so that the mind seems to heave like a volcano; the intelligence is wrought up to a state of most intense activity, on the rack to get hold of the great and deep truths of God.

For this end deep and thorough discipline is requisite. Fiery tribulations are often the means employed by God to rouse up the intelligence and quicken its search for truth into an earnestness almost like agony.

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So of all the other faculties of our whole mental and moral being. They all need discipline. Made originally right and tuned to mutual harmony, it has been the constant work of sin and Satan to wrench them out of place and order, and fill them with the dissonance of hell. God must put the whole instrument in tune. Every string, every wire, every tube, must be set right, till under his master hand it shall pour forth the music of heaven. How beautiful the process! Yet sometimes how mysterious! The result will fill heaven with melody, and make the chastened saints more than thankful for all the pain of the needful process.

Thus is God perfecting the character and developing the whole being to fit the soul for heaven. Thus through much tribulation he develops faith. He shuts the Christian up in a strait place where he can find none else to trust but God.

Thus too he develops the patience of the saints. See that dear child of God on a sick bed. Days and nights of weariness are allotted; why? Perhaps only to cultivate and develop the grace of patience. There may be nothing else lacking to put that soul into complete tune for the harmony of heaven; and now when this last wire is fitted, when this last tube in the great organ is properly adjusted, he will say--"Now take it home. It will do for the choir above."

So God disciplines his saints here for usefulness hereafter. He has work for them to do there. Only himself knows just what it is, and just what training is requisite for its successful prosecution. Then let us leave him to go on in this school of training us for a service which lies open before his eye but not before ours.

Again, it is most manifest that Christ is preparing the saints to be glorified with himself. He passed through this same school of discipline to his work and reward on high; so he asks us to follow him in his tribulations that we may be ripened for the same final glory. Having himself suffered being tempted and tried amid tribulations, he knows how to sympathize with those who are struggling along the same pathway. Who would not follow cheerfully such a Leader! Especially while cheered by such sympathy, and conducted onward to such a weight of glory!

Once more; the unbelief of Christians is the real occasion of very many of their trials. The Lord in mercy sets himself to cure this unbelief; and for this purpose employs the two-fold agency of external providences and the internal work of his Spirit. Providences from without press, and the Spirit within constrains us towards God. Oppressed with trials, we must seek God and believe his word and

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promises; drawn by his Spirit, we renounce our unbelief and dare to trust our own Father.

Thus the Lord makes his providence and his Spirit conspire together to expel the Christian's unbelief and beget faith.

It is indeed a most interesting consideration that nothing can occur in the universe which does not tend towards this same result. "All things work together for good to those that love God." All the latitude given to external temptations is allowed and still controlled with reference to this very end. With every temptation, God will provide a way of escape that we may be able to bear it; and having borne it victoriously, we learn to trust God more than ever. Thus every temptation through grace may serve to dispel unbelief, quicken faith, and ripen the Christian for future usefulness and final glory.

REMARKS

1. The true picture of the Christian life is very seldom presented. Almost all Christians are prone to take partial, one-sided views of the Christian life; a fact which seems often to result from dwelling too exclusively on one particular aspect of practical religion. By consequence we fail to represent it accurately as a whole, and false impressions are given.

Thus, the Christian life is sometimes represented as almost wholly a state of bondage to sin. You are made to see the Christian daily groaning under a body of sin from which no deliverance comes or is hoped to come till death. You cannot help inferring that his state is one of the most pitiable forms of slavery the world every saw--with no emancipation possible in the present life. Now this is a great perversion of the real truth.

Or again, the Christian life is represented to be a bed of flowers, with no toil, no ruffling anxiety, no strife within or strife without. This too is an extreme and one-sided view of the case. The fact is that the Christian life is a checkered, varied scene--a storm and then a calm, a rugged mountain pass, and then a verdant valley--the light and joy of hope and of victory, succeeded often by fell conflicts with Satan or with lusts, forming the dark shades of the picture.

So the Bible sketches the Christian life; so all experience and observation testify; so therefore it should be represented.

2. In consequence of these defective representations, real Christians and especially young converts are often greatly stumbled. Not finding religion to be what they expected, their confidence is shaken. If they have been told that all will be joy, light, quietude, with no sorrows, struggle, toil, they will be greatly discouraged when they

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find the fact to be otherwise. Hence a strong temptation to let go their confidence and apostatize from God.

It would be of vast service to every young convert, and indeed to every Christian to understand the relation of all these trials to their own spiritual improvement. Every Christian needs to know that these are the wisest means which God can use for molding, chastening, and purifying his own heart for the work of faith here and the bliss of heaven hereafter. Then no one need be stumbled. All would love to see a Father's hand both wise and kind, in every form of tribulation.

3. These tribulations are not arbitrary or accidental. This is a great and a most injurious mistake. They always come from God, directly caused or at least permitted for some wise and good end. Nothing can come by chance.

Nothing can befall the children of God which is not suffered by God for their good. Whatever it be, God means it as an instrument for their greater sanctification and higher usefulness.

Hence it follows that God is just as good to his people in the afflictions he sends, as in those things which we are pleased to call mercies. They are all mercies. The only difference among them is that the one class seem for the present to be not joyous but grievous, though afterwards they yield the same peaceable fruits of righteousness. The other class may be a less unpleasant medicine. All alike tend to health, and God is just as benevolent in giving the bitter portion as the sweet.

Our experience meetings on Friday afternoons are exceedingly rich and instructive. In one of these meetings a few days since a brother rose and said, "Rejoice, my friends, with me, for God has been peculiarly good to me of late." I wanted to reply at once, "Brother, you are mistaken --it is not merely of late that God has been good to you; he has always been as good to you as he could be; always doing the very best thing he could do, and the pleasantest thing for your present enjoyment that the nature of your case would admit. Think not that God is fitful, capricious,--benevolent only now and then; peculiarly good by turns; no mistake can be greater than this."

You think perhaps that God is sometimes particularly attentive to your case and to your welfare. No so; he is always attentive to you, as much so as if you were the only Christian who needed his care in the whole universe, and the benevolent sympathy and regards of the Deity were all concentrated upon yourself.

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It is like the case of that fond mother who has only one child in the world--a darling son. See how she watches over him day and night; she joins him in his little plays and keeps her eye out against all harm; she kisses away his little pains; if he is sick, O, how she watches over his pale frame. But God watches over every one of his children with an eye as fixed, with love as strong, with assiduity as unwearied as the fondest mother ever had--nay with love infinitely surpassing that of the best of mothers.

Christian mother, God gave you one only son. It was a precious gift, and you thanked the Giver for his love. You watched over that dear boy with the buoyancy of hope till he could run about his play alone; and what then? Oh, you say, he seemed well--till one morning he was sick. His little hand was hot, his cheek flushed; he rolled his wild eye in agony. --Ah me, I saw him die--and die too in so much suffering that I almost felt relief when his little bosom heaved for the last time. And do you suppose, afflicted mother, that God was any less good in taking away than in giving your dear boy? Nay, God has no fitful spasms of goodness; all alike is infinite love--the best thing for you that he can possibly do.

But the Lord hid his face from you, did he? But even then, he did not forsake his throne of love, nor revoke his promises, nor dismiss our great Advocate; so you might still have a God to seek and find. Nay, Christian, in those seasons of your bitterest agony, your Father was none the less kind and sympathizing. He chastens only for your "profit;" and not from his caprice. You will then (will you not?) learn to praise him for both--for the affliction and the gift. O you must learn this, else the law of gratitude cannot be written deeply on your very soul. You cannot praise God as you ought till you learn to praise him for every thing and see his own kind hand in afflictions not less than in his gifts of providence. "In every thing give thanks," is the inspired precept.

DELIGHTING IN THE LORD

July 2, 1845

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." --Ps. 37:4

In speaking from these words I shall,

I. SHOW WHAT IS IMPLIED IN DELIGHTING OURSELVES IN THE LORD.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE PROMISE "HE SHALL GIVE THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART."

III. WHY THIS PROMISE IS THUS CONDITIONED.

I. What is implied in delighting ourselves in the Lord.

1. Supreme sympathy with him. No one can properly be said to delight himself in the Lord any farther than he sympathizes with God, in respect to the great end on which His heart is set, and in the means by which he is attempting to accomplish that end. He must adopt his principles, enter into his views and feelings, and be able to respond a hearty amen, to all the announcements of his word, to all the dispensations of his providence, to his character, works, and ways. One who has this supreme sympathy with God, and who deeply interests himself in God's character, government, policy, ends and means, will of course delight himself in the Lord; and no one else will.

2. Delighting ourselves in the Lord implies a supreme complacency in him. Complacency in God, is benevolence or good will toward him, modified by a consideration of his character and relations. This always implies delight. Complacency is often spoken of as if it consisted altogether in a delight existing in the sensibility of the soul. But properly speaking it is not so. Complacency considered as a virtue, belongs to the will or heart. But it always implies a corresponding state of the sensibility; and of course, implies a delight or pleasure in view of the character, government, relations, works, and ways of God. Without this complacency of heart in God, we cannot be said truly to delight ourselves in him.

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3. Delight in the Lord implies that he is chosen as the supreme good of the soul. The text undoubtedly implies this. It is setting our supreme affections on him, and choosing him as our all-satisfying portion, making him the great center in which the affections and sympathy of our soul delight to rest.

4. Delight in God implies universal confidence in him. We could never be said truly to delight ourselves in God, unless we had supreme, universal confidence in his character, in his providences, and in his word. Nothing could be chosen by us as an all-satisfying portion, unless the mind regarded it as infinite and perfect. The mind is so constituted that it cannot be satisfied with any thing else. The mind is so constituted that it cannot be satisfied with any thing else. The mind is naturally and necessarily dissatisfied in a greater or less degree with whatever is seen to be imperfect. Delight in God implies, that the mind regards him as possessing infinite fulness and perfection, truthfulness, and every attribute and perfection that can fill and satisfy the soul. It is common for men to seek what they suppose will make them happy, and to endeavor to find happiness in the creature. But after all, nothing but the infinitely perfect Creator can satisfy the wants and demands of the soul. And to delight ourselves in the Lord, in the sense of the text, implies that we are satisfied in God; that his fulness and perfection meet all the demands of our being; that in him we have enough; and that the mind regards him as an exceeding great reward, as a portion infinitely ample, satisfying, full and overflowing, infinitely glorious and eternal.

5. Delight in God implies universal submission of our will to his. The soul that is not entirely submissive to God, cannot be delighted in him. He is like a child whose will is not subdued to the will of his parent; he is restive under the divine government, often made unhappy by the dispensations of his providence and by the requirements of his Word. To have true delight in God implies that we have no will of our own--only that the will of God should be done. It implies that the soul has come practically to regard God as infinitely wise and good, to feel the fullest satisfaction with his appointments and his dispensations whatever they may be.

6. Delight in God implies a spirit of universal obedience to him; a state of mind that inquires after what God would have us do with a fixed intention to do all his will without hesitation; and to devote ourselves entirely to pleasing him. It implies in short, that our whole being is given up to it; that we have no purpose or design, but in all things, at all times, in all places, and forever, to live wholly to him.

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7. Delight in God implies delight in obeying him, or delight in his service. It is one thing to obey, and another thing to have delight in obedience. To be sure our nature is such that true obedience always produces delight. But obedience and delight are not the same thing. Where the true spirit of obedience exists, we shall find our delight and happiness of course in the service of God. We are always delighted with the course on which our heart is supremely set. When, therefore our hearts are given up to pleasing God, and we live to this end, when we are heartily and universally consecrated to God's glory and interests, nothing will of course afford us so great pleasure, we shall be so delighted in nothing else, as in waiting on God, doing his bidding, and in every thing engaging in his service. The service of God will be our meat and drink. We shall know what Christ meant when he said "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me." "I delight to do thy will, O my God."

8. Delight in God implies, a deep interest in his honor and glory. Everything we do and say will have reference to God. God will be the supreme end of all we say and do. In this we shall sympathize with God himself. God has a supreme regard to his own interest and glory, and is the chief end of all his works. This is by no means selfishness in God. It is not because it is his own glory, but because it is infinitely the greatest good, that he has a supreme regard to it. God's well-being is of infinitely more value than the aggregate of the well-being of all creatures that ever were or could be made. God's well-being is infinite. --Whereas the well-being of all creatures will always be finite. Nothing can be infinite that is not eternally and necessarily so. Nothing finite can ever grow and increase until it becomes infinite. Therefore the aggregate well-being of all finite creatures, must always be finite and of course infinitely less than the well-being of God. Now if God would regard things according to their relative value he must of necessity lay infinitely more stress upon his own happiness and glory than upon the happiness and glory of all other beings together. There is no comparison between the finite and the infinite, and therefore the aggregate value of the endless happiness of all creatures is absolutely as nothing when put into the scale against the well-being of God. God so regards this; and it is reasonable and right and infinitely important that he should. Consequently himself, his own glory, and his well-being, are the supreme end of all his works. When I saw this fact announced in Pres. Edwards' writings many years since, I did not at once perceive its truthfulness. And I have often

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since heard persons speak as if they were stumbled by such announcements as if it implied selfishness in God. Now selfishness is preferring our own interests to our neighbors, simply because it is our own. It is not selfish in us to prefer our happiness to the happiness of a goose, because ours is really more valuable. But it is selfish in us to prefer our happiness to our neighbor's, when his is equally valuable with our own. I repeat it again; it is not because the happiness or glory is God's that his heart is set supremely on it, but because of its intrinsic value, because it is so infinitely the greater good. Now delight in God implies that we regard this as he does, so far as we understand it; that we sympathize with him in this; that we regard his interests as the supreme and infinite good, and delight ourselves in promoting his glory and honor in the universe; that we find our supreme happiness and satisfaction of soul in this.

9. Delight in God implies that we supremely seek and desire eternal union and communion with him, that so far as our own happiness is concerned, this is all we ask, to have eternal union and communion with the ever blessed God;--that, give us this and we could lack nothing essential to our happiness; but deprive us of this, and nothing in the universe could satisfy us.

II. What is implied in the promise "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

The promise implies that we shall have those things on which we set our affections, or in other words that our desire, our really cherished desires shall be gratified. If we delight ourselves in the Lord we shall have all things on which we set our hearts. "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart"--here is no limit, but it is plainly implied that what we set our hearts on, and that which we pray for shall be granted. It seems to me that the text is to be understood, not that every transient desire or awaking of appetite shall be gratified, but that the supreme desire of the soul, that on which we can properly be said to fix our affections and our heart shall infallibly be granted to us.

III. Why this promise is thus conditioned.

1. Because without this condition the promise would be unsafe to the universe. For God to promise unqualifiedly to give us the desire of our heart, unless he knew that we had a complete sympathy with him, would be unreasonable, unsafe, and what he could not innocently do. What would it amount to for him to make such a promise without this condition? Why to this--that our selfish desires should be granted. But when selfishness is slain, when our supreme

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desire is on God, and our whole soul sympathizes deeply with him, it is plain that our desires may be granted. It is then both consistent with the will of God, and with the highest good of being to grant our desires. God is then the great end and center of the desires of the soul, and in giving himself to the soul, he gratifies its desires.

2. God could not safely make such a promise but on this condition; because it would be impossible to fulfill it. Suppose he should make the unqualified promise to every individual that he should have the desires of his heart. With the endless lustings of men after objects around them, how often would it come to pass that different persons would desire the same things, when but one could possess them.

3. It is perfectly safe for God to make such a promise on the condition of delighting ourselves in the Lord, because whosoever delights himself in the Lord can never desire anything inconsistent with the will of God. The Spirit of God dwells in him; all his affections and desires are under the influence of the Spirit of God. And while he delights himself in God, he is sure not to set his heart on any thing unless he is drawn to it by the Spirit of God. In this case certainly he cannot at the same time be lusting after a forbidden object and delighting himself in the Lord.

4. This promise is thus conditioned, because God delights to bestow that on which the heart is set that delights in him. He loves to bestow himself, to communicate of his own fulness to those who set their hearts on him. He loves those that love him. There is a sense to be sure in which God loves his enemies; but his love to them is not a delight in their persons or characters. But he greatly enjoys the communication of himself to those who delight themselves in him. He loves to draw them into a participation of his joy, that they may drink of the river of his pleasure. He delights in making them partakers of his own divine nature, of his own holiness and of his own happiness.

5. It is of the highest importance to the universe that God should grant the desires of the heart which delights itself in him. It is for the highest good of being that he should do so. It is for his glory; it contributes to the stability of his government. It is not only highly honorable to God, but highly useful to his creatures to know that God will grant the desire of those who set their heart on him.

REMARKS

1. Those who delight themselves in God, will of course manifest great cheerfulness of mind.

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(1.) Because this delight in God is of itself a cheerful state of mind, and

(2.) Because they have the desires of the heart.

An unsatisfied craving of mind, that produces unhappiness, gloom, despondency, and despair, is not the portion of the mind that delights itself in God. The soul that delights itself in God, is pleased with whatever comes to pass. It has no way or will of its own, and therefore cannot be disappointed. It has no craving or lusting of a selfish nature, and therefore is not made unhappy by being crossed, and denied things on which its affections are set, because its affections are set on nothing but God. While it delights itself in God it is of course cheerful and happy under all circumstances, and can rejoice evermore, and pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks.

2. From what has been said, we may see why so few prayers prevail with God. The fact is, there is so much dissatisfaction with God and so much lusting after other things, that God cannot fulfil the desires of such souls; it would be infinitely unwise and unsafe to do so. Then, as a condition of prevailing prayer, we must delight ourselves in the Lord, and when we do this our prayers will be dictated by God's Spirit, and of course will be answered.

Now look around over the world. How few seem to have their supreme delight in God. How few are seeking communion and fellowship with God. How few make union with God the supreme end of their lives. It is not strange then that our prayers are not answered. The conditions of prevailing prayer are not fulfilled. Many pray because they are pressed up to it by conviction, not because their soul pants after communion with God, and delights itself in God. Instead of loving to dwell in the Bible, and in the house of God, and in the closet--in short, instead of delighting itself in God, it is constantly roving about here and there, to see if it cannot find some good. "Who will show us any good?" seems to be its constant inquiry. Now those who are in this state cannot have their desires granted.

The reason why so many desires are ungratified, is, because they are not the right kind of desires. The truth is, where an individual delights himself in the Lord, he will have the desires of his heart. Instead of being wretched all the time, and setting his heart on some thing he cannot get, when he comes to delight himself in the Lord, all this scrambling and lusting after what is beyond his reach, will be gone; he will be like a weaned child, all peace. When the mind has God, it has enough.

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Much prayer, or that which is called prayer, is after all, nothing but lusting in the Bible sense of the term. It is a craving of the mind after some selfish good. Much prayer is nothing else but the pouring out of these cravings of the selfish heart. The Apostle James speaks of this state of mind; "Ye lust, says he, and have not; ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts."

3. When there is delight in God, the supreme desire of course, will be for union and communion with God. This will be the all-absorbing desire of the mind. It will, as it were, swallow up all other desires. I will explain a little. We often see one state of mind or desire that comes to swallow up all others. The mind becomes so engrossed with one object of desire as to care for little else besides. We see this state of mind often in this world. One desire seems to eat up and swallow up all the rest. We see this too sometimes in the case of individuals that are very wicked. The drunkard's appetite for strong drink sometimes, will kill and completely destroy every other appetite; even natural affection seems to be annihilated by it. Sometimes a husband's affection for his wife is so strong, that he cares for almost nothing else. If the object of his affection is lost, he says, "what have I more? I have nothing to care for now." His interest in every thing else is destroyed. Now let this illustrate what I mean here. When the mind becomes acquainted with God and the sensibility is rightly developed towards him, as it always must be before it can be at rest, and all the desires center in God, he comes to be the supreme end of the soul in such a sense, that take any thing that you will, and leave his God, and you cannot affect his happiness; this one desire so swallows up all the rest. With such a soul, nothing else weighs a straw in comparison to the love of God. Christ was so swallowed up at one time with this one great idea, that when it was told him saying, "Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee;" He replied, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my mother, and sister and brother." He meant to rebuke the idea that our blood relatives are to be considered so much dearer than our spiritual relatives. He would say to those who sustain this relation to God, "Ye are my mother and my brethren." Now whoever has his sensibility much developed towards God, comes to feel that every

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thing must sustain some relation to this end, or it is of no value. Nothing else pleases. It must bear a relation to God, to his government, and to his glory, to make it of any regard to such a mind. The thing nearest and dearest to men naturally, if it does not sustain this relation, will be cast off as of no value. Said an individual some time since to another, "I am praying that the Lord would destroy your influence." "Well," remarked the other, "I hope the Lord will answer your prayers, if my influence is not good; for it is of no use to me unless it can glorify God, and if it does no good, I hope it will be destroyed." Now I suppose that individual answered just as he felt. He felt that his influence was worth nothing. Unless it would do some good to the universe, he cared nothing about it. Now when an individual comes into this state of mind, he regards every thing in this light. It must be valuable to God or he cares nothing about it.

We oftentimes see persons so much attached to others in this world as to seem really to enjoy nothing only as it sustains some relation to the object of their affection. Husbands and wives sometimes sustain this relation so that every thing is valued or not valued according to the relation it sustains to the one or the other. Now I suppose the mind becomes so completely swallowed up in God, so "sick in love," and so ravished with the love of God, and comes to take such delight in him as to say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, O God." The Psalmist knew what he said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee!" His father and mother, and many whom he had greatly loved, had gone to heaven, but still he exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" His children, and those to whom he was greatly attached, were all around him, and yet when he comes to think of God, his whole soul cries out, "There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Now this will be the case with a mind that is so ravished, so carried away with the love of God. There is such a dying of the mind to all other things, to self, to the world, to friends, to every thing, that the individual comes to care for nothing, not even to take his food, unless for the glory of God. He is dead to all but God. How safe it is, then, for God, to make such a promise as this, to an individual who thus delights himself in God!

4. An individual who delights himself in the Lord, will postpone every thing that comes in competition with communion with God. You will not find him making excuses for not attending prayer meetings, for not spending time in his closet, and holding much communion with God. You see persons who seem to be really honest, in saying they would like to commune with God, they would like to

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attend the prayer meeting, but they have worked very hard to day, or they have so much to do, or there is some good excuse, and they cannot attend. Now I have learned that when persons come really to delight themselves in the Lord, that such excuses don't appear to be really important. Show me a man whose soul is panting after God, who can say with the Psalmist, "As the hart panteth after the waterbrook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," such a man will love to go where he can have communion with God. He will as naturally postpone every thing else that interferes with his communion with God, as he draws his breath. The truth is, when persons make such excuses about reading their Bible and attending meetings, the secret is, they have lost their keen relish for communion with God, and are beginning to lose their delight in him.

5. If we delight ourselves in God, he will delight himself in us; and he will delight himself in us just in proportion as we delight ourselves in him. As we seek communion with him, so will he seek communion with us. God loves society--the society of the holy. If we embrace him, he will embrace us. If we pant after him, he will pant after us. If we are drawn to him, he will be drawn to us. This is a law of mind. It is impossible that he should not delight in the soul that delights in him; impossible that he should not seek after the soul that seeks after him. It would be the same thing as denying himself, not to delight in those that delight in him. Whenever a mind seeks union with God, God sets his heart on that soul. It is as dear to him as the apple of his eye. He loves it as he loves his own soul. Why should he not? It is like him; it is a part of himself; it is, so to speak, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone. It has come to be assimilated to his own nature. He comes to love it as he loves the man Christ Jesus, and for the same reason. And he will no more turn from it and not hear it than he would turn from his own beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

Now we ought to understand this, that whenever we find ourselves strongly drawn to God, God is infinitely drawn towards us; when our heart is panting after God, he is panting after us. More! it is God panting after us, that draws us towards him! This should be understood. It is of great importance that we should get this thing fixed in our mind, that when our mind is tending towards God, he is tending towards us. "Draw nigh to me," says God, "and I will draw nigh to you. Turn unto me, and I will turn unto you." ["]Love me, and I will love you."

6. The soul that delights in God, will greatly mourn, if for any reason, communion is withheld. Those will be days of mourning to

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that soul, when, for any reason God withholds the light of his countenance. It is impossible for him, then, to be cheerful and happy. He may have confidence, and say with David, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Now in this case the Psalmist had confidence in God, but he mourned. He tried to cheer up his soul, but he could not but mourn. In such a case, the soul is ready to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

I have thought many times that there was not so much mystery in what Christ said, at the time, as many would make us believe. The Christian, that knows what it is to commune and walk with God, and to have God withdraw his countenance from him, will naturally use this same language. And he will cry out with the Psalmist, "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? doth his promise fail forever more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" It is not strange that Christ should cry out, as he did. God's countenance was withdrawn from him, and he could not help crying out to God to know why this was so.

Where an individual has come to delight himself in God, and falls into this state of mind in which he mourns, his mourning will be very submissive and very peculiar. It will be nothing like the mourning of this world. Not a rebellious, complaining state of mind; it will be the mourning of a "weaned child," very submissive,--a peculiar kind of mourning, and a peculiar kind of submission. It is not rebellious nor complaining, and yet it is not joyful. It is not distrustful. "Hope thou in God," is its language, "for I shall yet praise him." It expects good from God. "I shall rejoice! Yes, for my Father will not always hide his face from me."

When these seasons last long, they head the soul into such a state, and so show the individual to himself, that he is filled with such deep grief, and is led to utter such unearthly, heart-rending groans, and at the same time has such an expression of holy submission, such a child-like dependence on God and confidence and hope in him,--O if the sinner could only hear him, could listen to such an individual when he supposed none but God near, he would go away and say, "Now I know, as I exist, I know there is such a thing as communion with God. O such expressions! such language! I know God was there!"

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When I was an impenitent sinner, I had been out to attend to some law business. Returning and passing by a school-house, I heard a man praying. That prayer did more to impress my mind with the subject of religion, than all I had heard before, from my birth. I have not the least doubt but that such a prayer would affect almost any man of reflection, could he hear it. The man did not know that any one could hear him. He had left his work in the field, and had retired to the school-house for secret communion with God. And as I rode along, I heard him and stopped, and listened to what he said. And Oh! It set my mind on fire! That was what I had never witnessed before. It seemed as if I was brought right into the presence of God! The very tones of his voice, before I could understand what he said, seemed to come down upon me, like the voice of God from heaven. Every word he spoke seemed to come right from the bottom of his heart. His voice was frequently choked with groans, and sighs. It was the voice of a man pleading with God!

When an individual is in this state of mind I am speaking of, when he has fallen into darkness from any reason whatever, although he mourns, he will not betake himself to any other source of happiness. He has gone too far in this way, to go anywhere else for happiness. When a person has but little grace, he will sometimes betake himself to other objects, run into company, and go here and there, trying this thing and that, to get happiness; but when one has come to delight himself in God, and the supreme desire of his soul has centered in God--now let him fall into such circumstances as I have mentioned, and he will not betake himself to such and such places and scenes, to make himself happy! No. Indeed he will not. He will say, "O God, I cannot, I will not go anywhere else for happiness. O God, thou hast taught me to love thee; thou hast weaned my soul from everything else, so that I cannot love anything but thee, and now, wilt thou take thyself, thou who are my all, from me? O my God, I will find my joy in thee, or joy I will never have." Such will be the language of a soul in this state.

Hearer, do you know what this is? You will know if you will give yourself up to God, so as to be all absorbed in him, so that your whole being will be given up to God. If this is not the case with you, you need to be crucified.

7. The happiness which the soul, that delights itself in God, finds in Him, is so different from all other delight, so peculiar, it is like no other happiness in the world. All other joy is nothing at all like it. It has such a peculiarity, such purity,--there is nothing else that can

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compare with it. The intelligence, the heart, the sensibility, the whole being is so satisfied in God. Oh! I wish I had some unspeakable word to express this! For we need some unearthly language to express what every Christian has, when he comes into such a state of mind with God. He is so elevated in God. He is drinking the very river of which God drinks. There is such a peculiarity, such sweetness in this, that the soul abhors all other joy. It cannot go and sip, and sip, in the polluted fountains of this world. What are they! What are they? Shall a man, who has bathed in the very atmosphere of heaven,--shall he go about to sip of the filthy cups of this world? Never! never! Only as he delights in God can he find any delight whatever. He cares for nothing else but what comes from God.

8. Be sure when you pray, that you fulfil these conditions, that you delight yourself in God.

9. He that will be content with God, and will really be satisfied with God, may have as much of God as he will. And just in proportion, as we give ourselves up to find our delight in God, just in that proportion shall we have delight in God. Go the universe over, and you will find, just in proportion as the soul gives itself up to God, just in that proportion, it finds its fullness in God. If you divide your enjoyment, how can God fill your cup? Just empty your whole heart of self and of everything else, then hold it up to God, and he will fill it with his own purity, with his own love and blessedness. Yes, you will have it filled with the ocean of God.

HAVING A GOOD CONSCIENCE

September 24, 1845

"Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." -- 1 Pet: 3:16

The discussion of this text will lead me,

I. TO DEFINE CONSCIENCE.

II. TO SHOW WHAT IS IMPLIED IN HAVING A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

III. THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH WE MAY HAVE A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

I. What is Conscience?

I answer, conscience is said by some writers to be moral consciousness; that is, consciousness as exercised on moral subjects. Consciousness in general is the mind's notice of its own existence and of its own states. In its particular reference to moral states of mind, it might be considered as moral consciousness, and this is precisely the idea which some writers attach to the term, conscience.

In the popular sense, however, the term means more than this. It includes not only the mind's notice of its own moral states, but the accompanying state of feeling. Every body knows that when a mind whose moral sense is not utterly perverted, notices its own right moral states, there springs up a delightful feeling of approbation; and when such a mind notices its own wrong moral states, there arises a feeling of intense and agonizing disapprobation. Now, in the popular conception of conscience, these feelings of approval and disapproval are associated together with the mind's recognition of its own right and wrong states as all included under the term conscience.

II. What is implied in having a good Conscience.

1. That it be enlightened. Some persons hold such exalted or rather such perverse views of the sufficiency of human reason that

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they see no need of any divinely revealed light. Another class speak of conscience as being itself the light of God in the soul, and they deem this of itself amply sufficient for the perfect guidance of the human heart and life. Now, in opposition to both of these views, it is quite plain that we need the aid of a written revelation, and the yet additional aid of the Spirit of God to give its revealed truth efficiency upon the heart.

Especially is it essential to a good conscience, that there should be in the mind a well-developed idea of the S[pirit] of the law of God. If the mind errs on this point, or has defective views, there must of course be what is called an evil conscience. For example, suppose a man has no idea of the rule of duty, except as it respects outward conduct; he does not regard it as reaching the heart at all; then his conscience is not enlightened, and cannot be a good conscience. Its decisions must fail in a most fundamental point. It is only when the true idea of the law as a rule of duty is well developed, that a man can have a good conscience.

2. It is implied in a good conscience that it be quick and tender. There may be a well developed idea of law, and this one important condition of a good conscience may be present, and yet the mind may be so sluggish and apathetic in respect to its moral relations that the conscience becomes almost perfectly inefficient. There may be various moral states which the mind does not notice at all. For example, it may not notice indulgence of appetite; feelings of envy; violations of the law of love in business transactions. Now it is essential to a good conscience that it be quick to notice any and every departure from the law of love; in fact, it should notice instantaneously all our moral acts and states of mind. It should be in an active state of attention, incessantly comparing the mind's states and acts with the rule of duty--always on the alert to know whether every thing we say, do, or even think is pleasing to God.

A child may understand its parent's requirements well, and yet may be so negligent as not only to fail to do the things required, but he may fail even to notice his own negligence, and may not be really conscious that he is neglecting a most important filial duty. Now this, as every one must see, is a deplorably defective state of the moral faculties. The conscience of such a child is utterly wrong.

The same defects of conscience are often exceedingly apparent in our relations to God. The mind may understand the law of God, and yet may be so little disposed to attend to its own moral states and compare them with that law, that the man might as well have no

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conscience at all. In such a state the reason performs none of the functions that belong properly to the conscience.

3. It is essential to a good conscience that it be persevering. I may perhaps illustrate what I mean under this head by alluding to the will. Some individuals have a great will; a will so resolute and persevering that they never give up any thing they undertake. If their will is set upon any object, they never relinquish it till it is gained.

There is something extremely analogous to this in the conscience of some men. Their conscience will never rest till its demands are yielded. It persists in its work until it gains the ascendancy, and the desired change is effected.

Now it is vastly desirable that the conscience should have this quality of unyielding perseverance. When the mind becomes conscious of any particular form of sin, the conscience ought to persist in rebuking it until it be thoroughly and forever abandoned. Our conscience will do us no good if it stops short of this.

4. It is essential to a good conscience, that we obey its dictates. It will ultimately be weary of testifying for God if we refuse to hear and obey its voice. When its demands are long resisted and its voice unheeded, it seems to retire as it were into its inner sanctuary--cease to reiterate its unheeded remonstrances, and employ itself only in putting on record for future use all the contempt and abuse it is receiving. Its accounts will one day show that it was not dead nor sleeping. It was silently preparing for the judgment scene, and the eternal state beyond, where its claims shall be reasserted and its grievances be heard.

III. The conditions upon which we may have a good conscience.

1. There must be light;--a correct and thoroughly developed idea of duty.

But 2. There must be something more than the unaided light of the human understanding. The mind must have divine light, that light which God, and God alone can give. This light is promised to those who seek it, and all observation and experience show that without it, we seek in vain to find in any of our depraved race the true and well developed idea of moral obligation.

3. A third condition is indulgence. If I may use this term in this relation, I would say, you must indulge your conscience if you would give it efficiency.

It seems to be a law of all our mental and moral powers, that they must be indulged in order to be fully developed. For example, let the will be indulged, and its demands will become more and more

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imperative; its energy accumulates; its power is developed. On the other hand, let the will be suitably resisted, and in a proper way put down, and it yields--a great change takes place. Some children seem to have no will. They are perfectly submissive to the will of their parents. Their own will seems to be lost in their parent's will, so that the only will they have left is to do the will of their parents.

A similar change takes place where the soul really submits to God. It ceases to have any will of its own. Its only will now is to do God's will most perfectly. Nothing else can please such a soul.

Now, God must always bring the soul into this state before he can bless. Hence we see explained the thousand measures of his providence;--they have for their end the discipline of the will. They are divinely planned to subdue the will and bring it to bow in perfect submission to the will of God.

While submission and discipline have this result, indulgence has the opposite. Indulgence strengthens the will against God, and against submission to any known authority but itself.

So of the sensibility. Indulgence greatly augments its power. Sometimes the emotions, by indulgence become overpowering, and the man loses all self-control. Discipline and restraint have the opposite effect.

The same law prevails respecting the conscience. Give it the moral supremacy which it ought to have--let it have its own way, and its efficiency and energy are greatly augmented. It speaks then with solemn authority as if it were indeed a voice of God in the soul. Its rebukes inflict keener pain; its smiles shed over the soul a sweeter joy.

Hence it appears that the conscience is under the same law as all our other mental faculties. Trample it down and it seems to yield; it rebukes you with less decision and authority. Continue to resist it, and it seems almost to die; its voice is hushed; it ceases to remonstrate.

We may hence appreciate the importance of this condition of a good conscience. We must indulge it, and give it its appropriate place among the powers of the soul. That place is the throne of dominion. Conscience ought to bear rule over all our powers and their entire action. Hence it should be obeyed, and its demands always treated with profound regard.

IV. We next consider the importance of having a good conscience.

1. It is intimated with great justice in our text that a good conscience is indispensable that we may commend ourselves to the

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consciences of other men. Nothing can be more true than this. To good men, especially, we never can commend ourselves, unless we have an enlightened and good conscience.

2. A good conscience is indispensable to self-respect. No man can really respect himself who does not keep a good conscience. It is impossible that he should. He may flatter himself in his own eyes, but genuine self-respect he never can have unless the foundation for it be laid in the ennobling consciousness of aiming evermore to do right, according to the dictates of an enlightened conscience.

3. It is essential to peace of mind. That real equanimity--that well-founded peace of mind, which he may have, who always obeys a good conscience, can never be had on any other conditions. The man who violates his conscience cannot have it.

4. A good conscience is essential to usefulness. Without it, you can have but little influence over others. Those men whose moral sentiments are loose will practice loosely wherever their interest prompts them to do so, and will surely lose the respect of the community. This once lost, the less they say about religion the better. The less they do to urge other men to be just and holy, the better. If their life and spirit is such that whenever they say a word to recommend religion, the thought rushes into every body's mind, "Physician, heal thyself," that man may as well hold his peace. His first business should be to heal himself. Let him first set his own conscience right and live according to its dictates; then the time may come when people will hear and regard what he says.

When Paul and Silas were preaching the gospel at Phillippi, a sooth-saying woman was employed by the devil to frustrate their efforts. She had long been imposing upon the people until her character had become perfectly odious. Of course she was a good tool for the devil to use. He sends her after the Apostles, and just when they are getting the attention and the hearts of the people, he sets her a shouting--"These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation." The people are at once repelled; they will not believe the best truth in the universe coming from such a quarter; they turn away, and the Apostles seem likely to be utterly nonplussed in respect to introducing the gospel there. Paul is "grieved," and turning to the woman, commands the evil spirit in the name of Christ to come out of her. Then the word of the Lord had free course.

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Now what this woman said was true enough--but, O, to have it said by such a woman! It was enough to undo and nullify all that the best preacher of the gospel on earth could accomplish.

So every where and in regard to all cases where men of a loose and evil conscience would fain try to do good. Let a drunkard blow his putrid breath into your face and exhort you to be a Christian. He could not do a worse thing for your salvation. Let a man of known dishonesty get up in your prayer and conference meetings to speak for God, and all that love the cause of God are agonized, and all that hate it are made full easy of their consciences. Let such a man go about in your families with ever so many good things on his tongue--yet if his dishonest life gainsay his fair words, it were infinitely better he should never say a word. Often has the cause of religion ample occasion to say, Deliver me from my professed friends.

If a man has loose notions of morality on any points of practice, he will be known, and his talk in favor of religion might as well be spared. It matters little whether he speaks for religion or against it,--his life is against it, and his own words in its favor can be nothing better than a scandal.

5. men who do not keep a good conscience must become odious to any good society. Such men could not be respected even in hell. Every body knows that in a community of thieves and robbers they would be despised. Every community is constrained by the demands of self-preservation to insist upon obedience to conscience in at least some points. Hence the worst communities known to us in the universe have their moral regulations which it is utterly disreputable and even scandalous to violate. Deeply as our moral nature has been corrupted by sin, it still retains some of the outlines of its original structure. Under some circumstances it will yet abhor and condemn wrong doing.

6. If we do not keep a good conscience we must be odious to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves. Our state is odious in itself and it cannot appear otherwise than odious to any beings under whose observation it may come.

7. A man who does not keep a good conscience becomes a nuisance in society. You know there are such things as natural nuisances, as a pond or a marsh that breeds the ague, or a vessel that brings into port the yellow fever. So also there are such things as moral nuisances. The former acts injuriously upon the health--the latter upon the spirituality and piety of the people. A man of an evil conscience is a nuisance of the latter class. If our jurors could wisely

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take cognizance of such things they might complain of every such man as a moral nuisance to the community in which he lives.

8. Having a good conscience will secure the favor of God and peace of conscience. It secures these rich blessings by a law of necessity. God can never fail to bestow his smiles upon him who keeps an enlightened conscience void of offense, and surely he who maintains such a conscience will have the joy and peace of self-approbation.

9. Yet again he will have the respect of other men. The case may be such that he will have nothing else about him to command respect; yet even then he cannot fail to be really respected for maintaining a good conscience. You have all seen cases of this.

Such a man will of course be useful. His example is a blessing though he should never speak, or had not even the power of speech. The reputation of a good conscience will give any man such a character that what he does say will have weight. Hence he is furnished with a most valuable power of influence for doing good.

10. One consideration more. Maintaining a good conscience is absolutely indispensable to salvation. No man can be saved who does not mean to do right, and who does not take pains to know what is right in his own case and in all its varied circumstances. What! a man be saved without a good conscience? Then it is a vain thing that God as said--"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." What sort of a heaven is that man fitted to enter who does not keep a good conscience? How could he dwell in that city wherein shall "in no wise enter anything that worketh abomination or maketh a lie?" No; let that man lay it deeply to heart that if his conscience be not heeded--if its decisions are not obeyed, he has no possible ground for expecting to go to heaven.

REMARKS

1. Those who have not a good conscience are not aware how they appear to others. I have not infrequently had occasion to expostulate with persons of loose conscience, and when I have told them how they were regarded in the community, they have been astounded. They had never so much as thought of this. It had never been told them, and they had not the discernment to see it themselves. Having managed to keep a pretty good opinion of themselves, they have been so blind to their own real character and have so misinterpreted its commonest developments that they have not been aware of the impressions which themselves are making upon the public mind.

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Not long since I was in a community where a man lives whom I have known for many years. He is unlike any other man I ever saw. A neighbor said of him --"He seems to have no friends. Nobody loves--nobody respects him." Now this is precisely the result which ought to have been anticipated. Any body else but himself would anticipate it, but he did not. He seemed not aware of the state of feeling towards himself, although this feeling was so strong that people could hardly meet him in the streets without giving vent to their disesteem and even contempt. The trouble with him was, he had no conscience. He seemed incapable of appreciating the rights and interests of others if those rights or interests came at all into competition with his own.

So not infrequently some persons run so low in point of conscience that they are universally despised and yet sometimes are so stupid, or self-conceited, or blind as not to be aware of the fact. They should be pitied and often blamed too.

2. Such persons are often annoying and harassing their neighbors exceedingly. Their own selfishness seems to have blinded their own eyes so much that they can see no other selfishness but their neighbors, they never see their own, even though it may be so prominent, and so glaring as to amaze the whole neighborhood. It sometimes seems as if such persons would not scruple a moment to bring the small-pox into a neighborhood if it might in some perceptible degree subserve their own interests. The inquiry about the interests of others, either does not strike their mind at all, or if it does, it awakens not the least solicitude. What a conscience this!

Sometimes such persons will even go so far as to complain if they are not allowed to violate the most manifest principles of right and equity--as if they alone of all the world had a perfect right to trample on all other interests but their own!

It is indeed a great and sore trial to be so situated as to have much to do with men or women of this description. One needs in such a case to let patience have her perfect work. Surely there is any amount of occasion for its exercise.

There is one man who will keep unruly cattle, and let them run among his neighbors to destroy their crops. One such man is enough to chafe a whole community, and keep the body politic forever sore.

Others there are, and many others too will not pay their debts. Ministers and men not engaged in business are not apt fully to appreciate the evil of negligence in this thing. But business men feel the force of this. It is no wonder therefore that men who have much to do with commercial transactions should have the importance of

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perfect promptness and punctuality in this point thoroughly developed. But ministers and perhaps students too who are preparing for the ministry are notoriously delinquent, and very often greatly to their injury. Business men will not respect them, and are often so chafed by this negligence in ministers that they are thrown quite beyond the reach of any good influence from their preaching.

It is a great calamity for students preparing for the ministry to run into debt and keep in debt as some do throughout their course of study. There is the greatest danger lest they acquire a looseness of conscience in respect to paying debts, and learn to content themselves while they are wronging and perhaps distressing, or at least chafing and harassing those to whom they are indebted.

The evil in the case of students really becomes terrible when they get into such a state of mind that having means in their hands to pay their debts they can quietly go on, and spend their money in extravagant dress, riding for pleasure, or indulging their appetites. Such young men must have made utter shipwreck of a good conscience. If they go into the ministry with such a conscience and with such habits, they cannot fail to curse the church and scandalize the gospel.

This matter of recklessness in paying debts is a sore calamity among any people. Especially when it prevails among professors of religion, it brings a grievous scandal upon the cause of God, and breaks the right arm of Zion's strength. She cannot hold up the glorious law and gospel of God as a burning and shining light so long as there rests upon her own name, the stain of daily and manifest dishonesty in business transactions. How can Christians hope to reach the consciences of ungodly men, while standing in such ill odor for looseness and perhaps rank injustice in business transactions?

Again, I remark that a virtuous community will very soon by a natural process throw off such persons as the scum of society. It is a curious process in the social action of a community, yet you may often observe its operation. As the scum in a vessel under fermentation, or as the chaff under a strong wind, so men of loose consciences seem to get loosened up on a community; they rise to its surface and soon disappear. The fact is that they see they are not respected, nor wanted there. They get chafed, restive, uneasy, and are glad to make it convenient to be off. This is the natural process of things where there is virtue enough to create a strong public sentiment in favor of right. Then those who will not yield to this sentiment will find it very inconvenient to stay.

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Where there is not health enough in the community to throw off its social scum, it must be in a very bad state. Just as in the physical system, if there is not enough of the vital energy to throw off disease or poison, the man must die; so in the social state, if there is not enough of the vigor of virtue to throw off moral nuisances and moral poisons, languishing and death must ensue. Often this process of moral corruption goes on until the pernicious results become so apparent and so glaring even, that a reaction follows, and people seem frightened by the horrid consequences of vice and learn in some measure to appreciate virtue.

It is a rich luxury to have a good conscience. How mellow and glorious is the sun-light which it pours into the soul! Few only seem to know its blessedness--yet there are some who know it well. It is as you have sometimes seen the sun break forth from a cloud and all is glory before him. The universe seems to be lighted up into smiles of joy to greet his coming. Such is the atmosphere of peace and glory in which the soul seems to bathe itself when it enjoys the luxury of a good conscience. There is in fact no apparent distinction between this and the broad sun-light of God's own presence upon the soul.

Scarcely any thing will produce tears of joy more suddenly than for conscience to pour its sun-light approvingly upon the mind. When you have passed through a scene of great trial, through grace victorious, have you not found a delightful mingling of deep humiliation, and of overflowing gratitude to God that seems almost too rich a luxury of bliss for your heart to endure? You felt infinitely unworthy of such sustaining grace--you wondered how God could bestow it on such a one as you--yet was your inmost being stirred up to praise God for this grace, and you deemed it the richest joy of all, that God both deserved and would receive all, all the glory and the praise for all the good wrought in you by his Spirit and done through your being upheld by his power.

Your conscience approved of what through grace you had done, yet was there no pride--no self-gratulation; you cast yourself lower perhaps than ever at Jesus' feet to praise that grace which gave the victory.

The man who has a good conscience can be comfortable under any degree of outward reproach. Let all the world reproach him and cast out his name as vile, yet if conscience within is peaceful, all will be well. Let the men of his generation disown him--yea, let them wax hot in their rage against him and hustle him out of the world, yet may he be calm as a summer evening. What has he to fear? The deep

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foundations of his bliss are within--where no wrath or scorn of man can ever reach them. It is enough for him that conscience approves, and that his own infinite Father smiles upon his soul.

But right over against this, let that man have a vile conscience and he cannot have peace. Let all who know him conspire to approve and applaud him it is of no avail. Should angels from heaven mistake his character and give him honor, and devils from hell hide their faces before him in awe of his supposed virtue as if he were a bright angel, yet would his inmost being cry out and proclaim its earnest dissent against all such praise.--Yet would his conscience upbraid him, and the lack of its approval, like the lack of Mordecai's homage to Haman, would be enough to poison all the joy derivable from all other honor and approbation. So vain a thing it is for any man to hope to be happy without a good conscience.

The most damning guilt of all belongs to those whose consciences are enlightened but are not quick and tender, and who do not obey its dictates. They know their duty but they do it not. With light enough to be angels in virtue they have stupidity and moral hardness enough to sink them to the rank of devils. No guilt can be so black as that of knowing the claims of God, and yet deliberately setting the mind, despite of conscience, to trample those claims under one's feet. No moral state can be worse than that of having a conscience thus abused, thus violated of its virtue so to speak, and rifled of its purity, till it ceases to persuade towards the path of life.

Are any of those impenitent sinners who hear me, going on this moment in that career of death? Sinners, beware!!

RELATIONS OF CHRIST TO THE BELIEVER

July 30, 1845

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." 1 Cor. 1:30

In speaking from this text, I shall,

I. DEFINE BRIEFLY THE TERMS USED;

II. SHOW WHAT IS IMPLIED IN CHRIST'S BEING MADE UNTO US WISDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION;

III. SHOW HOW HE BECOMES OUR WISDOM &C. &

IV. THE CONDITIONS ON OUR PART OF HIS ASSUMING THESE RELATIONS TO US.

I. Define briefly the terms used.

1. Wisdom is a comprehensive term often used in the scriptures to denote true religion. Perhaps no other more strictly philosophical definition of true religion can be given than this--it is wisdom;--acting wisely, in view of all known truth which is important to our welfare. All who are truly wise will of course reverence and obey God.

Some commentators have supposed that wisdom is here put first in order, that it may cover the whole ground, being a comprehensive term which may include all that pertains to human salvation. Such would read the next word, "and," even; thus--Christ is made unto us wisdom, yea, even righteousness, sanctification and redemption. All these are comprehended in his being our wisdom. Or the meaning may be according to the common interpretation--Christ imparts to us each moment the wisdom we need in daily life. As his own words--"If any many lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally."

"Righteousness" denotes justification, acceptance with God. This is the meaning of the term as often used in the scriptures.

"Sanctification" means holiness; the being made pure from sin, and becoming holy as God is holy.

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"Redemption," as a part of the scheme of salvation stands intimately connected with our being justified and sanctified. Its figure supposes us to have been slaves of sin, and to be bought off from this state of slavery by Jesus. Henceforth, we are no longer held under either the curse of the law, or the control of sin.

Thus these various terms when all employed as in our text, denote salvation from sin itself and from all its penal consequences.

We are next to consider,

II. What is implied in Christ's being made our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

1. It implies our own fallen and helpless state. Christ would not become our wisdom if we were wise enough of ourselves. He never would become our righteousness if we could be righteous before God without him. Nor would he be our sanctification if we were not so wholly polluted as to need divine cleansing; so hopelessly unclean that no efforts of our own either would be made, or could if made avail to transform us from utter pollution to intrinsic purity of heart. He would not have given himself for our redemption if we had not been fearfully enslaved, past the power of self-effected emancipation. Thus all just views of Christ's work serve to abase man, for they show that Christ becomes all in all to us because we are nothing and meaner than nothing in ourselves.

2. It is also implied that we have in him a perfect wisdom, a perfect righteousness, sanctification and redemption. If God presents us his own eternal Son as a supply for some specific want of ours, we may rest assured that the supply is perfect. The source is exhaustless. It is both adapted to meet the existing want and is amply adequate. If God should raise up to any one of us a Solon or a Solomon to be our wisdom, the supply might be valuable to the extent of their ability to teach us--but no further. If God gives us Christ, the supply must be just as perfect as Christ's own ability. So also, if Christ should give us some heavenly-minded saint, say from the upper world, to stand by us, and come into the closest relation to us which is possible for a heavenly and an earthly saint to sustain, in order that this saint might be our sanctification--then he would be worth just as much to us as he could do. His ability to effect our sanctification, would be the measure of his value to us. So of Christ. He is a perfect sanctifier, because he is able to "keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy;" because, "he gave himself for the church that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or

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any such thing, but that is might be holy and without blemish." This last passage shows that this cleansing is effected by means of "the washing of water by the word;" agencies which pertain to the present state. Of course the present is the state in which the sanctifying work takes place; unless it be already effected, none can see God in heaven. So also is Christ a perfect Redeemer. All that redemption can do for enslaved and accursed man--all that is need to do, if fully done by Christ.

3. It is implied that this wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, provided for us in Christ are such as God can accept. If we become righteous through Christ's righteousness, God will accept us. If sanctified in this way, our sanctification will be acceptable to God. If redeemed, God endorses the redemption-act, and we are held slaves no longer. This must follow of course. The scheme of God's own providing, when legitimately received by us according to the true intent of the provision, God cannot disown and reject. God cannot accept our own righteousness, but will accept of Christ's. Our own self-made sanctification can never be worthy of his acceptance, but that wrought in us by an indwelling Christ, the Father can and will approve.

4. Let it not be forgotten, that God has made Christ our wisdom, righteousness and sanctification, and that Christ has accepted the office,--has undertaken the work. Of course nothing less than perfectly ample provisions are afforded for our being wise, righteous, sanctified and redeemed.

III. We next inquire how Christ is to become our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

It is manifestly one thing for God to set him apart for these purposes; another thing for Christ to be willing to undertake; and yet another for him actually to become so to any individual of the race.

1. Not by imputation. Many have supposed, strangely enough, that Christ works out a perfect righteousness in himself, not in us, and then makes it over to us so that by imputation it becomes ours. He first becomes holy, wise and righteous himself, and then accounts this holiness, wisdom, and righteousness ours, by some process of transfer, which, however, makes it ours not by causing us to be holy, wise, or righteous, but only by causing us to be so regarded.

This seems to be exceedingly unlike the true gospel system. The gospel scheme of salvation manifestly contemplates a real change wrought in the soul from folly to wisdom, from sin to holiness, from unrighteousness to righteousness.

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2. Christ does become our wisdom and righteousness by uniting himself with us. It is not merely by entering into a covenant relation as some have supposed, but by entering into an actual relation of the most intimate sort; as the Bible often expresses it, by entering into us and dwelling in us, so that we are in Christ, and Christ is in us.

3. Having really entered into us in this spiritual union, Christ works in us by the influence of his Spirit through his truth, thus enlightening our intelligence, molding our hearts, chastening our temper, and transforming us into his own image. In the language of the Bible, he "works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is not strange that by such a union, and by means of such influences exerted upon our souls, he should become our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

4. Contemplating righteousness and redemption in their strictly technical meaning, Christ becomes our righteousness and redemption by presenting us to the Father as redeemed through his blood and thus made right in the eye of law, the punishment due for our sins being set aside in consideration of Christ's having suffered enough to answer all the ends of public justice under the government of God. Consequently we appear before the great King of the universe, not as self-redeemed, but as redeemed by Christ--not as self-justified, but as justified only through the righteousness of Christ.

Again, in this spiritual union formed between Christ and the believer, Christ takes possession of our faculties and so controls them with his gracious influences that he rescues us from the power of temptation, and delivers us from the law of sin which is in our members. The Bible represents our very bodies as being emancipated from the thralldom of sin and [S]satan. We become temples of the Holy Ghost, and so united to Christ that he says "we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones."

Such being our relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, is it any wonder that we should be accepted of the Father? It being most evident that we are thus accepted not for our sakes, but for Christ's sake; not for our righteousness but for his; nor for any thing in us which is primarily ours, but for every thing in Him.

Now however curiously we may inquire about the philosophy of our union with Christ--however we may push our inquiries to learn how one mind can dwell in and thus control another, or how the vicarious death of one being may avail for the pardon and life of another; there may still remain points about the subject to us inexplicable, and yet there should not therefore attach to them a doubt

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of their reality. There may be realities in the spiritual world and in the vast government of God which our short vision cannot fathom. The strong presumption is that there should be more in the universe than we can fully know to-day.

IV. We are next to consider the conditions on which Christ becomes our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

1. A full renunciation of ourselves. While we are trying to gain access to God and acceptance by ourselves, we are of course rejecting Christ, and he will of course reject us. It is all vain to expect success in this way. Our works and our persons will be alike rejected while we disown Christ and cleave to our own merits and righteousness. Why should it not be so? Our own works, out of Christ, are worthless; they are never right in themselves except as Christ works in us to make us do right. And as to pardon, there is nothing that we can do which approximates towards making an atonement for our sin on the ground of which God can remit the penalty of death eternal.

Whether therefore we think to merit a pardon, or to make ourselves so holy without Christ as to be accepted of God, we shall utterly fail. We must become quite empty of ourselves if we would be filled with Christ, and surely we must be filled with Christ if we would be right with God.

2. It is essential that we apprehend Christ as being our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, and understand what is meant by these precious words. We must know in some good degree what is meant by the oft-recurring language of the Bible which represents Christ as being our Life,--Christ our Light,--Christ our All; which affirms that Christ is in us--dwells in us and is our sanctification. Until we understand these passages intellectually, we cannot believe in Christ and receive him in these relations. Faith begins with the intelligence; hence the idea must be in some measure developed in our minds before we can put forth moral efforts to realize this state in our own experience.

3. There must be a hungering and thirsting after Christ--a state of mind ripe for giving up every thing that stands in the way of receiving Christ. We must be ready to renounce self altogether and put the Lord Jesus Christ on the vacant throne. Christ must take the place so long held by self.

During my ministry I have seen striking cases of persons who have groped a long time after Christ as if they were ready to embrace him if they might find him, but yet when the idea of embracing Christ came to be fully developed, and they saw what it really was, they

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drew suddenly back and would not embrace such a Savior on such conditions. Before, they thought themselves quite ready and anxious to get such a Savior as they supposed Christ to be; but when they saw how much self-denial and self-renunciation were implied in receiving Christ, they turned away like the young man in the gospel history--"sorrowful--for he had great possessions." How could he make up his mind to give them all away?

Thus many are very often deceived. They think themselves quite ready to receive Christ. They suppose themselves really to thirst for gospel salvation, and think that surely if they could see it and find it they are of course ready to embrace it;--but let me tell you, my own experience testifies that this does not follow of course. I know that some may be greatly anxious for relief and apparently most ready to receive it; and yet when they come to see how much self renunciation it demands, they draw back. Hence a positive readiness to welcome Christ though at the utter sacrifice of self and of all that is dear to self is an indispensable condition of receiving him.

4. If Christ is received at all by us in all these relations, it must be as a whole--a whole Savior, one who delivers us from all sin, one who demands absolute and universal self-renunciation. It must be understood that every sinful indulgence must be crucified, and Christ become all in all to our life and happiness.

5. The great, comprehensive condition is faith--that act of the mind which receives Christ for all that he is offered--as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. It is faith on our part which consummates this blessed union between our soul and Christ. Christ has of a long time been ready to enter into this relation to us; and now the moment the soul commits itself to him and truly yields up to receive Christ in all his relations, the thing is done: Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. It is impossible that this union of our soul with Christ should take place without faith on our part. Christ may be at hand--may reveal himself to the soul and show us what he stands ready to do for us; yet if we do not voluntarily receive him, he does not become our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

6. In order that Christ may become our wisdom, we must receive him for all that he is. We must really cease to trust in our own wisdom and practically rely entirely upon his. So we must receive him as our righteousness, sanctification and redemption, taking him alone for the full supply of every want in all these respects, and

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utterly renouncing ourselves as at all sufficient to do of ourselves what Christ is provided to do for us.

REMARKS

1. It may be proper to present in few words the true idea of salvation through Christ: namely, Christ living and reigning in the soul; a vital union between a living God and the very soul of the believer. This is the very thing which Christ so beautifully and forcibly illustrated by the figure of the vine and its branches. As the branch is in the vine and cannot live and be fruitful unless it be, so no more can we except we abide in Christ.

2. It is remarkable to see to what an extent the Church has lost the true idea of faith and union with Christ, and how nearly they have lost sight of that which is the very soul of the whole gospel. The Old School hold that Christ's salvation is something imputed to us; not a living union, effected by Christ's dwelling within us, but a something made and done by Christ, and reckoned ours by imputation, that is, by being so regarded.

The New School hold no such ideas, but hold simply that we are forgiven through the atonement of Christ, and then as to salvation from sin, we must work that out ourselves. Yes, some of their great leaders say, if you want to become free from sin, you must work for it. This is the very language of Dr. Chalmers in his commentary on Romans. After arguing forcibly and at length the doctrine of imputed holiness and righteousness, he asks; "How shall we get personal holiness and righteousness?" He answers, "I tell you, you must work for it."

Precisely the same answer was given by the Synod of New York and New Jersey. They maintained strenuously, that personal sanctification must be got simply by working for it; they use the very language of Dr. Chalmers.

What a development this of the fallen doctrine of the church! Instead of receiving Christ for holiness, they put our own works in his place. Nothing is said, apparently nothing is believed concerning a living union between the soul and God, whereby a mighty transformation is wrought and fruit brought forth to God: this view seems to be entirely lost, or overlooked; imputed righteousness is made to answer for pardon, and then as for personal holiness, "you must work it out."

3. A full salvation is equally open to all, to all of every grade, of all ranks of society; a door is set wide open, and whoever will, may rise and enter. The whole of this salvation is open to each and all.

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When self is rejected and Christ received, you have the whole of it, nothing more remains. The rich, and the poor, the free and the bond, may have it all on these only conditions.

4. This great and full salvation may be received by any and by all, now, at this very moment. Let me ask the impenitent sinner in this house; Did you suppose when you came here this morning that it was possible for you to be as really saved and blessed to-day as the purest soul on earth is? Did you not suppose that the work was too difficult, and the time requisite for doing it so long that you must of course delay till some more convenient season; till some season less filled up with studies, business occupations, &c? Did you suppose it possible to be fully saved from sin and death at once?

But you say, must I not work? Must I not be convicted, and thus get ready for a work of grace? Oh, sinner; you do not understand the great simplicity of the gospel system. But you must understand it, or never come to Christ at all. You think you must work much and long; but no mistake can be greater. God wants not those works of yours; he will accept of Christ, but not of your works; you might go about till doomsday to get ready, and not even approach the subject. In this way you never begin, you make not the least advance. God does not ask of you any of those works; he can receive nothing but Christ, and he offers you Christ to-day. Christ on the cross, your pardon; Christ in your soul, your sanctification; this is all, and when you accept of him in all his relations, the work is done; until you do, nothing is done at all. God will no sooner accept you out of Christ, than he would accept the Devil. He will no sooner accept at your hands one thing than another; your prayers no sooner than your curses; your reading the Bible, no sooner than your reading Tom Thumb; your going to church, than your going to a brothel--all is odious, abominable, shocking to him, only as seen in Christ. Abandon then forever the idea that you must make these preparations. All are of no use, only that you may thus use up all your own efforts and learn that you must renounce them all, utterly, and forever. Will you push your prayers and your self-righteousness into the very face of God? will you set yourself up to merit his favor? Horrible!

"O my God, said a sister, who had long been fasting and praying and had worn herself all out; O Lord, said she, I give it all up, I leave it all; I cast it all away; Jesus is all my salvation; this is enough; I want nothing more; I put away all things but Christ; let me have Christ only, and Christ forever."

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But perhaps some sinner will say; "Must I not first be converted? You are urging Christ on me before I am converted."

Sinner, what is it to begin? What is it to be converted? Conversion is the very thing I am talking about. Paul did not say to the Jailer, go and pray--go and read the Bible--do penance; but go at once and believe on Christ--believe, believe now.

So sinner, Paul says to you, now; all the things you would do before you come to Christ are of no use. You might work hard, but like the boatman in the rapids of Niagara, despite of your hard rowing you would go over the falls.

5. From what has been said, it can be easily seen why so few embrace the gospel. If this entire self-renunciation is an indispensable condition of receiving Christ, then the reception of Christ has met with two obstacles; often this condition has not been thoroughly preached and insisted on; and again, when it has been, many have stumbled upon it, and could not receive Christ on such terms.

6. The true and glorious idea of the gospel being left out, men have of course been left in bondage to sin. How could they be saved when they were not told that they must receive Christ as of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption?

7. This view of the subject presents the most adequate remedy for our necessities; the only thing that can really save our souls. Let me inquire of those in this house who have made great efforts. Did not those efforts leave you in a yet more wretched state, except when Christ was with you, and led you to receive him alone? What did all your other efforts avail? Oh! some of you can say, I know what this fruitless toil means; I have tried it all, and got into the experience described in the 7th chapter of Romans, and there I groaned out, "O wretched man that I am;" and there I found nothing but wretchedness and fruitless struggles till I went forward and found peace, and no condemnation in Christ Jesus.

8. Hitherto the mass of the church have gone only into the 7th of Romans, and then have floundered along, plunging deep in the mire like Bunyan's pilgrim in the slough of despond, toiling, agonizing. O, what cases of agony you would find if you were to go about the churches. I can not tell you how much my soul has been agonized as I have found such multitudes, confused, confounded, agonized, crying out, "O wretched man;" and all this time supposing that this is the highest attainable state of experience in this present world, and the very state in which Paul was when he wrote the epistle. Alas, if God had really doomed the church to such a life till death comes for their

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relief! Alas, yet more if the Church dooms herself to such a living death, when God has provided so simple and immediate a deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord!

9. It is infinitely dangerous to mistake the true idea of the gospel. The more I see the real state of the Church, the more I am perplexed to conceive how the Church can be saved in such a state of darkness and unbelief.

10. How infinitely important that a ministry be raised up to go out and preach this true, and whole gospel; O, how much good one such minister may do! Let him go where he will, he will find not a few who are crying out in agony, O wretched man! If he can only reveal to them a living, redeeming Savior, what a work he may achieve! O, is it not time, young men, to be awake to these things? Will you not get hold of this glorious gospel yourselves, and then go out and tell the churches its glories, and its power to save? But, alas, there is a young student, yes, perhaps a theological student; he goes out and lectures; not on the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, but on Mesmerism and Phrenology! Horrible!! Instead of preaching to the churches a full salvation and leading forth her desponding sons and daughters into glorious liberty, he goes about manipulating heads and working upon the nerves of some pale invalid--Alas! I cannot tell you how much my soul has been agonized to think that there ever could be a Theological student here who could do this! O let him only be full of Christ, so full of Christ that he can think and talk about nothing else, and he will lecture on something very different from Mesmerism and Phrenology. Let all these young men be filled with Christ, and this Institution can shake the world! When every student is full of this one great idea, and every professor also; and every Christian in this church; then let it pour forth abroad like waves of light and glory over all the land. O, hast that day of salvation!

11. Many have put faith in the soul in the place of Christ in the soul. Now Christ is received by faith, but Christ in the soul, and faith in the soul, are very different things. We never should rest till our faith be such as really receives Christ into the soul; then we shall have Christ there and not faith only.

12. We may see the relation of faith to sanctification. Faith must take the lead in all truly gospel exercises. Faith receives Christ, and then Christ becomes our sanctification. Christ once received in the soul, then works in us to will and to do, develops every grace, and leads us along to the stature of perfect men.

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Let no one stumble at the mystery of Christ in the soul, achieving there the work of salvation. I have often injured my own soul by philosophizing about the work of faith; but now I have learned that Christ is my all, that Christ received within us works in us and effects all that need be wrought.

13. It is easy to see why this doctrine is regarded by many in the Church as so mysterious. It is because they still hold on to the notion of self-sanctification; sanctification by faith or by works, without Christ. They are in great agony, they toil hard; and no wonder; they have not the true gospel. They are working out their salvation without Christ.

15. It is a present and universal duty to receive Christ thus. All who do not are living in sin. Whatever they may think of themselves, they are in bondage to the flesh and to Satan.

Beloved, if you live in sin, you will die in sin, and whither Christ goes, you cannot come. You are rejecting Christ, and you can have no salvation out of him. Verily there can be no salvation without receiving Christ into the soul as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Now, if this be so, what is the state of many professors of religion here? Many of you have not received Christ by a living faith--you have no rest in Christ--no rest any where. Until you find Christ, you have not found the true gospel, nor its salvation. You are living, not in Christ, but in yourself. You are not conscious of having eternal life actually in your possession. You do not realize its vital, sin-subduing, soul-purifying power. And will you rest there? Can you?

I am afraid that very many of this congregation have not the power of the gospel in them. That young man who can go out and preach nothing better than Phrenology and Mesmerism; is his soul running over with the flood tides of the gospel? Do you think that young men, if their souls were filled with the love of Christ, could go about and lecture on politics? Nay, truly; Could they go out and tell people how to vote for President if their own souls were full of Christ, and they knew that many hundreds and thousands abroad in the land are stranger to the glorious gospel of a full salvation.

O, it does seem to me that we are crazy if we will not wake up to the fact that the Church knows not Christ, and that Christ must be held forth in his fullness before his gospel can become truly the power of God unto salvation to the souls of the Church.

O, I am constrained to believe that very many now here know not this glorious gospel yet! Their souls do not teem with the subject.

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O, how I want to see every student here, and every man and woman in this place in a blaze! Then might this Church begin to be the light of the world. Who will not pray God that his own mighty power may come down and abide upon our Zion.

THE FOLLY OF REFUSING TO BE SAVED

August 14, 1845

"Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" --Proverbs 17:16.

In ordinary discourse the term 'fool' is used in various senses; but generally in only one sense in the Bible. We sometimes speak of a natural fool, meaning one that is born so, or that becomes so by some injury of the brain. Sometimes persons are called fools who are deranged; and sometimes the term is applied to those who in common matters act unwisely.

Moral fools are those whose intelligence remains unimpaired, but who refuse to use it, and who give themselves up to be controlled by their sensibility and their passions as if they had no intelligence at all. This is the sense in which the Bible uses the term, fool.

It deserves special notice that this is the worst and most disgraceful sense of the term. Fools in most of the other senses of this word are not much if at all accountable; perhaps they are not moral agents at all; and hence the term as applied to them is not reproachful. We may pity them; but it were unreasonable and cruel to blame or even despise them.

But a moral fool, who has reason and will not use it, who gives himself up to his own gratification as if he had no intelligence and meant to stultify all the sense God has given him--he is a mean man, and the term fool which the Bible applies to him is intrinsically and most justly reproachful.

The term wisdom in scripture, denotes true religion, virtue, or holiness. It implies a knowledge of things as they are, and especially some right knowledge of God, and a corresponding conformity of heart to this knowledge. It always involves these two elements; enlightened intelligence, and a systematic yielding of the heart to the control of known truth.

The meaning of our text is obvious. It asks why sinners should possess all the means of salvation, and have the opportunity of laying hold of infinite good, and yet have no heart to use it. Wherefore is it

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that they have so great a price lodged in their hands? Why does God give them the means to buy, when they don't want the commodity?

The text assumes that sinners really have all the requisite means of salvation--that they have no heart to lay hold of it though it be an infinite good; and that, acting thus, they are really fools. It is taken for granted that having price enough in their hands to buy infinite good and yet refusing to buy, they are fools indeed. Then the inquiry is pressed;--Why is this so? Why are so many facilities afforded, and no use made of them?

This naturally leads us to inquire in the first place what constitutes the price which sinners have in their hands?

To this we answer,

1. God has removed the obstacles to their salvation by giving Christ to die for them. Now if they will only give themselves up to Christ and accept his atonement for their sins, there remains no need of their suffering the penalty of the law. They are indeed condemned to hell already, and most justly; but through the death of Christ, the redemption-money is put into their hands, and they may redeem themselves if they will.

2. God tenders to them the advocacy and mediation of Christ. It only remains that they accept it, and it is theirs--freely, faithfully, unceasingly. God has given his own Son to mediate between sinners on the one hand, and the infinite government and throne of Jehovah on the other. Now he only asks the sinner, will you have my own Son for your prevailing advocate? I "hear him always."

3. Christ himself in all his official relations is offered to sinners. Every thing that he is appointed to do, he offers to do for them. The true Christian can say in truth, Jesus is mine, my Teacher, my Mediator, my atoning Sacrifice, my everlasting Friend, my All. Now everything that Christ can do for the soul, he offers to do for every sinner. The price is put into the sinner's hands to obtain this immeasurable good.

4. God offers him also the Holy Spirit. Yea, this Spirit is given, is sent to strive with even the wayward, unwilling sinner. Fain would the Spirit lead him to forsake his sins and live. The heavenly voice calls, entreats, implores; the Divine Agent throws light before his mind; awakens solemn thought; bears long with his stubbornness and folly; so that no sinner can say--There is none to plead with me that I would turn and live, for the Spirit of God is doing this very thing.

5. All the promises are given the sinner. God has given you all these exceeding great and precious promises that he may encourage

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and incite you to lay hold of everlasting life. They cover every want you have or can have, they come down to meet you just where you are, like a golden chain let down from the eternal throne to lift you out of the horrible pit, and raise you up to heaven. O, what promises! Surely such words could come from none but God! What a price are they! They are written pledges--the express bonds of the government of God--government bonds, sinner, enough to insure you the infinite riches of the treasury of Jehovah,--yet they are laid at your feet--a price put into your hands to get wisdom.

6. God gives you all things requisite to life and godliness. All needed grace is provided and proffered you to make sure to you eternal life. Provision enough is here to meet all your need for time and for eternity. You may have the prayers of this people, their sympathies, their counsels; all the aid they can afford you in your way to heaven. You cannot imagine a thing essential to your salvation which God has not furnished you--not one thing. On his part all is done. Nothing remains except what necessarily devolves on you to do.

There are some things essential to the salvation of the sinners which God cannot do. They must be done by the sinner himself. God cannot repent in your stead, you must repent for yourself. Neither can God believe on Christ for you; this also you must of necessity do yourself. The Deity cannot be born again for you, so that it shall answer instead of your "making yourself a new heart and a right spirit." It is no part of the provisions of salvation to relieve you of the responsibility of these duties. Indeed it is in the nature of the case impossible that you should be saved unless your own mind consents to obey God and accedes to the whole plan of salvation. No other being in the universe can give this consent of the mind in your stead, so as to exonerate you from the responsibility of doing it yourself.

But every thing that God could do, he has done. He knew the whole ground beforehand. His eye ran through the whole subject; he knew your guilt and condemnation, and consequent need of an atonement; he knew your ignorance and need of instruction; your waywardness and consequent need of guidance and quickening; your reluctance and aversion, and consequent need of mighty influences to constrain you to turn and live. Hence it is with the utmost truth that the Deity, looking over the whole case, says of you as of his ancient people, "what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

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And now in view of all that God has done to bless the sinner by putting in his hand a price of infinite value, how can we say less than this, that every sinner who has this price given him to get wisdom and will not use it, is a fool, really a fool in the worst sense of that term?

Sinner, your conduct is infinitely unreasonable. It would be wicked to call you any thing else than a fool. If any one should call you anything else than a fool, he would be a liar like yourself. You can rightly bear no other name than this, No other word so perfectly expresses your real character, and so well distinguishes you from all other beings in the universe. By pre-eminence, and in distinction from all other beings, you are a fool. Yes, a fool and a liar in the worst sense of the term are you--in the same sense in which Satan is a fool and a liar. --Did I say, in the same sense in which Satan is a fool? I take that back. The devil has no price put into his hands to get wisdom. Who knows that if he had, he would play the fool with it as you do? Go bear this price to hell, and then put it in the hands of Satan and his angels, and see if they will scorn it as you do. Let them have Bible societies there, and the glorious effusions of the Holy Spirit, and let the tidings ring through all the deep caverns of hell--"Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."--Who knows that they would hear with cold indifference, and spurn with proud contempt as some of you do? We are too fast then, in saying that Satan and his legions are as wicked fools as those ungodly sinners who will not have salvation. We should not condemn them before they are proved guilty. Put on trial, they might show vastly more wisdom than you do. It is by no means improbable that you are greater fools than they. We do not know that they would not reject the offer of eternal life. True they once played the fool when they broke away from their rightful allegiance to God. They did then just what you did when you began to sin; but no offers of mercy ever fell upon their ears. Who knows that they would have been so great fools as to have trampled Mercy underneath their feet? Surely they have never evinced that superlative folly which characterizes the sinner who will not have a redemption which costs him nothing but which cost the Son of God a cruel death.

But let us enter into some particulars which show the infinite folly and unreasonableness of the sinner's course.

1. Sinners prefer their own gratification to the happiness of God and of the universe. They had rather please themselves than please God, though they know that God's pleasure is perfectly right and perfectly vital to the happiness of the universe. O, what infinite folly

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to be willing to see the well-being of the universe put in jeopardy, or even sacrificed, to secure their own selfish gratification!

What should you think of a man who should see a city taking fire and know that by an effort he might extinguish the fire and save the city;--but prefers some slight gratification, and sees it burn down. He had rather read a novel, or finish his dinner, or play with a whistle;--any such paltry gratification he places before the saving of a city from devouring fire! O, you would cry out, What a contemptible fool! What a wicked fool, and a wretch! O, you would cry--What! would he stop to read his novel, or finish his dinner, or jingle a rattle-box, and give this mean gratification the preference over the salvation of a city from fire!--What a fool!

We do not call the fowls of the air or the beasts of the field fools, for they know no better;--but the beings whom God has given intelligence and who then make themselves like brutes, should be called fools in the worst sense of that term.

2. Sinners are fools because they give time the preference over eternity. These little interests that can endure but for a moment, they value more than those momentous interests that must endure through ceaseless ages. Just think of this! They not only hazard, but cast away eternal interests for those which are transient as a dream. If this is not folly, what can be?

3. Sinners prefer their own present gratification to eternal happiness with God. God promises them his own infinite smiles of love and favor; they of their own accord forfeit this blessedness every day they live for the sake of the pitiful pleasures of sin. What infinite folly is this!

4. Sinners are fools because they really care more for men than for God; care more for the good opinion of men than of God; are more afraid of offending men than God; care more to be loved by men than to be loved by God, and would sooner please man than God. All this you know is the fact. Some of you are conscious that it is your state of mind this very moment. You can all look back to the time when you practically acted and really felt as I have just described. You thought a thousand fold more of men than of God. Was there ever greater folly than this in hell?

How do you suppose that angels must regard this? What can be more wonderful to them than such folly in beings whom God has made capable of wisdom? What can astonish and amaze them more than to see how men treat God? How they must feel to see men treat their Infinite Father with absolutely no respect whatever--with not a

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thousandth part so much respect as they show to most of their fellow mortals! O, they never saw God so abused and insulted in their worlds of light and love! O, they cry out--why does God bear with such outrageous insult? Why does he let any sinner breathe his air or see his sun light another moment?

And if they wonder that God should bear with the sinner's folly, surely they cannot any the less wonder that sinners should be such fools. O, they say, why will those sinners lose heaven and go down to hell for absolutely no good reason whatever--nay, when every imaginable reason urges them to win eternal bliss and shun eternal woe?

5. Sinners show their folly inasmuch as they care more for their bodies than they do for their souls. What hosts there are over all the land who really care more for dress than they do for heaven; or more for the low forms of sensual gratification than for the noble enjoyments of benevolent affections. O what folly to put the body before the soul! And what is that body, sinner, for which you care so much? Pray what is it made of, and what is it? Made of the same matter which last year was gathered in from your wheat field--the same which a little farther back was carted out from the dung-hill;--now you are strutting about with a portion of this same substance in your body; and you are proud of it, and value it more than your immortal soul! And where may this choice body of yours be when another summer shall have come and gone? Where? There is a place for it on yonder hill, and there are worms there to consume it. Ah, sinner, is this worth more to you than the soul that never dies?

Your soul--what is it? A spark of God--a living, thinking agent, made like it's Author to exist onward, and still onward through everlasting ages. In its essential nature as intelligent, and moral, it is made like God. Like God, your soul must exist eternally, reaping forever the fruits of seed sown in these passing years of your existence.

And yet this soul you value less than that earthly body! You would think a man mad if he should pay more attention to his shoes than to his feet--if he should value the cloth he wears more than the body that wears it! Yet your folly is greater far than this.

6. The sinner's folly is apparent also in this; he prizes other books more than the Bible. He reads other authors much; the Bible little, or perhaps none at all.

What strange conduct is this. Consider, of what does the Bible treat? Is it merely of history, or of philosophy, or is it to be valued

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merely for its poetry? No, no; it is far more than this;--it is a guide from earth to heaven--rather a guide from the way of hell to the way of heaven; it leads away from the doom of the lost to the joys of the blest. It puts into your hands a pearl of great price. O how precious! But in its place you put Byron and Shakespeare--and what next? Perhaps Tom Thumb or Don Quixote--nothing can be so mean or so frivolous that you will not prefer it before the glorious word of God.

Some of you probably know so little about the Bible that you would not know whether the preacher had quoted from the Bible or the Koran! Shame on such ignorance of such a book as the Bible! Let me ask these young men and young women; how much have you read in your Bible the past year? Is it so much that you are advancing in that knowledge of God which it reveals? Are you sure that you have made some fresh accessions to your knowledge of the Bible during the past week? Suppose your Bible could speak and were called on to testify how much you had read in it;--what sort of testimony would it bear? If that Bible could also testify how much you have neglected its pages and how much you have read other books of far less importance; if it could testify also to the small interest you have felt when you seemed to be reading its sacred lines and to your great interest, when you have read other pages inspired with far other spirits;--what a testimony would be borne! How full of condemnation to your soul! Let this come home to every heart.

7. The sinner's madness appears also in this;--they postpone the one thing needful for almost any trifling matter. Religion is put off and made to give way to every thing else. One man pleads that he must pay his debts first; another must get his lessons first, or perhaps get through college first; and then, after all the more important things are done, he will attend to religion. Thus in practice religion is made the last of all things, and in time of being attended to it comes last of all. In theory, however, these same men will admit and even maintain that it should be first of all.

Now there can be no greater or surer mark of folly than to pursue a course directly the opposite of what we know to be right. This every sinner is doing.

You cannot conceive a more desperate folly in the universe than that of the sinner who has such a price put into his hands to get wisdom but who has no heart to improve it. Do you suppose there was ever heard of in the whole universe anything so shocking, so monstrous, so absurd, so foolish, so hateful, so devilish--devilish did I say?--so much worse than devilish, as this folly of the sinner who

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might buy heaven, but chooses to throw away his price and go to hell! O, this is the perfection of folly! Surely nothing in the line of folly can outdo this!

But we must pass now to answer the inquiry--"Why is this that such a price is put into the hands of sinners, when God who gives them the price foreknew the madness of their hearts?" Perhaps some are ready to think that God was not very wise to do so much for the salvation of the finally lost, and then leave things so that they do ultimately perish.

There are some things here to be taken into consideration in order to get the whole subject before us.

1. The making of these provisions has been instrumental in actually turning the hearts of many from sin to God. They could never have been saved if no such provision had been made. Their eternal happiness is a great good to the universe.

2. God has put this price into the hands of a great many who never use it, because in no other way could he give the price to those who would use it. In every age and country where the gospel has been preached, "some have believed the things spoken and some have believed not." How could the former have heard to their salvation, if the latter had not also been permitted to hear, although they refuse to obey and it issues in their damnation?

3. God doubtless designed to leave all sinners utterly without excuse. Hence He gives them the most perfect opportunity to secure their own salvation, and there leaves them--alone responsible for rejecting the gospel if so they choose, and thus deciding their own destiny. It is his policy to leave free agents to act freely and bear alone the responsibility of their own free actions. So shall "every mouth be stopped, and all the world" of the ungodly stand guilty before both God and the universe.

Again, it is plainly revealed that God's design in putting such a price under such circumstances into the hands of sinners is to glorify himself; that is, to pursue such a course as all the universe will approve as being perfectly holy and perfectly honorable to himself. They will see that God was moved throughout by the purest love--that every act of his, breathes good will to man--that God plainly has done and has intended to do all he wisely could do for the salvation of all, even of those who will finally choose death and have their choice. All intelligent beings will be perfectly convinced that no sinner ever perished because of any want of love for his soul on God's part, nor for want of any effort that God could reasonably and wisely make for

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his salvation. They will see that every lost soul is lost because they would not have salvation when God had done enough on his part, and nothing remained but for them to do theirs. Then, seeing all this, they will glorify God. They will most perfectly exonerate him from all responsibility for the eternal death of the sinner. They will infinitely applaud and adore both the wisdom and the love of God in this whole scheme of salvation.

And yet we often meet with a sinner who is full of impious fault-finding against God. Let us pause and reason with such a sinner.

Why should you look up into the face of your [M]aker and say, Did you not know that I should act just so? Your Maker might answer, yes, I foreknew it, but the universe did not, and they never would have known it if it had not taken place before their eyes. If I had forborne to create those who will finally perish and had simply told the universe how I foresaw they would have acted in case I had created them, no intelligent beings in heaven, earth, or hell, would have believed me. If I had attempted to show them how you would have rejected my dying Son, and done despite to my Spirit--how long you would have resisted every effort I could make--how you would have hardened your heart under the richest mercies I could have shown you, and forced your way to hell through the strongest persuasions, and fiercest terrors I could have thrown in your pathway to ruin, no one would have believed it possible. Suppose I had done just what you now demand; suppose I had forborne to make provisions of grace for those who would despise them, and had forborne to create those sinners, who if created would not embrace the gospel, and instead of letting such sin and such grace develop itself in action, had simply proclaimed what it would have been; who would have believed me? Neither the folly of the rejecting sinner, nor the grace of the long-suffering Savior could have been believed if facts had not compelled belief.

It is doubtless infinitely wise in God to make the fullest possible manifestations of his own love and wisdom. He will so develop his own course towards the wicked that no stain can attach to his own blessed throne. He will so arrange all his course that no suspicion can arise in heaven, no murmur spring up in hell.

O what glorious developments there will be of the great fact that God is love! This alone will explain the reason why there is a price put into the sinner's hands to get wisdom, though he has no heart to improve it.

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1. Incidental to this arrangement is the fact that the sinner's refusing to improve the price put into his hands will greatly aggravate his own guilt. It must be so. No sinner can possibly avoid this result. If you will not improve your facilities for knowing and obeying God, and securing heaven, you must become vastly more guilty than without this price in your hands you could have been. The Bible is most explicit on this point. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the final day than for those cities which Christ taught. Every body knows that reason harmonizes on this point with revelation.

2. Your ultimate damnation will be greatly aggravated if you will utterly reject this price put into your hands for wisdom. It had been better for you never to have heard of the gospel--yea; better never to have been born than to have salvation made possible and then rejected by your foolish guilty choice.

Perhaps you would stop me here and ask, Why then did God give me birth at all? Why in such a land as this; why among Bibles, Sabbaths, and Christian friends? Why did He give me all these things when he knew that I would abuse them, and thus aggravate my own damnation?"

Sinner, does it become you to ask such questions as these? Are you not perfectly free in all you do? Is it not of your own free choice that you keep on in sin, despite of all God does to stop you and turn you back to obedience? Are you not most fully conscious that you pursue your career of rebellion against God, of choice, and of choice do not embrace the Lord Jesus as your Savior? Who then have you to blame but yourself?

You may lie down at last in hell, yet will God appear glorious in all that he has done. He will appear before all heaven, and all hell too, to have been kind and most sincere--most truly desirous of your salvation; yea infinitely concerned and anxious to save you. So anxious that he spared not his own Son, but made him for a propitiation for the sins of the world. And who has fought God in all his efforts to save you? Who, but yourself? Who then is in fault? Who must bear the responsibility of the sin of your soul? Surely not its Maker, for he sent his own Son to save that soul?[,] Have you done as much to save it? Nay, have you done any thing to save it? Have you not done everything you could to destroy it? Then on whom lies the guilt and responsibility of its eternal ruin?

Now, for the sake of relieving you of the burden of this responsibility and guilt, shall the Deity withhold these glorious

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developments of his own wisdom and love? Shall he, for your sakes, rob the universe of the blessings accruing from these developments?

The text rather assumes than asserts the fact that the sinner has no heart to improve his price for salvation, yet this is an appalling fact. None can deny it. Precisely this is the great and the only difficulty in the way of your being saved. You need this salvation greatly, but you do not feel that need, you do not care for this salvation; you don't desire it and ask it with any earnestness which at all corresponds with its value. How can you expect to find by such seeking? You long for happiness--not for holiness. You would fain be saved from hell and not from sin. For a salvation from sin you have no heart whatever, you would like to be saved from hell by some scheme of your own providing; but this scheme of God's providing, you scorn. You cast it from you, and dash it away. You cannot bear to be wholly indebted to the grace of God for it, and you do not like another claim which it imposes, viz. that you should wholly die to sin.

Such an abuse of one's own intelligence or reason is the greatest curse a man can inflict upon himself. It is infinitely more wretched and cursed than to be a beast, nay, more than to be transformed to a beast. I have sometimes seen persons who were convinced of this. They saw themselves so guilty and so utterly without excuse that they envied the very beasts, and longed to become beasts themselves. Yes, they have sometimes cried out--O that I might become like the toad, or that dog which is kicked about the streets. O, sinner, if you will not yield to the law of your reason, how dreadful to you, must be the curse of having a reason! How fearful the guilt and the doom of being made a rational being, and of having prostituted your reason to the basest of folly!

Again it is impossible really and truly to respect impenitent sinners. Nobody can respect them. They do not respect one another. They do not even respect themselves. Their course is such as most utterly to forbid all proper self-respect. Self-respect demands for its foundation what by no means exists in their case. There can be no proper self-respect unless we are conscious of acting according to the best light we have. Every man who acts otherwise must be, in his honest moments, ashamed of himself. Hence a man can have no just self-respect, who knows that he has the price of salvation placed in his hands, and yet is conscious of having no heart to use it.

Plainly then, a man who forfeits his own self-respect, and the respect of all mankind, has no right to demand the respect of his fellow men. You cannot respect him, any more than you can respect

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the devil. How would you feel if you should see the devil? Could you treat him with respect? Suppose you had before your mind in an instant his whole character--his towering intellect, and his utter perversion of it to hellish purposes--his whole career of malice and rebellion against God; could you respect him? Add to all this the supposition that Satan has had a Savior provided and offered, and that he has proudly and madly spurned this salvation; suppose that God has given him the Holy Spirit, and watched over him and kept him out of his deserved place in hell for half a century, "not willing that he should perish, but that he should come to repentance;" and yet Satan had only grown tenfold more desperate in sin. Then, knowing all this of him, could you respect him? Oh, no; your soul would recoil from such a monster in wickedness with horror! Oh, you would cry, what do I see? The very prince of devils--a being who has fought against God, who has spurned the redeeming love, and the redeeming blood of Jesus--who has resisted and grieved away the Holy Ghost, and has madly sought to ruin himself forever and ever! O what a being is this? Could you forbear to curse him? Your soul would so deeply execrate such conduct, methinks the spirit of cursing would burn in your soul, and you could not forbear to cry aloud; O cursed be the monster that can fight against God, and deny his son, and do despite to his Spirit! Let curses scathe the being who can stultify his intelligence for the sake of being as wicked as he can be.

And in these feelings of deep horror at such dreadful sin and folly, there might be no malevolence; it might be only the deep response of the inner soul against such wrong, the burning testimony of uprightness against such horrible perversity. Listen to St. Paul. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, accursed." So the pure spirits in heaven feel. When they see your wickedness they will be horrified, just as you would be to see the Devil himself, and to see disclosed the depths of his depravity.

Again, it is impossible that we should not intensely loathe the conduct of sinners. It infinitely deserves to be loathed, and all right-minded beings must loathe it.

Again, it is just as impossible that sinners should not loathe themselves whenever they come to take a fair and full view of their own conduct. Now, I beg of you, sinners, not to complain of others for not giving you that respect which you cannot give yourself. The fact is, that both you and we are so made that we cannot rationally have any other feelings than compassionate abhorrence of such a character as yours. All mortal beings must abhor you. All hell, all

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heaven, and if there be any other moral beings in the universe, they need but to see what you are, and what you have done, and they will utterly abhor you.

Let me go round and ask this assembly. Young friend, you have lived here these many years in impenitence, how ought this church to regard you? you have been rejecting salvation all your life. You have lived through several revivals in this place, hardening your heart more and more, and becoming more and more mad in sin. Four years or more perhaps you have spent in an institution founded in prayer, watched with tears, taught by men who labor for Christ, and supported by the "two mites" gathered from the humble cottages where there are tears and prayers for Zion; in such an institution you have passed your four years term, and still can scorn the service and the redeeming blood of Jesus. O, when you came up unto this stage to deliver your commencement speech, would it be strange if hosts of the "spirits unseen, who walk the earth" should break through the curtain that commonly veils them from our view and vent their hisses and curses upon you before the great assembly? Would it be an undeserved doom if God himself should hurl you from this stage to hell?

It is at least safe to say that there would be bitter grief over the career of folly. How does that praying mother feel? I knew him well, she says, he was needy and I took him into my family and boarded him; he was sick, and I nursed him; he was far from God and I prayed for him, and with many tears have I besought him to return to his own Savior--O must it be in vain! And there is the agent who labored to collect funds to sustain the Institution. Faint and sick he held on his weary way, gathering up the little offerings made by piety and self-denial upon the altar of Immanuel. He wanted to raise up a spiritual ministry; he felt that the world needed such a ministry and he would not shrink from being spent in such a service. And yet, to such an institution you come and pervert all its facilities for education that you may train yourself for mightier warfare against God, and for pulling down a heavier damnation upon your own head.

You know that these things are so. Then do not call this scolding, and let your heart rise up against it. No. It is not scolding, but is truth and deep compassionate sympathy. When you get to hell, will you parade yourself in your pride and supposed dignity? Nay; you will hide your head in shame and everlasting self-reproach.

When sinners set up a claim to the respect of their fellow men, they are dishonest. They demand what they know no man can

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honestly give. What then can we say of you? Only that you are a poor degraded fool.

Now, do not suppose from any thing that I have said, that angels and spirits do not pity you. They do. I pity all the devils in hell. Often, as I have thought of their condition, I have said, "poor devils, poor devils, how much I pity you!"

Do the people treat you kindly? Every thing that is better than the fires and curses of hell, is better than you deserve--is gratuitous kindness. Don't imagine that this is real respect for you. No, it ought not to be, for you don't respect yourself and never can, so long as you madly fight against God and against your own well-being.

It is an infinite pity that you should have this great price in your hands, and no heart to use it. O, what an infinite pity! You need salvation, and God has in great mercy, and at great expense brought it within your reach. What is that which the sinner holds in his hands! O, it is the price to get wisdom: alas, that he will not use it! Salvation is brought to his parched and burning lips, but he will not drink. Madness is in his heart.

Go to your closet sinner, and tell God--say to him; Thou hast held me up from hell unto this day, and given for me thine own son to die. Christ put into my hands the price of wisdom--but Lord, I have not the least inclination to use it. I feel nothing in my heart but contempt of this great salvation. I cannot forsake my sins to day, if I knew I should thus secure the richest glories of Heaven.

Now, sinner, be honest enough to say this before God, and confess it before men. Fix your eye steadfastly on this dreadful pride and madness of your own heart, till you loathe, abhor, and forever renounce it.

SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF GOD FIRST

August 27, 1845

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." --Matthew 6:33.

The Jews were greatly mistaken in respect to the nature of that kingdom which their Messiah was to set up. They expected a kingdom like the kingdoms of this world, invested with earthly splendor, fitted to aggrandize their nation, and minister to their national pride. Christ sought to undeceive them. He told them that his kingdom did not come with outward show--that it must be within men, and that it was not of this world. He would have them understand that it was spiritual, and not temporal; demanding the homage of the heart, and not the pomp and pageant, so commonly rendered to royalty. The simple idea of this kingdom is that Christ himself reigns in the hearts of his people, securing the perfect submission of the will, and the consecration of every power to himself. Thus his kingdom is within; it is invisible. It puts on no outward glare. In the hearts of men he writes his laws by his Spirit, and thus rules over them to deliver them from Satan and sin, and translate them into his own kingdom of peace and love.

The subjects of this Kingdom are shut up to no particular location. Each in the sphere where providence has called him to reside and to his master's will, may there be truly a member of this invisible kingdom. Christ may be reigning over him, and he may be indeed a subject and a citizen of this kingdom of God.

This is the kingdom we are required in our text to seek. To seek it, implies that we seek to belong to it--seek to know Christ's will and to do it--seek to be recognized by Christ as one of his subjects, and seek to promote the interests of this kingdom, as all true subjects of any kingdom do, and should do if the government deserves their support. He who truly seeks first the kingdom of God, seeks to be as really and perfectly governed by Christ now, as the holy in Heaven are. He would have Christ living and reigning within him so that every thought shall be brought into obedience.

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We are required, not only to seek the kingdom of God, but also "his righteousness." The original word here rendered righteousness, is sometimes rendered justification. The radical idea seems to be simply this--being right with God--coming into a state of acceptance with him. This we know must in our case include both the free pardon of past sin and the being sanctified so that we are not actually sinning. So long as his law condemns us for unpardoned sin, or so long as we are actually sinning, it would be monstrous to suppose that God can accept us as righteous, and that we are right in his sight.

Hence, when the righteousness of God as in our text, is spoken of as a thing for us to seek, it must include both pardon and sanctification.

The command to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness first, enjoins upon us to treat this subject as of absolute and supreme importance. This must be the great business of our lives. Nothing else is allowed to have any practical importance compared with this.

The injunction--seek God's kingdom first, implies that we seek it first in point of time. It should be the first thing attended to. It is not merely to be admitted as of first importance, but should really be put first in point of time. The first thoughts of each morning should be given to it. And whenever God's word, or his providence brings before our mind the invitations or the claims of this kingdom, we are to remember that now is the accepted time. Now, first in order, before any thing else, let the concerns of your soul with the kingdom of God and his righteousness have the first regard.

It is also implied that we seek this kingdom with supreme earnestness. This is fully involved in the points just spoken of. We are required to agonize to enter in at the strait gate--to press hard for entrance, with the greatest earnestness, and the most strenuous efforts. Let the soul be indeed in agony to carry the point and make sure of admission into the kingdom of God. To the same purport are very many passages which I might quote from the Scriptures, all going to show that God requires us to seek with all our hearts, to lay out the utmost strength of our souls, if we would successfully resist the devil, and really break the chains of sin, and secure so great a treasure as eternal life.

It is also implied that we seek the kingdom of God with perseverance. We must press on till we obtain. This is the great business of life--to get back from revolt, to obedience--from our state of rejection, cast out from God, to a state of acceptance, where we shall be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Then let us

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persevere in seeking the whole of this change until it be completely effected. The nature of the case demands such perseverance. The blessings within reach are too great and precious to be lost for want of perseverance in the pursuit. They will amply reward you for a whole life of most earnest seeking.

Again, the kingdom of God would be the object of supreme engrossment. You must bring all your powers into action. Your intellect must be thoroughly awake--your sensibility to the claims of truth must be all alive, and your will must act with inflexible decision. Absolutely your whole mind must be aroused to its utmost exertion.

Still again, the command implies that every thing else must be postponed to this. The spirit of the precept demands that every thing else be thrown into the back-ground, and this be placed foremost of all.

When Christ was upon earth, he admitted no apology for delay--would allow nothing to interpose between the soul, and its present duty. On a certain occasion, Christ called a man to follow himself. The man replied, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." No, said Christ, "leave the dead to bury their dead"--the dead in sin to bury the natural dead--"but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." One might suppose that if any circumstances would justify delay, these would. God has said, "Honor thy father;" and the instinctive feelings of propriety, as well as respect for the dead are wont to secure a prompt regard to these last offices which we can pay to the departed. Shall we then forsake a father's burial, and leave to others, yea to wicked men, these last obsequies? Yea, let the dead bury their dead; thou hast a call from God--go thou and preach his kingdom.

But "let me go first and bid them farewell which are at home in my house." No; said Christ, ["]no man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Now it is plain that our Savior puts these strong cases for the very purpose of enforcing strongly this point--that nothing else whatever may be placed before prompt obedience to this great precept, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

The spirit of the text requires that every thing shall be promptly sacrificed that comes in competition with this. Let nothing else come up to crowd this aside; seek this first; make this your present business; if your father is dead, no matter, attend to this; cut off your right hand if it interfere with this work--make any sacrifice whatever which needs to be made in order to your successful prosecution of

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this great work of seeking first the kingdom of God. No consideration whatever may be allowed to divert the mind from this subject.

To this command Christ has annexed a promise. This next claims our attention.

You will observe that the condition of this promise is, "Seek first the kingdom of God;"--as if he had said "If you will seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, you shall have all these earthly things of which he had been speaking. You shall be fed as surely as I feed the ravens, and clothed as well as I clothe the lilies. You need not be anxious for these things. It is my business to provide them. Mark the lilies of the field; how they grow--they toil not--they spin not; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. And if God so gloriously attires the grass which grows only for a day, and is burnt tomorrow, will he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" [""]Therefore, be not anxious about these earthly things. Let the Gentiles who know not their Father on high, seek after these things anxiously--but remember that your Father knows your wants and will take care to supply them. Only, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Consider also that your anxieties about these things can do no good. Which of you by ever so much anxiety can add to his stature one cubit?

We are to understand this promise as including all that is necessary for us, either in time or eternity. The connection however, shows that Christ had principal reference to provisions for our earthly wants. He knows what these wants are. He formed the constitution which creates them; and he passed through this very state of physical want himself. He understood how strong the tendencies of our minds are to excessive anxiety about the requisite supply. Hence he says--I will take away from you all apology for neglecting the things of My kingdom--you shall have no excuse for not making religion the chief thing; let it be your first business--first in point of time--first in your esteem--first in the earnestness with which you seek it; then trust me to make up all the other things that you need. Do My business and I will do yours. Take care of My kingdom--throw your whole soul into its interests, and I will supply your physical wants. Do your duty as I enjoin it, and I will be responsible for these lesser things.

It is very easy to see that for Christ to take this course, and require us to seek the kingdom of God first is very reasonable, even though he had annexed no promise; because,

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1. It is of supreme importance to us that we should attend to these spiritual things. The infinite well-being of the soul depends upon it.

2. The time is so short: and the fact that we know not how short it is, renders it indispensable that we should attend to it immediately. Life is so uncertain that we can place no dependence upon the prospect of doing another day what we put over from this. "Who knoweth what a day may bring forth?"

3. Another consideration: Every hour's delay makes success more doubtful, and your peril of damnation more portentous. Your heart will be more hardened, temptations will have gained more power, and a mightier struggle will be demanded ere victory can be sure.

4. If you neglect but for one moment too long, it will be fatal. There is a moment beyond which if you neglect seeking the kingdom of God, you can never attend to it with success thereafter. If you wait beyond that point, no mercy remains; the door of heaven is shut against you; your damnation is certain.

We cannot know where this point is. It may be this hour, this moment. This sinner, may be your last opportunity. If so, how important that Christ should require you to seek salvation now! And how vital that you should heed and obey the call!

5. Unless the subject is treated as of supreme importance, it is of no use to attend to it at all. Some persons attend to it just enough to make their damnation as certain as it can possibly be made, and as dreadful. Let one attend just enough to quiet his conscience and lull his fears--just enough to keep the truth before his mind and learn to resist it--just enough to habituate himself to resist the claims of God and do despite to the Spirit of grace; he is in the worst condition possible. He is commonly decent enough to prevent being aroused and alarmed by his own open wickedness. He does nothing that shocks his own moral sense and startles him from his deep lethargy; so he moves along waxing daily worse and worse, till he wakes at last in hell.

Now it were better for this man to let the subject entirely alone than to attend to it in this sleepy, profitless, heart-hardening way. It is better also for the sake of others that he should let the subject alone than give it only such attention; for he will greatly stumble others and lead them down to perdition. His example induces others to follow him; and if his course is the most ruinous that can be for himself, so will it be for his followers. But it was in view of this very influence

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that Christ said of some, "I would that thou wert cold or hot; because thou are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Christ therefore prefers that you would let the subject entirely alone, rather than attend to it just enough to quiet your fears, evade conviction, harden your heart, induce others to ruin, and never do your duty.

6. The supreme importance of the subject would render Christ's command in the text more reasonable even without the annexed promise. For even if we were to suffer the want of bread and the worst pinchings of poverty, this were infinitely better than to lose the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Therefore, it must be wise to seek the kingdom of God first.

It would be supreme folly to grasp the lesser good so eagerly as to lose that which is infinitely greater. How much more now, since to him who seeks first God's kingdom, the promise is given--all these things shall be added unto thee. Indeed we have no reason left us for neglecting obedience to this great and good command.

My main object in this discourse is to bring before you, and illustrate several

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1. The command and promise in our text strongly illustrate God's great care for our souls. If God had no care for us, or but little care for us, he would not use so much effort to urge us to secure salvation. Why is it that God reiterates these commands so incessantly, giving line upon line, and precept upon precept? Only because he would awaken and urge us to those efforts which our case demands. But especially I ask, Why does God append to his commands to great and precious promises? He knows our circumstances. He sees how great our wants are, and how many, and therefore he says--your soul is in danger and will be lost if you suffer your chief attention to be engrossed in cares for earthly things. I entreat you, therefore, to take care of your soul, and I will see to your physical wants. Do you by all means seek first my kingdom and righteousness, and I will see that your "bread shall be given and your water shall be sure."

This is just like an infinite Father. It is as if a father should come out from the East to visit his son in Ohio, and should find him almost worn down with toil, laboring hard to get in his wheat and his hay that he might feed his family and pay his debts;--but his great labor and care are crushing his health and putting his very life in peril. See, he raises blood, and his cold night sweats but too plainly show that he

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must change his course and get relief, or his wife is a widow and his babes are orphans. The father sees all this in an instant. My son, he says, attend first to your precious health and do all you can to restore it and prolong your life; I will take care of your hay and your wheat; I will see that all the other things you need shall be added if you will only secure your precious life. So he writes home to his distant family that they need not expect him home again for a long time yet;--he finds business with his son of more importance than anything else can be.

Now this would be a striking case of parental sympathy and interest--just such a case as we have in our text of the parental care of our great Father for our salvation.

2. The disinterestedness of God is very affectingly manifested in this command and promise. What would you say of a father who should do as I have just represented? Just leave all care of your business to me, he says to his son; go at once into your house and take your bed as much as your health needs; and he sends home to the dear ones there that they must forego the pleasure of seeing him for some months yet, for here are other interests not his own which his heart will not allow him to leave neglected; this father you would say manifested a most admirable degree of disinterested affection. You might perhaps naturally expect all this of one who was really a father, yet it would show that indeed he had a father's heart. So of God. In making these provisions for supplying our earthly wants and in taking from our minds the burden of earthly cares, he has shown himself a God of love. That he should be so careful to urge us up to duty and to remove all hindrances so that nothing need divert or interrupt us--this indeed shows us a God full of goodness and rich in love.

3. To refuse to be diverted from God's service by worldly cares and to give our whole heart to the Lord, is the only way to make sure of earthly good. If any of you would make sure of whatever temporal good you need, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Then you shall have a promise which is infinitely more secure than any stocks or deposits in all the land. It will be safe to trust God. He who makes the rain and the sunshine; he who clothes the lilies and feeds the young ravens, knows how to reach your wants and fulfil his own promises. He cannot lack either the resources or the will.

4. Unbelief urges a very different course from this. Unbelief always professes to be sorely afraid of tempting God by neglecting temporal matters. So much afraid is it of overdoing this thing of having faith in God's explicit promises!

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Now it cannot be doubted that the Savior meant to rebuke this unbelief and urge strongly the duty of casting all our care upon God, only taking care on our part that we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. He meant to show us that we have no room for fear about earthly good, provided we take all due care of our souls and of all the things of his kingdom.

And this was in our Lord a most wise and beneficent foresight. For who does not know that for one reason or for another, almost all persons are excusing themselves for neglecting the soul. The student must study. Most certainly, and without doubt, he must now get his lessons. What! do you call him away from his lessons to seek the kingdom of God first! What! he cries out, shall I not lose my education if I listen to such a call? Now is my harvest time--now is the time to cultivate my mind--I came here to study--it were a pity if I may not get my lessons first, and seek the kingdom of God when I have a convenient season!

Yet let me say here that ever so much proper attention to religion can never be any loss to us. It never robs us of other things which are really better. The student who seeks first the kingdom of God rationally, will not need to neglect any useful study. He cannot lose any thing on the whole by putting each and all things in their proper places, and giving to each its due measure of attention. The wise-minded student may not know so much of Shakespeare or of Byron--may have less to do with Homer or with Virgil; but he will not therefore fail of learning the things that are most useful. I do not hesitate to say that the student who shall obey this precept will come out ahead of all his fellow-students who disobey it; he will not be an intellectual drone, a lounging idler, only half awake to the value of knowledge, and only half alive to pursue it. No, his mind will apprehend the value of truth and will press forward with quenchless longings to attain it. Hence his mind will move under such impulses and be encompassed with such an atmosphere of light that he will be a better man, will have more of all useful knowledge, and will have a better balanced mind than any of his associates who seek first something else and not God's kingdom.

The same may be said of men of any condition in life--of those who till the ground--of those who fill the shop, or move behind the counter. Let a man any where obey this precept; you will find that his temporal wants will be supplied. He may not get so rich or get rich so fast or by such means as shall load himself down too much to run the

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Christian race at all--so much as to crush himself down to hell--this may not be his course, but he will have all real good.

5. Every thing really valuable must be lost by disobeying this command. If a man neglects the kingdom of God, nothing which he can obtain is really valuable to him. Suppose he gets an education. This will only aggravate his final condemnation.

I wonder if this is usually understood. Do these young men and young women understand this principle? It is plain and undeniable. Our future happiness and misery will be as our mental cultivation and as the development of our intelligence. The more mental power and the wider range of views we have, the larger is the scope for bitter reflection, and the keener the pangs of self-reproach and remorse in that world where the wicked become their own worst tormentors.

Did you ever consider what Byron's state of mind must have been when he spent whole nights in writing poems to save his soul from the unutterable agonies of reflection upon himself--to keep himself from rolling in hell while he yet lived upon the earth! And do you ask, why was this? Because his mind was highly cultivated, and its original endowments were of the very first order--because he saw truth and its relations clearly, and felt its force deeply--and therefore could not bear the terrible reactings of such mental powers when they turned in upon his soul to scourge and lash himself as the guiltiest being on earth. In mental power and in self-inflicted torment too, he is like the devil. Perhaps one more like the devil never trod the earth.

Sinner, if you don't mean to serve God, I advise you to be as near an idiot as possible. Keep away from knowledge; go beyond the Rocky Mountains--go and fish for whales--shut off every flashing ray of light you can--contract your mind within the narrowest possible compass; don't seek knowledge unless you mean to pile up a mass of fuel that shall burn your soul forever. Keep away from knowledge and mental cultivation. What have you to do with an expanded mind, and sharpened intellect? It will only inflict the keener stings of remorse and furnish you the more scope for everlasting self-torment.

I said, nothing is valuable to you unless you mean to seek first the kingdom of God. Every enjoyment, even life itself, is a curse to him who is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Every abused mercy augments that fearful treasure of wrath. The sooner you stop eating and drinking and breathing the better. "Every beating pulse you tell" will rise up in the judgment against you to swell the evidence of your great guilt in not seeking life when God besought

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you to live. It were better for you not to have lived at all unless you seek first the blessing of God and eternal life.

Hence, if you neglect to seek first the kingdom of God in pretense of seeking other good first, you are infinitely mistaken. You will lose the good you seek, and also the greater good you would not seek but should have sought. Let me tell that student who neglects the kingdom of God and drives his studies that he may keep up with his class or keep before them; that he drives on upon his own ruin. The good you seek to gain will be an infinite curse to you. If it should prove a blessing, it must be in spite of God's threatened curses; and surely you ought to know that it is a vain thing to fight against God. Surely whom the Lord blesses is blessed, and whom the Lord curses is cursed. You will find it so.

6. Again, it is plainly implied that if we seek first the kingdom of God, we shall not only have these other things promised, but have the kingdom of God too. Certainly our Lord meant to imply that we should have the very thing we seek first.

7. If we really obey this command, it will be manifest in all the arrangements of our common life. Observe a business man who obeys this command. He never takes upon himself any business which must crowd out a proper attention to religion. You will see in all his arrangements, that he makes provision for religious duties as much as he makes provision to eat his daily meals. When did you ever know a man lay out his business so as to reverse no time for his daily food and nightly sleep? Go into any house and you see provision made for sleeping and eating. You will see perhaps articles of food and means of cooking it. You will say--well, these people expect doubtless to eat and to sleep. This enters into their arrangements. So of every man who means to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. Whatever his principle business is, you will see his arrangements made accordingly. So long as he has his reason, he never can make his arrangements for his time so as to leave his principal business unprovided for. If his principal business be to seek the kingdom of God, everything will be shaped accordingly. He will no sooner fail to do this than fail to make his family arrangements for eating and sleeping.

But let us go into that student's room. We can probably learn what he is seeking first. The door opens; we pass along in; there are his books; there lies Byron and Shakespeare; let us look for his Bible. Aye, his Bible is not there; we look for it on the table, for possibly he keeps it there and goes to it regularly for his spiritual bread--but no, it

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is not there. Look under his pillow. Alexander the Great is said to have slept always with his Homer under his pillow--but not so with this student. You find no Bible there. At last it is found in the bottom of his trunk. It has not been opened since his mother put it there on the very day he left that home of his childhood. It was his mother who put it there we know; for see, she has marked many passages with her tears. O, she did hope this dear son would ponder and learn to love those blessed pages. With what throes of heart, such as none but a parent feels, did she send him away and commit him to her own Father and Savior. O, has he forgotten all a mother's prayers?

But perhaps the Bible has been taken out of his trunk, but has lain on his shelf unmoved until the dust has coated it over--a witness against him that he heeds not the words of eternal life. Or you find it at last on his table, but under his Cicero and a huge pile of newspapers and novels--ah, that youth is not seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. His arrangements are not made at all for this end.

But there is another scene. Here is a student's Bible worn with much and constant use--wet with many tears--Oh, how often has his soul been feasted as with angel's food from those exceeding great and precious promises!

It is said of one of the Apostles that after his death his knees were found to be callous from his frequent and long-continued kneeling in prayer. So it might be with you if you were really given to prayer and mighty wrestlings with God.

8. When persons are really engaged about their souls, they will not suffer themselves to be placed in circumstances so engrossing as to be crowded away from seeking God supremely. They would dread such a state worse than death.

9. Many hold this truth in theory who after all utterly deny it in practice. Almost every body will admit that we ought to seek first the kingdom of God, and that religion is the supreme business of life; yet how almost constantly is this denied in practice?

As I have kept my eye upon the course of things in this community, I have seen almost every thing crowded in here to draw men away from God. The students get up society after society to cultivate the intellect;--but where are the societies got up to cultivate the heart? If all were right here, should we not see a different course of things; should we not see something crowded in almost everywhere to make the heart better--to awaken religious feeling and arouse attention to religious truth, and carry abroad a religious

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influence over all hearts. O, if this truth were really believed, we should see it reduced to practice by the students and by all the church, let their vocation be what it may. But now we see a great many students constantly pressed--full of engrossing business and wasting care--and why? What are they doing? Are they making ceaseless efforts to promote their own or others spirituality? Their efforts surely are ardent and vigorous enough to lead you to suppose so. O, if such were only the fact!

But judging from the actual life of many of these students, one would suppose that Christ had said--Seek first to get your lessons--seek first to master your Algebra or your Latin. And the course of things in the business community is such as it might rightly be if Christ had said--Seek first to get your business done in good time and in the most perfect manner;--first see to it that your crops are duly sown and timely gathered; then shall all needful things be added to you.

Such is a very common state of things in this community. It is such also with many of the students, but not with all as I am happy to know. There are some here who show that their hearts are upon the Zion of God. But having made these exceptions, the rest seem to live as if Christ had said to the student--Get your studies first, and you shall lose nothing in point of spirituality.

The fact is, if we are ever going to be seriously and thoroughly pious, we must make all our arrangements accordingly. Wherever you see a man thoroughly pious, you see a man who in fact does make all his arrangements with a view to this great object. He will not let labor or business of any kind interfere with his going to meeting, when he can go without fearing to displease God by neglecting some other apparent duty. His seasons of prayer are too precious to be lost. He cannot on any account forego the pleasure of meeting with God a few times at least each day. He is conscious that he needs to be strengthened daily with might in the inner man. Hence he cannot live without prayer.

10. No Institution can do much to bless the world unless it practically sets religion foremost. I mean what I say--practically; not in theory only, but in practice. An Institution which takes some other practical ground, may make students intellectual--may train them well enough for the bar or for medicine; but students so trained, must suffer fearfully in their spirituality, and if they go into the ministry, they can do little indeed to promote the salvation of souls. They cannot have power without deep piety, and they cannot have this

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unless they seek it first. The first place is its only right place. Make piety a secondary thing in any Institution, and the Spirit of God feels himself dishonored, and cannot bless.

Oh, brethren, let us anchor this Institution fast to this only right principle--religion the chief concern--seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

FAITH IN ITS RELATIONS TO THE LOVE OF GOD

October 22, 1845

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." --John 3:16

By the "world" in this passage is meant the human race. The passage affirms God's love for the whole human family.

The word "perish" does not mean annihilation, nor does the word "life" denote mere existence. It is plain that here, as often elsewhere, these terms are contrasted, so that if "life" meant mere existence, "perish" might, by the force of the antithesis, denote non-existence. But neither of these words can have these sense in the text. In fact, the words perish, destruction, &c., do not primarily denote annihilation, but only a change in the mode of existence. It is one of the greatest errors in biblical interpretation to force upon them this meaning. This narrow, short-sighted view of their meaning entirely overlooks both the glory of that life which comes to us through Christ, and the fearfulness of that woe which awaits the finally impenitent.

But we must pursue the thread of our discourse and enquire,

I. INTO THE KIND OF LOVE HERE SPOKEN OF.

II. WHAT IT IS TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST.

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN TRUE FAITH.

I. The kind of love here spoken of.

In the text we are told that God so loved the world as to give his Son for it. Does the emphasis upon the word so turn solely upon the degree of this love without respect to its nature? Does the text mean simply to assert that God loved the world so much, or that his love was moreover of such a nature that He could yield up his Son for a lost world? Plain the latter comes into consideration, and we are to study the nature as well as the degree of this love.

Directing our attention to this point it is obvious to remark,

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1. That this was not the love of complacency. Complacency is a delight in the character of its object, or in other words is benevolence modified by the consideration of a holy character in its object. Now at the time God so loved us as to give his Son, there was nothing in us upon which complacency could rest. God so loved us as to form the purpose of giving up his Son before any soul was converted--while the race lay before his mind in the attitude of rebels. God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. It could therefore have been no love of complacency which loved us while yet sinners.

2. It was not the love of fondness or natural affection--such love as parents have for their children. Some seem to suppose that this was the love of God--but they utterly mistake its real nature.

3. But positively this love is without doubt benevolence--good-willing, a disposition to promote the highest good of beings, not, as some conceive of it, without regard to their persons as individuals, but with such regard to individuals as to their own personal state and wants. This in general is doubtless the true conception of this love of God which induced him to give up his Son.

4. This love on the part of God is entirely disinterested. This is most fully apparent in the fact that God was willing to make personal sacrifices for the end in view. Instead of having any immediate good to himself as the object, the text tells us that he so loved the world as to make the greatest possible personal sacrifice--that of giving up his own Son to ignominy, torture, death. What more decided proof could be given of disinterested love than this!

5. It was impartial love. It fasted on the race, on all the individuals of the race, and on all without respect to persons. It had no special favors for certain castes; it looked not at certain classes as such; it made no distinction between the rich and the poor, the free and the bond, the high or the low, the white or the red or the black; no; it rested impartially and equally on all. It looked not with such an eye as men often cast over their fellows--scorning some and adoring others; nay, it was an eye of pity and love for all. It raised no other question than this--What is the value of each person's well-being? Then each is appreciated according to its real value.

6. It was a holy love. Intense affection it was indeed for sinning man; yet had it no complacency towards sin. Nothing could be more utterly opposed to sin than this love which sought the good of sinners. Else it had never devised such a plan of salvation, had never made a sacrifice of the just for the unjust. Love sought earnestly to save, yet

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only by putting away all iniquity--only by providing a way of pardon which fully honored the divine law--only by providing such influences as should effectually cleanse the soul from its pollutions.

7. This love was just. God could not let his love conflict with justice. He could not leave this throne to suffer by the pardon of sin without such an atonement as should fully sustain the dignity of law and effectually secure the interests of other beings who might be tempted to sin. God's love was blended with justice, else he had not given up his Son.

8. This love of God for sinners was real. Sometimes persons speak of both the love and the wrath of God, as if it had no reality--as if the Bible language on these points was wholly an accommodation to human weakness, meaning perhaps that God will act as men do when they love or are angry, while yet no such affections as these really exist in the divine mind. But the truth is that God really feels, yes, really has the very affections and states of mind which these words describe--and in all their most fervid intensity. His love is most intense, most sincere--all-absorbing--self-consuming. If you have experienced it you know how strong affections sometimes absorb and seem to consume the very vitality of the soul; the physical powers fail under the consuming, exhausting influence of intense mental action.

You know it was said of Christ, "The zeal of thine house has eaten me up"--as if his very being were consumed by his burning zeal for the house and the cause of God. It seems clear from several intimations in scripture that our Savior had the appearance of premature old age. "So marred was his visage more than any man and his form more than the sons of men," that kings and nations wondered at the strange spectacle.

On one occasion the Jews said to him "Thou art not yet fifty years old." We may infer from this that he appeared to be nearly fifty years old, though in fact as the Bible shows he was not much over thirty. Hence we may presume that his physical frame was intensely shattered while yet young in years. He must have used up his vital powers with consuming, self-regardless efforts for human well-being and by the intense, burning power of his mental excitement.

So of the love of God. It is not to be supposed that mind itself is consumed with intense action; but the body is; and in mortal flesh, the waste upon the body becomes an index often of the intense and exhausting action of the soul. The love of God may be seen in the love of Christ. "He that hath seen me, said Christ, hath seen the Father."

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9. This love is great, beyond all finite comprehension. Perhaps we get the most vivid conception of God's love by means of comparisons. See that parent who loves his child most tenderly. His son may be wayward, insolent, ungrateful; yet shall you see the father's love unchanging; still he forbears, still he is patient and long-suffering; still he waits and hopes, and plans every conceivable method to restore that way-ward son. Verily here is love, but it is only such love as God's towards us--but infinitely less in degree.

See also that affectionate mother. Her little infant frets and cries--her love endures it patiently. That dear child will not let her sleep, and her nervous system is well nigh prostrated;--still for her own child what will not a mother's love endure?

But oh, what is all this compared with the matchless forbearance and long-suffering of the God of Love! We shall never appreciate this till we see in their true colors the sinner's abuse and contempt of God's law and of his gospel too--till we see how God waits on the sinner and how the sinner grows only the more stubborn and insolent; how God sends him repeated tokens of his love and he only mocks God's mercy in return. Such is God's love that He not only forbears to punish, but sends his own Son to save,--yea sends his own Son to die that the rebel might live. What a spectacle! There lay spread out before the eye of God a world steeped in wickedness, reeking in its own pollutions--mad in its own rebellion; yet the heart of God pitied--there burned in his bosom the most intense love, and from his inmost soul he cried out--"How can I give thee up!" O what love was this! Love not only sincere and real, but infinitely great.

We are to think of this love to enemies; not to friends. It was not such love as husbands have for their wives, or parents for their children; no, but "God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." This it is that commends and sets off this amazing love of God in a light so glorious. Behold, says another apostle--behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we--that such as we,--should be called the sons of God! Well might he say--"what MANNER of love!" Was ever love like this in earth or heaven?

10. This is a most persevering and efficient love. It is not a mere emotion that flashes and burns itself out without producing action. It is not that sort of good feeling seen among men, that goes off in good wishes and leaves no fruit behind; that says to each object of need, "be ye warmed, and be ye filled," but gives not the things requisite.

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O, had God's love for man been only such as this, how deep and dire the ruin in which we had sunk, hopelessly, and forever!

The love of God to man was no empty and evanescent emotion. It has continued to sway the attributes of Deity for thousands of years, and will for coming ages, how many soever may be included in the divine plan for perfecting this glorious scheme of salvation. The love of God to man has called forth his infinite wisdom to devise, his omnipotence to execute, and we might perhaps say that this love has employed, not to say, used up, the divine energies since the creation of the world. O, who can adequately estimate all that God has done already in devising and carrying into effect this great scheme of human salvation!

11. This love moreover is particular, and not merely general. By this, I mean that it fastens upon individuals, seeking their good, and does not merely embrace the mass as a whole. We are too apt to conceive of this love as only general, and not as particular at all. We are not wont to feel that God truly and deeply loves us--yea, our own insignificant selves. Yet, this is the only right mode of apprehending the love of God. That eye that marks each falling sparrow, and counts the hairs of our head, is surely able to notice the meanest of his intelligent creatures, and the smallest circumstances which can affect their happiness.

II. What it is to believe in Christ.

It is something more than to be convinced of the truth of what is said in the Bible. This conviction may be in our minds as firm as the mountains; and yet we may have no gospel faith. Devils may believe, and in this sense they do--wicked men may and usually do have this faith of conviction--they may be convinced of the truth respecting Christ, and yet have no more saving faith than devils have.

But positively, faith is trust, it is depending upon Christ, relying upon him for every thing which as a Savior he promises to do for us. The soul, believing, thoroughly commits itself to God, yielding up all its interests to be disposed of according to his wisdom. More on these points soon.

III. What is implied in faith.

1. A realization of our actual dependence upon him. This idea of dependence must become a living idea, a practical reality to the mind, or we shall never really depend upon Christ.

This remark applies both to justification and to sanctification. As to justification, we must fully realize that without Christ we never can be pardoned and restored to a state of acceptance and justification

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before God. Else we shall never look to him in the gospel sense so as to receive justification unto life.

So also in respect to sanctification. Until it becomes a reality which the mind deeply feels, that we can be cleansed from sin only through faith in Christ, it is absolutely certain that we shall never by faith take hold of those promises for life.

2. It implies a realizing sense of the nature and extent of our death in sin. We must see and feel that we are really dead in sin; for until we see this, we shall of course be full of self-righteous efforts. No man ever will, or ever can believe on Christ till he sees this. Why should he? He seems in his own eyes able to help himself, and nothing therefore is more natural than to prosecute self-righteous efforts until the conviction fastens upon the mind that all is hopeless and fruitless till Jesus interpose. The man must see that he is hopelessly dead in sin--as much lost beyond hope without Christ as if he were already in hell, or had been there for ages.

3. It implies a penetrating sense of our utter disinclination towards any good. This is indeed the same thing as being dead in sin, and is only another phraseology for the same idea.

Many who are not Christians have no just sense of this. Indeed they have no just view of God and of his law. Perhaps they think they want religion, and are inclined to embrace it. O, how deceived! They need to see their utter disinclination towards any good. Then they would see their dependence upon Christ. They would see that unless Christ interposes while they are in this state of utter disinclination, they are so utterly selfish that they never will embrace Christ for salvation. Let me ask, will an individual ever depend upon Christ, so long as he thinks himself well disposed by nature, and has no just views of his utter death in sin? No; never.

Faith then implies that we understand our utter moral impotency, and utter disinclination towards God while in an unrenewed state. When one sees this, he is prepared to see that unless a sanctifying Christ undertake for him, damnation is certain. He sees that the thing he needs to be saved from is this selfish, morally dead state of mind.

Around this point, there hangs in the views of many minds an unaccountable darkness. They do not see the very thing, to pardon and remove which they need Christ. They are feeling about after some particular sins, lying, perhaps, or theft, or Sabbath-breaking, from which they suppose they need Christ to save them. Yet, what are all these, and all such sins, but the mere bubbling up of a certain state of mind--a little of the overflowing water from that deep and vast

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ocean of iniquity which spreads itself all over their inner moral being? It is this state of mind--this deep sink of iniquity, the rooted selfishness in which you have accustomed yourself to live and move and have your being--this it is from which you need to be saved. This is the great thing which needs to be set right. Do you understand this? What is it that you need when your heart sighs within you for peace, and you look to religion for help? What do you need? This only--to have your disposition to sin taken away, and in its place, a disposition to serve and please God. When you come to see yourself as you are in all your relations to God and duty, you will see that your own state of mind is the very thing you need to be saved from. You will see that this is really more terrible, and more to be feared than all the devils in hell. You need not fear the mightiest devils if your own state of mind is not radically wrong.

What then are you doing? Groping about to get rid of some one or two sins as if these were all from which you need be saved? Have you not yet learned that the thing you need first and chiefly is to be saved from a selfish state of mind, a state which is radically averse from, or enmity against God?

4. Another thing implied is a realization that God loves us. I mean just this--that God loves us, not the world merely and in the general sense, but ourselves in particular. The idea must come to the soul with convincing, melting power--God loves me. His pity and compassion reach even me.

Unless one understands this, how can he be penetrated with penitence, gratitude and love? No, until this idea is realized, that God is so infinitely gracious and benevolent that he has set his love on me,--until this thought comes home, the soul feels that it dare not approach him. This will be the effect just in proportion as the guilt and plague of sin are thoroughly realized. If these are deeply realized, the soul must needs realize also the great love of God, or it will fly away from the presence of God as if that presence were hell itself.

I have known men often feel as if they could fly in any direction away from God, so deeply did conscious guilt oppress them, and so terrible to their souls was the thought of meeting God. Some of you have heard me say of Father Nash that his sense of God's awful presence was such when under conviction that he would have leaped into a lake of liquid fire at once if he could have thereby escaped the presence of God.

Hence, a realization of God's love to us is essential to real trust. First, you must see your sins--and then to prevent despair, and to save

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you from being repelled by your own conscious guilt from the presence of God, you must apprehend his infinite love. Seeing this, the soul cries out--"after all my guilt and ill-desert, God does love me. Yes, so much has he loved me, as to give his Son to die for me. Now, I see that I may come back at once to my own Father."

Without this view of the love of God, you feel as if you could not approach God at all; but this love being seen and felt, you come sobbing back, with a heart all broken to pieces. When you see not only that God loved the world, but that he even loves you--and so loves you that he gave his own Son to die for you, then you feel yourself aroused by mighty attractions. How can you resist the melting power of such love? O, you say, what can I do for God? How can I ever praise him enough?

Such a gospel meets human want and affords an adequate remedy for human selfishness. It presents tangible points of blessed truth upon which a guilty, despairing sinner may take hold.

5. An apprehension of the nature as well as degree of this love is essential to, and is implied in real faith. The mind must clearly see that this love of God to us is not complacency, but compassionate benevolence.

6. Finally, it implies an actual dependence upon Christ in all his offices and relations. This is obvious in itself, and has been so often illustrated before you that I need not enlarge upon it now.

REMARKS

1. Many persons confound dependence with depending upon Christ. They talk about their dependence, without really depending upon Christ at all. Now it is one thing to say--I cannot be saved without Christ; and quite another thing actually to depend upon Christ. Father Nash used to say--I could sometimes see my dependence so clearly that I would gnash my teeth and swear and curse, daring God to do his worst; yet I was infinitely far from really depending upon Christ.

2. Faith always implies a sense of dependence, but this sense of being dependent does not always imply faith. Yet often people who talk much about dependence, have no realizing sense of the thing, and really make this talk an apology for doing nothing.

3. Many overlook the identity between depending on Christ and true faith. Let this then be ever remembered, that depending on Christ is the same thing as real faith. Real faith is a depending for justification on Christ, and on nothing else; it also[,] in the same exclusive manner depends on Christ for sanctification. In regard to

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both of these blessings, real faith is a depending on Christ. We are greatly deceived if we think these are different things, for they are precisely the same thing.

We can easily understand what it is to depend on Christ, for dependence of a similar sort is a perfectly common thing in the ordinary relations of human life. One young man comes here to study. He knows that various expenses will be accruing, for board, for books, for clothing, &c. Now he has no expectation of paying these bills himself--he depends on his father to pay them for him. He is not anxious on these points; he knows very well that his father is both able and willing to do all for him that he can need.

But another young student may be here who has no father to depend on; but perhaps he looks to the church to which he belongs, as they may have pledged themselves to help him; and still another, having neither parent, nor pledged supporters to depend on, depends upon himself. He expects to labor during the terms of study, and teach in vacations.

I allude to cases of this sort to show that the idea of depending on others is perfectly familiar to all minds. We are trained into it from the very dawn of life.

Such is the Christian's depending upon Christ. To Him the Christian looks for his ceaseless supply of every want. This is faith.

4. The doctrine of human ability as it lies in many minds produces nothing else than self-confidence and self-dependence as opposed to faith. Many have such an idea of human ability that they suppose they shall readily by dint of their own resolutions and efforts do what God requires of them. Such an idea renders dependence on Christ morally impossible. How can he depend on Christ when he thinks he can just as well depend upon himself? It is therefore wholly indispensable to true faith that the doctrine of human ability should be in such a shape in the mind as to encourage faith,--nay, rather, as to enforce the conviction that without aid from Christ, obtained by depending on Him, we are certainly undone. In fact the idea of human ability as often apprehended, is nothing else than the spirit of Anti-Christ. It stands directly and insuperably in the way of the soul's reliance upon Christ for the grace requisite for saving the soul from sin. Faith is forever impossible till this notion of self-sufficiency is utterly put away.

5. The doctrine of dependence, also, as it lies in some minds works mischief; for it begets a self-justifying spirit. Persons get the idea that they are in such a sense naturally unable that God cannot

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rationally require of them obedience. In conversation with a lady sometime since, she said, "I believe God was bound in justice to send Christ to die for sinners, and is bound now to do for sinners all that he requires them to be and to do." When she came to explain her views it appeared that she considered herself as not guilty but only unfortunate on account of her sinful nature--unfortunate in having ever sinned at all, so as to need a Savior's atonement; unfortunate in having a state of mind so selfish and averse from God, that without gracious aid she never would accept of a Savior already provided. Hence she thought God would be unjust if he did not help her out of the troubles into which under God's universal agency she had unfortunately fallen.

After I had shown her that she had fundamentally mistaken the nature of sin, and that she could not be innocent in entertaining such views, condemned as they certainly were by her own reason and conscience, the husband said--"I have sometimes thought my wife one of the most pious of women, and again I have thought that she had no piety at all." The wife rose, and went to her chamber in a dreadful agony and conflict of mind--kept her room for two days--and then came down, all melted, subdued, transformed to the very spirit of a lamb. She no longer held God accountable for her sins, or bound in justice to give her converting grace.

6. True and deep conviction of sin is the only remedy for either of these errors. In the first case, where the man has high notions of his own ability; only let God show him his own utter wickedness, the deep and fearful depravity of his voluntarily selfish heart, and he will see that his ability is only a mountain of lead on his soul to sink it deep in the waves of damnation. Look at that sinner. Suppose God shows him just what he is doing; makes him see his own voluntary agency in sin--makes him see that he might have done good rather than evil--that God endowed him with capacities for doing all his duty; then let the Spirit of God also show him how he resists and fights against God with all his might, and make him see his own heart to be black and guilty as hell;--then see what he will say. "O, he cries, this ability of mine is working out for me the deepest damnation. My whole heart is set upon iniquity. No other being in the universe can be so vile as I. O, surely, I am working my way down to the deepest hell."

When the Lord has thus shown him his amazing guilt, he will no longer depend on the fact of his being philosophically able to repent. He will neither deem this a meritorious thing, nor will he rely upon it for his own salvation. He will see that this ability of his has been the

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occasion of his meriting a deeper damnation than he otherwise could have done; and that his infatuated abuse of it is always such that he can depend on himself only to work out his own damnation.

So of the other man who makes God responsible for his own sin, for his being impenitent, and for giving him repentance. Let this man only be convicted thoroughly of his own sin, and he will no longer say--"God in justice ought to help me out." O, how he will abhor this very thought and the state of mind that can admit it for a moment! Now his mind turns upon himself in bitter self-execrations. He sees that he has no one to condemn but himself.

7. The love of God to man is entirely consistent with his anger against sin. There is a father who finds it necessary for the best good of his child to punish him. But does this prove that the father does not love his son? By no means. He never gives a more conclusive proof of his love for his son than when his intense desire to secure his highest good is so strong as to overcome all the reluctance a father's heart feels to the infliction of pain upon a child. This is the love of real benevolence.

The same benevolent regard to the good of the rest of the family might constrain a father to punish his son, even though the hope of reclaiming him may be entirely abandoned and form no part of the motive for punishing. So God in love to the universe may punish the sinner after all hope of his being thereby reclaimed has past away forever. He may do this for the sake of a public example.

8. The love of God is of such a kind as to demand that he should abhor the wickedness of man and man on account of it.

The reason of this is obvious. This love of God is real benevolence--a sincere desire for the happiness of his creatures. But God knows perfectly well that sin necessarily and fatally destroy happiness; hence he cannot but hate it, and hate men and devils too on account of it.

9. Self-righteous men often mistake the nature of this love, supposing it to be fondness, and that it does not involve a holy and infinite abhorrence of all sin. No mistake could be greater than this.

10. It is hard for a selfish being to realize the nature of this disinterested love. This is one of the most difficult conceptions for the selfish mind to form. The reason of this difficulty is obvious. Men are naturally inclined to judge the character and motives of the Deity as they do their own, making God altogether such a being as themselves. Consequently being supremely selfish themselves, they suppose God also to be selfish. When you hear a man therefore denying that God is

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really benevolent, or speaking of him as if he were selfish like sinning mortals, you may know that that man is supremely selfish.

It sometimes seems impossible to make wicked men conceive of God as being truly benevolent. It is so perfectly unlike their own state of mind, they seem almost incapable of apprehending what it is, and withal are by no means very ready to admit that God is so very much better than themselves.

In the same way the sinner is prone to conceive of Christians as feeling towards him as he does towards them. He often has no idea that Christians really love him intensely, and feel the deep yearnings of compassion over him in view of his present wretchedness and coming doom. He seems to have no idea that God, angels, saints, and all the holy in earth or heaven, feel utterly different from himself.

Sometimes impenitent sinners have been broken down completely by kind treatment. Such treatment where they had reason to expect its opposite, has sometimes made the idea flash into their mind that there is real benevolence in other hearts, although there is none in their own.

Many years since I knew a man who had abused a Christian in the worst possible way. So outrageous was this abuse that on reflection he felt constrained to go and make some confession to the Christian whom he had abused. What was his amazement to find that this Christian man had not the least ill feeling towards him--had no rebukes or reproaches to utter--that he had cherished no other feelings than compassion; and now, as soon as he saw him, his benevolent heart gushed out in compassion, and sympathy. O when the wicked man saw this, it brought before his mind the new and thrilling idea--It may be that God really loves me. Perhaps God too and all other holy beings are seeking my good and really care for my soul.

This is one of the most important considerations to get before the mind of any class of sinners, whether of backsliders or of those who have never professed repentance. There is a most melting power in the thought--God, my Maker and my Father, feels real and infinite compassion for me. Many a heart has bowed before God and been broken in godly sorrow under the power of this consideration.

It is a striking fact that the Bible often presents this feature of the divine character in a strong and most affecting light. "Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still;--therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee." O could you who have

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wandered and backslidden only get this idea into your mind--could you only see how sincerely and earnestly your Maker is entreating you to return to himself--you could not refuse to come. Hear what the Psalmist said--"Has God forgotten to be gracious? and will he be favorable no more? Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Then I said, This is my infirmity." Truly so. This is your infirmity, that you should cherish such apprehensions of God. O how can you cherish such thoughts of cold unbelief? Could you but understand how greatly God desires your return--could you see for once how deeply his compassions are awakened towards you and how cordially he would welcome you back to his bosom, it could not fail to break down all your pride, and melt your soul in penitence.

11. There is no danger that this view of the love of God should make men hard-hearted, stupid and reckless. Nothing else has such power as this to soften and melt the hearts of men. Nothing else can be compared with this to subdue rebellion; transform selfishness to benevolence, and regenerate the polluted soul into the image of God.

12. A realization of the nature and reality of the love of God is indispensable to true religion. Without this, all will be hard-hearted. Without this no one can know what it is to have an unction shed over all the soul, drawing it into deep communion with God, and awakening a calm and settled confidence in the Lord of Hosts as our own God and Father.

13. An apprehension of this needs to become an omnipresent reality, before men can be established in grace. I can testify on this point from experience. Nothing has had such an influence on my mind as this. When I go to God deeply realizing that he loves me more than I love myself, and loves to give more than I love to receive, then I feel that I may be strong in prayer and in faith. When I go to prayer for my family and can feel that God loves them more than I do--when I pray for my sick wife, and can see that God cares for her comfort and usefulness and for the interests of my family more than I possibly can, I then feel that it were cruel unbelief not to trust God for every possible good. So when I pray for Oberlin, it is good to feel that God planted this vine and he can water it at his will, and can defend it so that the "bear out of the wood shall not waste it, nor the wild beast of the field devour it." If this vine is good for any thing in his vineyard, he values it more than I do; he loves its prosperity more, and is more ready to make efforts for sustaining and enlarging it.

Every thing in short which pertains to his kingdom, he loves more than I do. His whole being is awake to these interests--yea,

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more, to every body's interests,--his word having told me that he feeds even the ravens when they cry, and much more will feed his "little ones."

13. A realization of this truth is indispensable to prevalence in prayer. In order to prevail in prayer you need to realize that God loves you infinitely more than you love yourself--that He loves Zion more than you do, and loves to see sinners converted infinitely more than you ever have, or ever will. Your heart will then be strong in prayer when you see that He truly cares for you, and cares for all human happiness, so that you have no need to excite his feelings, for his soul is already on fire, all awake with most intensely glowing emotions of love, and with one changeless purpose to promote the highest happiness of every sentient being in his universe as far as he wisely can. O, to have such a God to pray to, and to come before him with these realization of his ineffable love--this quickens faith and gives vitality to the soul of prayer. Brethren, do learn how to pray to such a God as this!

VICTORY OVER THE WORLD THROUGH FAITH

November 5, 1845

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."--[1] John 5:4.

The discussion of this text naturally leads us to make four inquiries.

I. WHAT IS IT TO OVERCOME THE WORLD?

II. WHO ARE THEY THAT OVERCOME?

III. WHY DO THEY OVERCOME THE WORLD?

IV. HOW DO THEY DO IT?

These are the natural questions which a serious mind would ask upon reading this text.

I. What is it to overcome the world?

1. It is to get above the spirit of covetousness which possesses the men of the world. The spirit of the world is eminently the spirit of covetousness. It is a greediness after the things of the world. Some worldly men covet one thing and some another; but all classes of worldly men are living in the spirit of covetousness in some of its forms. This spirit has supreme possession of their minds.

Now the first thing in overcoming the world is, that the spirit of covetousness in respect to worldly things and objects, be overcome. The man who does not overcome this spirit of bustling and scrambling after the good which this world proffers has by no means overcome it.

2. Overcoming the world implies rising above its engrossments. When a man has overcome the world his thoughts are no longer engrossed and swallowed up with worldly things. A man certainly does not overcome the world unless he gets above being engrossed and absorbed with its concerns.

Now we all know how exceedingly engrossed worldly men are with some form of worldly good. One is swallowed up with study; another with politics; a third with money-getting; and a fourth

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perhaps with fashion and with pleasure; but each in his chosen way makes earthly good the all-engrossing object.

The man who gains the victory over the world must overcome not one form only of its pursuits, but every form--must overcome the world itself and all that it has to present as an allurements to the human heart.

3. Overcoming the world implies overcoming the fear of the world.

It is a mournful fact that most men, and indeed all men of worldly character, have so much regard to public opinion that they dare not act according to the dictates of their consciences when acting thus would incur the popular frown. One is afraid lest his business should suffer if his course runs counter to public opinion; another fears lest if he stand up for the truth it will injure his reputation, and curiously imagines and tries to believe that advocating an unpopular truth will diminish and perhaps destroy his good influence--as if a man could exert a good influence in any possible way besides maintaining the truth.

Great multitudes, it must be admitted, are under this influence of fearing the world; yet some perhaps many of them are not aware of this fact. If you or if they could thoroughly sound the reasons of their backwardness in duty, fear of the world would be found among the chief. Their fear of the world's displeasure is so much stronger than their fear of God's displeasure that they are completely enslaved by it. Who does not know that some ministers dare not preach what they know is true, and even what they know is important truth, lest they should offend some whose good opinion they seek to retain? The society is weak perhaps, and the favour of some rich man in it seems indispensable to its very existence. Hence the terror of these rich men is continually before their eyes when they write a sermon, or preach, or are called to take a stand in favour of any truth or cause which may be unpopular with men of more wealth than piety or conscience. Alas! this bondage to man! Too many gospel ministers are so troubled by it that their time-serving policy is virtually renouncing Christ and serving the world.

Overcoming the world is thoroughly subduing this servility to men.

4. Overcoming the world implies overcoming a state of worldly anxiety. You know there is a state of great carefulness and anxiety which is common and almost universal among worldly men. It is perfectly natural if the heart is set upon securing worldly good, and

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has not learned to receive all good from the hand of a great Father and trust him to give or withhold with his own unerring wisdom. But he who loves the world is the enemy of God and hence can never have this filial trust in a parental Benefactor, nor the peace of soul which it imparts. Hence worldly men are almost incessantly in a fever of anxiety lest their worldly schemes should fail. They sometimes get a momentary relief when all things seem to go well; but some mishap is sure to befall them at some point soon, so that scarce a day passes that, brings not with it some corroding anxiety. Their bosoms are like the troubled sea which cannot rest whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

But the man who gets above the world gets above this state of ceaseless and corroding anxiety.

5. The victory under consideration implies that we cease to be enslaved and in bondage to the world in any of its forms.

There is a worldly spirit and there is also a heavenly spirit, and one or the other exists in the heart of every man and controls his whole being. Those who are under the control of the world of course have not overcome the world. No man overcomes the world till his heart is imbued with the spirit of heaven.

One form which the spirit of the world assumes is, being enslaved to the customs and fashions of the day.

It is marvelous to see what a goddess Fashion becomes. No heathen goddess was ever worshipped with costlier offerings or more devout homage or more implicit subjection. And surely no heathen deity since the world began has ever had more universal patronage. Where will you go to find the man of the world or the woman of the world who does not hasten to worship at her shrine?

But overcoming the world implies that the spell of this goddess is broken.

They who have overcome the world are no longer careful either to secure its favour or avert its frown; and the good or the ill opinion of the world is to them a small matter. "To me," said Paul, "it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment." So of every real Christian; his care is to secure the approbation of God; this is his chief concern, to commend himself to God and to his own conscience. No man has overcome the world unless he has attained this state of mind.

Almost no feature of Christian character is more striking or more decisive than this--indifference to the opinions of the world.

Since I have been in the ministry I have been blessed with the acquaintance of some men who were peculiarly distinguished by this

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quality of character. Some of you may have known Rev. James Patterson, late of Philadelphia. If so, you know him to have been eminently distinguished in this respect. He seemed to have the least possible disposition to secure the applause of men or avoid their censure. It seemed to be of no consequence to him to commend himself to men. For him it was enough if he might please God.

Hence you were sure to find him in everlasting war against sin, all sin, however popular, however entrenched by custom or sustained by wealth, or public opinion. Yet he always opposed sin with a most remarkable spirit--a spirit of inflexible decision and yet of great mellowness and tenderness. While he was saying the most severe things in the most decided language, you might see the big tears rolling down his cheeks.

It is wonderful that most men never complained of his having a bad spirit. Much as they dreaded his rebuke and writhed under his strong and daring exposures of wickedness, they could never say that Father Patterson had any other than a good spirit. This was a most beautiful and striking exemplification of having overcome the world.

Men who are not thus dead to the world have not escaped its bondage. The victorious Christian is in a state where he is no longer in bondage to man. He is bound only to serve God.

II. We must enquire Who are those that overcome the world?

Our text gives the ready answer: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." You cannot fail to observe that this is a universal proposition,--all who are born of God overcome the world--all these, and it is obviously implied-- none others. You may know who are born of God by this characteristic--they overcome the world. Of course the second question is answered.

III. Our next question is, Why do believers overcome the world? On what principle is this result effected?

I answer, this victory over the world results as naturally from the spiritual or heavenly birth as coming into bondage to the world results from the natural birth.

It may be well to revert a moment to the law of connection in the latter case, viz., between coming into the world by natural birth and bondage to the world. This law obviously admits of a philosophical explanation, at once simple and palpable to every one's observation. Natural birth reveals to the mind objects of sense and these only. It brings the mind into contact with worldly things. Of course it is natural that the mind should become deeply interested in these objects thus presented through its external senses, especially as most of them

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sustain so intimate a relation to our sentient nature and become the first and chief sources of our happiness.

Hence our affections are gradually entwined around these objects, and we become thoroughly lovers of this world ere our eyes have been opened upon it many months.

Now alongside of this universal fact let another be placed of equal importance and not less universal, namely, that those intuitive powers of the mind which were created to take cognizance of our moral relations, and hence to counteract the too great influence of worldly objects, come into action very slowly, and are not developed so as to act vigorously until years are numbered as months are in the case of the external organs of sense. The very early and vigorous development of the latter brings the soul so entirely under the control of worldly objects that when the reason and the conscience come to speak, their voice is little heeded. As a matter of fact, we find it universally true that unless divine power interpose, the bondage to the world thus induced upon the soul is never broken.

But the point which I particularly desired to elucidate was simply this, that natural birth with its attendant laws of physical and mental development, becomes the occasion of bondage to this world.

Right over against this, lies the birth into the kingdom of God by the Spirit. By this the soul is brought into new relations, we might rather say, into intimate contact with spiritual things. The Spirit of God seems to usher the soul into the spiritual world, in a manner strictly analogous to the result of the natural birth upon our physical being. The great truths of the spiritual world are opened to our view through the illumination of the Spirit of God; we seem to see with new eyes, and to have a new world of spiritual objects around us.

As in regard to natural objects, men not only speculate about them, but realize them; so in the case of spiritual children do spiritual things become not merely matters of speculation, but of full and practical realization also. When God reveals himself to the mind, spiritual things are seen in their real light, and make the impression of realities.

Consequently, when spiritual objects are thus revealed to the mind, and thus apprehended, they will supremely interest that mind. Such is our mental constitution that the truth of God when thoroughly apprehended cannot fail to interest us. If these truths were clearly revealed to the wickedest man on earth, so that he should apprehend them as realities, it could not fail to rouse up his soul to most intense action. He might hate the light, and might stubbornly resist the claims

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of God upon his heart, but he could not fail to feel a thrilling interest in truths that so take hold of the great and vital things of human well-being.

Let me ask, Is there a sinner in this house, or can there be a sinner on this wide earth, who does not see that if God's presence was made as manifest and as real to his mind as the presence of his fellow men, it would supremely engross his soul even though it might not subdue his heart.

This revelation of God's presence and character might not convert him, but it would, at least for the time being, kill his attention to the world.

You often see this in the case of persons deeply convicted; you have doubtless seen persons so fearfully convicted of sin, that they cared nothing at all for their food nor their dress. O, they cried out in the agony of their souls, what matter all these things to us, if we even get them all, and then must be down in hell!

But these thrilling and all-absorbing convictions do not necessarily convert the soul, and I have alluded to them here only to show the controlling power of realizing views of divine truth.

When real conversion has taken place, and the soul is born of God, then realizing views of truth not only awaken interest, as they might do in an unrenewed mind, but they also tend to excite a deep and ardent love for these truths. They draw out the heart. Spiritual truth now takes possession of his mind, and draws him into its warm and life-giving embrace. Before, error, falsehood, death, had drawn him under their power; now the Spirit of God draws him into the very embrace of God. Now he is begotten of God, and breathes the spirit of sonship. Now, according to the Bible, "the seed of God remaineth in him," that very truth, and those movings of the [S]pirit which gave him birth into the kingdom of God, continue still in power upon his mind, and hence he continues a Christian, and as the Bible states it, "he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The seed of God is in him, and the fruit of it brings his soul deeply into sympathy with his own Father in heaven.

Again, the first birth makes us acquainted with earthly things, the second with God; the first with the finite, the second with the infinite; the first with things correlated with our animal nature, the second with those great things which stand connected with our spiritual nature, things so lovely, and so glorious as to overcome all the ensnarements of the world.

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Again, the first begets a worldly, and the second a heavenly temper, under the first, the mind is brought into a snare--under the second, it is delivered from that snare. Under the first, the conversation is earthly--under the second, "our conversation is in heaven."

But we must pass to inquire,

IV. How this victory over the world is achieved.

The great agent is the Holy Spirit. Without him, no good result is ever achieved in the Christian's heart or life.

The text, you observe, says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." But here the question might be raised: Does this mean, that faith of itself overcomes the world, or, is this the meaning, that we overcome by or through our faith? Doubtless the latter is the precise meaning. Believing in God, and having realizing impressions of his truth and character made upon our mind by the Holy Ghost given to those who truly believe, we gain the victory over the world.

Faith implies three things. 1. Perception of truth. 2. An interest in it. 3. The committal or giving up of the mind to be interested and controlled by these objects of faith.

Perception of the truth must come first in order, for there can be no belief of unknown and unperceived truth. Next, there must be an interest in the truth, which shall wake up the mind to fixed and active attention; and thirdly, there must be a voluntary committal of the mind to the control of truth. The mind must wholly yield itself up to God, to be governed entirely by his will, and to trust him and him alone as its own present and eternal portion.

Again, faith receives Christ. The mind first perceives Christ's character and his relations to us--sees what he does for us, and then deeply feeling its own need of such a Saviour, and of such a work wrought in and for us as Jesus alone can do, it goes forth to receive and embrace Jesus as its own Saviour. This action of the soul in receiving and embracing Christ is not sluggish--it is not a state of dozing quietism. No; it involves the soul's most strenuous activity. And this committal of the soul must become a glorious, living, energizing principle--the mind not only perceiving but yielding itself up with the most fervid intensity to be Christ's and to receive all the benefits of his salvation into our own souls.

Again, faith receives Christ into the soul as King, in all his relations, to rule over the whole being--to have our heart's supreme confidence and affection--to receive the entire homage of our

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obedience and adoration; to rule, in short, over us, and fulfil all the functions of supreme King over our whole moral being. Within our very souls we receive Christ to live and energize there, to reign forever there as on his own rightful throne.

Now a great many seem to stop short of this entire and perfect committal of their whole soul to Christ. They stop short perhaps with merely perceiving the truth, satisfied and pleased that they have learned the theory of the gospel. Or perhaps some go one step further, and stop with being interested--with having their feelings excited by the things of the gospel, thus going only to the second stage; or perhaps they seem to take faith but not Christ; they think to believe, but after all do not cordially, and with all the heart welcome Christ himself into the soul.

All these various steps stop short of really taking hold of Christ. They none of them result in giving the victory over the world.

The true Bible doctrine of faith represents Christ as coming into the very soul. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me." What could more forcibly and beautifully teach the doctrine that by faith Christ is introduced into the very soul of the believer to dwell there by his gracious presence?

Since my mind has been drawn to the subject, I have been astonished to see how long I have been in a purblind state of perception in respect to this particular view of faith. Of a long time I had scarcely seen it; now I see it beaming forth in lines of glory on almost every page. The Bible seems to blaze with the glorious truth, Christ in the soul, the hope of glory; God, Christ, dwelling in our body as in a temple. I am amazed that a truth so rich and so blessed should have been seen so dimly, when the Bible reveals it so plainly. Christ received into the very soul by faith, and thus brought into the nearest possible relations to our heart and life;--Christ himself becoming the all-sustaining Power within us, and thus securing the victory over the world;--Christ, living and energizing in our hearts--this is the great central truth in the plan of sanctification, and this no Christian should fail to understand, as he values the victory over the world and the living communion of the soul with its Maker.

REMARKS

1. It is in the very nature of the case impossible that if faith receive Christ into the soul, it should not overcome the world. If the new birth actually brings the mind into this new state, and brings Christ into the soul, then of course Christ will reign in that soul; the

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supreme affections will be yielded most delightfully to him, and the power of the world over that mind will be broken. Christ cannot dwell in any soul without absorbing the supreme interest of that soul. And this is of course equivalent to giving the victory over the world.

2. He who does not habitually overcome the world is not born of God. In saying this, I do not intend to affirm that a true Christian may not sometimes be overcome by sin; but I do affirm that overcoming the world is the general rule, and falling into sin is only the exception. This is the least that can be meant by the language of our text, and by similar declarations which often occur in the Bible. Just as in the passage--"He that is born of God doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin because he is born of God,"--nothing less can be meant than this--that he cannot sin uniformly--cannot make sinning his business, and can sin if at all, only occasionally and aside from the general current of his life. In the same manner we should say of a man who is in general truthful, that he is not a liar.

I will not contend for more than this respecting either of these passages; but for so much as this I must contend, that the new-born souls here spoken of do in general overcome the world. The general fact respecting them is that they do not sin and are not in bondage to Satan. The affirmations of Scripture respecting them must at least embrace their general character.

3. What is a religion good for that does not overcome the world? What is the benefit of being born into such a religion, if it leave the world still swaying its dominion over our hearts? What avails a new birth which after all fails to bring us into a likeness to God, into the sympathies of his family and of his kingdom, which leaves us still in bondage to the world and to Satan? What can there be of such a religion more than the name? With what reason can any man suppose that such a religion fits his heart for heaven, supposing it leaves him earthly-minded, sensual, and selfish.

4. We see why it is that infidels have proclaimed the gospel of Christ to be a failure. You may not be aware that of late infidels have taken the ground that the gospel of Christ is a failure. They maintain that it professes to bring men out from the world, but fails to do so; and hence is manifestly a failure. Now you must observe that the Bible does indeed affirm, as infidels say, that those who are truly born of God do overcome the world. This we cannot deny and should not wish to deny it. Now if the infidel can show that the new birth fails to produce this result, he has carried his point, and we must yield ours. This is perfectly plain, and there can be no escape for us.

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But the infidel is in fault in his premises. He assumes the current Christianity of the age as a specimen of real religion, and builds his estimate upon this. He proves, as he thinks, and perhaps truly proves that the current Christianity does not overcome the world.

We must demur to his assuming this current Christianity as real religion. For this religion of the mass of nominal professors does not answer the descriptions given of true piety in the Word of God. And moreover, if this current type of religion were all that the gospel and the divine Spirit can do for lost man, then we might as well give up the point in controversy with the infidel; for such a religion could not give us much evidence of coming from God, and would be of very little value to man;--so little as scarcely to be worth contending for. Truly if we must take the professedly Christian world as Bible Christians, who would not be ashamed and confounded in attempting to confront the infidel? We know but too well that the great mass of professed Christians do not overcome the world, and we should be confounded quickly if we were to maintain that they do. Those professed Christians themselves know that they do not overcome the world. Of course they could not testify concerning themselves that in their own case the power of the gospel is exemplified.

In view of facts like these, I have often been astonished to see ministers setting themselves to persuade their people that they are really converted, trying to lull their fears and sustain their tottering hopes. Vain effort! Those same ministers, it would seem, must know that they themselves do not overcome the world, and equally well must they know that their people do not. How fatal then to the soul must be such efforts to "heal the hurt of God's professed people slightly; crying peace, peace, when there is no peace!"

Let us sift this matter to the bottom, pushing the inquiry--Do the great mass of professed Christians really overcome the world? It is a fact beyond question that with them the things of this world are the realities, and the things of God are mere theories. Who does not know that this is the real state of great multitudes in the nominal church?

Let the searching inquiry run through this congregation--What are those things that set your soul on fire--that stir up your warmest emotions and deeply agitate your nervous system? Are these the things of earth, or the things of heaven? the things of time, or the things of eternity? the things of self, or the things of God?

How is it when you go into your closets?--do you go there to seek and find God? Do you in fact find there a present God, and do you hold communion there as friend with friend? How is this?

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Now you certainly should know that if your state is such that spiritual things are mere theories and speculations, you are altogether worldly and nothing more. It would be egregious folly and falsehood to call you spiritual-minded, and for you to think yourselves spiritual, would be the most fatal and foolish self-deception. You give none of the appropriate proofs of being born of God. Your state is not that of one who is personally acquainted with God, and who loves him personally with supreme affection.

5. Until we can put away from the minds of men the common error that the current Christianity of the church is true Christianity, we can make but little progress in converting the world. For in the first place we cannot save the Church itself from bondage to the world in this life, nor from the direst doom of the hypocrite in the next. We cannot unite and arm the Church in vigorous onset upon Satan's kingdom so that the world may be converted to God. We cannot even convince intelligent men of the world that our religion is from God, and brings to fallen men a remedy for their depravity. For if the common Christianity of the age is the best that can be, and this does not give men the victory over the world, what is it good for? And if it really is of little worth or none, how can we hope to make thinking men prize it as of great value?

6. There are but very few infidels who are as much in the dark as they profess to be on these points. There are very few of that class of men who are not acquainted with some humble Christians, whose lives commend Christianity and condemn their own ungodliness. Of course they know the truth, that there is a reality in the religion of the Bible, and they blind their own eyes selfishly and most foolishly when they try to believe that the religion of the Bible is a failure and that the Bible is therefore a fabrication. Deep in their heart lies the conviction that here and there are men who are real Christians, who overcome the world and live by a faith unknown to themselves. In how many cases does God set some burning examples of Christian life before those wicked, skeptical men, to rebuke them for their sin and their skepticism--perhaps their own wife or their children, their neighbours or their servants. By such means the truth is lodged in their mind, and God has a witness for himself in their consciences.

I have perhaps before mentioned a fact which occurred at the South, and was stated to me by a minister of the gospel who was acquainted with the circumstances of the case. There resided in that region a very worldly and a most ungodly man, who held a great slave property, and was withal much given to horse-racing. Heedless

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of all religion and avowedly skeptical, he gave full swing to every evil propensity. But wicked men must one day see trouble; and this man was taken sick and brought to the very gates of the grave. His weeping wife and friends gather round his bed, and begin to think of having some Christian called in to pray for the dying man's soul. Husband, said the anxious wife, shall I not send for our minister to pray with you before you die? No, said he, I know him of old; I have no confidence in him; I have seen him too many times at horse-races; there he was my friend and I was his; but I don't want to see him now.

But who shall we get, then? continued the wife. Send for my slave Tom, replied he; he is one of my hostlers. I have often overheard him praying and I know he can pray; besides I have watched his life and his temper, and I never saw anything in him inconsistent with Christian character;--call him in, I should be glad to hear him pray.

Tom comes slowly and modestly in, drops his hat at the door, looks on his sick and dying master;--Tom, said the dying skeptic,--do you ever pray? do you know how to pray? can you pray for your dying master and forgive him? O yes, massa, with all my heart; and drops on his knees and pours out a prayer for his soul.

Now the moral of this story is obvious. Place the skeptic on his dying bed, let that solemn hour arrive, and the inner convictions of his heart be revealed, and he knows of at least one man who is a Christian. He knows one man whose prayers he values more than all the friendship of all his former associates. He knows now that there is such a thing as Christianity; and yet you cannot suppose that he has this moment learned a lesson he never knew before. No, he knew just as much before; an honest hour has brought the inner convictions of his soul to light. Infidels generally know more than they have honesty enough to admit.

7. The great error of those who profess religion but are not born of God is this:--they are trying to be Christians without being born of God. They need to have that done to them which is said of Adam--"God breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Their religion has in it none of the breath of God: it is a cold, lifeless theory; there is none of the living vitality of God in it. It is perhaps a heartless orthodoxy, and they may take a flattering unction to their hearts that their creed is sound; but do they love that truth which they profess to believe? They think, it may be, that they have zeal, and that their zeal is right and their heart right; but is their soul on fire for God and his cause? Where are they, and what are they

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doing? Are they spinning out some fond theory, or defending it at the point of the sword? Ah, do they care for souls? Does their heart tremble for the interests of Zion? Do their very nerves quiver under the mighty power of God's truth? Does their love for God and for souls set their orthodoxy and their creeds on fire so that every truth burns in their souls and glows forth from their very faces? If so, then you will not see them absent from the prayer meetings and from the class meetings; but you will see that divine things take hold of their soul with overwhelming interest and power. You will see them living Christians, burning and shining lights in the world. Brethren, it cannot be too strongly impressed on every mind that the decisive characteristic of true religion is energy, not apathy: that its vital essence is life not death.

LETTERS

By Charles G. Finney

1845 Oberlin Evangelist

**LETTER FROM PROF. FINNEY TO MISS A.E. OF
VERMONT [No. 1]**

March 12, 1845

Dear Sister:

Your interesting communication is just received and read. I am pressed with many duties and cannot answer so much in detail as I could wish. You suggest that an answer in the Oberlin Evangelist would be acceptable. As I am receiving many letters containing similar inquires, I think it may be well to reply as briefly as may be through the columns of that paper, since an answer to your questions will be also an answer to the many inquiries upon the same topics. I will reply to them in their order.

Your first inquiry respects sundry resolutions and promises which you have made, but not kept, and which therefore have been a snare to your soul. Among other things, you resolved and promised to observe certain hours for prayer and devotional exercises. Some of these promises you wrote down. If I understand you, they are all much of the same character. You say, "I then formed many resolutions that I would and would not do thus and so. Some of them I put into writing, and sought the grace of God to enable me to keep them. These I have not kept; for example, regular hours of prayer. For some time after I formed these resolutions, when the hour came I would leave my work and attend to those duties, sometimes doubtful whether I was doing right to leave my work. Now I endeavor to attend to those duties just as I think my heavenly Father would have me. I pay more regard to convenience. In so doing, do I regard self?"

In answering this part of your letter, I observe first, that you had no right to make a resolution either orally or in writing, appropriating certain hours to devotional exercises, irrespective of the circumstances under which the providence of God might place you. Multitudes of instances might occur in which observance of those hours would interfere with other manifest duties. In these cases, it could not be your duty to observe those hours in the manner which

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you had promised. Now as you had no right to make such a promise as this, it cannot be binding. Otherwise you might, by promising to do a certain thing, render it obligatory to do that thing, although it might, under the circumstances, be wrong; which is equivalent to saying, that by promising to commit a sin, you can make it your duty to commit it; which again would be the same thing as to say that it is your duty to commit sin; or in other words, that you sin in doing your duty, or in other words, that sin is no sin, or in other words still, that sin and duty are the same thing--which is absurd.

2. The spirit of a promise to observe certain hours for devotion, is simply this--that providence permitting--that health and all the circumstances rendering it consistent with the great law of benevolence; such and such hours shall be appropriated to such duties. If any thing more than this is intended by such a promise, the promise is unlawful. If you really doubted whether you did right in leaving your work, you did not do right. "He that doubteth, is damned if he eat;" that is, whosoever does that, the lawfulness of which he doubts, is condemned unless he as really and strongly doubts the lawfulness of the opposite course. Perhaps by your resolution you had placed yourself in precisely this predicament. You doubted whether you did right to leave your work, and perhaps as strongly, or more strongly, doubted the lawfulness of not keeping your resolution. In this case, if you acted conscientiously according as you viewed the subject with the best light you had, you ought not to regard yourself as being condemned for the course you took.

3. Such resolutions and promises are very frequently a great snare and stumbling-block to the soul. The reason is this: the unalterable, and only rule by which we are to be governed and by which we are to ascertain our duty on every occasion, is that of disinterested, perfect, and universal benevolence. Now this is right in itself, and let it be forever understood, that nothing in the universe is right in itself, but disinterested, perfect, and universal benevolence. This is the unalterable and only law of right.

Again, let it be forever understood that nothing is wrong in itself but selfishness; that is, the disposition to self-gratification. Every act of every kind that can have any moral character at all, every state of mind, and every omission that can have any moral character at all, is either right or wrong, as it is conformed to the law of benevolence or to the law of selfishness. Selfishness is always wrong, and every thing that proceeds therefrom. Benevolence is always right and every thing that proceeds therefrom. I mean by this, that all those outward actions

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and states of mind that necessarily follow from benevolence or selfishness, so far as they can have any moral character at all, are right or wrong simply because, and in so far as they are conformed to either of these laws. Now the question whether any particular action or thing is right or wrong, can be decided only by bringing all the circumstances of the case into the light of the law of love, always remembering that nothing is right or wrong in itself, but conformity or non-conformity to this law. Now whether it may be your duty to appropriate a certain hour to rest or exercise, to sleep, to prayer, to refreshment, to labor, to recreation, to study, to meditation, to visiting the poor, to taking care of the sick, or in any of the ten thousand other supposable ways, will depend entirely upon the circumstances of the case, and you should never promise to do or omit any thing that may be inconsistent with the circumstances in which Providence may place you. Your business is to be at all times wholly devoted to God, to be perfectly and disinterestedly benevolent, and let the employment of every hour be such as seems, with the best light you have, to be most for the honor of God and the advancement of his kingdom. This is the rule and the only rule of right; and all tying yourself up to any other course than this is wrong. It will be a snare to your soul.

Again, prayer and devotional exercises are the privileges of the Christian, and not things that he must be whipped up to, by resolutions, oaths, and vows. If your heart is full of love, you will not need oaths or vows to lead you to pray. If it is not, you will never discharge your duty by complying with an oath, and spending an hour in mocking God. It is always well to observe stated seasons for every duty, so far as we consistently can; but our circumstances are often such that very few duties can be uniformly attended to at any given hour. Let us be watchful, and sure to pray enough, and attend to every thing in its proper time and place, and not suffer Satan to bring us into bondage in any of these matters.

My sister, the same God that wrote the Bible, the same God that works within us by the voice and leading of his Spirit, is the same God that administers universal and particular providence in the world around us. The inward leadings of his Spirit and the written word, are never inconsistent with his providential dispensations. We want to know what the will of God is, respecting the disposal of our time and efforts every moment. His providential dealings are designed to afford us opportunity for developing and carrying out the great law of benevolence written in our hearts. This providence therefore, is to be regarded as a revelation of his will as to our duty every hour. Now for

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us to set up a resolution that we will or will not do this or that, is to make a standard and rule of our own--is to be self-willed, to disregard the voice of God and lean to our own understanding. In this we set aside the authority of God, under the pretence of piously keeping a resolution. The fact is, it is infidelity to deny or overlook the truth, that Providence is a continual revelation of the will of God in respect to us. My dear sister, let us remember that providence is nothing else than a great book of divine revelation, in which we are passing over successive chapters, verses, and pages day by day; and this providence, so far as we are able to understand it, is just as binding upon us as a written revelation, or as if God should utter his will in an audible voice from heaven. We have no right therefore, to make any promise or resolution whatever, that may clash with the providential revelations of the will of God in respect to our time and hourly duties. Let this suffice, my sister, for an answer to your first inquiry. In the next number, God willing, you will find an answer to your second inquiry.

Your brother;
C.G. FINNEY

**LETTER FROM PROF. FINNEY TO MISS A.E. OF
VERMONT [No. 2]**

March 26, 1845

Dear Sister A:

Your second inquiry relates to the subject of dress. "After having received the blessing of which I have spoken, I was very sensitive in relation to dress--about conforming to the fashion of the world, and felt that I never would change my form of dress. In this too, I have departed, but have not returned to my former course. This, however, is one point which has been a source of much pain to me."

Now, my sister, this is a much agitated question, and the only way in which it can be decided, is by reference to the law which I before mentioned: namely, that of universal, disinterested, and perfect benevolence. This is the rule and the only rule by which all our actions are to be governed. Benevolence is good willing, or willing the good or happiness of being. Our own happiness is a part of the good of being, and should always be estimated according to its relative value. As an illustration of this: Suppose there are before me two kinds of food, or two baskets of fruit: other things being equal, it is lawful for me, and even my duty to choose that which is most agreeable to me, simply because it is a greater good to me and no evil to any body else, and therefore is so far conducive to the highest good. So if I were providing food or fruit for another, it would be my duty, other things being equal, to provide that which is most agreeable to him.

Now apply this principle to dress. By a law of our being, more or less variety seems to be demanded; that is, our highest enjoyment can be promoted only by considerable variety. Now God is benevolent. In our original constitution he planted capacities for enjoyment, and constantly adapts his providence and works to these capacities, that he may promote our happiness. Hence the variety with which his works abound. For us to refuse this variety in our diet and in other things, is to reproach the wisdom of God, and trample down the laws of our being. There is, however, be it remembered, a

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reasonable variety in every thing, and there is a fanciful, unreasonable, luxurious, self-gratifying variety. Suppose you have for a long time worn one form and color of dress. It becomes necessary for you to have a new one. You feel inclined to change the color, and in some respects the form. Now observe, all things else being equal--the expense, the manner in which the change will be regarded by others--every thing, in short, being equal, it is no doubt proper for you to follow this impulse, that is, it is in accordance with reason for you to do so, and it is demanded by reason. It is a law of your being, and if it will promote your happiness, and impair the happiness of no other being, your duty in this case becomes plain, just as in choosing between different kinds of food. But observe that when the fashion of the day or other circumstances might give this change the appearance of conforming to the world, it should be abstained from, under that rule of the Apostle--"Abstain from all appearance of evil."

2. A great variety of circumstances are always to be taken into the account in determining the dress suitable for different individuals and at different seasons: such as the age, the sex, the health, the circumstances, the position in which providence has placed you. All these things should be well considered in deciding what is becoming, modest, healthful, Christian. Certainly no universal rule can be laid down but that already mentioned; namely, universal disinterested, perfect benevolence. It is easy to see that the practical application of this rule would naturally introduce a great variety, according to the climate, the seasons, the health, and various other circumstances.

There is no need of persons being stumbled upon this subject. A holy heart--in other words, a single eye to the glory of God in all things, will enable persons to learn their duty on this as on all other subjects.

My sister, let it be remembered as of great importance, that Christians should not judge one another upon such subjects as these, and apply their own rules and notions to every body, and insist upon making their own conscience the rule of another's duty. I have no right to judge another man by my light, and denounce him if he will not comply with my views upon this or any other subject. where the thing is manifestly neither right nor wrong in itself, but only right or wrong according to the circumstances. In this there is a great evil in the church and the world. Men overlook the fact upon which I insisted in my first letter, that but one thing in the universe is right in itself--that is, benevolence; and that every thing is right or wrong as it does or does not accord with the law of benevolence.

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I have been several times requested by my sisters abroad to give my opinion in relation to the rule by which especially females are to be governed in the regulation of their dress. Now to this I answer:

(1.) That the rule is that of universal and perfect benevolence.

(2.) That what is upon the whole benevolent in every case must be decided by a sober, honest, and earnest consideration of all the circumstances of the case. Every thing is of course to be avoided that will appear to be conformity to the world, because we are required to avoid all appearance of evil.

Again, all extravagance of every kind is to be avoided, and also all forms and modes of dress that are inconsistent with the best health; and again, whatever is inconsistent with a pure and correct taste. Every thing immodest, uncouth, or slovenly should be rejected. Christian women would do well to dress always just as they would if they expected to receive a visit personally from the Lord Jesus Christ. My sister, always dress so as to have reasons to believe that the Savior, if personally present, could not say--I am sorry to see you have so much regard to your personal appearance, or I am sorry to see you have so little. Dress in such a manner that you suppose he would have nothing at all to say about your dress, or about your state of mind respecting dress. Indeed, females would do well to dress always so as to attract no attention at all to their dress. Remember this, my sister. Few ladies would err if they would follow this rule. I say few, because I can conceive of circumstances in which there might be an exception. Some ladies are providentially placed in such circumstances that most of their associations are with those who dress most extravagantly. Now a lady thus situated must either dress extravagantly, or be noted for Christian simplicity and plainness. In such cases it is well for a lady to become notorious, and to depart so far from the extravagance of those around her, as to rebuke the gay and fashionable multitude. In this case she should by no means go to an opposite extreme, and pay so little regard to her dress as to be necessarily offensive; but let her observe the rule of the Apostle; adorn herself with modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with gold or pearls or costly array; but with such apparel as becomes a woman professing godliness.

Inasmuch as benevolence is the rule, we are always to remember that the expensiveness of dress is much to be taken into the account in deciding upon the propriety of any article of apparel. The wants of the world, the numerous demands upon our resources for aid to benevolent objects, should always be duly considered in all our

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expenditures, and of course for dress. The error is almost universal on the side of extravagance; but there may be error on the other side. Persons may not sufficiently consult their health, the climate, and all the circumstances of the case, and may for the sake of a present good, forego a greater and more remote good.

A great deal may be said on this subject. Not so much however really needs to be said as many suppose, because the law of benevolence is simple, and generally of very easy application. I have thought that many fail to distinguish between scrupulousness and conscientiousness in regard to questions of this kind, and that Satan often has very much to do in troubling the minds of many Christians on this subject. Your health is feeble and your nerves delicate; perhaps you are not sufficiently careful to discriminate between scrupulousness and conscientiousness. When the Holy Spirit shall have taught you how to make this just discrimination, I think you will be relieved of your trouble on this subject. I may resume this topic at some future time.

Yours in the Lord:

C.G. FINNEY

**LETTER FROM PROF. FINNEY TO MISS A.E. OF
VERMONT [No. 3]**

April 9, 1845

Dear Sister A:

Your third enquiry relates to the subject of wearing mourning apparel. You say, "A brother once remarked in my presence that he felt it was wrong for people to change their dress at the loss of friends, or in other words, to put on mourning apparel." He thought it was conforming to the fashion of the world and therefore wrong; and also that it was unnecessary expense. These considerations led me to believe in the same way. He remarked further that he should be singular should his friends put it on. These remarks led me to feel so decided that I made the remark that should my mother be taken, I should put on no mourning, even if my friends did.--The first trial I had of these feelings was the removal of my dear mother. Well, what did I do but conform to the wishes of my friends, as they would not comply with mine. My dear brother, do you think I did wrong in view of all the circumstances of the case? I find if I once yield and do the thing that I thought was not right, I am left to doubt whether I was right."

Upon this I remark,

1. That my own habit and that of our family is to make no change in our dress on account of the loss of even nearest friends. Our reasons are these:

(a.) It is an unnecessary expense.

(b.) It is a great snare and a stumbling-block to poor people. The custom of wearing mourning often involves large but poor families deeply in debt. It often works an injury in many ways. A large but poor family if they comply with this custom must all have mourning at the loss of a relative. They are unable to pay, and a merchant might almost as well give them their mourning apparel as to let them have it on credit. Else he must really oppress them to get his pay. For the sake of the poor, therefore, I have thought it duty for Christians, at

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least my duty, with my views upon the subject to discountenance such a custom.

Again, it is unavoidable that the preparation of mourning apparel diverts the attention of the living from the great impression which God designed death to make upon them. Just at the time when God is speaking to them in so impressive a manner they must be all bustle in preparing their mourning dresses, they must go to the store--visit the milliner's and mantua-makers, and tailors; search the shops for hosiery; mourning rings, ribbands, and crapes must be had, and much attention must be paid to the cut and form of every thing; the greatly salutary lesson which God designed to teach them by his solemn providence is lost and worse than lost. Besides all this, it is no real respect for the dead.

But once more. Let us bring up the law which I have mentioned in my first two letters, and decide this custom in the light of it. Does benevolence to the dead require this? Would the departed spirit if allowed to speak, request that all this attention should be paid to the outward habiliments of mourning? If the soul has gone to heaven, would its happiness be increased by the mourner's expending so much time, thought and money upon dress? Could that soul on any account desire that this expense should be increased, or the attention be thus diverted from serious considerations? If the departed spirit has gone to hell, can we alleviate its sufferings by procuring mourning apparel?

Again, would benevolence to God lead us to do any such thing? Or would benevolence to the living require it? Is it demanded any way by the law of disinterested and universal benevolence? Yet in regard to this, let me say that I can conceive of circumstances in which this might be the less of two evils, and therefore expedient and right; for, let it be remembered, nothing is right in itself but disinterested benevolence--nothing wrong in itself but selfishness. Now if circumstances should occur in which the highest good seems plainly to demand that we use mourning apparel, then let us use it; otherwise, let us abstain from using it. Only have a single eye to the glory of God and the good of man, and you can form a right judgment as to your duty under any circumstances they may occur.

I have suggested that circumstances may occur in which the law of love will demand compliance with this custom. For example, you may be so situated that non-compliance would have so much the appearance of stubbornness, self-will, or some other evil temper, as to render it expedient to submit to the practice. Or your family or social relations may be such as to render it expedient. It may be best that a

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wife should comply with her husband's wishes; a daughter with the wishes of her parents.

As to the scruples you feel respecting this and the other questions you have proposed, let me remark that you need not expect to be able to settle all questions of duty without a struggle and a trial. It ought not to be expected that we shall become settled on many important questions of duty without that agonizing effort of mind which usually precedes our throwing ourselves unqualifiedly upon God for direction. The very fact that, doubt and uncertainty hang over the path of duty, awakening an earnest desire to know the truth, produces a reaching, grasping, struggling, groaning, until the light of the Spirit, word and providence of God settle the mind in respect to his will. Do not count it strange therefore, my sister, that you should have these trials. They are a part of your Father's discipline. You know the way to get all your doubts resolved. Christ is your wisdom, your light, your life, your guide. He has promised to guide you by his eye. Your nature and circumstances are such that it will often cost you a struggle to penetrate the darkness that may enshroud some important question of duty. Let this never discourage or stumble you. You will find questions of higher and still higher import thrown before your mind as you advance in knowledge and conformity to the will of God. Remember you must agonize to enter the strait gate--the whole Christian life is a warfare with temptation and a struggle with difficulties, embarrassing questions, and multitudes of thing designed to develop to the utmost our patience, faith, love, hope, our sympathy with Christ in his humiliation, and thus prepare us to share with him in his glory. It is one of the grossest mistakes for Christians to expect ever in this life to get permanently beyond the struggles and agonizing conflicts which God intends for their discipline and development. Let no one expect it. It is enough for the servant that he be as his Master. Christ had trials of his faith, his patience, and all his graces. He learned obedience, we are told by the things which he suffered. Let it not be inferred from this that Christ sinned, nor should it ever be inferred that any being on trial sins because he has these struggles. These befell Christ as a man; so they may befall ourselves as human beings needing that development which discipline gives and which nothing else can give. The graces of the man Christ Jesus, needed development as well as ours, and his Heavenly Father attained it in the same way with him as with us. But I cannot say more on this subject at present. Let us be cheerfully willing to follow in his footsteps, and count it all joy when like him we fall into divers

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temptations, perplexities, and discouragements, remembering that the trials of our faith worketh patience.

Your Brother,
C.G. FINNEY

**LETTER FROM PROF. FINNEY TO MISS A.E. OF
VERMONT [No. 4]**

April 23, 1845

Dear Sister A:

Your fourth enquiry relates to public duties. You say, "I am very much tried in relation to duties, particularly public ones; and here, may I ask what you think to be the appropriate public duties for a female who is willing to do the whole will of God. What part should she bear in conferences and lectures, where there is no invitation extended to the sisters and where it is not expected that they will bear a part? I will tell you what I have done and how my mind is exercised upon this point. I do not know what makes me feel thus, and why I should have so much anxiety. I have felt it my duty to take a part, and did not dare refuse. I have sometimes felt tempted and did refuse, and thereby brought deep anguish of soul upon myself because I felt it was an act of disobedience; and because I have disobeyed, there is a fear that I shall again do so, so that my mind is in an anxious state. My mind is enquiring what I shall say on such occasions, and then I have much suggested to me; but when the opportunity occurs, I somehow cannot express it as I thought I could. Where is the defect in me? If it is of the Lord that I should speak or pray, why have I not freedom and influence, and why any solicitude in relation to another opportunity."

My dear sister, I could relate to you a great many cases similar to yours, where persons have been greatly perplexed with suggestions, impulses and feelings, and have sometimes given way to them and have been led from step to step into most ridiculous absurdities. Now here remember again, that the law of universal love is your rule in meeting and out of meeting, and not any suggestions, and impulses, or mere feelings. If benevolence manifestly requires you to speak or pray anywhere, at any time, your duty is plain; but impulse, mere feelings, and suggestions are no rule of duty. They may and often do come from Satan, and I should think from what you say

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that Satan is trying to make you appear ridiculous. For a woman to pray or speak, in a prayer of conference meeting is certainly neither right nor wrong in itself, but its propriety must be determined in view of all the circumstances of the case. I know some have supposed that the Scriptures plainly prohibit the speaking or praying of women in promiscuous assemblies. I do not so understand the teachings of the Bible. Your question, if I understand you, does not involve the enquiry whether or not the bible forbids this practice. You seem not to have any scruples upon this subject, but in respect to the where and the when. Now the where and the when must be decided by all the circumstances of the case. If you feel constrained by the love of Christ to pray or speak, and the circumstances are such that by doing so you would not offend God's little ones, you may no doubt do so with propriety. But when the opinions of your brethren and sisters are such that this course would really shock and grieve them, this should be taken into the account, and in most instances doubtless should decide you not to do it. But I can conceive of circumstances in which it might be your duty to do so even should they object, but then, I should not consider a bare impulse or feeling of any kind as sufficient evidence that this is your duty. The question is, what are the circumstances? where are you? what have you to say? what is the demand for saying what is upon your mind? The truth is, my sister, that many persons mistake by supposing that the Spirit of God leads christians by impulses and by creating certain feelings and impressing it upon them that such and such things are duty, without the mind once considering whether the course thus impressed upon their minds is demanded by the law of benevolence. Now let it always be remembered that the Spirit of God influences the mind by truth. The mind in order to act virtuously must have reasons which appear to it to be good, and sufficient reasons for any given conduct. It is true that where we have an express revelation of the will of God, that is a good and sufficient reason and we need enquire no further; but we are never to regard a mere impression or feeling as obligatory where we can perceive no other reason for the given course.

Considering the standard you have set up and the attainments to which you are aspiring, it is not at all wonderful that Satan should endeavor to vex and divert you by all sorts of suggestions, putting you up to make promises which he knows you will not and cannot keep, and then tormenting you by accusing you of having broken your promises. That he should suggest to you trains of thought, and impress you to speak in public assemblies is not wonderful or new.

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Should you begin to give way and follow these suggestions, as I have often known persons to do, you would soon be impressed with the duty of arising and interrupting the preacher and producing disorder in public worship. If you refuse to follow these suggestions, it is natural that he should accuse you of pride, the fear of man, and all such things. Now, my sister, I do not believe that this is the way in which God leads his children.

Again, you speak of the impressions being very strong upon your mind. This also, in my view, is a suspicious circumstances. I have learned by experience as well as from observation, that oftentimes the impulses of Satan are much more powerful than those by which the Spirit of God leads his people; that is, the impression on the imagination and feelings is much stronger. The mind of God is calm and mild; and in general no doubt the leadings of his Spirit are calm and mild also, and more like a still small voice; whereas Satan is boisterous and often deeply exciting in his suggestions and impulses. I do not mean to say that God is not sometimes so, but that the strength of an impression is not by any means decisive proof of its coming from God. In my own experience I can remember some instances in which I laid too much stress upon the strength of an impression, and was afterwards satisfied that it was from Satan.

You say you are tried with the subject of eating and drinking. This is also very natural, considering the position which you have taken to live in all things wholly to the glory of God. The same rule, remember, is to be applied to this as to every thing else. "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." Quantity, quality, times of eating, and every thing about it should have respect to the best physical condition of the body and through this to the glory of God. Act, my sister, according to the best light you can get for the time being. As opportunity may offer, study the laws of life and health, and conform to those laws as far as other duties will permit, and make such changes from time to time as increased light demands. Be not brought into bondage on this subject. My observation has shown me that persons are liable to be brought into bondage in different directions upon the subject of diet, and dress and many other things of this kind. When I first read Graham's work on Physiology and Dietetics, I was deeply interested in it, and as it was at the time the best light as I supposed which I had, I became very scrupulous in my conformity to his views. After a while, I found myself in complete bondage to what is called Grahamism.

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Some are manifestly in bondage to their appetite and have no command over themselves. Others are in bondage to Grahamism or to some other ism, so as to be ready to starve themselves well nigh to death, unless they can get a particular kind of diet. Now all this appears to me to be taking upon our necks a yoke which God has never imposed upon us. If I understand the rule with respect to diet it is that we shall as far as circumstances admit, prefer those things which are most consistent with and conducive to the best physical state of our bodies, not hesitating, however for conscience sake to eat such things as are set before us in our journeyings and wanderings, provided they are not positively injurious.

Your Brother,
C.G. FINNEY

EXPLANATORY REMARKS FROM PROF. FINNEY UPON CERTAIN POINTS IN A RECENT SERMON

September 24, 1845

Dear Brother Cowles:

I find that some things in my sermon reported by you on 1 Cor. 1:30, have been misapprehended by some of the brethren abroad. They have understood me to disapprove of ministers preaching at all upon the subject of politics.

Now this is by no means my view of the subject as every one knows who has heard my Lectures on Pastoral Theology, or who is acquainted with my real views. I hold and maintain that every department of human conduct is to come under review in the pulpit, and in its place be made the subject of instruction, discussion, reproof, warning, encouragement, or rebuke. But I also hold and maintain that care should always be taken to put and keep the gospel right end foremost, so to speak; that is, that the truths of fundamental importance should always have the greatest prominence--that the reformation and the sanctification of the hearts of men should always be the great theme of pulpit instruction, and that reformation in the different branches of morals should always have their appropriate place.

The thing which I intended in that sermon was to animadvert upon the conduct of ministers who it seems to me are guilty of a great error in turning aside to lecture altogether upon some particular branches of morals.

This did not Christ, nor his Apostles, nor it seems to me will any man do it who thoroughly understands the spirituality and power of the gospel, and carries it out constantly in his instructions.

I have no doubt it is the duty of ministers to instruct their people as occasion may require respecting their duties as citizens under an elective government; to lay down and enforce the great principles upon which they are to be actuated in coming to the polls. I believe also that at proper times and as occasion may demand, they ought to

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preach and enforce the instructions of the Bible respecting their duties in all the relations they sustain to God and man. I think also that at the present time there is a peculiar call for ministers to be unusually explicit, frequent, full, and pungent upon the subject of electing their representatives to act in our halls of legislation, and I do not believe that in general, ministers err on the side of paying too much attention to this question, and enforcing too frequently and pungently the great principles upon which Christian men are to act in their political relations. But as a general thing I am satisfied that the error is on the other side, and that there is by no means enough of pulpit teaching in regard to the responsibilities and duties of Christians in their political relations. The pulpit has been too long almost silent upon this subject.

The thing which it seems to me is wise in ministers in regard to their public teaching upon the subject of politics, is to hold forth in their public praying and preaching incidentally and by way of inference and remark on almost all occasions, enough to keep the people's mind awake to their duty and informed on all important points, and then it will never be necessary for them to leave their congregations or turn aside and give themselves up wholly to preaching and lecturing upon politics, on the Sabbath or on any other day. Such a necessity as this, if it be indeed a necessity, has arisen out of too general a negligence on the part of ministers to give the people their requisite kind and amount of instruction.

It will not be denied that the gospel aims primarily at converting sinners and sanctifying the saints, and that all outward reformations are to follow as a result from a reformation of the heart. It seems to be of little comparative importance to bring about a merely political reformation while the heart remains entrenched in selfishness. It is entirely below the high aims which a minister of the gospel ought to have, to go out among the cold churches and impenitent sinners, and give himself up to influencing the votes of men in respect to a particular candidate or election. This seems to me to be turning aside from the proper work of the ministry, and it must and will be felt to be so by a thinking community. The conduct of rulers and the ruled, the conduct of Christians at the ballot box and every where else, is to be me the subject of free and full discussion and animadversion by the ministers of God as occasion may offer.

But I humbly conceive that all the branches of outward morals should always be so pressed upon mankind as that they shall distinctly understand that there is no real reformation which does not begin at the heart, and that duty is never done unless with a holy

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heart. In particular localities and under particular circumstances it may be greatly important that ministers should be very thorough, discriminating, and persevering in their instructions upon the political relations of Christians at the present time. In other places there may not be this necessity for ministers to say so much upon the subject, for the reason that many lay-men and women are exerting themselves to diffuse light and arouse the public mind upon this subject. In such a case the principle of a division of labor will be brought to bear upon a community, which is of great importance in the church of God. If the lay-members of the church, who have property, talents, and influence, will put forth appropriate exertions to scatter light on political questions,--will be honest Christians throughout,--it will save the minister the necessity of doing any thing more than incidentally and occasionally to sanction their principles and measures in his prayers and preaching. But when the lay-members of a church are asleep, or are all wrong on political subjects, there has manifestly been a great want of ministerial faithfulness, and in such cases ministers should redeem the time and come out faithfully and thoroughly, acknowledging their past delinquencies and giving the people appropriate instruction.

By appropriate instruction I do not mean that they should content themselves with enforcing the obligation of right outward political action, but that they should go to the heart, and insist upon it that men should be universally benevolent and act in obedience to the law of universal, disinterested benevolence at the polls and every where else.

But I do not wish to prolong this communication. My only object is in as few words as possible to correct a misapprehension which in many ways I have found to have arisen from reading the sermon to which I have alluded. My motto is, Let ministers preach on politics and on any and every thing else as circumstances may demand, never however forgetting at any time to make the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of the church the great end at which they aim,--always insisting that right political action will follow and must follow from a right state of heart whenever the people are rightly instructed.

Your brother,
C.G. FINNEY

Sermons by the Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY

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THE NATURE OF IMPENITENCE AND THE MEASURE OF ITS GUILT

January 21, 1846

"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." --Matthew 11:20-24.

In speaking from these words, it will be my object,

I. TO SHOW WHAT IS INCLUDED, OR IMPLIED, IN A STATE OF IMPENITENCE.

II. TO POINT OUT THE GUILT OF THIS STATE OF MIND, AND SHOW THAT IT IS IN PROPORTION TO THE LIGHT UNDER WHICH IT IS INDULGED.

In a recent sermon I aimed to show what repentance is; I now wish to show what constitutes impenitence.

1. It is not, as many seem to suppose, the mere negation of repentance. It is not a negative, blank state of mind--a mere nothing; but is absolute and positive. It involves moral action of the most positive kind.

2. It is that state of self-seeking into which men not influenced by the Spirit of God, always fall. In this state men make themselves and their own supposed good, the object of supreme regard. Their ultimate design in all they do, is their own gratification. I mean all this, and precisely this;--in all they do for others, and in all they think themselves to do for God, their own self is the supreme and ultimate end. Everything terminates in self--or they feel no interest in it.

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In other words, impenitence is a state of consecration to self. Beyond all controversy, impenitent men are entirely consecrated--only it is not to God, but to self. To their own gratification, and their own supposed interests, they are supremely devoted.

It is a great mistake, to suppose that impenitent sinners are not devotional. They are most profoundly and perfectly so. You could not ask for more perfect specimens of devotion to a given object--but the object in their case is their own self. It cannot be said that they fall short of entire consecration. With them consecration is never unsteady, fitful, imperfect. Self being their idol, the worship they pay is always ardent, hearty, and consistent with their whole life. Furthermore, the impenitent man consecrates not only his own efforts and interests to himself, but the interests of every other being--of God as far as he can, and of his fellow beings also. All sentient beings in the universe within his reach are laid under contribution to minister to his supreme deity--self. He cares not for God, only as he can make God subservient to himself. He would pray to God, if he could thereby make God his own servant--not otherwise. If he does good to any of his fellow beings, you may be sure he has himself for the ultimate object--this is all; he cares for nothing in the universe, except so far as he can make it subservient to himself.

3. Impenitence is a state of self-exaltation. In this state the man sets himself above every thing else--even above God, and every other being or interest in the universe. Every impenitent sinner makes his own interest and his own will supreme; neither God nor angels, earth nor friends, are placed above self; all are placed in his esteem below himself, and made to bow down in homage and subservience to his own shrine.

4. It is a spirit of self-will; a state in which a man will have every thing in his own way. This man would be ready enough to be a christian--in his own way;--would go to heaven very cordially if he might go as Universalists expect to go, or as infidels dream of going;--his own will being supreme, and his own way being granted him.

5. It is a spirit of self-indulgence. I am aware this sentiment has been expressed in other language; but you will allow me to turn this subject over and over, that you may see all sides of it, and all the terms under which it has been clothed. Now the impenitent man does not always indulge himself in the same way. He may not always choose the gross and scandalous forms of self-indulgence; he may not everywhere be a glutton, a drunkard, a debauchee;--he may deem it more for his interest or taste, to consult his love of reputation, and

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may choose to indulge this. This may be his strongest passion, and if so, thorough self-indulgence will make him hold in check his grosser passions and appetites, especially if he resides in a truly moral community. But if a good name be his ruling motive, his decent moral conduct, having this for its end, is as real self-indulgence as you ever see in the veriest glutton or debauchee. No matter what the form of self-indulgence may be--its moral character turns upon the fact that it is self-indulgence, and not at all upon the greater or less decency it may have in the estimation of men.

This point ought to be thoroughly understood. Impenitence is self-indulgence in some form, and what the form shall be, will turn upon the relative strength of his several passions, and his estimate of the expediency under his circumstances of gratifying one rather than another. He may love money too well to be a drunkard, or his reputation too well to be licentious; but while in impenitence, whether he drink or abstain, it is to indulge himself; whether he be a glutton or be temperate in food; whether he be avaricious or prodigal; moral, or immoral; self-indulgence is evermore the one ruling end of his life.

This is equally true of all impenitent men. All the forms of morality you see among them, have the same, and no other root. So of all their forms of religious observance. Whether he go on a pilgrimage, or immure himself in a monastery, or subdue his flesh in his asceticism;--each, or all, are only forms of self-indulgence, one or another being chosen, according to his taste or his faith in its efficacy to subserve his great end of life--selfish good. All is self-indulgence. That devotee who crawls on his knees a thousand miles, and dies, still crawling, does it all for the same end as he who gives himself up to gluttony, or to intoxication--the main difference being that the one expects his good to come now--the other is content to wait for it, say till after death. The woman who takes the veil and goes for life into the nunnery, may go for the very same supremely selfish end as she who betakes herself to the haunts of ill fame. With each her own gratification is the supreme end--if the mind be in a state of impenitence towards God.

6. Another phase of the impenitent spirit is its self-dependence. It never depends on God--always and only on self.

Again, it is a spirit of self-righteousness. It everywhere and always rejects Christ's righteousness, and goes about to establish its own.

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It is a state of mind, finally, which cleaves to self, despite of all the claims of God, or of all the universe. Nothing is permitted to sever, or even weaken its supreme regard for its own self.

II. I am to show that the guilt of an impenitent state is always proportioned to the light sinned against.

It is plain that this state of mind in which self is preferred to every thing else, begins in the infant mind, where there is no light at all--when the idea of right and wrong is yet undeveloped. There the little infant chooses his own gratification, by the same law that all other animals choose theirs, and for ought we can see, as innocently, until its reason is in some degree developed, and duty to other beings and other interests is seen to impose a counter claim. We cannot tell how early the reason may begin to develop itself; it is not incumbent upon us to do this; but whenever it is, there moral agency commences; there impenitence begins in the selfish preference of its own little interests, to the greater interests of God, or of other beings. And as ray after ray of light breaks in upon that young mind, setting forth the claims of God right over against the demands of its own self-gratification, guilt is every moment increasing, if this light and the divine claims which it reveals are resisted. Nothing can be plainer than this.

The text obviously teaches this doctrine. It assumes its truth, and bases its augmented wo, upon the cities where Christ preached, on this very ground. So on another occasion Christ said, "If I had not come and spoken among them, they had not had sin; but now have they no cloak for their sin."

Again, as light increases, the obstinacy of the sinner's mind increases, or he cannot remain in a state of impenitent resistance. He must gird him self up to resist, or he could not withstand the force of this light. How much I have seen of this in revivals of religion. Light pours in--the sense of obligation is quickened--conscience lifts her voice;--but the sinner girds himself for desperate resistance, as he never did before. I have seen it often in this place. Young men here, pressed by truth and the spirit of truth, to yield to God, band themselves together, as if they could not hold out if they stood alone. They hold each other up--taking the same course that devils themselves would take--they gird up their loins for more vigorous effort to resist the claims of God, and maintain their position of impenitence. Of course the guilt of sinners thus resisting, is augmented with fearful rapidity. The woes of Capernaum fall thick and fearfully upon their heads.

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Again, as light increases, impenitence continuing, hardness of heart increases. This is only the same thing in other words. Greater and growing resistance of truth involves greater hardness of heart.

Yet again, as light increases, and the sinner girds himself to resist it, God has the greater reason to be incensed against him. How could he provoke God more and worse than he does! He sets at naught both the justice and the mercy of God, and seems determined to thwart every effort God can make to save him. Why should not a holy God give scope to law and justice?

As light increases, sinners see more and more of the folly and madness of their own impenitence. I once fell into conversation with a lawyer of eminence in the State of N. York. He began to cavil resolutely against the claims of the gospel. I headed him in on every side, and showed him that all his cavils only rebounded upon his own head, and aggravated his own guilt. He saw it, and finally acknowledged it, saying, "Well, I know my system will not do to reason upon; I may as well stop as try. I know there is no foundation for my cavils." You do, then, replied I, understand that you have no foundation for your objections against God and his gospel? Yes, I do. Now if this man goes on still in sin, he is in the most guilty state conceivable.

Thus, as light increases, sinners see more and more of the infinite reasonableness of God's claims.

Often, for a time, sinners almost believe their own lies. Perhaps they really labor under great errors of opinion in many points, and these serve to weaken the pressure of God's claims upon their consciences. They see perhaps, a great many difficulties in the way which they know not how to surmount. I know but too well from my early experience, that sinners may involve themselves in error and darkness, from which they cannot readily extricate themselves. As the Bible says--"The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble."

But often, at last, they open their eyes and see the infinite reasonableness of truth. I never shall forget the hour when in my own case the truth broke upon my mind--when I saw that all my cavils were groundless--that all God's ways were right, and all mine wrong. I had been brought up in great darkness, yet in the midst of a Presbyterian congregation, often listening to Old School preaching. But the strain of it was--"you can and you can't," and it filled my mind with utter confusion, and put every great truth of the gospel out of joint, in my mind. It seems to me now, that in all those years of my

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youth, I never heard one gospel sermon,--not one that I think presented the gospel in its clear and true light. It threw me headlong into all the absurdities of Old School theology, and there I stumbled along, only getting deeper in the mire. I at first got a Bible and placed it among my law books, to study law out of it. This led me to read portions of the old testament, and from this for a time I derived no benefit. But at length I took up the claims of religion as I would any point of law, and while I sought to justify myself in sin, I found, to my surprise, that truth and reason were all against me. Conviction broke on my mind, that God is all right--that I am all wrong. And do you suppose that I was easy under this conviction? Infinitely far from it. My mind chafed like a chained bear; truth had harpooned me, and I could neither escape nor rest. I fretted, raved against the truth, abused professors of religion; but all this neither changed the truth, nor helped me. My mind rushed one way, and then another way; but in vain, for God, by his Spirit, had anchored his truth deep in my soul, and I seemed to have no power to dislodge it. My mind worked like a steam engine, and seemed laboring under a mighty pressure. So you may have seen the sinner agitated and struggling--God attempting to break him off from his sins, but his iron heart resisting, and holding out in stern rebellion. But guilt is all this while accumulating with fearful rapidity.

Once more; as light increases, impenitence becomes a hard and troubled course. Conscience is ill at ease; the sinner must needs brace himself up against the heaven-sent impulses to repentance; it costs him fresh and painful efforts to remain in impenitence. O what guilt this sinner must incur who will fight his way down to hell against such influences put forth by God to save his soul.

REMARKS

1. Impenitence is the whole of sin. Nothing else in all the universe is sin but this. Outward actions being only the evidences, or manifestations of the inner moral state, we must turn our eye away from these, and look only at the heart. Then we see that nothing else is sin but impenitence towards God--that supreme regard for self which puts the mind in the attitude of rebellion against God, and against an appropriate regard for any other interests but those of its own self. Self-gratification becomes the one controlling law of action. No matter what form it may take on; its nature changes not. There is only this one thing sought as an ultimate end, by any sinner in earth or hell--self-gratification. The only difference among them all turns upon the different degrees of light sinned against, and this difference

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affects only the degree, not the kind, or moral quality of their conduct. So, the angel in heaven, and the saint on earth, so far as he is a saint, have each and all but one end in view--to please and glorify God; and here, too, the only difference turns on the different degrees of light which they may enjoy. The saints in earth or heaven, pursue a course right over against that of the sinner; but each class has but one heart--one supreme intention, for this is what is meant by heart. This is uniformly the Bible representation of saints and sinners.

2. There is no difference among sinners, only that the guilt of those who have had greater light, exceeds the guilt of those who have had less. It is vastly important that people would break through the shell and see the kernel of this truth. It ought to be seen by all, and may be. As I said before, no matter where the sinner is, whether in earth or hell; nor who he is, nor what his pursuits are; all is perfect sympathy among sinners of every name and grade and place--even between sinners in hell, and sinners on this earth--just as much as there is perfect sympathy between saints on earth and saints in heaven. Developments and degrees of guilt will vary according to light possessed and controlling circumstances; but no other difference will or can be found.

3. Outward acts are not sin, but are merely the evidences of the mind's state. There is not a particle of sin in your muscles. Even though they may be nerved up to stab your neighbor, yet those muscular movements are not your sins--these lie in an impenitent or selfish heart.

4. Outward acts and manifestations will of course be modified by circumstances. Suppose a man has for his supreme end his own gratification. Place him under one set of circumstances, and you will see one development of character; change his circumstances, and you will see another development of character. Take a man who in a loose community has been of loose morals himself, and transfer him to a religious and moral community, and you may anticipate a marked change, not in his character, but in its manifestation. If his love of reputation is strong, he will conform to his company enough to secure reputation as well as he conveniently can. He will be likely to become outwardly a religious man. He will probably become very moral, and perhaps a professed Christian. Why? Because his love of reputation is a controlling principle

The truth will justify a still stronger supposition. Let an impenitent man change his circumstances as we have supposed, and it will not merely affect his outward conduct, but will lead him to

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sympathize very strongly in his feelings with Christian people. This will be a natural result of his association with them. And yet the man may not be at all aware that it is his love of reputation that has brought him to this state of feeling, so changed from what he experienced when associated with wicked men. Hence it will be no strange thing if he comes to think himself a Christian. And indeed a great change has come over him, if you look only at his external conduct and his sympathy with his associates.

We may suppose that before a young man comes into this community, he was in the habit of frequenting balls, often drank freely, and nearly to intoxication and spent his money generously so as to be thought a hale fellow among his comrades; but he comes here--finds a different set of associates--breaks off his former habits and falls in with theirs--finds that his sympathies set almost as strongly with his new associates as they did with his old ones, and, amazed, he cries out--How changed I am! Surely this must be religion! It must be that I have become a Christian! I have no taste for strong drink--can do without my cigars--am just as happy without balls and routes; indeed I seem to take much the same pleasure in religious meetings now as I did in my social convivialities then; it must be that I am indeed converted! Now this man does not consider that all this change in him may result from the change in his circumstances, and that under the influence solely of his love of reputation and of the law of sympathy with associates he may experience all this change without a particle of religion. Indeed if he loves his own reputation and is a thoroughly selfish man, he will naturally modify his course to suite his changed circumstances.

Again, as selfish considerations alone produce this change, the improvement made in his deportment or in his sympathies may not make his guilt at all the less;--nay, it may be really greater now than it was before. If his light is greater, of course his guilt will be.

Let us look at this supposed case again. That young man who came here used now and then to get drunk--to visit her "whose house is the way to hell"--to laugh and jeer at prayer and piety; but now mark the change;--he comes into a religious family and bows the knee with them in prayer; he goes regularly with them to social worship, nay perhaps he even prays sometimes in his closet; the profane oath, the derisive laugh at religion and the daring deeds of sin are abandoned;--and with one voice the people say--how much this man is improved! But mark ye; if his light has increased and he has not repented of his sins before God, his guilt is greater than ever before,

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instead of being less. He is just as selfish--just as really opposed to God as he ever was, and the fact that he manages it in a more decent way and has adopted a mode of sinning which conforms itself to his circumstances only shows that he uses some discretion in carrying out the ruling principle of his heart.

But we may take a case even stronger still. Let a man come into Oberlin who has been an atheist and a pirate--for most pirates are in principle atheists; take one who has been raised among bloody men in the Spanish West Indies, who boasted in New York city that he had murdered five hundred men--let this man come into Oberlin to reside among us. He has a friend here and after staying awhile with his friend, he takes it into his head that he will get an education. You may look into his trunk and you find it full of bowie knives and pistols; examine his overcoat, you will find his pockets freighted with death-weapons; he wears them for awhile, but soon is ashamed to do what nobody else here does and lays them carefully away where none will ever see them. By and by you see him in a prayer-meeting--the man who used to make the very air blue around him with horrid blasphemy, is in the place of prayer and on his knees, and possibly you may hear his voice in supplication;--at all events, you see him civil, respectful towards religion--he gives up his atheism; but we may suppose continues still impenitent. Yet he professes to approve the plan of salvation and proclaims it a glorious plan. Now this man, so changed--so humanized, so much better as a citizen than before, may really be ten-fold more the child of hell now than ever before. Do you ask, how can this be? I answer, for the simple reason that his light is indefinitely greater than it was before, and yet he remains a selfish, impenitent man. His resistance to light and consequently his guilt against God are vastly enhanced by this change through which he has passed.

Until we get hold of the true idea of sin and holiness, we can never tell when men are growing better. We shall make the most egregious mistakes, and have no standard by which to correct them.

You might take this man, formerly so vile, and vicious; you might wash and white-wash his exterior ever so much; you might fit him for any lady's saloon, nay so far as the exterior is concerned, you might fit him to grace a mansion among angels, yet if he remains an impenitent sinner, he has only become the more wicked; that outside finish is only the garnishing of a sepulcher, which within is all pollution.

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There are probably in this place, nay even under the sound of my voice, persons more guilty than any pirates in the universe--more monstrously wicked than the pirate Gibbs, who boasted that he had murdered so many men. The selfishness of Gibbs took one particular form;--the selfishness of gospel-hardened sinners here, a different form;--different, but not a whit less hostile to God, or less odious in his sight, or less really depraved and worthy of eternal condemnation. The blackest malignity as estimated by God belongs to that form of selfishness which has resisted and still resists most light.

There may be some young women here more abominably wicked than you can find in the most polluted harlot's house--even young women against whose virtue and external conduct no charge can lie, and who can scarce hear the word licentiousness without a blush. Now wherein lies the difference between this refined, impenitent young lady, and the most corrupt harlot? Only in this; that each seeks her own self-gratification, but in different ways, and the one persists in this self-seeking despite the influence of more light and stronger dissuasives from heaven, earth, and hell, than are present to the mind of the other. She who has most of Capernaum's light to sin against must have most of Capernaum's woes to suffer, and for the best of reasons. The ultimate end of moral action--the only thing at which God looks, being the same in both cases, each has the same kind of moral character; and the difference in degree of guilt remains to be estimated by the amount of light enjoyed and resisted.

Again, as each sinner, remaining impenitent, resists all the light he has, he is just as wicked, as under his circumstances, he can be. He persists in being supremely selfish despite of every reason known to him why he should repent;--how then can he be any more wicked, until he has more light to resist? You will all see this point clearly if you once get thoroughly before your mind the two points I have been laboring to elucidate--namely:

(1.) That guilt is always and only in proportion to light resisted.
And,

(2.) That while impenitence continues, all those modifications of the external conduct which are only a choice among different forms of rebellion against God, have absolutely nothing to do in the estimation of a sinner's guilt. Let these points be well understood, and you will readily see that every sinner who resists all the light he has is just as wicked as, under his circumstances, he can be.

Again, just in proportion as light increases, sinners are in danger of committing the unpardonable sin. It is plain from what the Bible

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says of this sin that only those commit it who have great light and who resist and abuse that light. Those Pharisees who blasphemed the Holy Ghost, knew full well that Christ's miracles were wrought by the finger of God, and yet they impiously ascribed them to the devil. They had great light, and they greatly abused it.

Now we may ultimately see that more persons commit the unpardonable sin in Oberlin than any where else in all the land, for the reason that great light is enjoyed here, and by some is greatly and impiously resisted.

This is the climax of all sin. To know enough of God to make you an angel and then resist it madly and malignantly enough to make you a devil--what can be a greater sin? What can be greater folly and shame and madness?

Yet we are not wont to estimate guilt according to these plain principles of the Bible and of reason. We see a pirate--we are shocked;--we cry out--"He is a pirate! Horrible! He has murdered a hundred men! Oh, such a wretch! Surely he is not fit to live." Indeed he is a wretch, a horrible and wicked wretch;--but there perhaps, sits another impenitent sinner who could not see blood spilt without having his own blood creep in his veins, who yet is the guiltier sinner of the two. This sinner, here in Oberlin, has been brought up religiously, has heard preaching enough to have converted a thousand souls, but has heard it only to harden his own heart--this sinner may be a hundred fold more guilty than any pirate, and much more likely to have committed the unpardonable sin. Let the gospel-hardened soul take warning!

Again, in the light of this subject we see how to account for the events which not unfrequently occur in the world's history. The most notorious sinners, it sometimes happens, are soon converted when they come under instruction, while in very religious places, it is almost impossible to promote a revival of religion and secure the conversion of sinners. You may go into the Sodoms of the land--the no-God settlements, as they are or may be called, and there you may find the word of God will fall with power on many hearts. I once went into a place called Sodom--notorious for its daring wickedness, where there was but one professor of religion and he bore the name of Lot. This man had invited me there to preach. I went--I came to the place of meeting and the people were all there; yet I felt strangely--could not fix my mind on any text to preach from--seemed perfectly shut up--but trusting in God I began the exercises: felt enlarged in prayer, and finally seized upon the text--"Up, get ye out of this place,

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for the Lord will destroy this city." It was a curious looking congregation. For a while I thought they would very likely pitch at me and drag me out of the house--they seemed ready to devour me in some way--but presently I saw what was moving their minds--the truth of God fell like quick, successive peals of thunder on their hearts; one after another fell from their seats; weeping, wailing, cries, screams, and prayers for mercy filled the whole house. I had to stop preaching, for I could not go on at all; and why? What was the matter? Only this: there was a company of ignorant persons who had indeed been regarded as the most wicked of sinners, but they had not hardened their hearts under the preaching of the gospel, and now when they came to hear a gospel sermon, its truth fell on their hearts like life from the dead.

So when you see a harlot converted, or a profane swearer or a notorious Sabbath-breaker, how do you account for the fact? You can ascribe it to the circumstance that they have not resisted so much light as thousands who have lived their life long under the gospel and consequently have not committed the unpardonable sin.

But look into that deacon's family, and that minister's family: there is a son or a daughter there who has lived amid the focal blaze of God's truth for years; is he converted? No--he is gospel hardened.

Finally, gospel hardened sinners and backsliders are the very worst people this side of hell. No matter how morally or genteelly their outside deportment may be modified, they have resisted all the light God could give them and have fearfully filled up the measure of their guilt. That pious father may have great hopes of his morally behaved son--may think perhaps to train him for the ministry--Oh! does he not see that his hardened son is more fit for a minister of hell than of Christ and of heaven? That son may know enough of the gospel, it may be, to preach it; but if, with all this knowledge, he only hates that gospel: if he has trained himself to resist all this truth and all these motives which he has heard until they are to him an old story: then indeed is he far more fit to be an apostle of Satan than of Jesus Christ. The very worst character such a man can bear is that of an impenitent sinner. He cannot possibly do a worse thing than to persist in his impenitence under all the light which God pours upon his path from heaven.

THE RULE BY WHICH THE GUILT OF SIN IS ESTIMATED

February 4, 1846

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." --Acts, 17:30-31.

I recently preached a sermon on impenitence in which I dwelt at length on the guilt which attaches to sin committed against great light. I purpose now to discuss this point still farther.

The text declares that God will judge the world in righteousness. I shall not at this time dwell on the fact that God will judge the world, nor upon the fact that this judgment will be in righteousness; but shall endeavor to ascertain what is the rule by which our guilt is to be measured; or in other words what is implied in judging the world in righteousness. What is the righteous rule by which guilt is measured, and consequently the just punishment of the sinner allotted?

In pursuing this subject, I shall deem it important:

I. TO STATE BRIEFLY WHAT THE CONDITIONS OF MORAL OBLIGATION ARE; AND

II. COME DIRECTLY TO THE MAIN POINT, THE RULE BY WHICH GUILT IS MEASURED.

I. State briefly what the conditions of moral obligation are.

1. Moral obligation has respect to the ultimate intention of the mind. The end had in view, and not the mere external act must evermore be that to which law pertains and of which guilt is predicated. Surely guilt cannot be predicated on the outward act merely, apart from intention: for if the outward act be not according to the intention as in the case of accidents, we never think of imputing guilt; and if it be according to the intention, we always, when we act

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rationally, ascribe the guilt to the intention and not to the mere hand or tongue, which became the mind's organ in its wickedness.

This is a principle, which every body admits when they understand it. The thing itself lies among the intuitive affirmations of every child's mind. No sooner has a child the first idea of right and wrong, but he will excuse himself from blame by saying that he did not mean to do it, and he knows full well, that if this excuse be true, it is valid and good as an excuse; and moreover he knows that you and every body else both know this and must admit it. This sentiment thus pervades the minds of all men and none can intelligently deny it.

2. Having premised so much, I am prepared to remark that the first condition of moral obligation is the possession of the requisite powers of moral agency. There must be intelligence enough to understand in some measure the value of the end to be chosen or not chosen, else there can be no responsible choice. There must be some degree of sensibility to good sought, or evil shunned;--else there never would be any action put forth, or effort made; and there must also be the power of choice between possible courses to be chosen. These are all most manifestly requisites for moral choice, or in other words for responsible moral action and obligation.

3. It is essential to moral obligation that the mind should know in some measure, what it ought to intend.

It must have some apprehension of the value of the end to be chosen, else there can be no responsible choice of that end, or responsible neglect to choose it. Everybody must see this, for if the individual when asked, why he did not choose a given end, could answer truly, "I did not know that the end was valuable and worthy of choice," all men would deem this a valid acquittal from moral delinquency.

4. Supposing the individual to know what he ought to choose; then his obligation to choose it does not grow out of the fact of God's requiring it, but lies in the value of the end to be chosen. I have said that he must perceive the end to be chosen, and in some measure understand its value. This is plain. And this apprehension of its value is that which binds him to choose it. In other words, the moral law which enjoins love, or good willing must be subjectively present to his mind. His mind must have a perception of good which he can will to others, in connection with which a sense of obligation to will it springs up, and this constitutes moral obligation.

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These are substantially the conditions of moral obligation; the requisite mental powers for moral action; and a knowledge of the intrinsic value of the good of being.

Before leaving this topic, let me remark that very probably, no two creatures in the moral universe may have precisely the same degree of intelligence respecting the value of the end they ought to choose; yet shall moral obligation rest upon all these diverse degrees of knowledge, proportioned evermore in degree to the measure of this knowledge which any mind possesses. God alone has infinite and changeless knowledge on this point.

II. I come now to speak of the rule by which the guilt of refusing to will or intend according to the law of God must be measured.

1. Negatively, guilt is not to be measured by the fact that God who commands is an infinite being. The measure of guilt has sometimes been made to turn on this fact, and has been accounted infinite because God whose commands it violates is infinite. But this doctrine is inadmissible. It lies fatally open to this objection, that by it all sin is made to be equally guilty, because all sin is equally committed against an infinite being. But both the Bible and every man's intuitive reason proclaim that all sins are not equally guilty. Hence the measure or rule of their guilt cannot be in the fact of their commission against an infinite being.

2. Guilt cannot be measured by the fact that God's authority against which sin is committed is infinite. Authority is the right to command. No one denies that this in God is infinite. But this fact cannot constitute the measure of guilt, for precisely the reason just given--namely, that then all sin becomes equally guilty, being all committed against infinite authority; which conclusion is false, and therefore the premises are also.

3. The degree of guilt cannot be estimated by the fact that all sin is committed against an infinitely holy and good being; for reasons of the same kind as just given.

4. Nor from the value of the law of which sin is a transgression; for though all admit that the law is infinitely good and valuable, yet since it is always equally so, all sin by this rule must be equally guilty--a conclusion which being false, vitiates and sets aside our premises.

5. The rule cannot lie in the value of that which the law requires us to will, intend or choose, considered apart from the mind's perception of the value; for the intrinsic value of this end is always

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the same, so that this rule too as the preceding would bring us to the conclusion that all sins are equally guilty.

6. Guilt is not to be measured by the tendency of sin. All sin tends to one result--unmingled evil. No created being can tell what sins have the most direct and powerful tendency to produce evil; since all sin tends to produce evil and only evil continually. Every modification of sin may for ought we know tend with equal directness to the same result--evil, and nothing but evil.

7. Guilt cannot be measured by the design or ultimate intention of the sinner. It does indeed lie in his design and in nothing else; yet you cannot determine the amount of it by merely knowing his design; for this design is always substantially the same thing--it is always self-gratification in some form, and nothing else. I endeavored to show this in my last sermon on impenitence, and we need to get this idea thoroughly into our minds. The general design of the sinner being always self-gratification, and it making very little if any difference in his guilt what form of self-gratification he chooses, it follows that the measure of guilt cannot be sought here, and must therefore be sought elsewhere.

8. But it is time I should state, positively, that guilt is always to be estimated by the degree of light under which the sinful intention is formed, or in other words, it is to be measured by the mind's knowledge or perception of the value of that end which the law requires to be chosen. This end is the highest well being of God and of the universe. This is of infinite value; and in some sense every moral agent must know it to be of infinite value, and yet individuals may differ indefinitely in respect to the degree of clearness with which this great end is apprehended by the mind. Choosing this end--the highest well-being of God and of the universe always implies the rejection of self-interest as an end; and on the other hand, the choice of self-interest or self-gratification as an end always and necessarily implies the rejection of the highest well-being of God and of the universe as an end. The choice of either implies the rejection of its opposite.

Now the sinfulness of a selfish choice consists not merely in its choice of good to self, but in its implying a rejection of the highest well-being of God and of the universe as a supreme and ultimate end. If selfishness did not imply the apprehension and rejection of other and higher interests as an end, it would not imply any guilt at all. The value of the interests rejected is that in which the guilt consists. In

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other words the guilt consists in rejecting the infinitely valuable well-being of God and of the universe for the sake of selfish gratification.

Now it is plain that the amount of guilt is as the mind's apprehension of the value of the interests rejected. In some sense as I have said, every moral agent has and must of necessity have the idea that the interests of God and of the universe are of infinite value. He has this idea developed so clearly that every sin he commits deserves endless punishment, and yet the degree of his guilt may be greatly enhanced by additional light, so that he may deserve punishment not only endless in duration but indefinitely great in degree. Nor is there any contradiction in this. If the sinner cannot affirm that there is any limit to the value of the interests he refuses to will and to pursue, he cannot of course affirm that there is any limit to his guilt and desert of punishment. This is true and must be true of every sin and of every sinner; and yet as light increases and the mind gains a clearer apprehension of the infinite value of the highest well-being of God and of the universe, just in that proportion does the guilt of sin increase. Hence the measure of knowledge possessed of duty and its motives, is always and unalterably the rule by which guilt is to be measured.

The proof of this is twofold.

1. The scriptures assume and affirm it.

The text affords a plain instance. The apostle alludes to those past ages when the heathen nations had no written revelation of God, and remarks that "those times of ignorance God winked at." This does not mean that God connived at their sin because of their darkness, but does mean that He passed over it with comparatively slight notice, regarding it as sin of far less aggravation than those which men would now commit if they turned away when God commanded them all to repent. True sin is never absolutely a light thing; but comparatively, some sins incur small guilt when compared with the great guilt of other sins. This is implied in our text.

I next cite James 4:17. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This plainly implies that knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation; and even more than this is implied; namely, that the guilt of any sinner is always equal to the amount of his knowledge on the subject. It always corresponds to the mind's perception of the value of the end which should have been chosen, but is rejected. If a man knows he ought in any given case to do good, and yet does not do it, to him this is sin--the sin plainly lying in the

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fact of not doing good when he knew he could do it, and being measured as to its guilt by the degree of that knowledge.

John 9:41--"Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth." Here Christ asserts that men without knowledge would be without sin; and that men who have knowledge, and sin notwithstanding, are held guilty. This plainly affirms that the presence of light or knowledge is requisite to the existence of sin, and obviously implies that the amount of knowledge possessed is the measure of the guilt of sin.

It is remarkable that the Bible everywhere assumes first truths. It does not stop to prove them, or even assert them--it always assumes their truth, and seems to assume that every one knows and will admit them. As I have been recently writing on moral government and studying the Bible as to its teachings on this class of subjects, I have been often struck with this remarkable fact.

John 15:22, 24--"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sins. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." Christ holds the same doctrine here as in the last passage cited, light essential to constitute sin, and the degree of light, constituting the measure of its aggravation. Let it be observed, however, that Christ probably did not mean to affirm in the absolute sense that if He had not come, the Jews would have had no sin; for they would have had some light if he had not come. He speaks as I suppose comparatively. Their sin if He had not come would have been so much less as to justify his strong language.

Luke, 12: 47-48--"And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Here we have the doctrine laid down and the truth assumed that men shall be punished according to knowledge. To whom much light is given, of him shall much obedience be required. This is precisely the principle that God requires of men according to the light they have.

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1 Tim. 1:13--"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Paul had done things intrinsically as bad as well they could be; yet his guilt was far less because he did them under the darkness of unbelief; hence he obtained mercy, when otherwise, he might not. The plain assumption is that his ignorance abated from the malignity of his sin, and favored his obtaining mercy.

In another passage, (Acts 26:9) Paul says of himself--"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." This had everything to do with the degree of his guilt in rejecting the Messiah, and also with his obtaining pardon.

Luke, 23:34--"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This passage presents to us the suffering Jesus, surrounded with Roman soldiers and malicious scribes and priests, yet pouring out his prayer for them, and making the only plea in their behalf which could be made--"for they know not what they do." This does not imply that they had no guilt, for if that were true they would not have needed forgiveness; but it did imply that their guilt was greatly palliated by their ignorance. If they had known him to be the Messiah, their guilt might have been unpardonable.

Mat. 11:20-24--"Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." Buy why does Christ thus upbraid these cities? Why denounce so fearful a woe on Chorazin and Capernaum? Because most of his mighty works had been wrought there. His oft-repeated miracles which proved him the Messiah had been wrought before their eyes. Among them he had taught daily, and in their synagogues every Sabbath day. They had great light--hence their great--their unsurpassed guilt. Not even the men of Sodom had guilt to compare with theirs. The city most exalted, even as it were to heaven, must be

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brought down to the deepest hell. Guilt and punishment, evermore, according to light enjoyed but resisted.

Luke, 11:47-51--"Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchers. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you it shall be required of this generation." Now here, I ask, on what principle was it that all the blood of martyred prophets ever since the world began was required of that generation? Because they deserved it; for God does no such thing as injustice. It never was known that He punished any people or any individual beyond their desert.

But why and how did they deserve this fearful and augmented visitation of the wrath of God for past centuries of persecution?

The answer is two-fold: they sinned against accumulated light: and they virtually endorsed all the persecuting deeds of their fathers, and concurred most heartily in their guilt. They had all the oracles of God. The whole history of the nation lay in their hands. They knew the blameless and holy character of those prophets who had been martyred; they could read the guilt of their persecutors and murderers. Yet under all this light, themselves go straight on and perpetrate deeds of the same sort, but of far deeper malignity.

Again, in doing this they virtually endorse all that their fathers did. Their conduct towards the Man of Nazareth, put into words would read thus--"The holy men whom God sent to teach and rebuke our fathers, they maliciously traduced and put to death; they did right, and we will do the same thing towards Christ." Now it was not possible for them to give a more decided sanction to the bloody deeds of their fathers. They underwrote for every crime--assume upon their own consciences all the guilt of their fathers. In intention, they do those deeds over again. They say, "if we had lived then we should have done and sanctioned all they did."

On the same principle the accumulated guilt of all the blood and miseries of Slavery since the world began rests on this nation now. The guilt involved in every pang, every tear, every blood-drop forced out by the knotted scourge--all lies at the door of this generation. Why? Because the history of all the past is before the pro-slavery men

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of this generation, and they endorse the whole by persisting in the practice of the same system and of the same wrongs. No generation before us ever had the light on the evils and the wrongs of Slavery that we have; hence the guilt exceeds that of any former generation of slave-holders; and, moreover, knowing all the cruel wrongs and miseries of the system from the history of the past, every persisting slave-holder endorses all the crimes and assumes all the guilt involved in the system and evolved out of it since the world began.

Rom. 7:13--"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, worketh death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The last clause of this verse brings out clearly the principle that under the light which the commandment, that is, the law, affords, sin becomes exceeding guilty. This is the very principle, which, we have seen, is so clearly taught and implied in numerous passages of Scripture.

The diligent reader of the Bible knows that these are only a part of the texts which teach the same doctrine: we need not adduce any more.

2. I remark that this is the rule and the only just rule by which the guilt of sin can be measured. If I had time to turn the subject over and over--time to take up every other conceivable supposition, I could show that none of them can possibly be true. No supposition can abide a close examination except this, that the rule or measure of guilt is the mind's knowledge pertaining to the value of the end to be chosen.

There can be no other criterion by which guilt can be measured. It is the value of the end chosen which constitutes sin guilty, and the mind's estimate of that value measures its own guilt. This is true according to the Bible as we have seen; and every man needs only consult his own consciousness faithfully and he will see that it is equally affirmed by the mind's own intuition to be right.

A few inferences may be drawn from our doctrine.

1. Guilt is not to be measured by the nature of the intention; for sinful intention is always a unit--always one and the same thing--being nothing more nor less than self-gratification.

2. Nor can it be measured by the particular type of self-gratification which the mind may prefer. No matter which of his numerous appetites or propensities the man may choose to indulge--whether for food, for strong drink--for power, pleasure, or gain--it is the same thing in the end--self-gratification, and nothing else. For the

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sake of this he sacrifices every other conflicting interest, and herein lies his guilt. Yet since he tramples on the greater good of others with equal recklessness, whatever type of self-gratification he prefers, it is plain that we cannot find in this type any true measure of his guilt.

3. Nor again is the guilt to be decided by the amount of evil which the sin may bring into the universe. An agent not enlightened may introduce great evil and yet no guilt attach to this agent. This is true of evil often done by brute animals. It is true of the mischiefs effected by alcohol. In fact it matters not how much or how little evil may result from the misdeeds of a moral agent, you cannot determine the amount of his guilt from this circumstance. God may overrule the greatest sin so that but little evil shall result from it, or He may leave its tendencies uncounteracted so that great evils shall result from the least sin. Who can tell how much or how little overruling agency may interpose between any sin great or small and its legitimate results?

Satan sinned in betraying Judas, and Judas sinned in betraying Christ. Yet God so overruled these sins that most blessed results to the universe followed from Christ's betrayal and consequent death. Shall the sins of Satan and Judas be estimated by the evils actually resulting from them? If it should appear that the good immensely overbalanced the evil, does their sin thereby become holiness--meritorious holiness? Is their guilt at all the less for God's wisdom and love in overruling it for good?

It is not therefore the amount of resulting good or evil which determines the amount of guilt, but is the degree of light enjoyed, under which the sin is committed.

4. Nor again can guilt be measured by the common opinions of men. Men associated in society are wont to form among themselves a sort of public sentiment which becomes a standard for estimating guilt; yet how often is it erroneous? Christ warns us against adopting this standard, and also against ever judging according to the outward appearance. Who does not know that the common opinions of men are exceedingly incorrect? It is indeed wonderful to see how far they diverge in all directions from the Bible standard.

5. The amount of guilt can be determined as I have said only by the degree in which those ideas are developed which throw light upon obligation. Just here sin lies, in resisting the light and acting in opposition to it, and therefore the degree of light should naturally measure the amount of guilt incurred.

REMARKS

RULE BY WHICH GUILT OF SIN IS ESTIMATED

1. We see from this subject the principle on which many passages of scripture are to be explained. It might seem strange that Christ should charge the blood of all the martyred prophets of past ages on that generation. But the subject before us reveals the principle upon which this is done and ought to be done.

Whatever of apparent mystery may attach to the fact declared in our text--"The times of this ignorance God winked at"--finds in our subject an adequate explanation. Does it seem strange that for ages God should pass over almost without apparent notice the monstrous and reeking abominations of the Heathen world? The reason is found in their ignorance. Therefore God winks at those odious and cruel idolatries. For all, taken together, are a trifle compared with the guilt of a single generation of enlightened men.

2. One sinner may be in such circumstances as to have more light and knowledge than the whole Heathen world. Alas! how little the Heathen know! How little compared with what is known by sinners in this land, even by very young sinners!

Let me call up and question some impenitent sinner of Oberlin. It matters but little who--let it be any Sabbath School child.

What do you know about God? I know that there is one God and only one.--The Heathen believe there are hundreds of thousands.

What do you know about God?

I know that he is infinitely great and good.--But the Heathen thinks some of his gods are both mean and mischievous--wicked as can be and the very patrons of wickedness among men.

What do you know about salvation? I know that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to die that whosoever would believe on him might live forever. O, the Heathen never heard of that. They would faint away methinks in amazement if they should hear and really believe the startling, glorious fact. And that Sabbath School child knows that God gives his Spirit to convince of sin. He has perhaps often been sensible of the presence and power of the Spirit. But the Heathen know nothing of this.

You too know that you are immortal--that beyond death there is still a conscious unchanging state of existence, blissful or wretched according to the deeds done here. But the Heathen have no just ideas on this subject. It is to them as if all were a blank.

The amount of it then is that you know every thing--the Heathen almost nothing. You know all you need to know to be saved, to be useful--to honor God and serve your generation according to his will.

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The Heathen sit in deep darkness, wedded to their abominations, groping, yet finding nothing.

As your light therefore, so is your guilt immeasurably greater than theirs. Be it so that their idolatries are monstrous--your guilt in your impenitence under the light you have is vastly more so. See that Heathen mother dragging her shrieking child and tumbling it into the Ganges? See her rush with another to throw him into the burning arms of Moloch. Mark;--see that pile of wood flashing, lifting up its lurid flames toward heaven. Those men are dragging a dead husband--they heave his senseless corpse on to that burning pile. There comes the widow--her hair disheveled and flying--gaily festooned for such a sacrifice;--she dances on;--she rends the air with her howls and her wailings;--she shrinks and yet she does not shrink--she leaps on the pile, and the din of music with the yell of spectators buries her shrieks of agony; she is gone! O, my blood curdles and runs cold in my veins;--my hair stands on end; I am horrified with such scenes--but what shall we say of their guilt? Ah yes--what do they know of God--of worship--of the claims of God upon their heart and life? Ah, you may well spare your censure of the Heathen for their fearful orgies of cruelty and lust, and give it where light has been enjoyed and resisted.

3. You see then that often a sinner in some of our congregations may know more than all the Heathen world know. If this be true, what follows from it as to the amount of his comparative guilt? This, inevitably, that such a sinner deserves a direr and deeper damnation than all the Heathen world! This conclusion may seem startling; but how can we escape from it? We cannot escape. It is as plain as any mathematical demonstration. This is the principle asserted by Christ when he said--"That servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes; shall be beaten with few stripes." How solemn and how pungent the application of this doctrine would be in this congregation! I could call out many a sinner in this place and show him that beyond question his guilt is greater than that of all the Heathen world. Yet how few ever estimated their own guilt thus.

Not long since an ungodly young man, trained in this country, wrote back from the Sandwich Islands a glowing and perhaps a just description of their horrible abominations, moralizing on their monstrous enormities and thanking God that he had been born and taught in a Christian land. Indeed! he might well have spared this censure of the dark-minded Heathen! His own guilt in remaining an

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impenitent sinner under all the light of Christian America was greater than the whole aggregate guilt of all those Islands.

So we may all well spare our expressions of abhorrence at the guilty abominations of idolatry. You are often perhaps saying in your heart--Why does God endure these horrid abominations another day? See that rolling car of Juggernaut. Its wheels move axle deep in the gushing blood and crushed bones of its deluded worshipers! And yet God looks on and no red bolt leaps from his right hand to smite such wickedness. They are indeed guilty; but O how small their guilt compared with the guilt of those who know their duty perfectly, yet never do it! God sees their horrible abominations, yet does he wink at them because they are done in so much ignorance.

But see that impenitent sinner. Convicted of his sin under the clear gospel light that shines all around him, he is driven to pray. He knows he ought to repent, and almost thinks he wants to, and will try. Yet still he clings to his sins, and will not give up his heart to God. Still he holds his heart in a state of impenitence. Now mark here;--his sin in thus withholding his heart from God under so much light, involves greater guilt than all the abominations of the heathen world. Put together the guilt of all those widows who immolate themselves on the funeral pile--of those who hurl their children into the Ganges, or into the burning arms of Moloch--all does not begin to approach the guilt of that convicted sinner's prayer who comes before God under the pressure of his conscience, and prays a heartless prayer, determined all the while to withhold his heart from God. O, why does this sinner thus tempt God, and thus abuse his love, and thus trample on his known authority? O, that moment of impenitence, while his prayers are forced by conscience from his burning lips, and yet he will not yield the controversy with his Maker--that moment involves direr guilt than rests on all the Heathen world together! He knows more than they all, yet sins despite of all his knowledge. The many stripes belong to him--the few to them.

4. This leads me to remark again, that the Christian world may very well spare their revilings and condemnations of the Heathen. Of all the portions of earth's population, Christendom is infinitely the most guilty--Christendom, where the gospel peals from ten thousand pulpits--where its praises are sung by a thousand choirs, but where many thousand hearts that know God and duty, refuse either to reverence the one or perform the other! All the abominations of the Heathen world are a mere trifle compared with the guilt of Christendom. We may look down upon the filth and meanness and

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degradation of a Heathen people, and feel a most polite disgust at the spectacle--and far be it from me, to excuse these degrading, filthy or cruel practices; but how small their light and consequently their guilt compared with our own! We therefore ask the Christian world to turn away from the spectacle of Heathen degradation, and look nearer home, upon the spectacle of Christian guilt! Let us look upon ourselves.

5. Again, let us fear not to say what you must all see to be true, that the nominal church is the most guilty part of Christendom. It cannot for a moment be questioned, that the church has more light than any other portion; therefore has she more guilt. Of course I speak of the nominal church--not the real church whom He has pardoned and cleansed from her sins. But in the nominal church, think of the sins that live and riot in their corruption. See that backslider. He has tasted the waters of life. He has been greatly enlightened. Perhaps he has really known the Lord by true faith--and then see, he turns away to beg the husks of earthly pleasure! He turns his back on the bleeding Lamb! Now, put together all the guilt of every Heathen soul that has gone to hell--of every soul that has gone from a state of utter moral darkness, and your guilt, backsliding Christian, is greater than all theirs!

Do you, therefore say--may God then, have mercy on my soul? So say we all; but we must add, if it be possible; for who can say that such guilt as yours can be forgiven! Can Christ pray for you as he prayed for his murderers--"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" Can He plead in your behalf, that you know not what you are doing? Awful! awful!! Where is the sounding line that shall measure the ocean-depth of your guilt!

6. Again, if our children remain in sin, we may cease to congratulate ourselves that they were not born in Heathenism or slavery! How often have I done this! How often, as I have looked upon my sons and daughters, have I thanked God that they were not born to be thrown into the burning arms of a Moloch, or to be crushed under the wheels of Juggernaut! But if they will live in sin, we must suspend our self-congratulations for their having Christian light and privileges. If they will not repent, it were infinitely better for them to have been born in the thickest Pagan darkness--better to have been thrown in their tender years into the Ganges, or into the fires which idolatry kindles--better be any thing else, or suffer any thing earthly, than have the gospel's light only to shut it out and go to hell despite of its admonitions.

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Let us not, then be hasty in congratulating ourselves, as if this great light enjoyed by us and by our children, were of course a certain good to them; but this we may do--we may rejoice that God will honor himself--his mercy if he can, and his justice if he must. God will be honored, and we may glory in this. But oh, the sinner, the sinner! Who can measure the depth of his guilt, or the terror of his final doom! It will be more tolerable for all the heathen world together than for you.

7. It is time that we all understood this subject fully, and appreciated all its bearings. It is no doubt true, that however moral our children may be, they are more guilty than any other sinners under heaven, if they live in sin, and will not yield to the light under which they live. We may be perhaps congratulating ourselves on their fair morality; but if we saw their case in all its real bearings, our souls would groan with agony--our bowels would be all liquid with anguish--our very hearts within us would heave as if volcanic fires were kindled there--so deep a sense should we have of their fearful guilt and of the awful doom they incur in denying the Lord that bought them, and setting at naught a known salvation. O, if we ever pray, we should pour out our prayers for our offspring as if nothing could ever satisfy us or stay our importunity, but the blessings of a full salvation realized in their souls.

Let the mind contemplate the guilt of these children. I could not find a Sabbath school child, perhaps not one in all Christendom who could not tell me more of God's salvation than all the Heathen world know. That dear little boy who comes from his Sabbath school knows all about the gospel. He is almost ready to be converted, but not quite ready; yet that little boy, if he knows his duty, and yet will not do it, is covered with more guilt than all the Heathen world together. Yes, that boy, who goes alone and prays, yet holds back his heart from God, and then his mother comes and prays over him, and pours her tears on his head, and his little heart almost melts, and he seems on the very point of giving up his whole heart to the Savior; yet if he will not do it, he commits more sin in that refusal than all the sin of all the Heathen world--his guilt is more than the guilt of all the murders, all the drownings of children and burnings of widows, and deeds of cruelty and violence in all the Heathen world. All this combination of guilt shall not be equal to the guilt of the lad who knows his duty, but will not yield his heart to its righteous claims.

8. "The Heathen," says an apostle, "sin without law, and shall therefore perish without law." In their final doom they will be cast

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away from God; this will be perhaps about all. The bitter reflection, "I had the light of the gospel and would not yield to it--I knew all my duty, yet did it not["]--this cannot be a part of their eternal doom. This is reserved for those who gather themselves into our sanctuaries and around our family altars, yet will not serve their own Infinite Father.

9. One more remark. Suppose I should call out a sinner by name--one of the sinners of this congregation, a son of pious parents, and should call up the father also.--I might say, Is this your son? Yes. What testimony can you bear about this son of yours? I have endeavored to teach him all the ways of the Lord. Son, what can you say? I know my duty. I have heard it a thousand times. I know I ought to repent, but I never would.

O, if we understood this matter in all its bearings, it would fill every bosom with consternation and grief. How would our bowels burn and heave as a volcano. There would be one universal outcry of anguish and terror at the awful guilt and fearful doom of such a sinner!

Young man, are you going away this day in your sins? Then, what angel can compute your guilt? O, how long has Jesus held out his hands, yes, his bleeding hands, and besought you to look and live! A thousand times, and in countless varied ways has he called, but you have refused; stretched out his hands, and you have not regarded. O, why will you not repent? Why not say at once; It is enough that I have sinned so long. I cannot live so any longer! O, sinner, why will you live so? Would you go down to hell--ah, to the deepest hell--where, if we would find you, we must work our way down a thousand years through ranks of lost spirits less guilty than you, ere we could reach the fearful depth to which you have sunk! O, sinner, what a hell is that which can adequately punish such guilt as thine!

ON DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

March 18, 1846

"If ye love me, keep my commandments; And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." --John 14:15-17, 21-23

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." --2 Cor. 6:17, 18, and 7:1

In remarking upon these verses it is not my design to dwell upon all the thoughts they present or might suggest. I shall aim to illustrate,

I. THE CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD AS HERE DEVELOPED.

II. THE CONDITIONS OF HEARTY OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

III. THE CONDITIONS OF DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS TO THE SOUL.

IV. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THESE MANIFESTATIONS.

I. The conditions of acceptance with God.

This topic has been recently dwelt upon at considerable length in your hearing, and it has been shown most conclusively that the once unalterable condition of acceptance with God is entire obedience to

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his law. You must fully set your heart to obey God in all things--at all times--under all circumstances--you must in fact obey the whole law of God in spirit; that is--it must be the supreme, fixed, strong purpose of your soul to do all the will of God.

This is undoubtedly assumed in our texts, especially in the one from 2 Corinthians. In the context the Apostle urges the church at Corinth not to connect themselves unequally with unbelievers, urging as a reason that sin can have no fellowship with holiness; the temple of God no agreement with idols; "for ye, said he, are the temple of the living God, for God has promised to dwell and walk in you;" and the condition of this promise is that you come out from among them and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing; then God will receive you, and will be a father unto you and ye his sons and daughters. Dropping the borrowed language of the Old Testament, the Apostle goes on to give in his own language what he understands to be the import of these promises and of their conditions. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." These therefore are the conditions of God's dwelling in us--cleansing ourselves from all filthiness--perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Becoming pure in heart and life--renouncing all filthiness of either the flesh or the spirit;--this and nothing less than this can be the condition of acceptance with God.

This same truth is also plainly implied and taught in the passage from John's gospel. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. Then will I pray the Father and he will give you the Comforter &c." So again, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him." Obedience and love, evermore inseparable, are here made the condition of the divine favor.

So every where throughout the Bible we are taught that God accepts only those who fully and most heartily obey him.

Indeed it cannot possibly be otherwise. The nature of God forbids that it should be. What! God accept a rebellious spirit and own him as his child! God smile on a heart still sinning! This were to subvert his throne, and abolish all moral distinctions in his kingdom! This were to treat sin and holiness alike, and show that he regards neither! This is just as impossible as for God to cease to be holy!

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It must be therefore that God makes sincere and full-hearted obedience the one unalterable condition of his favor. It would be infinitely dishonorable to him to accept anything less.

The same truth is implied in making repentance a condition of being accepted of God. For repentance is nothing else than a hearty turning away from all sin to the full-hearted love and service of God.

II. We must next inquire for the conditions of rendering this obedience.

Full obedience, we have seen, is the condition of God's favor; but we have still to look for the conditions of this obedience itself. How shall we obey? Under what influence and motives and efforts may we hope to yield this obedience?

1. Faith. It has often struck my mind forcibly in reading the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans that the Apostle is here illustrating the impossibility of obeying the law of God without faith in Christ; not the impossibility of obeying it at all; but of obeying it under legal motives. Hence he shows that the law when it comes in contact with a depraved heart, the cross not being present, only provokes resistance and stirs up the depths of the heart's depravity. And the utmost that can be effected is to elicit ineffectual struggles between the reason and conscience on the one hand, and imperious lusts on the other. But faith coming in gives the victory.

Such is manifestly the strain of his illustration in these chapters.

Again in Hebrews 11:6, we read that without faith it is impossible to please God. This is a most concise and explicit assertion to our point.

Galatians 5:6 teaches that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails any thing; but faith (alone avails) which works by love." That faith which becomes efficient through love is the capital thing in the gospel scheme. This avails; nothing else does or can.

In Acts 15:9 we have a passage strikingly in point. Peter is there testifying before the great council at Jerusalem, as to the manner in which the Gentile converts were sanctified. He says, God gave them the Holy Ghost even as he did us, and "put no difference between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith." By faith then did they come into a state of purity of heart and thus sincerely and fully obey God.

To the same purport is Acts 26:18 where the Lord appears to Paul and commissions him to go to the Gentiles and "open their eyes * * that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among

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them that are sanctified--(how?) by faith that is in me." On this point then we see that the testimony of scripture is ample and explicit.

III. We are next to notice the conditions on which God and Christ will manifest themselves unto the soul.

This is expressly stated in the passage taken from the gospel of John. The entire scope of this passage is worthy of consideration. Christ was about to leave his disciples by his own death and ascension to heaven. Yet he bids his disciples not to grieve--tells them that he will come again,--yea come himself, with the Father, and take up his abode with them. The world says he, shall not see me in these visitations and indwelling of my presence with you, but ye shall see me. How, asks Thomas, how can this be that thou wilt show thyself unto us, and yet the world shall not see thee? Then comes the explanatory answer. "If a man love me, he will keep my words and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Love, therefore, leading the Christian to keep Christ's words--that is, love prompting and securing full obedience--these are the conditions, as here revealed.

So elsewhere throughout the Scriptures. So in our passage from Corinthians. "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you." "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" so shall we realize the fulfillment of those exceeding great and precious promises which pledge us the indwelling presence and manifestations of God.

I have shown that according to the scriptures, faith is the condition of real and full obedience. Of course faith is also a condition of these manifestations. The soul must first believe in Christ and take hold of divine strength for its aid and of divine truth with realizing apprehension, before it will be thoroughly obedient.

Now considering faith as one of the conditions of these divine manifestations, the question may be asked--Must our faith fasten specifically on these promises of manifestations and plead with confidence for this particular blessing before it can be received? This is an interesting and important question.

In answer to it I remark, that this form of faith is not particularly alluded to among the conditions given in either of our texts. Obedience and love--purity of heart and life--are the things there specified.

Yet the general law in the spiritual world is clear and decisive on this point. When God gives a particular promise like this of

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manifesting himself to his people, he requires specific faith in that promise--a definite laying hold of those very words or at least of the idea of that promise, and a pleading of the faithfulness of God for its fulfillment.

Famine rages in Israel. Drought has parched all the land. The Lord is about to send rain, and to send it in answer to prayer. Yet he simply tells Elijah to go and meet Ahab. Elijah obeys. But we well understand that rain does not come without special prayer. In due season he bows his soul with mighty energy for rain.

There are passages of scripture which plainly show that specific blessings being promised, specific faith must take hold of these promises as a condition of their being given. In Ezekiel 36:37, the Lord having promised to cleanse his people and give them a new heart, declares explicitly--"I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." This is given here as a universal principle of the government of God. So far as we know, the Lord never departs from this principle in his spiritual administration towards his people. Whenever he has promised a blessing either to his church or to individuals, the mere promise does not secure the bestowment; faith must take hold of that promise; you must ask, and ask believing that plighted word of the Lord;--then he gives it and not before. Thus God elicits prayer--makes us prize the blessing and love the Giver.

The conditions then, briefly, of these manifestations are;--full-hearted obedience to all known duty--walking in faith, love and obedience; and taking hold by faith of God's promise for this very blessing. Take hold of this promise and wait earnestly and in confidence, honestly and earnestly meeting every revealed condition. Then shall the blessing be given.

IV. What is implied in Christ's manifesting himself to his people?

It would seem that it must mean something more than is commonly meant by faith; for the word manifest refers our minds rather to sight than to faith. I will do more, Christ seems to say, than make you believe; I will make you see. Your apprehensions of God and of his Son shall be most vivid. It shall be as if you saw with open vision. This shall be more than mere faith.

It is also something more than love--at least more than such love as is implied in keeping God's commandments; for so much as this is a condition of these manifestations; hence must precede them; and therefore cannot be the blessing itself.

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We have a clue to the real meaning in the paraphrase which our Lord himself gives. "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." O there must be precious meaning in such words as these. "We will come unto him"--the Father and the Son will come to visit him and reveal themselves to his soul--and this for no transient hour; but "we will take up our abode with him." This must be very like heaven! What more, we might almost ask, would be requisite to make one's bliss like heaven?

What then, ask we again, is implied in these promised manifestations? More of course than giving a man the Bible--and more than making a man understand the Bible. These gifts, great though they be, are never designated in such language as we find in the text. Positively:

(1.) These manifestations imply, the baptism of the Spirit. The context plainly shows that Christ had this in his mind. After giving the promise as in our text, He proceeds to promise the Comforter, to show that he would teach all things and bring those things to their remembrance which Christ had said to them. He would "glorify Christ, for he would receive of Christ's and show it unto them."

(2.) The text shows that the blessing promised, means the indwelling of the Father and of the Son by the Spirit. And this, as I have said is declared to be not a visit merely, but taking up an abode--not as a way-faring man who tarries for a night, but as a resident who makes your house his home.

Let it not be supposed from what I have said that the child of God to whom these manifestations are made, and who received the special baptisms of the Spirit, has of course never had the Spirit before. Let no one imagine that the faith and love and obedience which as I have said must precede these manifestations as their condition, can ever exist without the Spirit. By no means. But there is a higher kind and measure of the Spirit's influence and also a lower. The latter is essential to any sincere faith and love; the former comes only in those glorious manifestations of which our Lord here speaks.

This higher influence is said in our context to be sent by the ascended Savior on those who truly love him and fully keep all his commandments. The disciples plainly had received a lower measure of the Spirit's influence before;--now they receive a higher measure in the baptism of the Spirit.

(3.) Another thing is implied in these manifestations. Christ will actually reveal himself to the mind so that it shall know him in his official character and relations. And there is a deep and precious

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meaning in this. Often have I been struck with this in my own experience. Some new aspect of the Savior's character, or some new point in his relations comes before my mind with great vividness; I wonder I had not seen this before; I seem not to have been aware that Christ sustained this relation, and I now embrace him in this new relation and rejoice that I find him meeting and supplying one more want of my soul.

Thus for example, when Christ revealed a new feature of his relations to me through these words--"Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." Then I saw him not merely an atoning Redeemer, but a Sanctifier--one who came to save his people from sinning. Then my soul knew Christ in this other and more glorious relation. But more of this.

(4.) When Christ manifests himself to the soul, the Christian is rather a knower than a believer. He does indeed believe--but he also more than believes. He not merely believes that Christ died and made atonement, but he is made to know Christ. How natural is the language which a Christian enjoying these manifestations uses so spontaneously--"I believed before, but now I know it." I was often struck with the strong language of Elder Marks on his sick and dying bed. He did not say--"I believe," but "I know." He would sit in his great chair, when he could not lie down, and laugh and then cry, overcome and convulsed often with deep, unutterable emotions because God was showing him his own blessed truth so that he knew it.

Now in such cases, this strong perception which we call seeing and knowing is not of the body but of the mind. It is not your external eye that sees, but your internal eye. Hence your perceptions are so clear and so vivid.

We here observe that when Christ manifests himself, there is something more than mere belief. There must be belief before this; a belief that begets love and obedience; but when Christ manifests himself by his Spirit, there is something more than this, Christ says, "the world shall not see me, but ye shall see me." Did he mean that he would come again during their life-time in his body, and that they should see this? No; but that he would make such revelations of himself that they should know that they had a personal interview with their Lord. He told them he was going away to heaven, but they need not grieve, for he should return again and show himself. Now did all this mean only that they should have faith in him? Much more than

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this;--it meant that he would return and show himself and they should know assuredly that Christ was with them.

Again, when Christ manifests himself to the soul, it must be that the mind in some way has an assurance that it is not deceived, and that the manifestation is actual.

I have spoken of personal interviews with Christ. You are aware that in various ages there have been many saints who have asserted that they had interviews with Christ. There were many cases of this before Christ's incarnation. Christ manifested his glory to Moses; to Isaiah--to John in Patmos--to Paul as he himself assures us. And in every age since, there have been those who have supposed themselves to have interviews with Christ. They are wont to say--"I have seen him." I have heard a man in this place say, he had seen Christ. He could not rid himself of the impression that he had truly seen the Lord.

Now on this point I am not going to say that Christ manifests himself to the bodily eyes of the saints, but the revelation is such that they do not know but they see him with their eyes. Perhaps it seems to them altogether as if they did.

I have often in your presence alluded to the circumstances attending my own conversion. When Christ first revealed himself to me, I certainly seemed to see him, and to rush and fall at his feet as really as if I were to turn about now and fall at Br. Mahan's feet. I felt a powerful drawing of soul towards him, as if my very soul would be drawn out of me;--I rushed into a private room and there I seemed to meet him. There--so it seemed--was Jesus--the very Savior!

Now this I do not mention because it is a peculiar case; it occurs or has occurred somewhat frequently in the experience of the people of God. Christians have often felt that they have seen Christ. They have no more question about the fact than about any other. They do not know that they see him with the bodily eye, but their mind sees Christ, and it makes all the impression on the mind of seeing.

Christ does not usually manifest himself so that one sees a form and shape; but so that the soul is perfectly conscious of the presence of Christ. I know a minister who has told me that at one particular period of his life it was frequently just as real to him that Christ was with him as that any man ever was. It seemed to him a matter of consciousness that Christ was present as much as it ever was that another man is present;--as much as if Christ had actually come down from heaven and kept by his side daily. This is Christ's making himself manifest.

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It is intimated also that the Father comes and takes up his abode in the soul. This implies that the Holy Ghost reveals both Christ and the Father. Now it is certainly remarkable that in all Christian experience there is such a distinction between the Father and the Son. The Father is revealed as a father; Christ as Savior and Redeemer. The soul seems to know God distinctly in these two relations. It has no misgivings in respect to God's being indeed a father--more than any child has respecting his own earthly father. So also the soul regards Christ as really the Redeemer, and comes to him as such.

Another thing. These manifestations involve the establishment of the soul's love and confidence. This is no doubt one of the principal designed objects of those manifestations. In the case of the primitive disciples, Christ meant to give them such a hold of the gospel as should prepare them for coming trials;--and should make them knowers and not mere believers.

Another result. Whenever Christ is thus manifested the external evidences of revealed religion have no longer any special force on the mind, comparatively; the minds' reliance is hence-forward chiefly on the internal evidence. I have often thought that if Christ had not revealed himself to me so that my mind took hold powerfully of the internal evidence, and was impressed forcibly by the manifestations to which I have alluded, I should have been an infidel, and should have apostatized utterly. It has often seemed that my natural incredulity is so great that nothing else but this could have kept me from being an infidel. My mind was in the habit of constant agitation under the questions--How do I know that this is so? How do I know but all this is delusion? Satan would often present these difficulties in the strongest light. I would set myself to reason upon them, and could see that according to all the rules of logic, all is clear and certain; yet at the same time I was conscious of such a state of mind that I knew I should not have believed if Christ had not given me conscious and certain manifestations.

These manifestations greatly confirm the mind in its convictions. Religion becomes a matter of experience so that the soul cannot but believe. If Christ manifests himself to the soul once, it can doubt no more. Yet such manifestations may be frequent, and if the conditions are fulfilled, will be.

Light from the scriptures is another result. The promise as applied to us, is that the Spirit shall take of the scriptures and show to us. Persons thus enlightened and privileged see more of the Bible than

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ever before. They have a new kind of confidence in it. They take up their Bible and find there new things unseen before.

REMARKS

1. Many professors of religion seem to have lost sight of this truth. It is remarkable to see to what an extent this is true. Perhaps they have lost sight of the strong faith which must precede them; perhaps they conceive of nothing better in religion than a dim hope, and enjoy nothing more. They seem to forget the conditions--"If a man love me, he will keep my sayings, and my Father will love him." In fact some seem to have lost the whole subject.

Again, there are not a few who understand this subject--know that they may have such manifestations; but have got the idea that it means more than it does; or their notions of what it is are entirely vague; they call it perhaps assurance of faith, or assurance of hope. but they fail of attaining because they quite overlook the conditions, or seem to forget that there are any conditions at all. Or as the case may be, they misapprehend the conditions, and set themselves to get it in some antinomian or legal way, and hence fail of any good result.

Others have the idea that obedience itself depends upon divine manifestations, and hence suppose they cannot obey till they get these manifestations. But this is not the Bible view of the subject. Our text says--If a man obey and love--then shall he have the manifestations--then, and not before.

Some set themselves to seek for these manifestations selfishly, for the luxury they may afford. Of course they fail of fulfilling the conditions and seek in vain. To seek these manifestations as some do that they may be distinguished and get honor to themselves, or if their motive be any other than the glory of God, the very seeking is an abomination to God, and will cause him to manifest to such seekers his wrath rather than his glory.

When persons set themselves to seek this blessing selfishly, they are commonly deluded by Satan, and suppose themselves to have obtained some great blessing when they have obtained no spiritual blessing at all. Satan, transformed in appearance to an angel of light deceives such men and makes them believe that God has revealed himself to them, when it is only the devil. This is my opinion as to such cases, and I will tell you why I think so. I have known several instances in which persons have related a most remarkable experience of most astonishing manifestations of God to the mind as they supposed; but the results were a bitter, hard, acrimonious spirit--a spirit of fierce denunciation instead of gentleness and love--a spirit

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such as the Holy Ghost never begets--but which is the genuine offspring of Satan's manifestations. Forthwith they plunge headlong into the most fantastical and absurd errors, and the most anti-christian practices. And yet in all these things, they will most pertinaciously insist that God is leading them. I have known several who gave up family prayer, and closet prayer, and yet insisted that God led them in all this. By the fruits we may know that it was not God but Satan who induced them to abandon prayer.

This is the history of their case. They learn from the Bible that God promises manifestations; from merely selfish motives they seek this blessing; and God answers them according to their seeking and his promise. They set up the idol of their own selfishness in their hearts, and seeking God thus, He answers them according to their idols as He has said he would. The Lord suffers Satan to deceive them. No wonder they are exceedingly positive and as bitter as they are positive. The hand of Satan is in all this. How else can you account for their state?

Yet let it be well considered--such cases do not at all impair the integrity of these promises, and ought no[t] to shake our confidence in them. The false prophets revealed strange things; yet we know that this was the work of Satan. There were true prophets none the less, and their messages were none the less worthy of confidence. Real prophecies did not fail of coming to pass because Satan deceived some false prophets.

It is doubtful whether such persons are for any considerable time very positive that God is leading them, and that the manifestations they have are from him. Usually God gives them so much light that they might, if they would, see that their leader is not God but Satan. Sometimes under these Satanic hallucinations the mind is thrown from its balance. Such cases are an exception to the remark last made.

Again I remark, it is of vast importance that this doctrine respecting divine manifestations should be fully developed throughout all the church, and especially among all gospel ministers. Suppose that all ministers had these interviews with Christ and lived so near to him--nay rather, had Christ and the Father abiding continually in their hearts;--would they not preach as if they had a Savior and knew him? Would not all their preaching then be full of Christ, and would it not reveal Christ to their hearers? Verily they might then say with John, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

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It is one of the greatest difficulties with ministers that they have lost this experience. They do not know Christ by the living experience of their hearts through his presence abiding within them. All that they can say about the gospel of Christ, they say upon mere faith as opposed to the clearer vision of these promised manifestations. All is mere faith and often very dim. O how much better to see Christ and be able to testify from the burning impressions made by such divine visions of Jesus!

It is indeed well to be able really and fully to believe that Christ is with us; but the mind needs greatly to know this and have it in the mind as a living, burning reality, kindling every energy of the soul by its presence and power. Every minister needs this in order to preach with energy and demonstration of the Spirit. The whole church needs it and must have it before she can be clothed again with the glory and power of apostolic days.

Many persons call these divine manifestations, sanctification. But this seems not to be the scriptural view. The Scriptures plainly represent obedience and love as the conditions, and these manifestations as consequent upon their being fulfilled. Of course sanctification precedes as a condition and is not merely an effect. At the same time it is doubtless true that these abiding revelations of Christ to the soul exert a most hallowing agency, and may well be called a spiritual cleansing. They do indeed rectify the sensibility, mightily quickening it towards God and his truth, and thus serve to purify the soul. To the individual Christian they are life from the dead, giving a glorious vitality to all his spiritual apprehensions. If they might only become general, they would be like from the dead to the whole world. If all the church were to come under this influence--if all missionaries went forth with this experience; if it were a universal fact among them that Christ manifested himself among them so that they should know him as they know each other, and be as conscious of his presence and of his guidance too as they ever are of a Christian brother's presence and counsel. O what tremendous power would this give to the whole missionary enterprise!

This gave the early apostles their great power. Driven by fierce persecution, they assemble together; Christ comes among them; the whole place is shaken where they are assembled together; they pray for a bold and fearless spirit that they may preach Christ in the face of scorn and scourging--and they have it. Nothing can daunt such men--and nothing stand before them.

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It would be richly instructive to read this portion of the apostle's history with the eye on this point, and see what the results were of having such manifestations as they had on Christ, and such baptisms of the Holy Ghost.

This great blessing should be sought by every Christian. None should rest till he obtains it. Let his object in seeking it be the glory of God and his only; let him know that it is for the glory of God that he should have it, and that he cannot eminently glorify God without it--then let him know that if he will fulfill the conditions the blessing is surely given.

Every Christian is authorized to take this ground and ought to take it at once;--If the conditions are within my power, as the Lord liveth, I will have it.

Let me say to those who doubt--this is the course you should pursue, for this will bring you the blessing you want. You need not be afraid to come to Christ and tell him all your difficulties;--come in the simplicity and fulness of your heart and say, Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee--thou knowest it is in my heart to know and do all they will; now come and manifest thyself unto me, and take up thine abode in my heart.

You need, brethren, only to seek these blessings with all your heart and you will obtain. I have been greatly struck with the fact that within the circle of my own observation these blessings are obtained of the Lord usually in this manner. Led by the Spirit of the Lord, an individual sets himself with great earnestness to mortify every lust and subdue every sin; he spares not his dearest idol; he loathes and abhors every thing that can separate his soul from his Savior, and puts it utterly away;--this being done his Savior comes and makes his gracious presence manifest. This is just what we might expect from Christ's language. When a Christian puts down every appetite and lust of body or mind that leads the heart away from Christ, and does all this for Christ, then let him know that he may lay hold of this promise of the Savior and say--Lord, I have humbly sought to fulfil all the conditions; now in thy mercy and faithfulness bestow on me the blessing." This is the remedy for doubting.

Then will the Savior come to your soul and reveal his glories. Then he will so attract your soul that you will cry after him in the spirit of adoption, entreating him to reveal himself yet more and more, until you can say--Surely the Lord hath done great things for me whereof I am glad and I will praise him; surely he hath done

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exceeding abundantly above all that I could ask or think; and to his name be all glory and praise forevermore.

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"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, And, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death until he come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." --1 Cor. 11:23-29.

This text gives us the original institution of the Lord's supper. In discussing it I shall,

I. EXPLAIN THE DESIGN OF THIS ORDINANCE;

II. SHOW WHAT IS NOT IMPLIED IN AN ACCEPTABLE RECEPTION OF IT.

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN COMING TO THE LORD'S TABLE ACCEPTABLY;

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN UNWORTHY PARTICIPATION.

I. The ordinance appears to have two great objects;

One, to show the bearings of the death of Christ in its governmental relations, as a substitute for the death of all who else must die; and the other, to show forth the spiritual relation existing between Christ and his people whereby they live by faith on him. The breaking of this bread and the pouring out of this wine may well represent the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood,

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and these emblems so far considered, doubtless set forth the atoning death of Christ as a sacrifice for our sins.

But the ordinance includes another important part;--this bread is to be eaten, and this wine his people are to drink. Now the frequent instructions of Christ to his disciples have made us quite familiar with the use of this emblem to denote the life of faith;--the fact that the hearts of Christ's people are purified, and animated with the spiritual life of the gospel, by means of receiving Jesus to their souls thus to purify and animate. Of this spiritual life, he is the living bread. Whoever eats shall live forever; whoever eats not, has no spiritual life.

Now the fact that Christ had already made so frequent use of this emblem and had so abundantly explained it, leaves us at no loss to assign this same relation as a secondary design of the ordinance of the supper. The breaking of the bread which he said denoted his body, might of itself indicate his death, and might suffice to exhibit its governmental relations; but the other great idea--the life of faith sustained by its appropriate spiritual food, required for its full illustration that these emblems of the Savior's body and blood should be received as food and incorporated into our very being.

Hence this ordinance not only shows forth Christ's death, but shows that by his death we live. If the question then be asked--Why do you eat this bread? The answer might be--To show that we live by Christ. In him in a most precious spiritual sense, we live and move and have our being.

Again, this ordinance is intended to remind us of our sins, and of our relation as sinners to the death of Christ. When he gathers us round his table and spreads before us those elements which represent his mangled body and his flowing blood, and says so mildly and impressively, "This is my body which was broken for you," who can fail to think of those sins of his own for which Christ died? And who can be so hard of heart as not to be melted under the thought--my life, and peace cost the Son of God such a death--a death of fearful agony!

Yet again, this ordinance reminds us how hopeless was our condition as sinners, without Christ's interposition. Surely we cannot fail to reason this;--The Father would not have given up his well beloved Son to such a death if any sacrifice less costly could have sufficed. If man could have wrought out his own redemption; or if there had been any other eye to pity and other arm of adequate power to save, then would the sacrifice of the blessed Jesus have been spared.

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The hopelessness of our condition sent up its imploring cry to the throne of God for help. Deliverance could come from no lower source.

Still another object of this ordinance is to awaken and quicken our compassion for sinners. Around this table we see the fresh manifestations of the Savior's compassion for sinners;--this should enkindle ours. Did he feel compassion for sinners, and shall not we also? Did his compassion burn so deeply and so strongly that he could die for sinners, and shall not our compassion at least move us to pray and weep and toil and deny ourselves that they may live? Shall there be no power in Christ's example to make us feel as he felt?

Yet again, this ordinance should keep alive in our hearts a sense of that great love which Jesus had for his enemies. We must not forget that it was for enemies--for us while we were yet sinners, that Christ died. Let us never lose sight of this fact, nor of the lesson it reads us respecting the feelings we should cherish towards all the enemies of God.

Oh, what a flood of light does this great fact shed upon the infinite compassion of Jehovah! Could he send his own Son to die for his enemies! Then we may hope in his mercy--if we will repent and trust him.

Again, this ordinance is valuable as affording conclusive evidence of the truth of the Christian religion. Every body knows that this ordinance exists. No fact of history is better attested than that it has existed as far back as the death of the Apostles.

But even if it were otherwise--if the historic evidence were very much less than it is, we should still stand on solid ground in affirming the utter impossibility of imposing such an ordinance upon mankind, if it had not been instituted by our Lord himself. The fact of its existence therefore stands an incontrovertible proof of the great facts of the gospel scheme. It proves that Jesus Christ did die for the sins of men--and that he desired his followers to show forth this great fact to the end of the world.

II. We pass now to enquire what is not implied in an acceptable coming to the Lord's table.

It does not imply an avowal on our part of Christian confidence in all those who come with us, or of Christian fellowship with them. I have often met with persons who hesitated to come to this ordinance; and when I have asked them why they hesitated, they have replied--"There are persons there of whose piety I stand in doubt. Therefore I

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do not feel free to come." Now this position assumes that in coming to the Lord's table we endorse the piety of all who come with us.

But this cannot be correct ground. Judas was present when Christ first partook of the supper with his disciples. The disciples to be sure might not have suspected his hypocrisy, but Christ knew it well. The example of Christ therefore in coming and allowing his faithful eleven to come also and eat with the known traitor, forever settles this point.

Suppose the disciples had known Judas' true character. The circumstances might still have been such as to justify them in coming with him to the table. This is not the place to go into detail upon the duty of disciplining those who give evidence of hypocrisy; suffice it only to say that we do not of course make ourselves responsible in coming to the Lord's table for the sincere piety of all who come. They come on their own responsibility.

If I held the views of which I am speaking, I could not commune with any church I ever saw. I could not administer the supper to any church with which I have ever been acquainted. I may believe the church to be a church of Christ, and yet may not have satisfactory evidence of the piety of some of its individual members. The general confidence I have in Christian character of the church justifies me in administering the ordinance, or in communing with them.

Yet such scruples as I here refer to are very common, and are the alleged reason why many absent themselves from the Lord's table. The reason is not a good one. If the devil should come, I would come too. Why should I be kept away by him? If he comes, let him bear his own responsibility.

III. We next enquire what things are implied in coming to the Lord's table acceptably.

1. A living, efficient faith, as opposed to a faith that is dead and inefficient. A dead faith is a mere opinion, held in the intelligence, but not affecting the heart or the conduct. Men sometimes hold certain opinions, and suppose themselves to hold them with entire sincerity; yet those opinions have no efficient influence upon their life. Such a faith is of no avail.

On the other hand a living faith is a vital, efficient belief which at once affects and controls both the heart and the life. In every case of living faith, the mind receives the truth in love and cheerfully obeys it. This receiving the truth in love is a living faith. It is a trusting, confiding, committing the mind to the influence of truth. The efficiency of such a faith will be manifest.

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It overcomes the world. "This is the victory that overcomes the world--even our faith."

This faith worketh by love--being efficient because love and trust are sweetly blended together,--this constitutes a fitness for acceptable coming to the Lord's table. But no amount of knowledge--faith being inefficient--can fit the soul to come to this table of the Lord.

2. Sympathy with Christ in his love for his church. All who come acceptably must have this. Christ's love was so great that he is represented as giving himself--his very life for his church. Oh! what love is this! Love that could induce him to lay his life down for his people! Let no one expect to be accepted at his table who does not sympathize deeply with Christ in this great love of his for his church.

3. Sympathy with Christ in his compassion for sinners. On this point we need to get before our minds the state of feeling in which Christ laid down his life for the lost and guilty. Into this feeling we must enter most fully if we would enjoy his presence and his smiles of love at his table.

In short you need to have a sympathy with the whole mind of Christ. Go back to the scenes of the last supper. There are his disciples. How intense the Savior's care and love for them! He would not leave them orphans--he could not part from them until he had promised them an abiding comforter--poured out his soul for them in prayer--giving them the largest promises, even assuring them that they might ask what they would in his name, and it would be given them.

Conceive too of the spirit with which he had all along anticipated the cross. Ready to sacrifice himself--ready to be arrested, dragged like a lamb to the slaughter;--ready to be insulted, tortured, nailed to the tree--ready to endure any thing--I mean not merely, any thing short of death, but any thing with death itself--any form of dying however full of agony. And all this for sinners! O what an emptying of self! what a consecration to the good of the vile and the guilty! Was every love like this! With all this love we are to sympathize if we would come acceptable to his table.

Take still another view of this point. Suppose the disciples when they came together for the first time to this supper of their Lord, to have understood its design as well as they did afterwards. Then conceive how they must have felt. There sat the meek and lovely One, around whose feet they had so often gathered to hear his precious words;--he is preparing to sacrifice himself. It is as if a man were

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making ready his own winding sheet. He is thinking of a memorial by which his death for them shall be had in perpetual remembrance through their lives and throughout the lives of all that should believe on him through their word down to the end of the world. Now if the disciples had well understood all this, with what emotions would they have gathered round that table! With emotions much the same should we now celebrate the supper he then instituted. If your souls, beloved, were thoroughly to enter into these sympathies, you would find yourselves drawn into most deep and blessed communion with your Savior at his table.

4. Another condition of acceptable communing in this ordinance is a deep sympathy with Christ in respect to the progress of his kingdom upon earth. One great and leading desire of this ordinance is to promote the progress of Christ's kingdom. It aims to quicken the faith, the zeal and the love of his people, and to testify before the ungodly to the great fact of the death of Jesus Christ for their salvation if they will come and receive it. We cannot therefore come acceptably unless we come in sympathy with Christ in this respect.

5. Every church must maintain wholesome discipline. If they neglect this they ought not to come to the Lord's table at all. They are guilty of greatly dishonoring Christ and his cause. How can it then be any thing else than mockery for them to publish to the world their professions of honoring the Savior, as they do in coming to his table? If I as pastor should find that a church refused to maintain wholesome scriptural discipline, I should feel it my duty to refuse to administer to them this ordinance. I could not make myself accessory to their contempt of the Lord's authority and of the rules of his house.

6. Stumbling blocks must be removed. If any members of the church have openly disgraced religion they must reform and put away the disgrace they have brought on the name of Jesus. Else how can they hope to meet his smiles at his table!

7. All difficulties between brethren should be amicably settled. The church ought to insist on this, before they come to the communion table. All hard feelings should by all means be allayed before brethren meet together at the Lord's table. How can they appear before their Lord with such feelings cherished towards one another! And do they think to secure the smiles of their Lord, coming themselves in such a spirit?

8. Self-examination is always an indispensable condition of coming acceptable. So Paul taught;--"But let a man examine himself and so eat of that bread and drink of that cup." This self-examination

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ought to be a most thorough scrutiny into one's own heart and life. We ought to know where we are and what our spiritual state is, before we come to the Lord's table to meet our Savior face to face. We ought to know whether we are prepared to come; we ought to know what blessings we need to seek from our Lord when we meet him at his table.

9. It is always important to renew our covenant at these seasons of communion with Christ. I do not believe that Christians can come acceptable unless they do virtually renew their covenant with Christ on such occasions. It is eminently fit and proper at these seasons to review our past life--to see what sins we have committed--to repent of them; confess and forsake them and again solemnly renew our covenant to be the Lord's fully and forever. All this is so fit and proper that no Christian in the right frame of mind for acceptable participation can fail to do it. You sit around the table of your crucified Lord, and before you are the elements which bring to your mind the scenes of Calvary. You stand as it were by the side of the sacrificial Lamb, and as the Jews of old, so you now lay your hand on the head of the victim and "there confess your sins." How appropriate and solemn to confess one's sins over the broken body of Jesus Christ! What place can be like this for breaking one's heart for sin, and earnestly putting it forever away! Oh let us never come to this impressive scene without improving it for penitence and confession, and for solemn renewal of our covenant with our Savior.

10. Restitution should be made amply for all wrongs done, as far as it lies in our power to make it. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." These precepts of our Lord's applies pertinently to any act of worship, but preeminently to communion with Christ at his table. Its meaning none can question, for nothing can be plainer than his language--nothing more reasonable than its obvious meaning. If you have done your neighbor wrong, so that he has reason to have somewhat against you, stop where you are--go not forward a step in your professed worship of God while wrong toward your brother lies unretrieved--go and make this wrong right as far as you can; make all reasonable or possible reparation and the most ample confession; become reconciled to thy brother; then mayest thou appear before thy God acceptably--not otherwise.

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How can any one who has ever read this precept dare to come to the Lord's table until he has first made restitution for all known wrongs against his fellow beings?

Restitution should also be made to God. By this I do not mean to imply that we can remunerate God for injuries done him; but I do mean that we can restore to his cause and service what we have wrongfully withdrawn or withheld. If you have in your hands of the Lord's wealth which of right ought to have gone into his treasury for the use of his poor, or of his laborers;--or if, as the case may be, you have been squandering this wealth upon your taste or your passions as you have reason to know God would not have you, then you have wronged your Maker and robbed his cause; and it becomes you to make ample restitution before you venture to meet your Lord at his table.

So if you have backslidden from the Lord, and your heart has gone after other gods, what business can you have to come to the table of your Lord, except you can come in the spirit of most deep and humble repentance? How can you come acceptably, unless it be to re-consecrate your heart and all your powers to your dying Lord? In coming to the table of the Lord, you publicly profess to sympathize with Him; if this profession is mere mockery, can you hope to be accepted?

IV. The consequences of coming unworthily, next demand our consideration.

One of the results to be expected,--one indeed which always follows an unacceptable coming is great spiritual blindness. This is true of all religious duties;--performed in a wicked state of mind, they induce great spiritual blindness. But I have often thought that an unsuitable attendance upon the Lord's table must harden the heart beyond everything else. There are many in the churches who do this; who come to this table, conscious most fully that they are in no fit state of mind to come acceptably; but they feel that they must come--they fear being disciplined if they refuse to come; or at least, they fear the loss of their Christian reputation; hence they come, and consequently, become dreadfully hardened.

Do you meet with a professed Christian who is in deep and awful darkness, or whose conscience seems to be seared as with a hot iron? Search out his history, and you will find in most cases that he has allowed himself to come to the Lord's table in a careless, wicked state of mind, and having thus trifled with the most solemn and effective means of melting the heart, he is now hardened fearfully--

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perhaps so much so that no means or influences can ever reclaim and restore him. When one comes to the table in this wicked state of mind, he is likely to go away more bewildered and hardened than ever. The curse of the Lord is upon him.

On the other hand, coming acceptably has the opposite effect. It quickens our spiritual sensibility--melts the soul in godly sorrow; and makes every grace thrive and grow like the cedars of Lebanon. Those that be planted thus in the courts of the Lord shall flourish in the house of our God.

The judgments of the Lord will follow the deliberate or reckless abuse of this ordinance. So the text plainly teaches. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.["]

There can be no doubt that in the primitive church, not merely spiritual but physical judgments befell those who abused this ordinance. For this cause said Paul, are many weak and sickly among you, and many asleep--doubtless in death. There is no reason to doubt the fact that God often sends judgments upon people in this world for their sins; and especially for the sin of perverting or disregarding this sacred ordinance.

Another danger of most fearful sort awaits those who abuse this ordinance. It is reprobation. They are in the greatest peril of being given up of God. When the best means which the Lord can use to melt the heart prove unavailing, it only remains to give over the helpless reprobate to his fit doom. If the view of his crucified Lord, dying for his sins fails to move and melt his soul, there is little if any hope of his ever being brought to repentance. In the judgment day we shall find a great many professors at the left hand of the Judge--because of their hypocrisy at the table of their Lord, and of the [j]udicial blindness and hardness of heart thus produced. Hence followed reprobation, and their place on the left hand. They may plead--"We have eaten and drunk in thy presence and thou hast taught in our streets;" but he shall say, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

REMARKS

1. Satan tries often to keep weak believers away from this ordinance, and especially young converts. He makes them doubt whether they are real Christians, harasses their mind--accuses them of playing the hypocrite; makes them feel that it would be a horrible thing to come to the Lord's table; and perhaps ultimately succeeds in inducing them to forsake the table of the Lord and even prayer itself,

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and other religious duties. Now young converts and indeed all Christians ought to be on the alert that they be not caught in this snare. They should repel Satan by saying--I know I am in danger of being deceived--therefore I will flee to Christ now. Now if never before, will I repent of my sins, and take hold by faith of the offered gospel salvation. Now I will lay hold of the arm of the Lord for my help, crying, "Search, me O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I know it is a solemn thing to come to the Lord's table, but Jesus invites me and I cannot stay away. I cannot forego the spiritual blessings which may be obtained there; there is no reason in the universe why I should. I will indeed be on my guard most diligently lest I come and partake unworthily, I will go to Jesus and confess my sins--my soul shall lie in the dust before him--and if my brother has aught against me with any good reason, I will go and be reconciled to my brother before I come to that divine table of the Lord;--but how can I be persuaded to stay away and starve--while I know there is bread enough and to spare in the banqueting house of love?

In this way, Christian brother, you may quite baffle Satan, and make his temptations a blessing and not a curse to your soul. If you will be really honest with your God and with your own soul, you shall have nothing to fear.

2. Satan often tries to embolden real hypocrites. The true convert he will try to harass with the fear of being a hypocrite; but with the real hypocrite he plays another game. He tells him to fear nothing--H[h]e helps such persons to come to the Lord's table with heedless self-confidence, as careless, as to any special preparation, as if they were coming to any common meal. Horrible presumption! Perhaps they never really ask the question--"Am I prepared in heart to commune with Jesus Christ at his own table?" If their mind does glance at such a question it soon glances off again, and they do not give themselves solemnly to self-searching in the light of God's word, and with prayer for the Spirit to guide their minds deeply into the secret things of their own real character. Those who never examine themselves may know, if they will believe it, that they are deluded by Satan and may expect to lift up their eyes in hell in the awful agony of final, remediless disappointment.

3. Satan often plays a game with backsliders which is adapted to keep them forever in a backslidden state. He says to men--This is a means of grace--you must by all means go. But he is careful not to

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tell them they will need to prepare their hearts by solemn self-searching and deep repentance before the Lord. He keeps this idea quite out of sight--if he can. His plan is to make them trust in external means for their salvation. Prayer he tells them too is a means of grace; hence if they will pray in form--enough to keep conscience quiet--all will be well. Thus he keeps them away from real repentance--lures them along in their backslidden state, and puts their souls in infinite peril of final perdition.

4. Those who know themselves to be backsliders have no right to come to the Lord's table, unless they mean to return to the Lord when they come; for coming in any other way, they really play the hypocrite; and what right have they to do this?

5. This ordinance is often a great curse to the church. The best things perverted, work the greatest mischief. The more precious the institution, the more shocking and pernicious its perversion. The same is true of every doctrine of the Bible; the best and richest for practical benefit, become when perverted, the very worst. It is on this principle that no one can come under all the solemn and impressive influences of the Lord's table and resist with a cold, unmoved heart, and not be awfully hardened and fearfully cursed by that which Christ gave us for the choicest blessings.

6. This ordinance is peculiarly precious to the saints. Here they meet Christ under most affecting circumstances. It is as if they were to meet him at his own funeral or at his cross. What can be more precious! How do the most melting considerations cluster round the heart as you come to meet Jesus and remember his dying groans and his tender love for his people at his own table.

7. This ordinance must have been most affecting to Christ. Think of the circumstances under which he first instituted the ordinance. Beside him sat the traitor; before him lay outspread in full and distinct view that foul and cruel treason--the rush of the chief priests and of their armed men to seize him--the mock trial--the insults--the scourging--the dying agonies--the being forsaken of God; but these were not the only objects of his deep solicitude. Around him sat his eleven faithful ones, and his heart sympathized deeply with their coming trials and with their yet more remote labors, persecutions, and temptations in his service. He foresaw the need of giving them some memorial of his own death, for he knew that so long as they remembered this and saw it in all its proper relations, they would be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Hence he sets up this impressive memorial, and inscribes on it the sad yet glorious and

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heart sustaining fact of his own bloody death for the salvation of a world.

Yet again, let us consider how affecting is this memorial in its form, and in its natural associations. "Come, he says to his beloved ones, come sit down with me at my table. This bread betokens my body which I am about to give for the life of the world. This wine, which I now pour out foreshows the shedding of my own blood--indeed!--my blood, which is soon to be shed for you." O how he must have felt amid these scenes! and how must they have looked on and listened with mingled amazement, gratitude and love, as the great idea began to break into their mind that their Lord might ere long die for them; and as they saw in his eye and his tones that love unutterable was swelling in his heart and compassion yearning in his bosom. Viewing this transaction in all its bearings, what a scene! Did earth ever witness another such?

8. The celebration of the Lord's supper may be a most interesting scene to the Savior now; perhaps in many respects as interesting now as then. Why not?

When Christ sees a church in a suitable state to come acceptably,--when he sees the humble, broken heart, and the uplifted eye of confidence, trusting in his word and atoning blood, think you not that his heart is affected with tenderest sympathy? It must be an interesting scene for the exalted Redeemer to see his church on earth still celebrating his death age after age, still breaking the symbols of his body and pouring out the emblem of his blood as if they could not and would not forget the love and compassion of that wondrous death--as if they lived in and through the life begotten by that wondrous death!

Beloved, your risen Savior sees you eating of his symbolized body, and if your heart is in sympathy with your act, his eye regards it and his heart beats in sympathy with yours!

9. But on the other hand it must be exceedingly abhorrent to the mind of Christ to see his professed people come in a hard, unfeeling, unbelieving, ungodly state! To see them coming as it were to attend his funeral, without a tear, and without showing or having the least feeling adapted to such a scene! Oh what mockery of the dying Jesus is this! They come and stand before his cross--they can see his blood flow--they come and look into his open grave--but all, with hearts unaffected! Oh, how could they testify more strongly that they never loved this blessed, dying Savior! This I need not say must be utterly abhorrent to the heart of the Savior.

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Brethren, are you prepared to come to the table of your Lord this afternoon? Have you such sympathy with Christ that you can come with broken hearts--can abase yourselves most spontaneously before your Savior--can pour out your tears of penitence at his feet, and then can trust and love and adore?

Come, brethren, for the voice of love invites us--come, but let none abuse the call.

FORFEITING BIRTH-RIGHT BLESSINGS

May 13, 1846

"Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled: Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. 12:15-17.

The transaction alluded to in this passage is one of the most affecting on the records of scripture. One of the main points in it was Esau's despising and selling his birthright.

In order to understand this, we shall need to revert a moment to the custom to which it alludes. The practice originated very early, was well known in the times of Abraham and Isaac, and even prevails still in some eastern countries, whereby the whole estate of the father or a double portion in it, for it assumed these two different forms, fell to the eldest son. With this was also connected a certain authority over the younger members of the family,--often regarded as the authority of the father, transferred at his death to the eldest son.

But it is more to our purpose to notice that in pious families, certainly in the family of Abraham, a father's blessing, solemnly pronounced as he drew near the point of death, was one of the precious elements in the birthright of the favored son. Nor was this all. To Abraham and to his seed a blessed covenant had been given--a covenant which on certain conditions, pledged one class of temporal blessings--namely, the land of Canaan and a numerous posterity; and also another class of spiritual blessings--the Messiah in the line of his descendants, and through him blessings on all the nations of the earth. You may find this covenant expanded in Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22 chapters; and also in respect to its spiritual bearings, in Romans 4, and Gal. 3 and 4.

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This covenant formed a precious legacy, descending from Abraham to Isaac and onward in the line of his descendants through distant generations. Yet let it be noticed that this legacy of blessings did not at first diffuse itself over all branches of these patriarchal families. Abraham had an Ishmael who had no inheritance in the things of this covenant. Isaac was the sole heir next after Abraham. And of his two sons it seemed to be well understood that only one could have the birthright and the blessing.

Now it can not be doubted that Esau understood all the important points involved in this legacy of promised blessings. He knew what his birthright included; he must have known the promises made and renewed so solemnly to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. He also doubtless understood the tenor on which these promises were to descend to him in connection with his birthright. And yet the history shows us how he took a course which forfeited them all. Returning at one time from the hunting field, faint with fatigue and hunger, he said to Jacob--"Feed me I pray thee, with that red pottage." Jacob said, "Sell me this day thy birthright." Esau said, ["Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright be to me? And Jacob said, swear unto me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob."

Such is the simple record given us of the circumstances of this transaction. They serve to shew how little Esau valued the blessings which came down to him from his godly ancestors. The appropriate reflection to be made on reading the narrative is, not this--See how strong the temptation was, and how much to be pitied was the unfortunate Esau who stood at the point of death and bartered away an intangible and valueless ideality for what which was the very stay of his life; but rather this--"Thus Esau despised his birthright." There is Esau "that profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."

God set his seal to this act of Esau's. He took him at his word. Esau said--I sell it to Jacob. God confirmed the deed and it was henceforth Esau's no more. It passed from his hands forever. The Lord suffered another train of circumstances to transpire in which the solemn affirmation of the father transferred the birthright and the blessing to Jacob. There is no need at this time that I should fully detail all the circumstances--much less, that we should attempt to justify in all points the scheme of deception by which the mother effected this end.

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It may however be not amiss to remark that even before the birth of these two sons, the Lord had clearly predicted that the law of primogeniture in their case should be reversed so that the elder should serve the younger. She might therefore have felt that as the time drew near when a father's blessing was to single out the favored son, it was important that the purpose of God in respect to the younger of the two should stand.

While we can not justify her measures, yet we may remark that God's purpose did stand. The aged father pronounced on Jacob the ever memorable blessing--"Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." Gen. 27:28, 29. Scarcely had Jacob withdrawn when Esau came, announced himself, and besought his father to arise and eat and bless him. Now the whole truth flashed upon the mind of Isaac. He had given away the blessing--to Jacob. It could not be revoked. He was conscious that the hand of God was on him in giving it to Jacob and he could not recall it. He reveals the facts to Esau--Jacob came--"I have eaten of his meat before thou camest, and have blessed him; yea and he shall be blessed." Sad news to Esau. Yet one more effort remains. He may perhaps get another blessing equally valuable for himself. He cries therefore "with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father--"Bless me, even me also, O my father." Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept." But he found no place of repentance--no possibility of changing his father's mind--though he sought it carefully with tears. The die is was cast forever. Himself had sold his birthright, and God had confirmed his rash mad act, and given it to Jacob.

This is indeed one of the most affecting scenes on sacred record. It is peculiarly striking and solemn when we regard it as a kind of faint portraiture of that everlasting anguish and regret which will seize upon every lost sinner's heart when the truth shall ultimately flash upon him--my soul is lost--I have sold it for a mess of pottage, and it is lost forever.

Esau's sin consisted in despising this great blessing which belonged by birth to him. It is plain that he set no just value upon it. Its spiritual part he seems to have held in no estimation whatever. Suppose that he had been at the point to die of hunger;--was it

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nothing to him to retain even then, his hold of Jehovah's gracious covenant? Was that a fit moment to despise his birthright and all its divinely promised blessings?

We may next observe that from this point, the law of primogeniture seems to have been annulled and never restored again in its full form and force as it existed before. When Jacob came to die, he called together all his sons and gave them all his blessing. They all alike seem to have become partakers of the promises. The birthright seemed to diffuse itself over the whole family. Together they became a nation of God's people, heirs in common of most of those blessings which came down to Isaac and to Jacob in the narrow line of the birthright.

It is much to our purpose to notice distinctly the fact that when the Jewish nation were set aside for their unbelief, a still wider diffusion of these promised blessings took place. The apostle Paul both announces and evinces the fact that all who are Christ's are Abraham's seed and heirs with him of this great promise. All are equally with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, sons of the birthright, entitled to that covenant which pledges peculiar blessings to children on the ground of the faith and obedience of their parents. This is a point which we should by no means overlook. There is too much of precious promise in it, it would seem, to allow us to forget or disown it. If we were to do either, might it not be said of us that we have despised our birthright?

Recurring to our text, I observe that the transaction alluded to there, and indeed the whole history of the Bible, recognize the fact that this blessing may be forfeited. Here let me read some passages, showing that God couples children with their parents in both his promises and his threatenings. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul that thou mayest live." Deut. 30:6. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-sources. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Isa. 44:3-5. "As for me, this is my covenant with them, 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,

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saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Isa. 59:21. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:38, 39. Observe here that this reveals the great law of the gospel dispensation. The gospel reign has now begun and its spirit and its principles are now beginning to be developed. Just here now we find the cheering announcement--"The promise, that is, of the Holy Ghost, is unto you and to your children."

Again, we find in Romans 4, that Paul distinctly argues this great point, to show that all believers inherit the very same spiritual covenant which God gave first to Abraham. It was given to him not of law but of faith; hence all who have this faith inherit it.

The same doctrine is held and argued in Galatians 3 and 4, it being there maintained that "the blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith;" and the conclusion arrived at, being that "if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Thus we see that God connects children with their parents in his promises of blessings.

But let us dwell now more distinctly on the fact so plainly involved in our text--that these blessings may be forfeited.

It is plain they may be forfeited by contempt. If either parents or children treat them as of no value, they are in infinite peril of forfeiting them altogether, and God may at once take the forfeiture at their hands. Such treatment on their part must be exceedingly provoking to God, and none need wonder that God should say--If you despise these blessings, you need not have them.

Again, these blessings may be forfeited by a delay to embrace them. There is a limit beyond which God cannot wait on either parents, or children. This very delay implies that the blessings are lightly esteemed. For this reason therefore God might well arise in his displeasure and shut the door of hope and mercy.

Another obvious reason lies in the very nature of the present scenes of probation. Life must have an end, and may end quickly.

Still again, the blessings of this covenant may be forfeited by ignorance or unbelief. If parents do not understand its provisions or do not believe its promises, they may so entirely fail of laying hold by faith of these blessings as to forfeit them utterly and forever.

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Again, they may be forfeited and lost through presumption. Children may tempt God as Esau did, presuming that God will give the blessing of course, although they have despised and sold it. Such seems to have been the case of Esau. He must have known that these covenant blessings accompanied the birthright; and yet he acted as if he supposed that his having foolishly sold his birthright to Jacob could not be taken as a forfeit. He presumed either that Isaac did not know of that transaction, or that it would not prevent his bestowing the blessing on himself even if he did. But his presumption was only another sample of his folly.

So it is no doubt often the case that the children of pious parents tempt God and forfeit all these blessings. They may have heard much of this covenant, and they rely on it for their own salvation, while they put off repentance and provoke God till he cuts them down in their sins and shuts the door against their salvation forever. We have on record in the Bible many cases of parents and children who did forfeit these blessings. In many ways has the Lord taught us that children will be greatly affected by the course pursued by their parents. Curses or blessings come on them according as their parents are faithless in God or reckless of fulfilling the conditions of the covenant on the one hand, or are faithful on the other in labors and in prayers for their salvation.

This principle is amply recognized in several passages, some of which I will now refer to as illustrations. In the second of the ten commandments, we read, "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep My commandments." Thus in this solemn promulgation of Jehovah's will did He most emphatically recognize this principle that parents and children are most closely connected together, so that for the parent's sake good or ill shall come on their children. Yet let it be here observed that this does not imply that God punishes the child for its parent's sin. By no means. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord most distinctly declares that he never does this.

But there is yet scope for visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. A drunken father shall entail poverty, disease, and disgrace upon his offspring; yet shall not his offspring be at all punished for his sins. The punishment of individuals pertains to the next world and never to this. These providential circumstances which place our earthly trail in poverty or plenty--in sickness or in health--in

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disgrace or in honor--these are by no means our punishment in any proper sense. They may be evils; and in view of their final results they may not be. It may however well be an affliction to parents to be the guilty means of bringing disease, poverty and disgrace upon their children. Yet God has so connected parents and children together that such results naturally follow a parent's sins.

When the Lord condescended to show Moses His glory, "he passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Ex. 34:6, 7.

In Lev. 20:5, the Lord expresses one of his solemn threatenings against idol worship thus; "Then will I set my face against that man and against his family." In the case of Achan you all remember that God visited his fearful judgments on both the father and all his children.

These passages and cases I have alluded to, in order to show that parents often forfeit these covenant blessings for their children.

Both parents and children may so fatally forfeit this blessing that God will not return to renew the forfeited covenant, and reverse his decision. Isaac could not reverse what he had done in giving the blessing to Jacob. He was probably conscious that God had spoken through him in the blessing on Jacob, and now how could he of his own will reverse it? He could do no such thing. He seems to have been greatly astonished and amazed to find the blessing gone to Jacob, but he knew that God's hand was in it, and he dared not attempt a change. Yea, said he, "and he shall be blessed."

Parents may shut themselves out from these blessings. Of this we have a striking case in that generation of the Hebrew people which came out of Egypt under Moses. With an high hand and an outstretched arm Jehovah had led them forth; with water from the smitten rock, and bread from heaven, had he sustained them, and with his daily presence in the cloud and in the fire had he guided them, and now, brought to the very verge of Canaan, perhaps already presuming that their toils were all over, they lose all through their cruel and wicked unbelief. In the very moment perhaps of their highest anticipations the Lord crushed all their hopes, shut and barred the doors of the promised land upon them and doomed them to wander

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forty years with their children till the plains of that wide waste were whitened with their bones. None could enter Canaan till the unbelieving fathers were all numbered with the dead. "Ye shall know, said the Lord, my breach of promise." Ye shall know that though I promised to Moses that I would bring you into Canaan, yet I can not fulfil that promise to you who have forfeited it by your unbelief and your rebellion against me. For good reasons God had sworn in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; and no entreaties or measures of theirs could induce him to reverse that awful oath.

In this transaction of Esau, there are many points of most solemn and affecting interest. It teaches us this fact--that there is such a thing as sinning once too much. So did Esau. He reached a crisis--by one fatal deed he capped the climax of his iniquity--by one additional sin, he shut the door forever upon his own soul and cut off all hope of ever regaining the lost blessing. Mark well his case. In a fit of faintness from hunger and fatigue, he showed the real attitude of his heart in respect to this blessing. He had so little regard for it that he sold it for a mess of pottage. So of the Hebrew nation on the borders of Canaan. There is a last sin--a point in transgression beyond which mercy cannot go--at which justice interposes, and takes the sinner's case into his own hands.

The forfeiture of this on the part of either parents or children depends on the light they have. Their danger is critical and their guilt great in proportion to the knowledge they may have of the nature and value of the covenant and its promised blessings. In the case of Esau, we must suppose that he had light enough to enable him to appreciate the worth of his birthright. He could not but know how God had appeared over and over again to his godly grandfather, and to his father, giving and renewing those great and precious promises;--he well enough knew that Abraham valued these promises infinitely more than all his earthly wealth;--and yet with all this knowledge before his mind he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Well does a sacred writer call him, "that profane person," Esau. Forcible and pertinent is the remark of the original historian--"Thus Esau despised his birthright." No wonder that the Lord abhorred his conduct, and stamped his reckless disregard of these great blessings with the seal of his own indignation. Esau had too much light. His guilt was too great;--his sin could not be forgiven. See also the Hebrew nation on the borders of Canaan. What had they seen? The uplifted hand of the Almighty ten times falling on oppressive Egypt, and finally whelming her armies in the depths of the Red Sea; that same hand guiding

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themselves in love by fire and by cloud through the trackless desert, spreading for them a daily table there with angel's food; smiting Amalek before them when the hands of prayer were uplifted and upheld;--rebukes from on high, chastening and scourging them for their idolatry, their murmurings and unbelief;--all these things were fresh before their minds, for all had transpired before their eyes with the lapse of some two or three years;--and yet with all this light before them, they dare to rebel against the Lord and will not believe his word nor trust his power to save. "So he swore in his wrath that they should never enter into his rest." What could have been more just than this?

Now if it be true that the Lord rejected them the more readily because they had great light, then how important for us to enquire into our own responsibilities and dangers. Is not our light greater far than theirs? How critical then must be our condition? How imminent our peril of provoking the Lord to swear in his wrath that neither we nor our children shall ever enter into his rest.

Whenever either parents or children have forfeited the blessings of this covenant, the fact may be known by its closing up all access to the mercy seat in prayer. If the parents themselves are rejected as the Hebrew nation were on the borders of Canaan, the door of access is shut against themselves. They cannot pray acceptably for themselves. If their children have forfeited their birthright like Esau, then the parents cannot have a spirit of prayer for those children. This is plain, beyond question. It could not be of any avail for the rejected Hebrew nation to pray that God would let them go up into Canaan. They could not possibly have an acceptable spirit of prayer for this object, since God had sworn in his wrath that they should not enter. The Spirit would not help their infirmities, and make intercession in their hearts, to pray against the fearful oath of Jehovah. Neither in the other case could it be of any avail for Isaac to pray for profane Esau's pardon and the reversal of the sentence against him.

If you have observed with care and extensively, you have doubtless seen many cases illustrating this position. I have had occasion to observe many--so many that I cannot but regard this as a most striking mark of being rejected from God's covenant. If any of you have actually rejected this covenant, and God has taken you at your word, you will have no longer any spirit of prayer for blessings that are to come through that covenant; you will have no liberty of soul before God--no pleadings of the Spirit of the Lord within you--no strugglings and agonizings of the Holy Ghost within your heart for

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the souls of your children--no mighty help from the Lord, giving you power to believe and lay hold of the covenant and really close in upon the naked word of the Lord and say,--"Lord, thou hast spoken--now do as thou hast said." I recollect the case of one backslider who had long been far away from God, and during this time his children had been growing up and hardening their hearts in sin. When he came to awake to his condition and see where he had been and what he had done, it was heart-rending to hear him exclaim--"I cannot pray for my children--I have ruined their souls forever--I can get no access to God in praying for them." Now this is no uncommon case. Parents break their covenant with God, and then he withdraws it and holds himself no longer bound by its promises.

Again, where the children of pious parents treat their birthright with indifference, or disregard, as many do, and seem not to appreciate the blessing of being born of pious parents, they may expect the God of Abraham will give them up. In every age of the world God has recognized this principle, and has taken care to leave cases of fearful warning on record both in sacred and in all church history showing that his patience can not be forever abused with impunity, and that He sometimes takes the reckless forfeiture of his covenant at the hands of the guilty, abandoned rebel.

On the other hand the Lord has always conferred blessings on faithful parents and faithful children. How often is it implied in the Bible that God felt himself bound to confer great blessings on the Jews because of their connection with Abraham. The Psalmist touched this point when he said, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." Ps. 103:17, 18.

In the same manner and by the same immutable laws of Jehovah's moral government will great curses come upon children and upon children's children for the backsliding and unfaithfulness of their parents.

Again, I remark that after parents have long violated this covenant by grievous backslidings, God sometimes renews it. He has promised yet to do this to the Jewish nation when they shall again return to him. Thus he holds himself ready to renew covenant with parents even after most bitter backslidings, and after their children are on the very verge of destruction. So wonderful is his long-suffering--so rich beyond expression is his mercy--so does he love to bring the

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families of his people into his covenant where he can bless them and show forth His faithfulness and his great lovingkindness.

When the Lord does this, it is always on the condition of repentance; it can never happen on any other condition. His people must return with brokenness of heart, and bitter tears, confessing and forsaking all their sins against him. Then God for Christ's sake can forgive and can restore. They will have the evidence of this in a returning spirit of faith and prayer.

Now mark; perhaps I have spoken the experience of some parents here. You have some of you felt that you could not lay hold of this covenant--you could not grasp these promises by faith: the Lord did not write this covenant in your heart; but on your repentance the Lord meets you with gracious pardon--writes anew his covenant on your very hearts, and gives you thus the inward witness of your acceptance in the bonds of that covenant. Then you felt that verily you had occasion to bless and magnify the name of the Lord.

REMARKS

1. The birthright of God's children is of infinite value. The Lord promised to Abraham and to his posterity, not Canaan only or chiefly; but spiritual blessings, to children for their parents sake; and then brought all the Christian church up on to the same broad platform of promise, making them heirs by faith of the same covenant and of all its spiritual blessings. And what a covenant is this! How infinitely precious to the pious parent's heart! How glorious to God as well as blissful to man! Who can fully estimate its value? What if you might inherit the throne and crown of Britain, and then pass it down as a legacy to your children. Your eye would sparkle--your heart flutter at the tidings. What if you might inherit an estate worth a million. But how much more may you inherit in the promised mercies of this glorious covenant! Thrones and gold are only chaff in the comparison; here are substantial, everlasting realities.

2. Great multitudes in every age have broken this covenant and forfeited its blessings. Even in the family of Isaac there was one who forfeited these blessings and thus brought on himself not the blessings promised to Abraham, but the heaviest curses. Oh, how many wayward sons have sold their birthright as Esau did, and the Lord has shut them off from the blessings of his covenant. And how many professedly pious parents too--strange that they should not more rationally appreciate the priceless value of this covenant!

Suppose you inherit a throne--a crown;--would you recklessly forfeit it? Would you not say--This belongs now to my children; let

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me keep it for them? Indeed you would be most earnest and watchful--you would prize it, and nothing could induce you to be remiss in preserving so rich a good and handing it down unsullied to your children.

3. It is amazing to see how little many children realize the value of these blessings. What! do you not understand, dear children, that great blessings are promised you for your pious parent's sake? Do you not know the value of this birthright? Hear David urge this plea--"Have mercy upon me, O God, and save the son of thy handmaid."

4. Many parents have occasion for most bitter reflection upon their own folly and guilt in forfeiting this covenant. Said a father to me--"I have no confidence to pray for my children; they have gone from under my influence; I cannot even reach them with my prayers." If any of you my hearers, are in this state, the only thing you can do is to repent and plead with God to return in mercy and renew his covenant with you. Go humble yourself before him;--entreat him not to take your forfeiture of the covenant at your hands and make it final and fatal.

And brethren, how pertinent are the words of Paul to this case; "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." A promise being left us, beloved, O let us not come short!

It is possible, nay perhaps probable that there may be parents here who have already fallen short, and lost hold of this glorious covenant. Come ye who are professedly Christian parents--let me talk with you about this. How long since you entered into this covenant with God for your children? How old were you then? How many children have you thus dedicated to God? Where are they now? Where have they been? Through much prayer and faith and most diligent keeping of the covenant, have they received its promised blessings; or does their hard heart and wicked life bear testimony against you? O have you forsaken this covenant, and has the Lord forsaken you and your children? Like Eli of old, have you neglected to restrain them, and have they in consequence plunged into fearful hardness, or possibly, crime?--If you have broken covenant, will you not seek the Lord now, if possibly he may renew it and give you a fresh hold upon its promised blessings? It may be that you have let the promise slip, and now can find no place for repentance though you seek it carefully with tears. Perhaps God seems to say to you--"They shall know my breach of promise!"--awful words!

FORFEITING BIRTH-RIGHT BLESSINGS

One word to children. God has committed to you a great and sacred trust. Have you despised your birthright? Have you made light of these blessings and vilely cast them off? If so, the day will come when you will see your folly in bitter anguish. Like Esau you may wail out with a great and bitter cry--"O is there no forgiveness for me--ah is there none?"

I once had a friend whose death under the attendant circumstances was deeply and awfully affecting. He had a pious and praying mother--a careful mother, who had watched over his early years with Christian assiduity, and many tears. His father was a good man, and while for some months I boarded in the family, I could not but say, This is a well-ordered and godly household. Rarely if ever have I seen a better regulated Christian family, or more care taken in training children.

Some years afterwards I saw this son to whom I referred, in the great revival at Rochester. He had been from home some time and of course away from the influence of his parents. In this revival he acted through out like a fool. Vain, proud, giddy, at first he took the ground that he would not be so singular as to become a Christian alone, while none else were coming out for the Lord; but when hundreds began to gather round the Savior's feet, he changed his tone and would not repent then, because he said he would not disgrace himself by going with the rabble. Just so full of nonsense and mad folly were all his positions. He lived through the revival, a hardened sinner.

Next came the fearful cholera and smote him among its first victims. It swept over his robust frame with terrible desolation, and almost in an hour he was on the bed of death. His godly father and praying mother rush to his bedside; there is no time for many words; the agonized son cries out, O, my father--cant (sic.) you pray for your dying son?--The father is speechless.--Mother, cant you pray for me before I die? The mother cant pray. No, not even that mother. It seemed to them as if there was no audience before mercy's throne. They could not pray for that son. You may conceive of their deep, unutterable agony;--O could you have witnessed the awful scene! A dying son of pious parents--who could not pray himself, and for whom even a pious father and mother can get no access to God in prayer! O could you only hear his last words of shrieking anguish--"what, father, mother, cant you pray for your dying son!"

The oath of the Almighty had passed, and the Lord saw fit to make him an awful monument to the whole city of his stern, his righteous, but inexorable Justice! O how all who heard it stood

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aghast, and how did it make the ears of all the people tingle! It was Jehovah's awful voice of warning!

Among these young men before me is there not an Esau? Have you not despised and sold your birthright--you, young man, whose pious father and mother have poured out their scalding tears for you like water, and their agonizing prayers as if they could not be denied; but you have presumed on mercy and kept on in sin; you have resisted the Spirit and insulted your Maker;--O could you have seen that young man die, and could you have heard his last imploring wail--"O cant you pray for your dying son;" and could you have realized how the iron of despair entered his soul as he sunk in the chill arms of death and all the bitterness of unutterable anguish filled the hearts of those who had prayed for him in his childhood, but might pray for him no more;--O could you see, or only realize one scene of this sort, you might learn one of the lessons of fearful warning by which your Maker would admonish you not to trifle with the salvation of your soul. O! the folly of sinners--the folly of those children of pious parents who sell their birthright for less than a morsel of meat,--sometimes even for poison. O! why will they forsake God, and slight his covenant? Why will they forfeit his mercies and provoke his everlasting frown?

Ye who are parents,--have any of you broken your covenant with God for your children? Then come and bring along those children of the covenant, and let us all humble ourselves before the Lord, deeply repent of all our sins, and entreat his mercy, if peradventure he may be gracious to us and renew his covenant with us, and once more write it on our hearts.

AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

June 24, 1846

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."--2 Cor. 4:17. Read also Psalm 73.

Few things are more interesting than to contemplate the contrast every where drawn in the Bible between the righteous and the wicked. No man can thoroughly study this contrast without being greatly affected by it. Throughout the Bible we find this contrast drawn in the strongest colors respecting their character, their afflictions, their joys, their entire earthly course, and their final destiny. It is my design in this discourse to notice some particulars.

Our text from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians speaks of the righteous. It affirms that their afflictions are light, are transient, and productive of augmented glory. We have another passage of similar import which asserts that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

The Bible throughout holds language directly opposite to this respecting the wicked.

But I am first to give a few particulars respecting the case of the righteous.

I. They have afflictions. This is asserted and implied throughout the Bible. And the whole course of God's providence in every age teaches the same things. The best saints are chastened. Affliction is not excluded from their cup because of their piety. Their afflictions may be in themselves as painful--may be as frequent and as long protracted as those which befall the wicked.

The book of Job shows that formerly this fact was greatly misunderstood. In those times of comparative darkness, when the light of written revelation had scarcely begun to fall upon the nations,

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some men, even some good men, seemed not to have understood the meaning of the divine dispensation towards the righteous.

But I have several specific points of remark to make respecting the afflictions of the righteous.

1. They are light. Paul calls it--"Our light affliction." This, you will observe, is a term of comparison. We need therefore to inquire with what our afflictions are to be compared in order to be reasonably deemed light.

Obviously the afflictions of the righteous are light compared with what they know and feel that themselves deserve. This is one of the considerations which make their afflictions seem, in their own view, to be light.

Their afflictions are not said to be light compared with those of the wicked. But they are light and every real saint feels them to be so compared with what himself deserves.

Again, they are light compared with what Christ suffered in working out our salvation. Whenever we think of Christ's circumstances, apprehending in some measure his trials from being rejected of his people, from the unbelief and fickleness of his professed friends, from the wickedness and coming ruin of his nation, which he could neither remedy nor avert; from the malice of his murderers, and from his position as our sacrifice;--when, I say, we duly apprehend such points as these, we always see that all our own utmost afflictions are light compared with his. I have never yet seen a Christian who did not feel this when reminded of the sufferings endured by Christ in his earthly afflictions.

Again, these afflictions are light when compared with those that await the wicked. Compared with those, they are too small to admit of being estimated as any thing at all. They are less than the fine dust of the balance.

In the same view, these afflictions of the righteous are light compared with what they themselves must have suffered if Christ had not suffered in their stead, and if they should not by the discipline of suffering here be so purified that God can take them to heaven at death. It is well for all Christians to consider both these points;--namely: how the sufferings of Christ have saved them from the terrible necessity of ever lasting anguish, and also how the moral discipline of suffering here may perform a most important and indispensable agency in preparing the soul for exemption from all further suffering in a world of peace and joy. Then you will see how light your afflictions are compared with what they might have been,

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and indeed must have been if God had forborne to adopt the great remedial system.

2. I must pass to remark that these afflictions of the righteous are short. They are short compared with eternity; short compared with what we deserve that they should be; short compared with the measureless duration of the sufferings of the wicked. Let their duration be compared with any of these points, and you cannot fail to see that they are indeed but for a moment.

3. All these afflictions of the righteous are in respect to them means of grace. So the apostle implies. In his view they "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They do this only as they serve to prepare the soul for glory;--by no means because they merit a reward of glory. But in their disciplinary character and results, they work for the Christian a weight of glory which infinitely exceeds all the weight of the afflictions themselves.

4. The perceived design and tendency of these afflictions rob them of their sting. When the people of God see this design and this tendency, they feel more like embracing and kissing the rod than like repelling it. Indeed it usually happens that they can testify after the scene of trial is past,--"It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." And often, while passing through the very furnace, the conviction that the hand of their own Father is in it; that it is designed for their good, and if they will fall in with this kind design, it cannot fail to do them infinite good--these thoughts serve to sustain them so that not so much as the smell of fire is on them. Or to change the figure, these thoughts, dropped as an anodyne into the cup of their sorrows, transform what else had been gall and wormwood, to the sweetness of honey.

5. A consciousness of their own ill-desert serves to inspire patience and submission. Let the Christian only realize this, and he will cry out--all these afflictions are nothing compared to what I have deserved at the hand of God. I cannot murmur. All this is no suffering at all when seen in the light of my deservings.

6. The fact that they are so short makes them appear so light.

With almost universal application it may be said of the afflictions of the righteous--"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." A night of unbroken sorrow may appear long--but soon the morning comes in its joy, the night of anguish is forgotten. What Christian does not know this? Where is the Christian who has not had this written out in his own experience? Hence, under

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the heaviest pressure of affliction, he can still expostulate with his own despondencies--"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me; hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God."

I can well recollect that before my own conversion I was deeply struck with this, that Christians were the only persons in the world who had any reason to be joyful. I could easily see that they had consolations which none others had. I saw that nothing could possibly befall them which could ultimately be an evil. All things I saw must work good and nothing but good for them. Reading such passages as our text, showed me plainly that all was well for them, and that they alone, of all men on the earth had a legitimate right to be joyful.

The opposite I saw must be true in every instance in the case of the wicked. All these thoughts passed often through my mind while in my law office. Even then I could not help thinking intensely on these points, nor could I help seeing the force and the bearing of earthly afflictions to curse the wicked and to bless and not harm the righteous. In this state of my mind, I did not perhaps quite envy Christians their lot, but I felt that none but they had any reason to be cheerful. The sinner, I plainly saw, had no business to be cheerful. Nothing could benefit his condition and prospects but to howl and mourn in most hopeless anguish. Nothing but ill was on him; nothing but ill yet more awful was before him.

Nor in my case did those views result from a state of melancholy or depression of spirits. I never had any tendencies of that sort. These convictions were the result of sober and intense thought. I studied the great questions of the Christian religion intensely, and I could not fail of being deeply impressed with the mighty contrast between the state of the righteous even in this world, and that of the wicked.

My situation in regard to early religious instruction, was rather peculiar. I heard no preaching but the strongest form of Old Schoolism, and had to grope my way along through all its absurdities, and think out all my religious opinions in the very face of all the preaching I heard in my earliest years. This led me to think deeply and thoroughly upon the great points of the Christian life. Hence when I saw a sinner in his sins I could see nothing cheerful in his case. All was full of gloom. But a Christian--what if he does suffer now? All will soon be well. His sufferings are soon over. Who can help seeing this? It seems to me now--as it did then, quite impossible for any thinking man to avoid thinking on this subject, and if he

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thinks at all how can he fail of being struck with the immense contrast between the case of the righteous and that of the wicked?

7. The joys of the saints are only the beginning of heaven. The Bible does not represent them as being short, like their sorrows; but represents their joys as long and their grief as short. Their joys are enduring, deep, full, fadeless; not light and fleeting as are those of the sinner.

II. I pass in the next place to remark that precisely the opposite in every respect is said in the Bible of the sinner. To show this I will read you the 73d Psalm. I select this, not because it is more striking or more decisive than many other passages in the Bible on the same subject; but because it brings out more distinctly the very truths I wish to lay before you.

It appears that before the volume of written revelation was filled up, and before men had learned to interpret the providences of God, as now in the light of revelation we are enabled to do, some men were greatly perplexed with the course of divine providence towards the righteous and the wicked. Such seems to have been for a time the case with the writer of this 73d Psalm. "Truly," he says, "truly God is good to Israel;"--"truly"--as if the conviction had just now become fixed in his mind, and he had just learned this fact, so long obscured in darkness,--"truly God is good to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped." What was the matter? He proceeds at once to tell us. "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." He evidently speaks not of all wicked men, for some of them have trouble as other men have; but he speaks of the prosperous classes--of those who seem during much of their life to have all that heart can wish. "Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return thither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." It is all in vain he says for me to have washed my hands from sin, and to have denied

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myself its pleasures, for I have been sorely plagued notwithstanding--more sorely even than most of these wicked men;--"for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." But at this point he checks himself;--it strikes his mind that to talk in this strain will be a stumbling-block to God's people; it will throw them into the same state of perplexity and repining; and he sees instantly that this will not answer; what then shall I do, says he? "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;" I was yet more painfully perplexed; I dared not speak out my feelings lest I should offend the generation of God's children. And yet my heart was hot within me, and how could I refrain from speaking out the deep, burning perplexities of my soul? "It was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God;" I knew not how to solve this mystery, that I should have so many troubles and the wicked so few--"until I went to the sanctuary, then I understood their end." "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so O Lord, when thou awakest thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." I was stupid as a beast; why did I not understand before this that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and that their richest joys terminate almost in a twinkling, in everlasting desolation and anguish? "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." "Thou shalt guide me"--what a blessing to have the infinitely wise God for a guide! "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish, thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works."

We see now that if sinners are joyful, the Bible represents their joy as only for a moment. I might quote passages almost without number to prove this. But there is no need that I should.

On the other hand, the Bible shows that when Christians are afflicted it is but for a moment, and that their afflictions are light also. O how light compared with the full lot of the wicked!

But what of the wicked man? Is he joyful? Yes, he has a feverish excitement and he calls it joy, but it cannot last; it vanishes away ere

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he has done quaffing off the mere foam of his pleasure-cup. Light too are all his joys--light as air; in their very nature they never can be solid and substantial; they are as the chaff which the wind drives away. Sinner, you know there is nothing in them worthy of the name of joy. You know they are vain, false, fickle, unsatisfactory; the first breath of adversity scatters them all; disappointment has hidden her sting beneath their fairest flowers. You have known all this in your own sad experience, and yet you are loath to admit it, and more loath still to act as if it were true.

Again the sinner's joys are only the means of aggravating his future sorrows. Instead of being as in the case of the righteous an antepast of heaven, they are a prelude to hell. Every joy of the sinner in this world is a fruit of God's mercy, and every such mercy abused, will be prolific in wrath and torments in the world of retribution. God will visit for all those abused mercies.

Then, moreover, those joys of earth will be food for thought in that world of tormenting self-reflections. Conscious guilt for mercies abused will harrow up the soul of the lost sinner with unutterable pangs.

Yet again, every sinner knows that his good things are the opposite of what he deserves. The sweet consciousness of integrity and of deserving well at the hand of God, he never has, or can have. He knows that all in his case is ill-desert--desert of utter and unmingled sorrows.

Once more. In the hour of trial, how great the contrast between the afflictions of the wicked and those of the righteous! The wicked man under his afflictions can only say--if his eyes are open--These are only the beginnings of my sorrow. I have only just begun to drink the bitter cup, the dregs of which are to be my portion forever and ever.

Yes, the wicked must bear their sufferings in this life, comfortless and unsustained. No Christian's hope gladdens and cheers their heart. No solace can they have in the bitter hour. Faith in Christ is, with them, entirely out of the question; they can think of Christ only as the being whose blood they have trampled under foot--whose mediation for sinners they have set at naught; and now they can hear Him say only this--"Because I have called and ye refused, therefore when ye call I will not answer." It avails nothing to speak to them of Jesus. The name soothes not their aching bosoms; it only harrows up their souls with more bitter self-reproaches, and keener despair. No

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hope have they;--certainly no good hope through grace: for they have set all grace at naught.

Thus the very opposite things are true of their afflictions which are true in the case of the righteous. While the afflictions of the righteous are light because of his buoyant, trusting, submissive, peaceful state of mind; the afflictions of the wicked are heavy because of his wicked state of mind. He has no power to resist and bear up under them.

Suppose an ungodly man is visited with bereavement. His property is torn away. Alas, it is his all; and what has he more? This was his God, and now it is gone, perhaps forever. It leaves him no good to enjoy. The Christian too may lose all his property in a twinkling; but then his Father in heaven is infinitely rich, and he need not fear lest he come to want. His great treasure remains untouched by the fires or the floods of earth. He can have a thousand angels to minister to his wants if he needs their aid, and his Father sees it best to send them.

Suppose the sinner is bereaved of some dear friend, a parent or a bosom companion, or a child of his strong and tender love. The blow comes down upon him with unmitigated weight. He has no Savior, no hope, no consolation--no being in the universe able to save, to whom he can flee.

These sorrows are heavy because they are enduring. They intermit only for a brief space and then another avalanche rolls over him again, crushing all his fondest hopes and spreading desolation all around him. And then the thought must flash across his mind--These are only the beginning of sorrows. I am bereaved here;--O how much more bereaved when every friend shall be torn away! Bereavement makes me wretched now--what shall I be hereafter?

There is another point of most solemn import. The wicked man's afflictions, instead of working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, will only work in his case a far more exceeding and eternal weight of damnation. For all these afflictions are only appliances on the part of God to reclaim the sinner from sinning and bring him to Jesus for salvation. If he resists them all, they cannot fail to aggravate his final doom. Hence the more thorough and searching his trials, the greater his guilt, and the more heavy his final punishment. Hence we see that the more he suffers here--supposing him to resist the design of God to reclaim him by these trials, the more must he suffer hereafter as a punishment for his deeper guilt.

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The reverse of this we know is true of the Christian as the more he suffers here the more he enjoys hereafter.

It is most striking to notice here that while all things joyful or sad work together for good to the Christian, all things, whether prosperous or adverse--joyous or afflictive, work together for ill to the sinner. The more he enjoys here, the more miserable he must be hereafter; and the more he suffers here, the more he must suffer hereafter. If there is in this an apparent paradox, it is still true, and you will instantly see its truth when you come to see the relation of the whole course of God's providence here towards the sinner, to this sinner's final doom. All God's providences are means of trial to the sinner, and if he abuses them all, and resists their influence, they cannot fail to work for him a deeper damnation.

Alas, the guilty course and the fearful end of the sinner! Instead of being able to say, with the Christian--welcome afflictions; welcome pains and trials and bereavements; welcome even the cross itself;--he can only say--Woe is me;--these heavy afflictions that make me weary of life now, are working for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of damnation! Nothing for me here but bitterness, and a vain pursuit of hollow pleasures, all working for me a more dire damnation for my everlasting portion!

REMARKS

1. If we would understand the Bible we must attain a position from which we shall see things as the inspired writers saw them. They estimated all things in the light of eternity. When they speak of earthly things, they compare them with eternity, and deem them long or short--valuable or valueless, as they are estimated in this scale of comparison. And why should they not? If we are to exist forever, there is surely no other rational way of estimating the value of whatever shall affect our entire well-being. Our happiness or misery in the next world is a part of the whole sum of our good or ill in existence as much as the portion which falls to us in this world.

Hence if earthly scenes and interests are brief and but for a moment compared with eternity, let them be called and deemed light and of small account. So the sacred writers seemed to regard them.

Many have fallen into serious errors in consequence of not understanding this. When the apostles speak of its being only a step to the day of judgment, some have supposed their real meaning to be that Christ's second advent was really just about to occur. But it is by no means certain that this was their real meaning. Minds so deeply impressed as theirs were, with the solemn realities of eternity are

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wont to view eternal scenes as very near at hand. The intervention of earthly scenes and events between--events in which their mind takes no interest--is scarcely thought of.

Now we need to be in such a state of mind as theirs in order to understand their language. Then we shall estimate all earthly things in the near view of the solemn realities of the eternal world.

2. Afflictions are light or otherwise, very much according to the state of mind in which they are experienced. In one state, a mere trifle will appear heavy; in another state the same trial will seem scarce worth regarding. The mind sustained of God can sustain almost any thing God shall lay upon it; but when a man has all his own burdens to carry alone, and can scarcely bear the burden of his own wounded spirit and rebellious, repining heart, how can he bear the superadded weight of affliction?

3. It is often exceedingly interesting to contemplate the afflictions of the righteous. When we see the afflicted soul sustained triumphantly by grace, and consider also how these light afflictions must educe a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, we see it a most blessed thing to be afflicted. O it is a joyful scene. Their state of mind is such that they scarcely feel the pain of their afflictions. They know themselves to be blessed, and their souls sometimes exult in scenes of deep affliction with exceeding joy. They have so much of God in their souls;--God takes occasion by means of the affliction to make such peculiar manifestations of his glory and his goodness to their souls that they may well exult in the precious good of being afflicted.

You may have heard it said of one of the daughters of Pres. Edwards, that while a husband whom she tenderly loved lay a corpse in the house, her joy was so great that she sought some secret place to give it vent lest it should be misconstrued by those who could not appreciate the abounding consolations of the great joy with which God was pleased to fill her soul. Now what was this? How shall we account for it? But one rational account can be given. The Lord was pleased to make this affliction in her case a sort of conductor along which the electric fires of his own love and presence reached and filled her soul. She became so filled with the joys of the Spirit that she could not be sensible to the bitterness of grief.

Now another woman in a different state of mind would have hung over that lifeless body--would have bathed it with her bitter tear; would have given way to inconsolable grief. Why? Because, in her state of mind, the consolations and joys of God are wanting.

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Payson, you may recollect, said near the close of his life--"Since I have given up my will, I have never in a single instance been disappointed." You need only be in a state in which you have no will but God's--then all will be well with you. Form no purpose except on this condition--"If the Lord will, I shall do this or that." Let a man get into this permanent state of mind, and where is he? Where he never can be disappointed. However his plans may issue, all seems well to him, because he wishes nothing otherwise than God would have it, and God's ways can never be frustrated. As a man once said of the weather when asked what he thought the weather would be--"Just such as pleases me," said he. But how could he know this? What does this mean? The answer is easy. Said he, "It will be such weather as pleases God, I know, and whatever pleases God will perfectly please me." Thus, beloved, if you are only weaned thoroughly from your own wills, and molded into sweet submission to the will of God, every thing will go just right. However much the course of divine Providence may seem to frustrate your plans and threaten mischief to your interests, you can say, "This pleases my Heavenly Father, and therefore I know it is best, and it shall please me."

I very distinctly recollect attending a funeral in a case where a man had lost a most beloved wife by a sudden death. But O, there was such a smile on his countenance, a smile so calm, so resigned, so sweet, so like heaven--I never can forget it. Such a countenance as his;--it seemed to betoken any thing else but affliction. Why? His heart was with God.

But while this is all joyful and interesting; on the contrary all is agonizing when you come to see the wicked under affliction. Alas! they have no consolation. I once witnessed a funeral scene in New York. A most ungodly man died leaving two ungodly daughters fatherless. Their mother had died before, and they felt themselves thrown upon a blank world, orphans. They wept and wailed enough to move a heart of stone. Their tears and cries were agonizing. I felt unutterable anguish as I saw their forlorn, despairing grief. But I could do little else than stand and weep. I talked to them of Jesus, but they had no Jesus. This name, so dear to the Christian heart, had no charms to them. They did not know him. They had never learned to trust him;--they had never made him their friend. Alas! they had no friend in the universe. Their father had gone to hell, and they were following on in the same path. O, it was enough to tear a man's heart all to pieces to witness such a scene! I could not help crying out, O, were they only Christians! O, if they only had Jesus for their friend!

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But these are only the beginning of sorrows. These are only the first tastings of that bitter cup which to all eternity they must drink to its dregs. These are only the first drops of that awful, rising, gathering hail storm, about to overwhelm them in its wide wasting ruin. If you have ever seen the awful tornado, rolling up in its mountain masses of cloud and hail from the west, roaring, crashing, sweeping along;--now its first drops fall--it is coming, coming--even these first drops thrill through the quick pulse and the beating heart of the houseless, naked wanderer--ah how can he bear that rushing avalanche of storm!

To the sinner in this world--the few drops of affliction cut him down; he cannot stand before these few small drops;--how can he stand when God shall make bare his awful arm and clothe it with majesty to visit wrath upon the guilty according to their deeds? O sinner, how can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong in the day when God shall deal with thee? The first drops crush you down; you cannot bear even the first small drop, but sink and wail out under even these;--what next? Next comes the solid hail--hear it roar. O that crash--as if it would tear the world in pieces! The first drops scattered in this world scald and scathe him--ah surely he never can endure in that dread day when the storms of Jehovah's wrath shall begin to beat forever on his guilty spirit!

When I have seen sinners under conviction, gnawing their very tongues literally as I have seen it--drawing blood, I have cried out in the inward anguish of my soul--If this is conviction, what is hell? O my soul, WHAT IS HELL? No hope;--no hope, no end, no escape;--O, if there were only some way of escape--or some end though after myriads of ages had rolled away in the agonies of the second death;--then it would not be all utter, hopeless despair. These thoughts of final relief might come as the elixir of life to bring at least a few drops of comfort; but no! hell has no hopes for its doomed ones;--it has no balm for the wounded spirits of its guilty, self-ruined victims. Every thought in every sinner's mind there, is only the fire and the gall of hell upon the dark malign spirits of that prison-house of despair!

Finally, brethren, let me say, it is exceedingly useful to us to contemplate this contrast between the earthly state of the righteous and of the wicked. Let Christians do this often and thoroughly. I have found it exceedingly useful to me to do it. It quickens the deep sympathies of my heart for my dying fellowmen and calls forth gushing gratitude for the mercies of gospel salvation. It is sometimes an evil to dwell too long and too exclusively upon the Christian's

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hope and the Christian's heaven, and neglect to dwell upon the bitter doom of the wicked. O, we must not forget their awful state! Our business here is to pull them out of those fires. Then let our hearts feel their awful peril. Let us often follow out this striking, heart-affecting contrast between the righteous and the wicked. If ministers would often do this, carrying out this contrast in all its great and striking points, O how would both they and their churches travail in birth for souls, and be filled with unutterable emotions of benevolent solicitude for the souls of the perishing!

Brethren, do you satisfy yourselves with the dainties of the Christian life and live to eat rather than to labor and toil? Do you come up here to this sanctuary to regale yourselves with spiritual manna, and give no crumbs to those who must starve in the agonies of the second death? Do you lose sight of the sorrows of the wicked, and quite forget their case? Do you--can you forget their awful afflictions here and hereafter--so heavy, so enduring, so fearful? O! can you let these things pass from your minds, and live on as if all were well? Beloved, you must one day give account for souls--for souls saved or lost.

ON BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH GOD

July 22, 1846

"Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." --Job 22:21.

The speaker here addresses Job and exhorts him to become acquainted with God. The text therefore naturally leads us to enquire,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING ACQUAINTED WITH GOD.

II. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH WE MAY BECOME THUS ACQUAINTED.

III. WHAT ARE ITS CONSEQUENCES.

I. The term acquaintance means something more than the common degree of knowledge of an individual's character. You often hear it remarked, "I cannot say that I am acquainted with him; I barely know him." Acquaintance, therefore, implies a more extensive and thorough knowledge.

The degree of our acquaintance with any individual will depend much upon our means of knowledge. Our means of knowing him may be only hearsay. This can never give us a real acquaintance with him. We might have a certain knowledge of some persons from reading their history. One might know much of Washington by reading all the published histories of him; but this would not be the kind of knowledge usually called acquaintance. It is plain that there is a much higher and more perfect kind of knowledge than this. A man who should only read a history of the battle of Waterloo would not get such a knowledge of it as one might by being in the scene itself. The latter might be in circumstances to know all about it.

We may also have some knowledge of others by their works. We may examine what they have done or have written. Thus we may know much of God from his works. His works of creation reveal Him; the course of his providence also; and the pages of his word. All these conspire to reveal to us God. But after all, none of these amount to as much as the text seems to imply in being acquainted with God.

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We may also have knowledge of another's character arising from familiar, protracted, personal intercourse. If this comprise also a deep sympathy with his plans and purposes, it gives us the best possible opportunities for becoming thoroughly acquainted. And this is what is usually meant by acquaintance. When you ask me if I am acquainted with a particular individual, you want to know if I understand his character thoroughly. This is always understood to be the meaning of the language.

Thus it is often said--"I am too well acquainted with such a man to believe that he has done a mean action, or that he can do one.[""] We can, any of us doubtless, say of some persons, "I am so well acquainted with him that I cannot easily believe any thing bad of him;" and of others we could say--"I cannot believe any thing good of them--certainly except on very strong evidence." Such is the result of real acquaintance.

So in the case alluded to in our text. The speaker assumes that Job knows something about God; but urges him to know more--very much more. He does not I think assume that Job is now a good man. He probably regarded him as self-deceived, and hence urges him to acquaint himself really with God.

II. What are the conditions of being thus acquainted with God?

The two first conditions that I shall name are always presupposed, and need no comment. They are

1. The requisite powers of intelligent, moral agency.
2. Light; that is the means of knowledge or instruction. But
3. It is also an essential condition that we lay aside prejudice.

Prejudice is pre-judgment, and such a pre-judgment as shuts out conflicting evidence. Now we shall never know God till we lay this aside. Indeed we never can depend on having a correct knowledge of any subject, or of any person's character unless we lay aside all prejudice respecting that person or character, and hold our minds entirely open to all the truth which it may be possible for us to attain. Nothing can be more certain, nothing need be more obvious than this.

Many persons seem to overlook the fact that men are ever prejudiced against God. They could not possibly make a grater mistake than this. In fact, there is more prejudice against God than against all other beings in the universe. Men are so prejudiced against God that they will not form any right views of his character. I do not mean by this that their feelings are violently hostile against God, so that they are conscious of active hatred at all times; this is not necessary to the existence of prejudice, nor is this as some suppose

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implied in prejudice. It is rather a fruit of strong prejudice than a part of it, or a cause of it.

Prejudice, as already shown, is a shutting of the mind against evidence. It supposes the mind to be made up, or at least to be strongly inclined to a chosen opinion--that it does not lie open to conflicting light and evidence.

Now it is remarkable to see how strong this prejudice against God often becomes. Of course it demands a great knowledge of human nature and much sound philosophy to know how to subvert and remove this prejudice against God. I do not mean to imply that it can ever be removed without the Spirit of God; but since human means must be employed, it is essential that they be wisely chosen and applied.

The grand secret of ministerial usefulness lies in understanding these prejudices and in knowing how to subvert them. No man can hope to be useful in converting sinners without this skill. He can do nothing to purpose unless he assumes that this prejudice exists and sets himself to resist and subdue it.

All sinners have this prejudice against God; else they would at once learn his character and love it. There is no intrinsic difficulty in knowing God. He has manifested himself abundantly, and now it only remains that we open our eyes candidly, and throw open our hearts to embrace all that is good, and every sinner might become acquainted with God at once--to the everlasting peace and blessedness of his soul.

4. Another indispensable condition is that we give up all self-will on every subject.

Until one is prepared to give up all self-will on every subject, he certainly cannot become acquainted with God. How can he know God unless his heart comes into sympathy with God, and enters thoroughly and heartily into his character and plans? Now this sympathy of the soul with God can never exist till we give up our self-will on all points. For self-will is always hostile to God's will. God says to every one of his creatures--"Give me your heart," or which is the same thing, "Yield up your will to mine." Self-will resists and rebels, and hence can have no sympathy with God; and consequently cannot really become acquainted with him. Nothing can be real acquaintance with God which falls short of entering into his experience, and of tasting the deep joys of his benevolent heart. Plainly, for this purpose, self-will must be brought under.

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5. We must be willing to know God as he is. Men generally overlook the fact that they are unwilling to know God as he is--a fact, too important surely to be overlooked! They are ready enough to form some conceptions of God; but in this they seek to form such as will please themselves--not such as are just and according to truth.

Just look at the idol gods which men have framed for themselves; some in the state of eternal inaction;--some are monsters and patrons of vice;--some are mean and all are wicked. Now are these the legitimate conceptions of God, framed by the enlightened human mind? Infinitely far from it. No man can read the records of idolatry without seeing that men have made themselves believe in just such gods as please themselves.

Or as another example of this truth, look at the god of the Universalists;--have they come to the Bible to learn God as he is there revealed? So far is this from being true that they find many things in the Bible which they must construe and wrest from their obvious meaning to suit themselves, or they will say--"God is worse than the devil!" They come to the Bible, not to find its meaning, but to make it.

6. Another condition of becoming acquainted with God is a really honest desire to become acquainted with him thoroughly.

Did you never see persons reluctant to become acquainted with each other? I opened a book a few days since and I was struck with the first remark I saw. I thought it remarkably just--"Never introduce persons to each other till you see that it will be agreeable to both parties to be introduced."

I have sometimes been introduced to persons who were any thing but pleased to be introduced to me. In various situations--perhaps when traveling, I have been introduced to wicked men who looked and seemed as if an electric stream was coursing up and down their bodies--they were so evidently troubled and uneasy in their condition.

Somewhat so of wicked men in relation to God. They do not like to be introduced to him. They know too well that they have reason to be afraid of him. If you knew you had injured a man, you would not wish to know any more about him than you could well help. You would not choose to come any nearer to him. Thus sinners know they do not wish to meet God and have near personal interviews with him. They do not want to become personally acquainted with God.

Right over against this, we sometimes feel exceedingly anxious to become acquainted with particular individuals. I have heard of

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persons whom I would go to Europe to see, and should not shrink from the cost and toil of a voyage across the Atlantic for this purpose. I recollect especially that soon after my conversion there was one man whom I exceedingly desired to see and know. I wanted to lay open my whole heart to him and seek his counsel and aid in my religious course. My heart burned with desire to make his acquaintance.

Thus we must have an ardent, burning thirst for the knowledge of God, as a condition of attaining it. We must not be satisfied with an outward, distant knowledge of God; but must long to know him as thoroughly as is possible for mortals in the flesh. When we come into this state we shall begin to know God indeed, and not before.

Another condition is the giving up of all selfishness and of the self-seeking spirit. This is most essential to success. All selfish ends must be abandoned. If we are bent on sustaining our own interests, we certainly cannot know God.

I have recently been very much struck with hearing an individual relate his own Christian experience. His case showed how truth seemed crowding its way into his mind, and how time after time its entrance was resisted and prevented by his selfishness. It seemed for a long time impossible for him to know God, and the reason was nothing else than this--selfishness was deeply rooted in his heart, and while there, the truth concerning God could get no admission. Sometimes, he came almost up to the very gate which, once opened, would introduce him to God;--then his bounding heart would say--"Now I shall know God, and I shall be a great man--a distinguished Christian"--and lo, down he goes again--farther from God than ever. So time after time he was thrown all aback by such developments of selfishness and self-seeking.

Now it is a matter of the greatest importance especially for ministers, to philosophize justly on this subject, and to trace all events of this sort to their legitimate causes. The subject is deep and requires profound and searching investigation.

Selfishness takes on so many forms and is so subtle that many persons entirely fail to detect its workings. Hence, impeded by this fatal hindrance--they are never able to come to the knowledge of God.

Again, self-knowledge is indispensable. There is such a thing as self-penetration. This thing must exist in some good degree, or no man can know God thoroughly. Without possessing self-knowledge, one may set about to find God, but with all his searching he will fail because he does not know himself. He will be likely to suppose that

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his own heart is in a state acceptable to God and adapted to search out God, and yet in this be utterly mistaken. Hence he can get, at the utmost, only little fragments of divine knowledge.

I said that the mind must have a disposition to know God. This must be an intense disposition--else it will not overcome the obstacles. The Bible requires men to agonize for spiritual blessings--to search, as for hid treasures. The mind must set itself to seek God with a most intense and agonizing earnestness.

It would be easy to show that this is not an arbitrary fact, but is thoroughly philosophical.

It is also fully scriptural. God has said--"Then shall ye seek and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." This is a state of mind well expressed by Paul when he said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."

Now everyone who would become acquainted with God must do thus. He must press on most earnestly after a full and perfect knowledge of God. The text enjoins upon us to get this knowledge of God. for nothing less then this intimate and special knowledge of God is meant by acquaintance. It is such a knowledge as will give peace of mind and that blessedness which is the birthright of God's children.

Another thing implied is confidence in God. Many suppose that if they have this confidence, they have already that acquaintance with God of which the text speaks. But this does not follow of course. Persons may have some degree of confidence in God for a long time without arriving at a thorough personal acquaintance with God. Confidence is an indispensable condition of this acquaintance, for many reasons. Unless men have confidence, they will not try God so as to become acquainted with him. Having such confidence they get hold of some promise and try him. Did you never do this? When oppressed with some want have you remembered that God has said--"Bring ye all the tithes into my store-house and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing." Now this is the way to know God.

Another condition of becoming thoroughly acquainted with God is attaining that experience which results from thorough confidence in God. The Lord had given us certain promises and the condition of their fulfilment is that we really believe them. If we do this, we shall experience their fulfilment. Let a man in circumstances of extreme

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trial throw himself upon the promise of God;--he will find God faithful. Then he will learn something new and precious about God.

Very much of our trials and temptations here are designed to work out for us this experience of God's power, presence and willingness to bless. Thus we come to learn many things in God's character. For example, God has promised that on certain conditions He will reveal himself to our souls. If we fulfill the conditions he will fulfill the promise, and we shall learn by our experience that God hears prayer. Such knowledge is of immense value in bringing us to become acquainted with God.

Another condition is that we have confidence to pass through trials. Without this we shall surely fail under trial; we shall let go our confidence in God and learn nothing by our trials but our own weakness. Trials often work out the speedy ruin of men because they learn by them only to distrust God; they stagger through unbelief and fall sadly from their steadfastness; they shrink from meeting the conditions and then throw the blame on God for not fulfilling them. Perhaps they say--"I did trust in God, and I am overcome after all." But that is a lie. There can be no greater lie than that. The Bible shows that there never was and never can be such a case as a man's really trusting God and yet failing because God does not fulfill his word. With real faith, you might walk through the fiery furnace and not be singed in its fires. Those three holy men believed. "Our God, say they, whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." So if Daniel had lost his faith, the lions would have eaten him up before he had fallen to the bottom of their den. Daniel knew where he was, and in whom he had believed. He knew his danger well, and his refuge too. Hence when thrown into this den, he was calm as if he had been safely sitting in the royal palace.

But could his accusers stand where he stood and pass unscathed through such trials as his? No! They had no faith--no God for their refuge.

Another condition is that God should make special manifestations of himself to the soul. God has promised thus to manifest himself on certain conditions. By performing these conditions, we may obtain those manifestations; God will reveal himself personally, and will show us great and wondrous thing of himself. This is a most precious, blessed truth, and in view of it, we may well be exhorted to acquaint ourselves with God. Even Job in

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that dark dispensation without a letter of written revelation might be exhorted thus to acquaint himself with his Maker.

Still another condition is intimacy of communion with God. I may live for a long time in the same neighborhood or house with a man and yet never become acquainted with him. I may know his name and many things about him, and yet never become thoroughly acquainted with him. For real acquaintance, it is essential that we have intimate communion. Some men may repel us from such communion however much we desire it; so that we cannot become really acquainted with them.

But God is always ready to hold communion with us. No fault, or reserve on his part can ever prevent our gaining acquaintance with him. Men may shut us out of their company, or at least from their sympathies; but God has no such repulsiveness about him. He is so meek and lowly that he is not above communing with a child even in the humblest condition possible on earth. Though he be the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, he yet condescends with infinite grace to dwell with the humble and contrite spirit. He knows nothing about the mere earthly distinction of the noble and the low; all are alike infinitely below him. The only distinction recognized before him is that between the proud and the humble. To the latter, he is ever open and most easy of access.

The thing now which we all need in order to become acquainted with God is an intimate personal communion. In order to know any person thoroughly we need to get into his heart. So you often express yourself. You say of a man, Now I have got into his heart--now I really know him and feel myself acquainted with him. I see him through.

So with God. You need such an intimate communion with Him that you really enter into his deepest sympathies and know his real heart. Most blessed knowledge!

Having shown what is meant and what is implied in being acquainted with God, I come now to speak,

III. Of the consequences of our acquainting ourselves with God.

Under this head I can only give an outline of the principal points. I can do no more than to mention several blessings that will certainly accrue to those who acquaint themselves with God.

1. Peace of mind. Job was at this time in great trouble of mind. His three friends were anxious that God should pass before him in such a manner that he could not fail of apprehending God's true

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character. They justly supposed that peace of mind would be the natural result of his becoming truly acquainted with God.

Peace of mind always does and always must result from the harmonious and right action of all the powers of the mind. When we feel as God feels--live as he lives; and when our whole souls harmonize with his soul in the spirit and developments of benevolence, then we cannot possibly fail of having perfect peace of mind.

Peace of mind stands opposed to all anxiety, and must result from the mind's finding in God all that itself needs. Let all the demands of its being be entirely met, and it can ask no more. Let it be distinctly seen and realized that these demands of our being are met in God, and peace of mind must follow.

Now it is a most blessed truth that when the restless mind of man comes to be acquainted with God, it finds in him everything it can need. Every want is fully and infinitely well supplied. When the mind realizes this, as it will when it comes to know God, it settles down into a state of calm repose in God which no restless anxieties can ever disturb.

One of the demands of our being is that others shall have the demands of their being met;--in other words, that we shall have not our own wants only supplied, but shall know that the whole universe also have their wants supplied in God. In order to our perfect peace, we need to see that all other beings have in God all they can ask or wish; that no want can possibly exist which does not find its adequate supply in the great Father of all. Now as the soul comes to know God more and more, it sees with increasing clearness and certainty that God's goodness, wisdom, justice and power are just what they should be to secure the highest possible degree of happiness and blessedness to the whole sentient universe, so that if misery exists it must always be the creature's own fault.

When we come to understand this thoroughly and to see that God's providence is perfect and reaches to all events--marks the falling of the sparrow and counts the hairs on our head;--when we see that God cannot fail of being infinitely faithful, kind and wise--that he cannot possibly mistake in anything whatever;--when these truths become fully settled in our mind and we rest on them as upon changeless, eternal realities, then all is peace. It cannot be otherwise.

But this state of mind toward God never can exist until we get more knowledge of him than mere hearsay. We must have personal experience and personal acquaintance in respect to God.

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Paul's words were full of meaning when he said--"I know in whom I have believed." Did you ever consider how much he meant in these words? Surely much more than many others would mean by the same language. It should be considered that Paul had been caught up to the third heavens--had heard unutterable things--had seen the Lord Jesus Christ himself--had passed through many scenes of sore and various trials--and in all had enjoyed varied and manifold experience of God and of Christ.

Hence this language from him must have been full of meaning. "I know him"--says he--"I know him;" I have seen him--I have had a long and precious experience of his lovingkindness and faithfulness;-- I know him;--and if all the devils in hell should tell me that Christ would not keep me, I know he would.

So we often see Christians who seem to know Christ so well that temptations seem to have lost their power upon their hearts. Let the temptation be ever so subtle, or so fierce, they do not slide or quake. They mildly say, I know him whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.

Another good accruing to those who acquaint themselves with God is that their faith becomes confirmed. As they become acquainted with God they find he bears acquaintance. The more they see of him, the more their confidence in his character rises.

Now in order to be at peace and to stand evermore in the evil day, Christians need to have their faith confirmed. They need to be assured that Jehovah is their friend, and to have such an acquaintance with him as shall make this truth a substantial reality.

So we sometimes come to have confidence in each other, when we become intimately acquainted, and this acquaintance reveals only substantial excellencies of character. When really worthy individuals are introduced to us, the more we become acquainted with them, the more we trust them. Of such we say--they bear acquaintance well. Of others we say the opposite--they do not bear acquaintance well. The more we know of them, the less we trust them. The former class are fast friends. We can confide in them under all possible circumstances.

Now God is a being who bears acquaintance perfectly. The more we shall know of him, the more clearly we shall see that in him there is no frailty--no infirmity--no defect.

Now I am well aware that in all Christian communities this is admitted in theory, but I also know that it is not held in fact. It is one thing to admit it in theory, and quite another thing for the heart to rest

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in it as a living, abiding reality. It is quite another thing for the mind to become so acquainted with God so as to triumph in him under all possible circumstances.

Another result is confirmed love. The Bible speaks of our "being root and grounded in love." There is a great deal of meaning in this expression. It develops most clearly the great truth that love is the basis of the Christian's character. In love it rests as its foundation, or to change the figure--in love it takes root and grows.

But of how few can this be said! The more I become acquainted with Christians, the more I am struck with their weakness in love. Their religion is not rooted and grounded in love. Many professed Christians are, to say the least, much of their time away from the spirit of love. There is a want of that universal love to God and man which gives to religion an unction, and makes it grateful both to God and man. If they had this unction of love at their first conversion, they seem to lose it and become legal. Then some of the forms of religious duty remain and some of the forms of humanity and human sympathy; but the spirit of genuine love is lacking. It is infinitely important to be rooted and grounded in love. The more you become acquainted with God, the more you will see that love is the only principle worthy of being regarded as the rule of life. This only is living like God, and this only is the spirit and life of real excellence.

Another result of becoming acquainted with God is a disposition to obey God in all our life;--a disposition to conform the whole life to God's will. It is a great thing to obey God under all circumstances, and a great thing to have one's mind thoroughly settled in this supreme law of action.

This will result from becoming really acquainted with God. I[t] will become more and more easy and natural as the mind becomes more and more acquainted with God; for the mind becomes thus more and more confiding, and if it cannot see, it will still assume that God is and must be wise.

Another result of becoming acquainted with God is fruitfulness. The Bible represents that our Father is glorified when we bear much fruit. But multitudes of professed Christians are remarkable for nothing so much as for their barrenness in the fruits of piety. With them, it seems to be a perpetual drought. They seem like Mount Gilboa on which no dew or rain descended. Of course, no fruits are borne to the praise of God. Of earthly seasons some are fruitful and some are barren; but with these professed Christians, all seasons and months are alike barren. This must be ascribed to their want of

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personal acquaintance with God. It would not be possible for them to be acquainted with God, and yet be so barren.

Another result would be moral courage. Unbelief is always the secret of moral cowardice. Persons who have not much faith are forever stumbling on the point of obeying God. They dare not trust God to take care of them in the path of straight forward obedience. They dare not face public sentiment--as if they feared it would ruin them, despite of the promises of God in their behalf. They are afraid of the censures of the church or of the world, their faith in God being so weak, and their apprehensions of God being so dim that they practically fear man more than God. Hence they cringe, shuffle, dodge, evade, shrink away from self-denying duty, afraid to take a simple-minded honest course, and trust God to bear them safely, nay triumphantly through.

Faith always cures this state of mind. It strikes at once at its very root.

See what a remarkable illustration of this we have in the case of the apostles. Before the Spirit of God was shed down upon them, they were timid. Peter was afraid of a servant girl, and they all forsook their Master and fled before a small band of armed men. They had nothing more at best than the courage of children. They needed a mighty change, and God provided means to produce it.

Christ had told them it was necessary that he should go away and that he should send the Comforter to teach them the (divine) things of Christ. He did so. He went up himself to heaven, and thence sent down the Comforter upon them. Then, O how changed! How full of moral courage! At once they become moral heroes. No dangers can daunt them. The same men who quailed before power and authority but a few days before are now fearless. The awful Sanhedrim no longer inspires terror. "We ought, say they, to obey God rather than men." "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."

Now this is always the result of becoming acquainted with God. Where you see a professor of religion who is a moral coward, you see one who does not know much about God.

I have been struck with this in seeing the moral cowardice of many ministers. I think I have seen not a few ministers more afraid of the Presbytery than a Roman Catholic would be of the Pope. Such men I have seen whose first and last question pending a case of duty, is--what will my Presbytery think of me? O, how disgraceful--how dishonoring to the Christian name--that a minister of the gospel

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should think so! O, were they only once filled with the Spirit of God, it would put another soul within them. Before the apostles were filled with the Spirit they might have quailed before the Sanhedrim;--but afterwards, the Sanhedrim--not they--were confounded. The Sanhedrim were confounded with the boldness of those unlearned men--fishermen and publicans of Galilee. O to be afraid of men--they are the last things in the universe to be afraid of! As if God were not infinitely greater and mightier than men! Surely those who quail before men rather than before God must be very far from any just acquaintance with him.

Another result of knowing God will be great searching of heart.

I have often been struck to see how it happens that many persons under the influence of a false philosophy, have taken a false view of this subject. This is a point which it seems to me of great importance that we should understand correctly.

Take the case of Isaiah as given in chap. 6, when God made fresh and most vivid manifestations of his glory before him. He then came to know God more fully by far than ever before; and it searched him through and through. Suddenly he cries out, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." Job also, when the Almighty came down to talk with him, cried out--"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Now all this class of passages have an important meaning. It is very important that we understand what they do teach and that we avoid ascribing to them a sense which does not belong to them.

In the case of Isaiah, we are not to suppose that he was sinning at the moment when God thus revealed himself. He did not cry out--"Wo is me--I am a man of unclean lips"--because he was then in rebellion against God. It is by no means either natural or necessary to suppose this. The same may be said of the case of Job, and of all other cases of the same sort. This subject might be understood if persons would take pains to do so. Experience would teach us much, very much about it. How common a thing it is for Christians to stand perfectly confounded when some new views of God's law and character flash upon the soul. They then cry out--"I have seen an end of all perfection, for thy commandment is exceeding broad."

What in such cases is the nature and what the results of this new revelation? Is it this, "I am now sinning; I see as I never did before that my present state is utterly wrong before God?" No; but the mind sees a vastness--a breadth in the law and in God's claims which it had

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not seen before and sees that more is implied than had been before supposed, in being obedient. And so it will be to all eternity. More and still more will be seen of the breadth and glory of the divine law and character.

Now in order to understand such a case as is that of Isaiah or of Job, we need to consider that we are always inclined to judge our past state and conduct by our present light. I have often in my own experience found that when drawn very near to God, I had such new and enlarged views of scripture passages that I felt sure I had never understood them before, It has really seemed sometimes as if I had never known God before. It was then perfectly natural if I judged all the past by my present views of God and of His law that I should cry out--all is rottenness. In such situations I have felt almost irresistibly impelled to do so.

In reference to this state of mind I often think of Mrs. Pres. Edwards. She represents herself as sometimes feeling such an attraction towards the divine character that it really seemed as if she should go right up, body and soul together. On such occasions she was wont to cry out--"All my past life is rottenness." Yet this was not because she then saw that her present state of mind was entirely sinful, but she saw a higher standard than she had ever seen before, and comparing her past life with this new and enlarged standard she saw its utter deficiency. If in these states of holy attraction towards God she deemed herself to be actually sinning, the explanation of her mistake is doubtless this, that she estimated her past obligation by her present light.

On this point it should be well considered that our former life is not to be judged by our present light. To do so would be to subvert one of the great principles of God's moral government: viz: that guilt is always to be estimated by existing light--not by light attained afterwards but not possessed then;--not by light enjoyed by other beings yet not by ourselves. Suppose we should go back to the times when all men and all ministers with the rest drank alcohol; and should judge the men of those times by our present light, we should inevitably condemn the whole church and all the good men of that day. On the same principle future generations may look back upon us and condemn us and all other good men who have lived since the times of the apostles; for their standard we hope and presume will be in some respects more elevated than ours, and their light greater on some moral questions. Consequently, if they may judge other men of other ages by their own light they will pass a most sweeping sentence

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of condemnation upon all past ages of the race. A principle which leads to such results must be radically false.

The nearer a man gets to God, the more clearly he sees that his past life is objectively wrong, although it may have been subjectively right. It seems important to make this distinction which I have now stated. An act may be said to be objectively wrong when it is wrong in itself considered, or in its relations to law; but the same act may be subjectively right, in reference to the state of mind of the subject or agent who puts forth the act--because with his light he did the best he could do, and his motives are acceptable in the sight of God. Acting according to the best light he has, his acts are subjectively right, and yet in view of the real spirit of the law, they are objectively wrong. Let this distinction be carefully made.

Now when a man becomes more enlightened by revelations from God than he has been, he will look back upon his past life and cry out--"What an infinite wretch I have been--how far my whole life falls short of meeting the spirit of God's pure and perfect law"--while perhaps with even all this increased light he does not see that his former intentions were wrong. Subjectively considered, therefore, his heart was right before, but objectively considered, his conduct seems egregiously wrong.

Another result of knowing God will be great humiliation. As men become thoroughly acquainted with God, they will see more and more of his excellence, and of course will realize more and more deeply the infinite wrong of sin against such a God. Hence they will feel an irrepressible inclination to humble themselves before him, and pour out their souls with great and bitter weeping at his feet. You are aware that such is the result among earthly friends. If you have wronged a good friend of yours, and if your growing acquaintance with him reveals more and more of his excellent qualities, you will see more and more of the cruel wrong of your conduct and will seek opportunities to humble yourself before him and pour out your full confessions as if you never could confess enough.

So with the soul before God. As you remember more and more your past sins, and see yet more of God's goodness, you will love to humble yourself more and more deeply at his feet.

In reading the life of Pres. Edwards, I have been struck with the recurrence of these scenes in his experience. Whenever he was drawn very near to God, his very soul seemed to burst forth in loud weeping and convulsive sobbing, pouring out his soul before God in the deepest humiliation. This was only the natural result of becoming

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more acquainted with God. In my own experience, I have found that when I have had new views of God I have felt that I must get down infinitely low before Him. Nothing less could satisfy the demands of my own mind.

This must be the natural result of seeing Christ in heaven. Did you never think how, when you get to heaven you will want to spend months in confessing, confessing, pouring out your soul in the deepest humiliation--as if you never could get low enough, or say enough to magnify his infinite grace, and strip yourself of all glory to give it all to him? How can our eyes look on the pure and lovely Jesus without being filled with these self-abasing thoughts of ourselves and thoughts of honor and glory to him?

Another result will be great wrestling with God. As we become acquainted with God, we shall become emboldened to ask of him great things. We shall then understand what it is to "come with boldness" to a mercy seat. We shall learn that God has a great heart, and is not displeased if we come and wrestle with him with great and overpowering importunity.

When we have become thoroughly acquainted with God, the mind will fasten upon some great things for his kingdom--not for ourselves--and we shall feel that we are authorized, and invited to come with boldness and with wrestling importunity and say with Jacob--"I will not let thee go except thou bless me." We know it is Christ with whom we plead, and we feel that we may venture on the most urgent importunity. It is to us as if we were pleading before some long-tried and proved earthly friend.

Again, there will result a great use of the promises of God.

To one who has no faith, the promises lie in the Bible as unused as if they were never made for use. They are in fact of no more avail to such a person than if they were made for angels and not at all applicable to sinning mortals. But as you become acquainted with God, you see that these promises are given to be used, and you feel that they are indeed your own.

Father Carpenter used often to cry out--"Lord, what are the promises good for, unless they are to be kept?" It was with him a living reality that God had given us these exceeding great and precious promises for our use, and that we should keep them bright as it were by constant use, and never let them get rusty. They were given us to live upon and to work upon, and if we mean to live or to work we must use them.

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Another result will be great and constant sympathy with God in all his purposes and doings. As we know God more, we shall be charmed more and more with his plans and ways and shall feel ourselves more and more identified with all his interests. This will operate powerfully to transform us into his glorious image.

As another result, we may name, great transparency of character. There will be an openness of soul before God--a continual holding of the heart out for constant inspection, a longing to have God's own eye search us continually. "Let thine eye search me"--we shall say--"show me all in me that is displeasing to thee."

Again, we shall be saved from those fears, cares and anxieties that result from want of confidence in God. For when we come to know God thoroughly we shall see in Him such a friend and father that we shall see no more place for cares. How can we have corroding cares when he has said--"cast all your care upon him, for he careth for thee."

Finally, there will result a full assurance of faith and hope. This cannot but result from becoming thoroughly and personally acquainted with God. Faith will become assurance; for as we come to know more of God, we shall see that he is infinitely worthy of being trusted and believed most perfectly. The assurance therefore is a natural result of our acquaintance with God.

So with hope. The expectation of promised good, like faith, must become strong and assured just in proportion as we thoroughly acquaint ourselves with God. There is no other valid foundation for assured faith and hope.

Whatever men may call these states of mind, and whatever relations they may suppose them to bear to sanctification or to consecration, it is quite certain that they can result only from becoming deeply and personally acquainted with God and from devoting the whole powers of the soul to him. They naturally result from knowing God in the full and deep sense of personal acquaintance and they can have no other foundation.

REMARKS

1. There is and can be no real comfort without acquaintance with God. The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. They know not what it is to be free from cares and troubles, and how should they? Why should they not be restless, and tossed forever without solid peace for they have not found any thing which can satisfy them, and what is to them more distressing still, they never can with all their searching unless they will seek it in God. Traverse the

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world up and down as they will, they never can find, away from God, the happiness and peace they need.

2. With this subject before you, you may see why the Holy Spirit is called "The Comforter." The name is pertinent because it is his office to reveal God to the mind, and thus comfort the hearts of his people. Who has not been struck to see how, when Jesus had ascended to heaven, the Spirit came and revealed a divine Jesus, taking of the things of Christ and showing to them his higher glories. Then they knew Christ as they had never known him before.

So with all Christians who live in the Spirit. The Comforter brings real comfort to their souls--just what their souls need. Beloved, you know this by an experience which the world cannot give.

3. All other knowledge of God except this which the Holy Ghost reveals, only agonizes the mind. It serves only to fill the mind with fear and dread; but never leads the soul to trust God as its own precious Father. It is most obvious that nothing but that which promotes faith and trust in God can ever afford real comfort.

4. The mass of Christians seem to know only just enough of God to keep them always worried and always in trouble. They know enough of God to understand his holiness and hatred of sin; enough to add pungency and power to the rebukes of their own consciences; but not enough to find through grace victory over their sins and abiding peace with God through Jesus Christ their Lord. Hence they seem in many respects to be even worse off than careless sinners who have almost no knowledge of God at all. For the latter, if they find no peace with God, do not find much disturbance of their dreams from that quarter, at least for a season.

5. A selfish mind cannot be properly acquainted with God. Experience seems to show that where selfishness takes on certain peculiar forms, it effectually precludes all right knowledge of God. Ambition and avarice seem to be its worst and most fatal forms. Ambition--O what a curse to the soul! If the ambitious man sets about seeking his own salvation, his aim is to make himself great or to enhance his reputation. Seeking it with such a motive, God will of course repel his proud heart away from his own mercy-seat. If the ambitious man seeks more piety--supposing him to be a Christian--still he is prone to let his ambition work in even here, and his object will be to gain distinction. Oh, how such a soul will be blighted by its own selfishness!

No better is the case of the avaricious man. His selfishness is wont to assume such power as utterly to exclude all right knowledge

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of God. See the case of Judas. He could attend the personal preaching of Christ for three years, and yet never have so much as the crust of his selfishness broken through. Alas, Judas was a thief and carried the bag. His heart was wholly in that bag, and the thought of making something for himself was ever present, and no matter how sacred his employment, nothing could be so sacred as to save it from being perverted by his sordid heart. If he had been building a meeting house, he would contrive if he could to make some speculation out of it. Ask such a man now to do something for the Institution here and he would try to make it turn in some way to his own personal advantage. Self, you may be sure, will some how be cared for--else what good will his life do him? His reigning disposition is--"I might as well not live as live and get no good to myself."

Now where these and similar forms of selfishness exist, it seems utterly impossible that men should become acquainted with God. The mighty currents of their heart drift them forever away from God and they cannot serve God and Mammon if they try ever so earnestly. If they would give up their selfishness--forsake their idol Mammon, they might then seek God and find Him when they should seek Him with all their heart.

6. Sinners are often ashamed to become acquainted with God. Men who would deem it their highest honor to be introduced to a President, are actually ashamed to be introduced to God. They would be ashamed to have it understood that they are his friends and value his acquaintance and friendship. O how they would fain cast contempt on the Infinite God! They know that no mortal man would bear such insults as they heap on Him. Is it strange that Christ should disown them in the awful day when he comes in all the glory of his Father and with his holy angels?

7. It really seems as if the great mass of professed Christians had no expectation of becoming acquainted with God. They seem not to consider that even in this world they may form as absolute an acquaintance with God as they can in heaven. They seem not to appreciate the value of those exceeding great and precious promises which assure us that the Spirit will reveal to us both Christ and the Father. All these rich provisions of the gospel for revealing the knowledge of God to man are to them as if they were not. Alas that they should know so little of their own mercies!

8. This is an infinitely dangerous state, and no professed Christian ought to rest in it one moment. Even if you are a real Christian your course is full of peril if you do not acquaint yourself

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with God. You will not trust him; you cannot have the security which his presence and his friendship afford.

9. A sensual state of mind is infinitely perilous. It is so especially because it is utterly repugnant to your becoming acquainted with God. You cannot grow in any thing good or great if you indulge in a sensual state of mind.

10. All who are really acquainted with God will have an earnest longing to see others made acquainted with Him. They know how blessed the knowledge is, and hence they cannot fail to desire that others too should know and enjoy this blessedness.

Beloved, have you this proof that you know God? Does your soul long to see all others enlightened into all the riches of this divine knowledge?

11. Finally the text exhorts us to become acquainted with God now. How reasonable and cogent is this exhortation! It does seem to me that persons must be infatuated who can pursue other knowledge eagerly, and yet be remiss in seeking the knowledge of God. I cannot but wonder that the persons now before me who are conscious of being strangers to God, or at least destitute of an intimate acquaintance with God, do not at once resolve--"I will know God. I must search for this knowledge more than for hid treasures. I am ready to forego all other knowledge rather than fail of this. All other acquisitions of any sort whatever shall be held as of no account compared with this. O let my soul know God!"

Christian, have you this burning thirst for divine knowledge? Does your very soul cry out within you as if indeed nothing else could by any means satisfy you? Then you need not fear. God will reveal Himself to you in his richest glories.

GOD MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO MOSES

August 5, 1846

"And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight, and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said to him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated; I and thy people from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen." --Ex. 33:12-23

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first; and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount. And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount: neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount. And he hewed

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two tables of stone, like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." --Ex. 34:1-8

There are many passages of Bible history which are richly edifying, and which it is important for us to read often and ponder deeply. The passage now before us I have read often, and several times have preached upon it. Every successive reading suggests new thoughts and develops new beauties; like a deep, rich mine of gold, the more it is wrought, the richer the ore it brings up.

God had called Moses to be a leader and instructor of his people in a great and mighty movement. Moses was to superintend and guide them from Egypt to Canaan. In the first verse of our passage Moses distinctly recognizes the fact that God had designated himself for this great work. "See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people."

But Moses very well understood that God had not called him to perform this work in his own strength, but designed to give him aid. It seems probable that Moses had often thought particularly of this point of having a helper, had often prayed over it and asked God whom he should have to help him in this great enterprise. He saw that the work before him was great;--he had been in that vast, howling, desolate wilderness before, and he could appreciate somewhat before hand the labor and responsibility of leading through it a host of three millions of dependent men, women and children. Such a work he well knew surpassed all human power, and he therefore rejoiced to know that God would send him a helper. Accordingly in the next verse Moses makes this appeal;--"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people."

Observe here that this was after Moses had met with God several times. He had already received the law on Mt. Sinai from Jehovah's own hand, and had seen the great "I am" in the burning bush. Yet though he had known so much of God, he still felt that he needed to

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know very much more. He knew far too little of God to be fit for this great work of guiding his people through that trackless desert. Now therefore, he makes his call to this work and God's acceptance of him in this capacity an argument with God for revealing himself yet more fully. Now, he says, inasmuch as thou hast called me and I have found grace, now show me thy way. Let me know more of thee.

You cannot but be struck with the simple-heartedness of Moses in this conversation with God. He unbosoms his whole soul as a man would with his friend. He is deeply impressed with the importance of knowing more of God, and feels most deeply that without this knowledge he cannot persuade the people to encounter the perils of that great and fearful desert. He felt the pressure of his own responsibilities and turned confidently to God. Hence his simple-hearted state of mind.

Opening his heart thus before the Lord, he reminds him that although he had called him, yet he had not told him who should go with him. The Lord seems to admit the full force of this appeal. How wonderful! Here is the great Jehovah, condescending to talk with a mere mortal man like one of us. He speaks; then he listens to the reply. He hears the appeal and feels the full force of the considerations it presents.

Now mark the gracious answer. "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest." Moses asks--Who shall go! The Lord replies--I will go with you myself--my presence shall guide you--you need not fear. How full of kindness, love, and condescension, is this answer! If you want to know who shall go with you, let this suffice you--I will go with you myself. I feel the force of your plea. I see all your necessities. I pledge you my presence.

How full of consolation to Moses, to be assured of Jehovah's glorious presence! How sweet the promise, "I will give thee rest."

Now listen to the beautiful answer of Moses, in which we have another exhibition of his great simplicity of character. He is so deeply sensible of his own deficiencies, that he knows and feels that he cannot go without God. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." He thus acknowledges most fully his entire dependence on God, and his perfect despair of success unless God be with him. What can be more striking than these developments of character, both on the part of Moses and of God! On the part of Moses, you see the most perfect simplicity and dependence; on the part of God, the most astonishing goodness and condescension.

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But let us examine the course pursued by Moses yet more attentively. When God had given him the promise "My presence shall go with thee," why did he not drop the subject at once? Why go on to argue and urge the case yet further? The answer is to be found in his intensely anxious state of mind. He could not endure to think of going on without God. Without God's presence, he urges, "wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight?" Now plainly Moses had looked thoroughly through this subject. He did not say this without reflection. It was no hasty remark; nor was it made without good reason. Indeed, Moses was in an eminently collected and rational state of mind. He saw how infinitely necessary it was, for the good of Israel, and for the honor of Jehovah, that this nation should stand out before all the nations of the earth as a distinct people. Hence he urges before the Lord--how can this be manifest unless thou be with us? Can any thing else make it manifest? Can my saying so do it? No; God himself must be with us, sustaining us amid all our trials, guiding us in all our ways, delivering us from all our foes, else we shall not be known as the people of God, and God himself can get no honor from our bearing his name. How perfectly reasonable are these views of the case, and the state of Moses' mind resulting from these views!

We come now to the answer of God. "And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name." The Lord seems to feel the full force of every word that Moses says. Indeed, no being in the world is so easily influenced by considerations of real importance as God is. I have always found that if I had good reasons to urge in prayer before God, I could certainly prevail with Him, for He is always reasonable. It is wonderful to see how the Lord suffers Himself to be carried by the least reason, presented even by a child. Yes, He seems to say, I know very well that your reasoning is all good, and I will surely act accordingly. So with Moses. God heard, and then did for him all that he could ask.

At this stage of the interview Moses ventured upon yet another great request. He had been drawing nearer and yet nearer to God during this whole conversation. How often in reading this narration have I seemed to be by his side, and to see God taking an attitude all along to encourage Moses to draw yet nearer and nearer. God promises to give him his gracious presence. He meets every request with his smiles and his assent. Moses therefore dares to take a position which probably no mortal had ever taken before. What is it?

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This--"I beseech thee, show me thy glory." But why should Moses make this request? Mark what had already passed. God had shown himself gloriously on Sinai until the people trembled and did not dare to hear that awful voice anymore. Moses had come down from that awful mount, his face all blazing with the glory of this interview with God. So much of that awful majesty of the Lord of Hosts had Moses seen; yet now he ventures to draw yet nearer and nearer, and since God kindly permits him to approach, he ventures upon another request. Let me see yet more of thy glory. Take that vail away and let me see thy face and all thy heart.

O what a request this must have been for a mortal man to make! But what reply did the Lord make? Did he say--"Take care, Moses, take heed what you ask?" Let us see. "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." O how ready--how infinitely condescending and gracious! I will make thee know my name;--that is, my real character--for by God's name we are to understand his character, since all his names were originally significant, and each expressed some leading attribute of his character.

Thou canst not see my face, said he; thou canst not bear the view of my unvailed glories; no man can see me in this perfect sense and live. The Lord grants him all he can give--all that Moses can bear. Moses was in a state of mind so disinterested and confiding that God could deny him nothing which was possible in his mortal state;--nothing which could be essential or useful to his success in the great work before him.

Moses needs to have such an impression made on his mind as will carry him through all possible trials and toils. Hence the Lord engages to show him all he could bear. Accordingly he proceeds to say--"Behold there is a place by me and thou shalt stand upon a rock, and while my glory passeth by, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock." In a cleft of the rock--where else should he put him? What other place so suitable? Christ is sometimes represented as a rock cleft for us, in which we may hide ourselves and be safe. So God places Moses in a cli[e]ft of a rock, and says, "I will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away my hand and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen." The Lord seems to have felt the importance of giving Moses all he had asked. Nay rather, the Lord himself had put it in Moses' heart to make these requests and had emboldened him to ask for things so great and precious. So God is wont to do with his children, and the fact should assure us that when

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our souls hunger and thirst after God, he will most certainly reveal himself to us and show us the fulness of his glory.

It deserves special notice here that the answer given by God to Moses shows in what his glory really consists. Moses says, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." The Lord answers--yes--"I will make all my goodness pass before thee." The glory of the Lord, then, consists in his goodness. It is not as some seem to suppose some dazzling splendor, some effulgence of light ineffable and overpowering--no such thing as this seems to have been thought of; but Jehovah's goodness--the intrinsic excellencies that compose his character--these he would cause to pass before Moses, for these are his true glory. And these glories of his character were brought before Moses when, passing along, he proclaimed those glorious and most expressive names--"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Every word in this description is full of most emphatic meaning. O how does it reiterate and amplify the precious thought that God is love.

It should also be noticed particularly that Moses had been previously prepared for just such a revelation of God. He had been a long time on Mt. Sinai amid its thunderings and smoke, and amid all the fearful manifestations of Jehovah's terrible justice. The flaming law of God had been before his mind most vividly and could not have failed to make deep and solemn impressions. He was therefore now prepared to hear of grace and mercy. He could appreciate them. He could hear the joyful promulgation and not abuse it. No man is ever prepared to hear the gospel until he has heard the law. He must in the nature of the case appreciate the strict and righteous demands of law before he can appreciate the real value of gospel grace to sinners.

None of the Hebrew people except Moses seem to have gone through this preparatory process. They had not been thoroughly impressed with the awful majesty, purity and strictness of the holy law of God. Hence they could not appreciate these manifestations of his goodness and not another one of the whole nation was allowed to be present with Moses in this glorious interview with God.

It is important in this connection to notice the precise moral attitude in which Moses stood before the Lord. He was now commanded to prepare himself two new tablets of stone. The circumstances in which the two formerly prepared were broken, you will all remember. Moses had been with the Lord on the burning

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mount; had tarried long; at last returns and finds that the people had made a calf and were engaged in the grossest idolatry. His indignation was kindled; he dashed the stones to the ground and broke them to pieces. The Lord seems not to have rebuked Moses for this outburst of indignation; it appears to have been under the circumstances entirely proper and acceptable to God, as was also his subsequent conduct in calling on the Levites to take the sword and slay those of their brethren who were leading that horrible iniquity and would not desist. In all this, the Lord seems to have fully accepted Moses.

Let us now pursue the thread of our history. Moses prepares the two tables of stone, and goes up early in the morning as the Lord had commanded him and lo, the Lord descends and meets him there. What an interview was this for a mortal man to hold with the great God! Think of the circumstances;--the deep solitudes of that rugged, awful mount Sinai were the temples of Jehovah's presence; the heavens above were the canopy of that temple;--there was God!

When Moses went up he had already received the promise that the Lord would meet him there. But the promise was not fulfilled immediately. At least one night intervened. What a night of anticipation--still, deep, solemn, anticipation that must have been!

Probably Moses had borne about as much as he well could for one day, and the Lord kindly deferred the more glorious interview until Moses should rise refreshed on the next morning. So the Lord often does when his people get very near him. Christian, have not scenes like these occurred in your own experience? You have a precious interview with God as the day closes and the shades of evening gather round you. You retire for the night, and your very dreams seem full of heaven, and you feel assured that those hallowed interviews with God will be renewed in the morning. You lay down yourself to rest with the sweet sustaining conviction that the Lord will reveal himself speedily again.

So to Moses. Early in the morning you see him brushing the early dew away, climbing that well known mountain, upon whose craggy summits he had seen God more than once before. If you might only have seen him;--if your eye could only have followed him as he drew near and entered into audience with the great God! How impressive and solemn must the spectacle have been!

Moses was in a state of mind in which God's saints have been frequently. The utmost conceivable awe pervaded his whole soul, yet he was not afraid of God. He was ready to go into any solitary wild and meet God alone. Many would have been oppressed with a

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superstitious awe under such circumstances, and would have declined or at least have dreaded such an interview. But Moses had no such superstitious dread.

Probably no mortal man was ever called to meet God under circumstances which were calculated to make a deeper impression than these. Consider what Moses desired and what his heart was now fixed on most earnestly. The renewing of the tables of the law was altogether an incidental thing. The chief thing was for God to show him his glory. He was fully aware that God was about to show such manifestations of himself as human nature could scarce endure.

Let me ask you what you would think of such an interview with the great God? How would you like to be drawn into such near and glorious communion with the dread Jehovah? Suppose God should apprise you that you might enjoy such an interview with himself as you retire from this place to your rooms. He gives you the promise. Would you be ready? Would your very heart leap up within you in the prospect and cry out--O let me know more of God and of his unsearchable glories? O, then, prepare your hearts. Put away every thing sinful, every thing earthly. Let your soul thirst after God, yea, after the living God. When you feel your need of it and ask it with such simplicity and faith as Moses had, you may rely on receiving it--to the joy and blessedness of your souls.

With Moses the solemn hour has come. The Lord passes by and proclaims his name--"Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." Observe that the previous interview of Moses with God had been at the giving of the law from Sinai, and it is remarkable that immediately after this, God should begin with proclaiming his name and should explain it by saying, "merciful and gracious," "long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth." Few except very spiritual persons would know how to understand this. But those who have had the law revealed to them as on Sinai's top can understand it well. No person ever really sees the law until it is revealed to him and he sees its pungent bearing upon his own case. So to Paul; when the commandment came he says, "sin revived and I died." But what is this? Had the commandment never come to Paul before? He had studied the law under the greatest doctors of his age; he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel; but yet he had not so understood the law as to have it cut him up root and branch and convict him powerfully of his own sins, until the moment when the commandment came to him.

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Now when a man has had the law really given to him it comes in a sense very similar to that in which it came to Moses. If any of you have had the law thus revealed to your hearts and consciences, you can understand why Moses should cry out--"I do exceedingly fear and quake." You would see why the people should stand afar off and dare not to approach the awful scene.

Now this revelation of law exceedingly well fitted Moses to receive the next revelation made at this interview. The giving of the law was first in order, as indeed it always must be, or the gospel of grace and mercy cannot be appreciated. This done, the revelation of mercy and grace may follow. This same God before whom all the people and even Moses trembled on Mt. Sinai, now revealed his name--"the Lord God, merciful and gracious." Mercy is a disposition to pardon. Grace is used in a wider sense--a disposition to bestow favor. The next thing is--"long-suffering," he can suffer and bear long with abuses and provocations. He is most forbearing towards those who offend him.

"Abundant also in goodness;"--yes infinite in goodness and loving-kindness. Abundant moreover in truth;--faithful ever to his promises of love and mercy. O how precious are these revelations made to Moses.

To Moses we must presume these were not mere announcements. Moses felt the impression of every one of these things. I might announce these very words in your ears, and though they might fall distinctly on your ears, yet the impression of their meaning might utterly fail to reach your heart.

But not so when Jehovah himself speaks. His words then reach the very heart. You have sometimes felt the thrilling impression of these truths, when every idea in them seemed to sink into your very soul. Just think how Moses must have felt, after all he had just seen of Jehovah's awful majesty on Sinai. O how these words must have gone down into his inmost mind! And not the words merely, but the ideas they represented--the very attributes of God must have stood right out and flashed their glorious truth before the very mind's eye of Moses. O what a scene of solemn impressions!

Perhaps I should say right here that we have no reason to suppose that all these things transpired in a moment, as some might at first thought imagine. Moses was full forty days and nights with God in this interview. A few other things were said during the whole scene, but this revelation of the name of God seems to have been the chief thing which transpired during this eventful period. It is therefore

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most rational to conclude that time enough was occupied to allow each thought to be fully expanded before the mind of Moses so as to make its deepest possible impression. Each feature of the divine character was doubtless developed distinctly;--his mercy, his grace, his long-suffering, his abundant goodness and truth, and the blending of each of these feature with his glorious justice. Every thing was so revealed to the mind of Moses that it pervaded his entire mental being and set his very soul on fire. O how did he ponder, and muse on each point, and study the illustrations presented to his mind! We can imagine the solemn, awful, thrilling impression as he sat in silence for many days together, no human being present to divert his attention for one moment--alone with God forty days--neither taking nor needing food or drink during all this time, but absorbed in beholding face to face the glory of God, and thus being changed into the same image from glory to glory.

At length he comes down from that mount of glorious manifestation. No wonder his face shone with a lustre of which he was unconscious but which was too glorious for mortal eyes to behold. No wonder the vivid impressions that filled and fired his soul should throw their reflection forth in his countenance. It was as if an angel from Jehovah's upper temple had alighted in the camp of Israel. A vail must be drawn over his face, for what mortal eye could bear the sight?

God's abundant truthfulness formed one important feature in these developments. This was especially pertinent to the case and the wants of Moses. The thorough development of this feature formed the secret of his great faith ever after. The whole subsequent history of Moses develops a most remarkable degree of confidence in God. The thousand trying emergencies through which he passed rendered it indispensable that he should have such confidence. Here in this signal interview with God the foundation was laid for it.

"Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;" that is will never justify the impenitent and self-righteous. God did not mean that he would not pardon the guilty sinner on his repentance. He only meant that he was not a corrupt judge who could be bribed to clear the guilty yet in his sins and impenitence. Moses needed to know this, that while God was most gracious and merciful towards the contrite, he should most assuredly punish the guilty and hardened sinner. No rebel could ever escape in his impenitence and rebellion.

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"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." This clause needs to be explained. It has been sometimes supposed to mean that God sends children to hell for the sins of their parents. This cannot be the meaning. The declarations of God by Ezekiel affirm that only the soul that sinneth shall die, and that father and son shall each die only for his own sins.

The declaration made here to Moses refers to the course of God's providence towards families and nations only in the present world, and to his course towards them for present discipline--not for eternal retribution.

The relations of parent and child almost inevitably involve these results. A dissolute father entails disease, poverty and degradation on his offspring. God allows, nay ordains it to be so, and thus creates a strong inducement to each parent to lead such a life as shall entail blessings and not curses on his children. Yet these children are not rewarded with heaven or doomed to hell merely for their parent's deeds. The whole of the result is this--they have their own probation on earth, in which their future state of joy or woe must be decided according to their own deeds. But they shall have this probation in prosperity or adversity--amid influences adapted to bless or adapted to curse, according as their parents may have so lived before God as to leave them a legacy of good or of evil.

We often see this principle illustrated in the history of nations. Nations as such must of course receive their retribution in the present world--they having no existence as nations in any other state. Hence we often see that God holds a nation responsible for the sins of their fathers. It would be an illustration of this principle if God should do as I have thought he would do in retribution for the slavery which has so long existed in this nation. The English nation introduced slavery here; we have perpetuated it, and have done about as much to enhance its calamities as we could do. I have often thought that God will some day remove this evil in a way which will scourge both of these nations with most signal and exemplary judgments. Suppose the mighty power of England's arms should come down upon us and blood should flow over our southern plains till every spot where the tears and blood of the slave have fallen should be saturated with the blood of his oppressors--till the carnage of masters and drivers should fatten the cotton fields so long worn out by the bitter toil of the oppressed--and other groans should take the place of the long

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unnoticed and uncared for wailings of broken-hearted mothers and bereaved children.

In this the world might read a lesson about that awful Justice which visits the iniquities of fathers upon the children and upon children's children.

On the same principle we often see children involved in the guilt and consequent sufferings of their parents. A most cogent motive is thus created to induce parents to obey God. You can easily see that it is most wise in God so to unite parents and children that the latter shall receive good or evil in the present world according to the voluntary course taken by their parents.

When God had made these revelations to Moses, naming these attributes distinctly and giving him time to dwell on each one until his whole soul was impressed with the truth, Moses prostrated himself before the Lord in most profound adoration. This was its first result on his mind. "He made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped."

Do you understand this feeling? Have you never found when God had revealed himself to you that you have felt pressed to bow yourself in deep prostration of soul before the Lord?

Mark his next step. He has a request to make. "He said, If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." Moses feels that it is time now to find how the Lord really feels towards the nation. It is a time to intercede in their behalf that God would pardon all their sin and make them forever his own inheritance.

The Lord replies--"Behold I will make a covenant, before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord; for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee."

The history then narrates various precepts and closes with the descent of Moses, his face resplendent with the unutterable glory of this wonderful and most instructive scene.

REMARKS

Whatever is written in the Bible is for our instruction. Much of the historical part is rich with the most practical instruction conceivable. All this may be said most truly of the passage we have been considering. It teaches,

1. That a personal acquaintance with God is indispensable to one who is to lead the people in reform. We must know God and have

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God preeminently with us, or we cannot lead on his people to higher degrees of holiness.

We may learn something of God by study and thought; but all this will fail us without special revelations from God. Some expect by the mere force of learning to prepare themselves for usefulness. They seem to take pains to get more learning rather than to get nearer God. They could not make a worse mistake. The learning is good, but the things God teaches when he draws the soul into deep personal communion with himself are incomparably better.

Moses was before this a very learned man. He was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and their science was at this period preeminently rich. Education and learning there were indeed only that of heathen, yet God saw that this would be valuable to Moses, and therefore arranged it in his providence that Moses should be trained in the royal family with all the facilities for education that Egypt could afford. But he needed infinitely more than all this, and God drew him into his own school to impart it.

2. Every part of this history is replete with instruction to us. Mark for instance the peculiar features of character developed in Moses at this time. A careful study of these will reveal to us the conditions on which we may expect divine revelations to our own souls.

When I see a man deeply impressed with a sense of this dependence upon God, feeling that he cannot get along and bear his great responsibilities without God, I know such a man is being prepared for usefulness. God will meet him and reveal to him the great things of his own character. Let him only give himself wholly to the work and to the interests of God's cause, and then have confidence enough to lay hold of the Lord;--such a soul never fails of being blessed.

3. Another thing peculiar in the case of Moses was his very clear apprehensions of what he needed to fit him for his work. This is immensely important. If a man lacks this just apprehension he will struggle on in the dark;--and how long often and how fruitlessly! He does not know what he wants.

But read this history of Moses and you will see that he had a clear idea of his responsibilities and of the qualifications he needed to discharge them well. He knew that he needed a revelation from God to his own mind. He knew that he needed to apprehend all these great truths so that they should stand out before his mind as living realities.

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4. When these attributes of God are clearly developed to the mind of any one he will have an entirely new view of the character of God. It will be so different from his former views as to make him doubt whether he really knew any thing right of God before. The impressions will be such as he can never lose during all his future life.

5. Moses saw that he needed to have God reveal himself to his mind. This is just what young men fitting for the gospel ministry need. Did you never see the difference in the manner in which two different individuals will speak of the attributes of God? One speaks mere words and they fall as if they were only wind. The words of the other come out of his heart and seem to fall like lead into the hearts of the people who hear him.

Here is a young man studying theology. He may become as wise as a man can become by merely human learning; but unless God reveal himself all will be mere words. If you ask what such a man has been preaching, the answer will always be--nothing but words, words, mere words. This is the great difficulty with much of the preaching of this age--it is nothing but words.

Do you not think that when Moses came down from the mount, the people felt? The influence of Moses on them was not that of mere words. Have you never seen how the eyes of the hearer would stand out when one is speaking from the heart? Even so when the people heard Moses, they hung on his lips and stood tiptoe to catch his burning words and the glory of his unearthly countenance. If young men feel as Moses did--"O my God, send me not up without thy presence"--they will seek that presence, and never rest without it. God calls you to the ministry;--how can you go into it without his presence--until you have seen as Moses saw, his glory.

6. This whole history is most replete with instruction for us. If those arguments used were good in his mouth as reasons for God's revealing himself to him, they are equally good for us. He pleaded God's call of him and acceptance of him for a great work, and said--Lord, since thou hast called me, now make me fit for the labor. "I beseech thee show me thy glory." Young man, go and do likewise. If God calls you to lead his church up out of the wilderness, see to it that you insist before you set out that the Lord be with you and show you his glory. Nor is this truth applicable to young men destined for the ministry alone. Every Christian is a priest of God, and should in some sense preach the gospel. Every man needs grace to fill the station to which God calls him. And every Christian should seek this grace even as Moses sought the grace he needed.

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6. [7.] The disinterestedness of Moses is worthy of all commendation. He never once thought of lifting himself up. Do you suppose he was continually saying in his mind--How people in future generations will honor me and reverence my name! No, not thus--he is all swallowed up in another and a very different great idea;--how shall this nation honor God? How may I do something to magnify his dread, his glorious name?

If we ever expect or hope to be great men, in mercy, don't let us aim at it. We shall pluck down ruin and disgrace on ourselves if we do; and as far as in us lies, on the cause of God also. I once knew a young man who had considerable trouble in getting license to preach. He was not thought to be very promising. This difficulty seemed to set all his ambition on fire. He declared--"I am determined to get to the head of the heap." Someone said to him--You never will by aiming at it. But he gave no heed to this warning, and set off on his career of attempted greatness. I don't know where he is now. Gone I suppose, sunk from public observation into that obscurity which alone forms a fitting place for unholy ambition. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." So it must ever be. This is the law of Christ's house.

How remarkable that Moses seemed never to care for himself or for his family. On one occasion some persons began to prophesy, and some of his friends seem to have been jealous for his honor. But Moses felt no jealousy of this sort. "I would to God, said he, that all the people were prophets." How noble! God could make Moses a great man without his making himself a great fool. Not so with some men, God cannot make them great without their making themselves fools.

7. [8.] All these features of the character of Moses should be distinctly studied. They are features of the character of Jesus Christ. Are you not in the habit of studying the character of those great men, such as Moses, Daniel, Job, Paul and John with the distinct design of drinking in their spirit and conforming your own to theirs? This is your true wisdom.

8. [9.] The urgency of Moses is well worthy of special notice. How strongly he insists upon God's giving him the blessing he asks for. On one occasion the Lord put his serious earnestness to the test most fully. The Lord said--Let me alone--go get thee down, for thy people have corrupted themselves;--let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." But no, Moses could not let the Lord alone. He seemed to seize right hold of his hand and insist that God should

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spare and forgive the guilty people. The Egyptians will hear of it and will say, "For mischief did he bring them out and to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth. Then what wilt thou do for thy great name? I cannot let thee go. What will become of thy glory? Blot out my name, but blot not out the name of thine Israel." Thus did Moses hold fast upon the hand of the Lord as it was uplifted to smite the nation. And what was the secret of his power with God? His disinterested love, and his zeal for Jehovah's honor.

Let this be our example. Surely it is most worthy of all imitation. How noble to be thus swallowed up and filled with zeal for the glory of God.

9. [10.] The great faith of Moses constitutes another point worthy of distinct consideration. Where every body else's faith would fail, that of Moses remains firm. Yet he had his sore trials. Once he cried out--"What shall I do, Lord, for this people are almost ready to stone me?" But remark that under this great trial he runs at once to God and hence is safe. So every man should do. If a man only has such faith as to run at once to the Lord, he cannot fail to get strength for all emergencies of trial.

10. [11.] His implicit obedience also was wonderful. He knew no law but the will of God. This spirit of universal obedience was one condition of those remarkable manifestations. He could not have had them without his obedient spirit.

When first appointed to his work, he felt great reluctance to go. He pled that he was slow of speech. But God overlooked the objection; Moses yielded and seems never afterwards to have shrunk from duty.

11. [12.] Moses seems always very careful to do all that God required of him, so that he could always have near access to God. It was very common before the Lord made any manifestations to the people, for him to say--"Sanctify yourselves;"--ye are now unfit to meet me. But Moses seems to have been always in a state of readiness to meet God and receive any manifestations. It is of infinite importance to maintain this state of sanctification--to abstain thoroughly from all iniquity and never fall into such a state of defilement as to feel your need of penitence, pardon, and cleansing before you can meet God.

I once knew a Christian who had been eminently a man of prayer--who had lived for years so that he could pray daily with acceptance before God, and whose conversations and prayers had created quite an interest in the subject of the prayer of faith. Yet this

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man sadly declined from this state and the Lord at length recalled him in the following way. I had, said he in his diary, an intimate friend who was impenitent, and who in raising a building was suddenly crushed with a fatal blow. I rushed to him. The dying man begged me to pray for his soul. That is all, said he, that you can do for me; pray for my soul lest I sink at once into hell. But I could not pray if it had been to save my own life. I was away from God and I could not get near him to pray a word. O my agony of soul was perfectly inexpressible. But that was the last hour of my quiet in such a state. I could not live so.

Moses could not get away from God. His circumstances demanded ceaseless watchfulness and permanent sanctification. Only once afterwards was he overcome and then by the sin of impatience. For this sin the Lord took him up on Mt. Nebo to let him view the land of promise and then die without ever going over. This was a sore affliction; yet for one sin the Lord sent it upon him; yea for one sin only. But this in Moses was a great sin. His light had been so great and the sin itself had been so public; God could not do less than to put his mark of intense displeasure upon it. So, beloved, must you keep your heart pure and your hands pure, if you would be always ready for communion with God, and if, having enjoyed these seasons of communion you would not fall under the marked displeasure of a jealous and holy God. But if you are content to live so that you must go and repent and cleanse yourself from present sin in order to be prepared to commune with God, of what use can you be to the world?

COMING TO THE WATERS OF LIFE

September 2, 1846

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." --John 7:37

The feast spoken of here is the feast of tabernacles, of which we have a full account in Leviticus. It was one of the three great feasts observed annually by the Jewish people. Those who are learned in Jewish antiquities give us many interesting and important particulars respecting the mode of celebrating this great festival.

A tabernacle is simply a tent, and the institution might be called the feast of tents. Its object was to commemorate the forty years sojourning of the Hebrews in the wilderness when tents were their only dwellings. In observing it, the people gathered the boughs of trees and built themselves booths or tents in the streets or on the house-tops in which they sojourned during the eight days of the celebration.

The last day of the eight was deemed the great day, and on this day was observed one ceremony of special interests. Our text evidently alludes to it. The whole people moved in procession to the pool of Siloam and took thence a quantity of water in a golden vessel, carried it thus to the temple, and there poured it out before the Lord. The design of this was to represent the outpouring of the Spirit as taught abundantly by their prophets. It is a most remarkable fact that this great prophecy of the effusion of the Spirit in the times of the Messiah should have been universally understood by the Jews, and that the knowledge of the coming fact should have been kept fresh in their minds, by this ceremony engrafted upon the great festival of tabernacles. Jewish writers concur in stating that the ceremony of bearing and pouring out the water meant just this and was always so understood by the nation.

It was on this occasion that, as stated in our text, Jesus stood and cried, saying "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." It

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would seem that he was in the temple as the procession returned from the pool of Siloam, and that he seized upon that solemn, eventful moment to lift up his voice before all the people and call attention to himself as the great Giver of that very blessing which they were foreshadowing so beautifully in the out-pouring of the waters of Siloam. Then and there did the man of sorrows stand out in the presence of the assembled nation and proclaim "If any man thirst, let him--not go to Siloam, but--come unto me and drink." "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The historian here adds his explanation of these words;--"But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive." Christ very well understood what was represented by the pouring out of the water and he knew that the Jews also understood it;--Hence his solemn annunciation at this time, calling attention to himself as the giver of the Holy Spirit according to their well known prophecies. In discussing this subject, I shall show,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE TEXT BY THIRST;

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN COMING TO CHRIST TO DRINK;

III. WHAT [IS IMPLIED IN] THE INVITATION--COME UNTO ME AND DRINK.

1. It is manifest that Christ has no reference to physical thirst for water, but to a state of mind--a state of intense desire, well illustrated by that natural desire for water which is called thirst. No doubt Christ alludes to that intense desire for communion with God which saints often have, and which is aptly expressed by the term, thirst.

Thus the Psalmist says--"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Indeed he often represents himself as thirsting and panting after God--even as the hart pants after the water brooks.

Now whatever the philosophy of the fact may be, every Christian knows it to be a fact that there is such a thing as an intense desire of mind, terminating upon God. The soul feels most intensely that nothing but the smiles and the manifested presence of God can meet and fill its desires.

You know that we are so correlated to the outward world that certain objects awaken intense desires for their attainment. There is that in our physical constitution which creates a demand for its appropriate gratification. A foundation is laid in our constitution for the desire which we call thirst, and the demand is for water.

Now it is very remarkable that there is a state of mind which corresponds to this state of the physical system. There is a thirst of the

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soul for God. The soul pants and longs after God with a singleness of desire and a burning intensity which nothing can appease but the attainment of its object. As the thirsty man cries out for water and can be relieved by nothing else, so those who are spiritually thirsty cry out after God, and nothing else can by any means suffice to stay their irrepressible longings. When a man is famished with hunger he wants food, and nothing but food will satisfy him; you might spread his table with gold--his soul still cries out for bread; you might clothe his brow with pearls--but you cannot even thus quench his insatiate longings for sustenance: so when the soul thirsts after God, this demand of the inner being can be met only by the actual revelations of God to this mind. God has so correlated our inward being to himself that the mind struggles and cries out after God and cannot possibly be satisfied with any thing else. The works of God are beautiful and lovely in their place--the smiles of his common providence are precious; but the spiritual mind can never be content to take these in place of those inward smiles of Jehovah's presence and those testimonies of his love which he gives to his favored children.

Every Christian knows that the Bible abounds with expression of this intense thirsting after God. And all who have had any experience in the deep things of the divine life in the soul understand well what is meant by this language. It may sound like an unknown tongue to those who have no spiritual discernment. What, they will say--the mind pant after God! What does this mean? Is there really any such thing as this? Yes, I answer, there surely is just such a thing as this--just such a longing of soul for God as the man dying with thirst feels for water. When the inward life is thoroughly developed and the soul renewed into the divine image, it thirsts after God, and longs most intensely for the light of his face.

Now it cannot be doubted that Christ had this very state of mind in his eye, and meant to invite to himself all those who had this longing after the knowledge and the favor of God. Most perfectly did he understand that it is not naturally possible for us to attain the highest state of blessedness on earth unless we draw and drink the living waters of life which he has promised, and which he alone can give.

I have said that this spiritual thirst is a certain state of mind. It may be defined thus--an intense desire for the fulness of a present salvation--a desire to realize in our own case what it is to be filled with all the fulness of God. In this state the mind pants after the

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fulness of a present enjoyment of God. This is the state which Christ had under his eye; a state in which the soul longs and pants after the fulness of a present communion with God.

The state ultimately desired by the individual who thus longs after God may be expressed thus;--A universal and entire cleansing of the mind from all that pollutes--in which all wanderings of thought in prayer are suppressed and controlled;--the appetites are brought into subjection and kept there; and soul lives and moves and has its being as it were in an atmosphere of God and of purity.

This state of mind is well illustrated in the experience of a lady, a letter from whom I saw some years since in R----. A friend of mine there showed me a letter written many years since by his grandmother. In this she gives in detail the course of her experience, showing how her mind had been greatly stirred up on respect to her falling so often and so sadly into bondage to sin--in respect to wanderings of thought in prayer and those various things over which Christians so often mourn. She felt the bitterness of these things, and came to feel at length that she could not live in such a state of bondage any longer.

In reading the scriptures, moreover, she had noticed that the Apostles got above this state of mind and evidently lived in liberty and not in bondage. Pursuing this train of enquiry she lighted upon many of those promises in the Bible which may well be called "exceeding great and precious," and she believed them. She knew they were the word of the Lord, and she had long since settled it in her mind that God must be believed in all he said. Of course her next step was to take hold of these promises and cry to God in mighty prayer that he would fulfill them in her case. She did so. Her feelings became so intense that the strongest language of scripture expressive of thirsting, longing, panting after God, was none too strong to express her actual state of mind. So earnestly did her soul agonize for this blessing that she literally cried aloud after God, saying, "I cannot let thee go unless thou bless me"--I must absolutely die in this room if thou give me not this blessing which I so greatly need. O, she cried, I cannot live without it.

Now she came to realize that very state of mind of which the sacred writers spake. She knew what it is to have the soul thirst and long after God, yea, the living God. She thirsted for that water of life which Jesus had promised, and she rushed to his feet to lay hold there of a present salvation from sin. I need not say that such seeking is never in vain. Jesus Christ has said, "If any man thirst, let him come

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unto me and drink." "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Such was the experience of this lady.

This hungering implies a right state of the will. The hungering itself is a state of the sensibility inasmuch as it is simply desire and feeling; but it results from the heart's being in a right state, and could not exist if the heart were in a wrong state. The thirst for spiritual blessings does not, as some seem to suppose, imply that the individual is in a sinful state, but that he is in a holy state comparatively;--yet is he striving to get higher and still nearer to God.

Again, this thirsting implies a self-loathing and disgust towards everything that stands in the way of the most intimate communion with God. Men find that the outward life is not so crucified but that it seems to come between the soul and God. There is something that prevents the soul from entering into that great, deep, calm communion with God, and the mind is in agony because it finds itself thus withheld from God. There is a waywardness of the physical propensities--an agitation and fluttering which I hardly know how to describe, but which most Christians understand but too well in their own experience; and when this develops itself, it comes directly in the way of entering into real and deep peace with God. It creates a sort of effervescing and agitation, not itself sinful perhaps, but excessively annoying and dangerous inasmuch as it often operates powerfully as temptation to sin. Many of you doubtless know what this is, and you also know perhaps how the soul is thrown into deep agony by means of this conflict with the flesh, and gives itself up to mighty energizings of prayer and faith that it may be delivered from this foe within and brought into a state of pure and perfect peace. This is one of the forms of thirsting for the waters of life.

Again, this thirst implies a great drawing of the Spirit of God. The soul is drawn out after God with a deep and powerful drawing, so that it truly yearns after God, and feels that nothing can begin to satisfy this craving desire of the soul but the very object itself--the inner communion of the soul with its Maker. It deserves special notice here that this often seems to the individual himself to be the very calling of the Spirit of God, as if he heard that voice and was conscious of being drawn upward towards the blessed God by some influence not self-originated. The spiritual christian recognizes this call at once as the voice of his beloved.

Again, this thirsting for the water of life implies being heartily sick of sin and heartily sick of tampering with any thing that can become an occasion of sin and that embarrasses the soul and hinders

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its living in the closest communion with God. It implies a supreme desire to live wholly for God and an utter loathing of any form of life which falls short of this. How often in looking at this point have I thought of Paul's experience. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." The Apostle here develops a state of mind which I fear but few enter into and thoroughly understand. I live, he says, yet not I; not I, the same Paul or Saul who once followed the flesh and lived afar from God--it is not the same I, that now lives, but it is Christ within me that now becomes my life. He knew what it was to have a new and spiritual life energizing through all his inmost soul.

Beloved, how many of you know what this means? Who of you have tasted in your own experience and know the blessedness of this divine life?

II. We are to enquire what is implied in coming to Christ to drink.

1. A belief in his real divinity; a belief that Christ is truly God. This cannot fail to be obvious to you upon a due examination of the text in its connection. For, what is the thing about which the Savior is here speaking? Nothing else surely but the gift of the Holy Ghost; and since the Holy Ghost is also divine--nothing else but the gift of God himself to the soul. The historian himself explains our Savior's language; "this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive."

Coming to Christ then, according to this invitation is coming to one who can give God to the soul. Of course therefore none can come in faith unless he has confidence in the true divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Take another view of this. The object of this thirst of the soul is nothing other than God himself. The soul as I have already said, when thirsting in the sense of the text, thirsts after God--after his presence--his love and his communion. Now then, while thirsting after God, can we come to Jesus to receive the blessing unless we believe him to be truly divine? Can any being who is less than divine give us communion and peace with God? Can one who is not God himself give God to our souls?

Again, mark the language of the text--"Come unto me and drink." If any man thirst truly after God, let him come unto me--I can quench his thirst, and supply all his wants. How can we believe this unless we truly believe that Christ is God?

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There is no escape from this course of argument. Some may seek to escape by maintaining that the thirst spoken of is not really a thirst after God. But surely every spiritual Christian knows that this is nothing else than a longing after God. What else is it? Does the soul thirst after a mortal man, or after an angel? Is it the favor of man or angel which awakens such intense desires and irrepressible thirstings? Nay verily; the Christian does not thus learn Christ. God and God alone is the supreme object of his thirst, and he comes to Jesus to be filled with God. How can he intelligently do this, unless he believes in his real divinity?

Again, this coming to Christ implies self-renunciation. None will ever come so long as they can find enough of good in themselves and without Christ to satisfy the demands of their own mind. This is most obvious. Their own vessel must be empty before they can rationally come to Christ to have it filled. None will ever come to Christ for these waters of life so long as he supposes he can get them by any efforts of his own. One's own righteousness must be utterly renounced and all one's own ways of being saved;--else there will be no real coming to trust in Christ. Self must be utterly renounced.

Again, coming to Christ implies a reception of him by faith as the promised Messiah, as our own Savior, Redeemer, and Mediator before God. There must be a personal appropriation of Christ by faith to one's self as ours in all those respects in which the divine gospel plan makes him the Savior of lost men.

All this implies that the Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them to us. We have no reason to suppose that any soul ever receives Christ as his own Savior except as the Spirit sets before that mind just views of its own need and of the perfect adaptation of Christ to supply that need.

Again, this coming to Christ implies some degree of expectation of receiving the blessing to be sought. It is naturally impossible to come to Christ without faith in his promises; and this faith you will readily see must imply some degree of expectation that if we come as we are invited to do, we shall receive.

III. What does this invitation imply?

As I have already said, it implies his divinity. On this I need not now enlarge.

Of course the invitation implies his entire ability to give the blessings needed. If he be really divine, none need to doubt his ability. If he promises to give, we ought not to doubt that he can.

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Again, the invitation implies also his willingness to bestow upon us the spiritual good promised. The very promise itself most perfectly implies this.

The promise implies also that if we do come to him to drink, we shall receive. When he invites, it is not to tantalize; it is not to raise expectation only to disappoint it again; it is not that he may send us away empty and confounded; no, but it is to induce us to come and enjoy the bliss of being blessed; and this of course implies the strongest, richest pledge that if we do come in honesty of heart and in humble faith we shall receive the promised blessings.

Again, we must get this blessing of Christ and of no one else. He doubtless intended to teach this most emphatically, that if anyone thirsted for the waters of life, that soul must come unto him and to none other but to him for those waters.

Mark how beautifully and impressively he taught this. See him in front of that lofty temple and in [the] presence of that vast triumphant procession as they move slowly along. He waits till the priest has brought forward the golden vessel of water from Siloam's pool and poured it forth at the foot of the altar, he stands by in silence till the ceremony is completed, and then he lifts up his voice before the assembled nation and cries aloud, Ho, ho, all ye people of Israel, ho, all ye children of the promises and covenants of the Lord, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." With me are the waters of real life. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

What an announcement is this! And with what mingled emotions was it received by those dense masses of human beings on whose ears it fell! Some of the Pharisees were man enough to murder him on the very pavements of the temple; they would not have scrupled to shed his blood, so enraged were they at him--but he meekly goes on in his Master's work, and perhaps through fear of the people they did not dare just now to lay their hands upon him. "Many of the people, it is beautifully added, when they heard this saying, said, of a truth this is a Prophet." Some said one thing and some another, so there was a division among them. What a scene of prodigious excitement did this startling announcement make! Such a sort of excitement the gospel in these later days often produces where it is announced with demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God.

REMARKS

1. Many persons have none of this thirst, for several reasons.

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(1.) They have never suffered themselves to be thoroughly convinced of sin. I say, never suffered themselves, for mark me, they could not fail of being thus convinced if they would not resist the Holy Ghost. His Spirit would reprove them of their sin if they would not resist his reproof. But they do resist, and hence they never know the depth of their own guilt and vileness so as to be led to cry out after deliverance and to thirst after God.

(2.) Many know not this thirst and supply, because though they have had a conviction of sin, yet they have never believed and tasted so as to know the blessedness of receiving these waters of life. In fact men need to know God by having some degree of communion with him before they will have their desires kindled intensely for more and deeper communion. The heart must first be submitted to God, and some experience be had of the rich blessedness of gospel peace and gospel love; than the soul will naturally thirst after God. But multitudes never have this thirst because they have not tasted of these waters.

(3.) I am often struck with the fact that many seem to know nothing of the meaning of such language as the Bible employs to express the longings of the soul after spiritual blessings. They confess that when they read such passages as the text, and many passages to which I have alluded in the Psalms of David, they really know nothing of this thirsting. They say the language is much too strong to express any state of mind they have ever had. They cannot call any of their exercises a hungering or a thirsting:--these terms would express a far stronger desire than they have ever felt. It is astonishing to see how many there are who never know God--never have the soul cry out after a full and perfect salvation--never feel a longing, a quenchless, burning desire, just like a natural thirst, which nothing else can supply but the very thing desired. They do not understand how the mind gravitates towards God. They do not know what it is to have God become the natural food and drink of the soul, so that nothing but God himself can satisfy its demands. There is such a state in which nothing but God can satisfy the demands of the soul. If all the angels of heaven were given us it would not satisfy; if everything else besides God in the whole universe were laid at our feet, it would not suffice; it would not be the thing which the soul craves. This object of supreme desire is nothing else but God. O how the soul cries out after God, the infinite God, the perfect, the glorious, the ever-blessed God! There is a most beautiful and wonderful correlation established between God and the human soul which lays a foundation

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for this want, this demand of the soul for God as its only satisfying portion. Consequently when the soul comes into an upright state, and the inner voice of its spiritual nature is heard, that voice cries out after God and feels that the soul must live in God and that to depart from God is hell itself. The living in and with God and being sunk in him, is the natural, the necessary and the eternal good of the soul.

In view of this great and glorious good, where and what is all that pertains to this outward life? It effervesces for a day--it bustles for a moment;--it is, and then it is no more; men may be fascinated by it for an hour: but when the soul comes to understand God, then nothing but God can suffice. Nothing else can meet its demands.

It is remarkable that this is the sum of all the blessings promised to the saints of God in the Bible. To Abraham God said--"Fear not--I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Mark this language. God does not say--I will give thee an exceeding great reward--but I am--I myself am thy glorious reward. I give you myself as thy portion.

So God often represents himself as being the infinite good of the soul. The spiritual Christian can easily understand this.

On the other hand, some think of heaven as being some place which is itself blessed. They fancy its streets to be of gold--its rivers and flowers and fruits combine every thing that can regale the senses and charm the taste, and the place itself becomes in their view the heaven, and would be if there were no God there.

But all such views are false and delusive. Really it is the presence of God and nothing else that makes heaven blessed. There the mind is swallowed up and forever enfolded in God. There the glorious God becomes truly the portion and the everlasting blessedness of every holy soul.

(4.) Many confound conviction of sin with this thirst for the waters of life. A state of conviction will truly precede it; but this thirst is entirely a different thing, and arises from the fact that the mind really knows and has entered into the enjoyment of God. You recollect how our Lord most beautifully represents his people as eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Now this must certainly denote a cordial reception of Christ by a living faith. And the previous hunger and thirst which are always implied in eating and drinking must in their spiritual acts imply much more than simply conviction of sin.

(5.) Many have not this thirst because they allow themselves to thirst for other things. The two are absolutely incompatible with each

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other. There is even among professors of religion a vast deal of thirsting after the outward life and its enjoyments. When this is indulged the inward thirst after God must cease.

2. It is a great blessing to have this inward thirst developed.

It is in itself a very great blessing to have the soul thus drawn out after God. The very desire is a heavenly state of mind, for you are conscious that your exercises are perfectly reasonable and that your affections are now taking hold of objects which are most perfectly worthy of an immortal mind.

And if the state of desire is blessed, how much more so is the fulfillment of it? O, to be filled even on earth with all the fullness of God! This is of all things below, most blissful!

3. When this has ceased in the mind, one can have no reason to hope that he is going to heaven. If the mind has become so apostate from God, there is no hope left. Why should God take that soul to heaven which has no longings for his presence?

4. Many persons stop short with this thirst because they have not faith to come to Christ. Do you see them come to Christ and plead--"Lord, didst not thou say--if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, and now, Lord, I have come, expecting thou wilt give me those blessed waters." Do you see this state of mind? No. They do not come to Christ believing absolutely that he will give them the blessings they need.

I can well recollect a scene in my own experience which is in point here. My soul was drawn out exceedingly for this blessing and I did not see why I did not attain it. My heart seemed full of prayer, echoing and echoing with pleadings and promises, till all at once the thought came across my mind--you do not believe you shall receive. I instantly thought of a dear friend of mind who would always anticipate my wants, who seemed to have the faculty always of foreseeing the things I needed, and who would be sure to supply them as if this was the chief pleasure of his existence. Then I asked myself--Do you as much expect Christ to supply your wants as you expect it of this earthly friend? I saw then that I did not. I saw the shameful unbelief of my state of mind, and I felt so rebuked and so perfectly ashamed that I could not help crying out--"O my blessed Jesus, I have not had so much faith and confidence in thee as I have often had in a man!"

So, many are withered and blighted because you do not believe that God is drawing, but you are resisting. O, you do not believe. Jesus himself comes near--yea very near;--he puts the cup into your

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very hand and says "drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved;" but alas, how many still will not believe.

O this fountain of life--what is it but the fountain of God bubbling up in your inward, spiritual being. Verily the blessing offered you is nothing less than the glorious God himself; and now will you not believe? If any man will come believing, the voice divine says, I will give him of the waters of life freely.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF ENDURING TEMPTATION

September 30, 1846

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." --James 1:12.

This passage presents the subject of enduring temptation. In discussing it, I will enquire,

I. INTO THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION.

II. INTO ITS DESIGN.

III. ENQUIRE WHAT IT IS TO ENDURE TEMPTATION IN THE SENSE OF THE TEXT.

IV. SHOW THAT THUS TO ENDURE TEMPTATION IS ONE CONDITION OF BEING SAVED.

I. The words tempt and temptation are synonymous with trial. To tempt is to try; to subject one to trial. Now sin consists in self-seeking, self-indulgence. Whatever, therefore, tends to selfishness, and draws the mind to self-seeking, is temptation, and is more or less strong according as this tendency is more or less strong towards self-indulgence.

The Bible mentions three great sources of temptation--the world, the flesh and Satan. The outward world is so correlated to our susceptibilities as to excite them and thus beget a temptation to self-indulgence. The flesh with its appetites and passions clamor for gratification; and hence the flesh and the outward world become temptations. Satan also presents his temptations in every form which subtle malignity can devise.

But I need not enlarge on this point; you are familiar with it in all its details.

II. A few words should be said next of the design of these temptations.

These temptations which environ us on every side in our present state are by no means designed by God to do us harm, but altogether to do us good. In creating the external universe and in giving us

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outward senses that we may behold and enjoy it, he had but one great end in view, and that is our good. From the fact that we are susceptible to pleasure from these sources, we are not to infer that God's end in view was to harm us by these temptations. They are undoubtedly to be considered as parts of a great system of moral probation, in which they perform the functions of means to a great, wise and good end. Real evils may be incidental to their operation, yet important good is their ultimate result.

The very term trial, shows that these things are intended as a test of character. God everywhere represents himself as trying his people that he may test and develop the real state of their hearts.

Another end in view is that he may greatly search their hearts. We are prone to be exceedingly ignorant of ourselves. Were it not for trials, we should live and die in this ignorance. To prevent so deplorable a result, God permits temptations to assail us on every side and bring out all the deep things of our hearts. Just so a chemist would take any particular substance into his laboratory and test it in his crucible. He would try it by placing it in contact with other substances that act powerfully upon it and by this he ascertains its affinities and its real character. So God takes us into his great laboratory and applies the tests of spiritual chemistry to our hearts. Often we are not at all aware that we have any such affinities for earthly objects, until we are brought into close contact by temptation;- then perhaps we find that we have strange susceptibilities about us which we had not known before.

Temptations are designed to empty us of our self-complacency. Peter was very self-complacent until he came into circumstances of great trial. It proved a great blessing to him to be thus tried. He thought much less of himself afterwards than before.

So it often happens. I know how often, perhaps in some hundred or thousand instances, I have seen men brought into circumstances which greatly abated their opinion of themselves. They had been very self-complacent--they had come to imagine that they had something very good in themselves. They cherished this notion with self-satisfaction; God saw their danger and permitted his fierce and strong temptations to try them until he had developed to their own view the unknown tendencies of their hearts and made them loathe themselves in their own sight as much as they had delighted in themselves before.

The real children of God may always expect such self-disclosures. As sure as God loves them and sets his heart on their

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salvation, so surely may they expect some form of trial that will cure them of self-complacency.

Again, trials serve to empty the heart of self-righteousness. By self-righteousness I mean that which originates in ourselves and not in Christ working in us to will and to do. That is always self-righteousness where one supposes that his obedience to God originates in himself, and he does not realize that there is no good inherent in himself whatever.

Lest I be misunderstood on this point, let me say that I do not mean to imply at all that we are passive in our obedience to the divine law. If I had supposed the mind passive in this obedience I could not have spoken of God's working in us "to will." An influence which leads us to will must of course terminate in our highest activity. It never can be exerted effectually and yet we remain passive. Nothing can be more active than an act of the will.

Further, my meaning is not that whatever good we do, does not really belong to us, and is not really our own doing, pertaining to our own actions and states of mind. This cannot be denied.

These explanations being made, let me say again, that if any Christian loses sight of this fact that he never does any good except as God works in him, he must soon learn it by the endurance of such trials as will compel him to see it.

Again, another design is to teach us our dependence of God; to hedge us in and shut us up to Christ and make us abide in him. When temptations teach us our own weakness and certainty of falling unless we abide in Christ, we wax really strong in the Lord. Temptations are designed to develop, establish, and strengthen every form of virtue. This is made abundantly plain in the Bible.

III. What is it to endure temptation?

The original word is used for the trying of metals by fire and by such tests as are adapted to develop their real character, or to remove their impurities. That which abides the test and remains after the trial, might be said to have endured the temptation.

So of the moral trials of the Christian. To endure temptation is to stand the trial--to abide constant in the faith--to hold out and come forth only the more pure, as the precious metals when the searching fire has passed over them. It is to persevere, despite of all temptations to be inconstant in our allegiance to Christ.

IV. This endurance of temptation is a condition of being saved.

Temptation is always implied in a state of probation. There could be no such thing as a state of trial if it included no temptation.

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A person could not be tried or proved except in a state fitted for such a process and for such results.

Again, temptations are naturally incidental to our present state. They spring up from our very constitution, and from the relations we sustain to the world we live in. Indeed we might say, they spring out of our moral being, and that no moral being can exist in circumstances where he can find sources of happiness without being exposed to have those very sources of happiness become temptations to selfishness. We have reason to believe that there is no world where moral beings may not be thus tempted.

Certainly in this world, temptations are incidental to our very existence. Look at Adam and Eve. As long as they had bodily appetites they were in circumstances of temptation. Sometimes these temptations urged the will with great vehemence; at other times with less power, or not at all.

Now inasmuch as we all have these appetites and susceptibilities, temptation is naturally and necessarily incidental to our present state of existence. When the susceptibilities become strongly excited in any given direction, then temptation becomes in that degree powerful. The temptation urges us to forsake the guidance of God and of reason and give ourselves up to self-indulgence.

At this point, let us contemplate another great fact; viz. that holiness is naturally and necessarily a condition of our salvation. It is of all things most absurd to suppose that any one can be saved without holiness. Of all human dreams and fantasies this is the most absurd. Strange that men who can think should entertain so flagrant a delusion.

I have often been struck with the absurdity of those who say that the doctrine of regeneration is a mystery and a humbug. So far is this from being true that it is naturally and forever impossible that one should ever be happy and be saved unless he comes into the state described in the Bible as the regenerate state, and made according to the Bible, a condition of salvation. When God declares--"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," he makes no arbitrary appointment. This is no capricious decree of the Almighty. It is one of the laws of our being that a selfish man must be born again and be thereby changed from selfish to benevolent, or he never can be happy in God, or really happy anywhere or anyhow in the universe. He must be sanctified, that is saved from being a sinner, or he cannot be saved from the misery inherent in sinning, or from the punishment consequent upon it.

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Again, regeneration and sanctification are not physical changes, capable of being wrought upon us by an exertion of God's physical omnipotence. It is sometimes said--We know men must become holy, but God can work this thing in us. God can create in us the very state of mind which his law demands.

Now such persons need to consider that holiness is not some substance created in us, but is a voluntary conformity of heart and life to the law of God and to the laws of our own nature. It implies that we willingly and cheerfully consecrate ourselves to the very ends demanded in the law of God. This and nothing else but this, is true holiness.

The more I have thought of it the more I have been astonished that any class of men who ever think at all on moral subjects can ever tend towards infidelity. What! reject the religion of the Bible and then talk of salvation? The man knows not what he is talking about. He knows no more about the subject and no more understands what he says than the veriest maniac! For, what is salvation? What is eternal life? Only let the individual press the question--What is this thing about which I am talking?--and he will see that he must become just what the Bible represents men as becoming before they can be saved. He will see that it is in the nature of the case impossible that any man should be saved from misery to happiness unless he be changed from selfishness to benevolence.

It is therefore no arbitrary or governmental ordination of God which sends the sinning rebel to hell; he only goes to his own place--the only fitting place for one of his character which the universe affords.--He has passed through his state of trial and has come out not pure but vile; hence no place but one fitted for the vile and filled with the vile can at all befit him. Surrounding circumstances and divinely employed means and influences must actually secure our purity of heart here, or we cannot be saved hereafter. So both reason and scripture conspire to affirm.

REMARKS

1. With this subject before us, we can see the real difference between those who are true saints and those who are not. The former are distinguished by enduring temptation; the latter by being overcome by it. All, both saints and sinners, are tried for the very purpose of developing character; in all cases it produces this very result; some endure the trial and some do not. The former of course are the real saints; the latter are deceived if they suppose themselves

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to be Christians. Temptation does not overcome the Christian;--he overcomes it.

2. We see what constitutes the Christian warfare. It is made up of resisting temptation--of resisting and overcoming all those inducements to turn away from God and to seek one's own ends and gratification. This is the strife and the struggle in which the Christian is engaged.

3. All men whether saints or sinners are tried, and all either endure temptation, or are carried away by them. The sinner is continually carried away. He is conscious of no conflict and no warfare, because he makes no resistance. He knows no other law than self-gratification. If he resists the temptation to self-gratification in one form it is only that he may secure it in some other form. Whenever he desires self-gratification, he seeks it; and just for this reason he is a sinner.

The Christian is tried in the same manner, but he resists the temptation. He knows that it will not do to give himself up to seek after sensual or selfish indulgences.

4. Another remark is due here which may explain to impenitent men a thing they often wonder at as unaccountably strange. I can well recollect much of my own experience on this point before my conversion. I saw that Christians had trials of mind and many troubles and difficulties which I could not account for. I thought they of all persons ought to be happy, (for I was sure the wicked had no ground for being so.) I could not account for the fact which I often noticed that Christians seemed quite unhappy. I was quite observing of all the movements I saw among Christians, for I used to attend their prayer meetings and ponder all the developments of character I saw among them. For a long time I was at a loss to account for the fact that they seemed to have so much trouble and so little enjoyment. I rarely fell in with one of the rejoicing ones whose face would shine; this class were few in number then, and I rarely met with them. I can well remember one deacon who used to visit our office. Often however he seemed to be in an agony of soul; I could often hear him sigh, --could see his struggles of mind;--the tear would start in his eye, and the words falter on his tongue. I used to be searching after the causes of this. Why is it I would say that one who has so much reason to be joyful in God should seem so sad?

Perhaps some impenitent man who hears me has a pious wife, and sometimes surprises her in tears. Repelled perhaps by seeing tears, the cause of which he knows not, he may perchance peevishly

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exclaim--"I don't want such a wife--so often weeping and unhappy." You ought, my friend, to use a little philosophy about this and try to understand it. Perhaps your own conduct may have caused those tears. The indifference you manifest to the welfare of your own soul may be agonizing your wife. She may love you too well and her Savior too well to see you at enmity against him without feeling bitterly afflicted. Do not scorn those tears which your own folly and danger may have wrung out.

After my conversion I could see that I had often given Dea. H this trouble and anxiety which I had so frequently seen in his countenance. I saw that my folly and sin had caused him this deep grief. The fact is that if persons would consider they would often see the reason of this fact. The Christian has sore trials, and then instead of yielding as others to, he resists. Hence the struggle. Feeling a deep solicitude for the salvation of souls, when he sees their peril, his soul is troubled within him.

Instead therefore of wondering at these trials and seeing in them the evidence that they are wicked, we should rather deem it no strange thing and should see in them the evidence that such are righteous. The fact is that the Christian, standing in the midst of trials, is on battle ground. He is in a great strait, and if he might not take refuge in Christ, he would indeed be without hope.

Hence when you see Christians in the greatest agony and despondency, think not that they are not Christians, but rather be assured the more that they are. Those struggles are nothing else but a state of the sensibility and are not in themselves sin. They may rise to any degree of strength and yet not involve sin at all.

5. Sinners and false professors never learn the secret of standing by faith in Christ. Deceived professors sometimes seem to try; they talk as if they had some thought of making efforts, but alas, they seem to make no progress. In them are fulfilled the words of the apostle--"Ever learning, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Some kinds of truth they may learn, but never this great truth, that through faith in Christ, they may gain the victory over all sin. They do not learn how to take refuge in Christ under circumstances of temptation. They do not apprehend the great and blessed truth--"Thou standest by faith." How great the secret and how vitally important! Nothing can be more so. If a Christian does not understand this, his resolutions are all air, mere wind--good for nothing at all. All false professors and sinners of every sort utterly fail to learn this great secret of so standing by faith in Christ that they can endure

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temptation. They have none of this element in their religion and of course their religion can avail them nothing.

6. Temptations are among the most powerful means of grace. They are often the most effective instrumentalities which the Lord employs to bring sinners to Christ. Often we see them the most powerful means used to break men off from self-dependence. They serve to show men their utter weakness in themselves for any moral good; and this lesson once thoroughly learned, the individual is prepared to take hold of real help and strength in Christ.

7. There is no escaping temptation in the present life. We may get grace for victories, but we need not look to grace for exemption from all conflict. The form of the conflict usually varies as saints make progress in the divine life. As they ascend higher in holiness, or rather as they go deeper into their own hearts, they must expect the form of the attack will change; but the same law of the Christian life will still prevail--war against sin--struggle against temptation.

8. Saints cannot but grow under temptations. It is just as natural as it is for the winds of heaven to strengthen the trees of the forest. You see a tree growing in the dense forest--it is tall and slender; it lifts its lofty head towards heaven and reels under the blasts of the storm; but there are so many other trees to help bear the pressure that no severe trial of strength comes upon any one. But let this tree take its growth in the open field and all alone; then see how it thrusts out its broad, bracing roots; see how rugged the form it assumes; see how the mighty thunder gusts break upon it and it only braces itself the more firmly to withstand;--so does the Christian under temptation. He grows up strong, fixed, steadfast. He is compelled to live in Christ all the time, and hence he cannot but learn to walk by faith and to stand in the evil day.

But place the Christian where he has little or no temptation, and he will come up slender, pale and faint-hearted. Not being in circumstances to develop his energies, they are not developed as under trials they might and would be.

The true doctrine on this point plainly is that trials afford us the means of gaining strength in the life of God. If then we trust by faith in Jesus for sustaining grace, we grow; if we fail to trust, we fall before the temptation and bring disaster of the worst sort on our own souls and on the cause of Jesus.

9. Christians are sometimes so troubled as not to be aware of their growth and hence they get greatly discouraged. How often have I seen this! There is a Christian;--how he is dashed along on the

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mountain surges--hurled from one crested wave to another--how hard it is to keep his head above water; he does not know as he is making any progress at all towards the shore and haven of rest; but he is, and as you stand upon land you can see it though he does not see it at all.

So often in the case of saints. Those who look on rejoice to see them making great progress. We bless the Lord that we can see how these temptations are molding and fashioning them in the most lovely manner and imbuing their tempers with all the humility, the meekness and the sweetness of Christ.

See that Christian who has fallen into sore trials. His very countenance shows that he knows what sore temptations are and also what it is to have great consolations. The moral agencies that renovate character operate in his case with intense energy.

Some seem to think that a state of sanctification is beyond trial, and quite exempt from its struggles. This is one of the greatest mistakes. The saint never in this life gets so high that the Lord would not develop his graces yet a little more. The Christian is never too far advanced to be blessed by being carried along yet farther. You are never so far along that God may not have yet other blessings in store for you, to come through being tried yet more perhaps in the furnace of affliction.

Commonly when Christians have endured a scene of stern and fiery trial, they find it succeeded by one of great peace and rest. It is with them as with our Lord; --when Satan had gone, "lo, angels came and ministered unto him."

Now some suppose that this peace in God is a state of sanctification. But perhaps it may not be. It may be only a temporary reward--a visit of some angel of mercy to refresh the weary soldier after a hard fought battle for the Lord, to prepare him for another scene of struggle.

Persons are sometimes thrown into trials when nothing is to be seen but the naked promise. All external circumstances may seem in the highest degree forbidding;--and nothing remains but to trust the naked work of the Lord.

And sometimes we seem not even to have any explicit promise, but are thrown upon the general character of God. We are shut up to him and can only say--"I know him, and though he slay me, yet I will trust in him." Job seems to have been in this condition; every earthly helper had failed him; perhaps he knew of no specific promise of the Lord on which he could rest; but he knew something of God's general

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character, and knew therefore that he could trust him everywhere and always.

This case of Job is indeed in many respects exceedingly interesting. If you could have seen him in the midst of his trials,--property and children torn away; his wife become his tempter; Satan let loose upon him;--his flesh full of fire and his bones of anguish;--if you could have seen all this, you would have said, surely Job is the last man in the world to be benefited by affliction. This was indeed a fierce and terrible furnace through which to pass. Sometimes he frets, and sometimes almost slips; but still the Lord holds him up from falling; and probably there was no period in his whole life in which he grew so fast in the thorough knowledge of himself and of God--none in which he struck his roots down so deep and made them fast so firmly in the deep foundations of faith and trust, as then. If any suppose that Job was overcome in this trial they greatly mistake. Expressions did indeed escape him which showed that he was tried and almost beyond endurance, but his by no means proves that he was overcome. His constancy in God abides the trial, and by faith on the whole endures to the end.

You may have had an experience similar in some respects to this. You have been attacked by some vile, subtle, fierce temptation; your soul has been thrown into deep commotion; if any impenitent sinner had seen your struggles he would have been stumbled perhaps exceedingly and confounded;--but through grace you conquered and you came out as gold seven times purified, prepared to testify with one of old--"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

While all things work together for the good of the true saint, the very opposite of this is true of every sinner. All things work ill to him. He falls before every temptation, and of course every scene of trial only serves to develop more and more his ungodly lusts, or his unbelief and his settled alienation from God. Often you see such persons thrown into a fever of irritation against God. Secretly, perhaps sometimes openly, they repine and complain of the Almighty and fret against the course of His Providence. Every thing goes to develop their true character and strengthen all its bad points. This is all evil.

It is easy to see who have a good hope. All those who have are more than conquerors. They abide the trial. If at any time their foot slips, it is only a slip; they take hold afresh and still are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

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Let it also be remembered that it is only those that have a good hope that will endure temptation. Those whose hopes are false will not abide in the day of trial.

Hence those who fail and yield in the hour of temptation may see that they have no reason to hope. The features of their character are marks of the self-deceived and not of the true believer.

But you say perhaps--"I cant (sic.) tell--I dont (sic.) know where I am." A young man came to me a few days since with this complaint--I don[']t know where I am; --I don[']t know what to think of myself. In fact I am so afraid of sinning against God that I hardly dare to eat or drink or sleep" Indeed, thought I, and where can you be? What is your state of mind, dear young man? So afraid of sinning that you scarcely dare to eat! So full of fear lest you displease God! Surely this shows for itself where you are. A heart so tenderly alive to the fear of displeasing God may be easily known.

Yet one cannot look at such a case as that of this young man without crying out--how cruel the devil is! And how mean, that he should love to torment a conscientious mind and throw him into a state in which he will scarcely dare to eat, drink, or sleep. What a devil he is!

When you see real Christians thrown into great temptations you will find that ultimately it will do them great good. Their graces will shine beautifully during the rest of their life, and God has said that when they die they shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

When, therefore you hear saints groaning, agonizing, trembling, be not afraid for them. The roots are striking deeper, and they will surely gain a firmer footing and will glorify God in the midst of the fires. You may see him enter his closet, looking sad, perhaps haggard, almost distracted; but anon he will come out, meekly saying--The Lord knoweth my way. The Lord knows the tears I shed. He has delivered me in six troubles and in seven and still I know that he will deliver me, and I will yet own and bless his name. O beloved, it is good to be afflicted, if only we have faith in God and so hold on upon his arms as to endure to the end. Then there remains for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

QUENCHING THE SPIRIT

October 13, 1846

"Quench not the Spirit."--1 Thess. 5:19.

In discussing the subject presented in this text, I shall aim,

I. TO SHOW HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT INFLUENCES THE MIND;

II. TO DEDUCE SOME INFERENCES FROM THE KNOWN MODE OF THE SPIRIT'S OPERATIONS;

III. SHOW WHAT IT IS TO QUENCH THE SPIRIT;

IV. SHOW HOW THIS MAY BE DONE; AND,

V. THE CONSEQUENCES OF QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.

I. How does the Holy Spirit influence the human mind?

I answer, not by physical agency;--not by the interposition of direct physical power. The action of the will is not influenced thus and cannot be. The very supposition is absurd. That physical agency should produce voluntary mental phenomena just as it does physical, is both absurd and at war with the very idea of free agency. That the same physical agency which moves a planet should move the human will is absurd.

But further; the Bible informs us that the Spirit influences the human mind by means of truth. The Spirit persuades men to act in view of truth, as we ourselves influence our fellow-men by truth presented to their minds. I do not mean that God presents truth to the mind in the same manner as we do. Of course his mode of doing it must differ from ours. We use the pen, the lips, the gesture; we use the language of words and the language of nature. God does not employ these means now; yet still he reaches the mind with truth. Sometimes his providence suggests it; and then his Spirit gives it efficiency, setting it home upon the heart with great power.

Sometimes the Lord makes use of preaching; indeed his ways are various.

But, whatever the mode, the object is always the same,--namely, to produce voluntary action in conformity to his law.

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Now, if the Bible were entirely silent on this subject, we should still know from the nature of mind and from the nature of those influences which only can move the human mind, that the Spirit must exert not physical but moral influences on the mind. Yet we are not now left to a merely metaphysical inference; we have the plain testimony of the Bible to the fact that the Spirit employs truth in converting and sanctifying men.

II. We next enquire what is implied in this fact, and what must be inferred from it.

God is physically omnipotent, and yet his moral influences exerted by the Spirit may be resisted. You will readily see that if the Spirit moved men by physical omnipotence, no mortal could possibly resist his influence. The Spirit's power would be of course irresistible--for who could withstand omnipotence?

But now we know it to be a fact that men can resist the Holy Ghost. For the nature of moral agency implies this and the Bible asserts it.

The nature of moral agency implies the voluntary action of one who can yield to motive and follow light or not as he pleases. Where this power does not exist, moral agency cannot exist; and at whatever point this power ceases, there moral agency ceases also.

Hence if our action is that of moral agents, our moral freedom to do or not do must remain. It cannot be set aside or in any way overruled. If God should in any way set aside our voluntary agency, he would of necessity terminate at once our moral and responsible action. Suppose God should seize hold of a man's arm with physical omnipotence and forcibly use it in deeds of murder or of arson; who does not see that the moral, responsible agency of that man would be entirely superseded? Yet not more so than if, in an equally irresistible manner, God should seize the man's will and compel it to act as himself listed.

The very idea that moral influence can ever be irresistible originates in an entire mistake as to the nature of the will and of moral action. The will of man never can act otherwise than freely in view of truth and of the motives it presents for action. Increasing the amount of such influence has no sort of tendency to impair the freedom of the will. Under any possible vividness of truth perceived, or amount of motive present to the mind, the will has still the same changeless power to yield or not yield--to act or refuse to act in accordance with this perceived truth.

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Force and moral agency are terms of opposite meaning, They cannot both co-exist. The one effectually precludes the other. Hence to say that if God is physically omnipotent, he can and will force a moral agent in his moral action, is to talk stark nonsense.

This fact shows that any work of God carried on by moral and not by physical power not only can be resisted by man, but that man may be in very special danger of resisting it. If the Lord carries the work forward by means of revealed truth, there may be most imminent danger lest men will neglect to study and understand this truth, or lest, knowing, they shall refuse to obey it. Surely it is fearfully within the power of every man to shut out this truth from his consideration, and bar his heart against its influence.

III. We next enquire what it is to quench the Spirit.

We shall readily understand this when we come to see distinctly what the work of the Spirit is. We have already seen that it is to enlighten the mind into truth respecting God, ourselves, and our duty. For example, the Spirit enlightens the mind into the meaning and self-application of the Bible. It takes the things of Christ and shows them to us.

Now there is such a thing as refusing to receive this light. You can shut your eyes against it. You have the power to turn your eye entirely away and scarcely see it at all. You can utterly refuse to follow it when seen;--and in this case God ceases to hold up the truth before your mind.

Almost every one knows by personal experience that the Spirit has the power of shedding a marvelous light upon revealed truth, so that this truth shall stand before the mind in a new and most impressive form, and shall operate upon it with astonishing energy. But this light of the Spirit may be quenched.

Again there is, so to speak, a sort of heat, a warmth and vitality attending the truth when enforced by the Spirit. Thus we say if one has the Spirit of God his soul is warm; if he has not the Spirit, his heart is cold.

This vital heat produced by the divine Spirit may be quenched. Let a man resist the Spirit, and he will certainly quench this vital energy which it exerts upon the heart.

IV. We are next to notice some of the ways in which the Spirit may be quenched.

1. Men often quench the Spirit by directly resisting the truth he presents to their minds. Sometimes men set themselves deliberately to resist the truth, determined they will not yield to its power at least for

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the present. In such cases it is wonderful to see how great the influence of the will is in resisting the truth. Indeed the will can always resist any moral considerations; for, as we have seen, there is no such thing as forcing the will to yield to truth.

In those cases wherein the truth presses strongly on the mind, there is presumptive evidence that the Spirit is present by his power. And it is in precisely these cases that men are especially prone to set themselves against the truth, and thus are in the utmost peril of quenching the Spirit. They hate the truth presented--it crosses their chosen path of indulgence--they feel vexed and harassed by its claims; they resist and quench the Spirit of the Lord.

You have doubtless often seen such cases, and if so, you have doubtless noticed this other remarkable fact of usual occurrence--that after a short struggle in resisting truth, the conflict is over, and that particular truth almost utterly ceases to affect the mind. The individual becomes hardened to its power--he seems quite able to overlook it and thrust it from his thoughts, or if this fails and the truth is thrown before his mind, yet he finds it comparatively easy to resist its claims. He felt greatly annoyed by that truth until he had quenched the Spirit; now he is annoyed by it no longer.

If you have seen cases of this sort you have doubtless seen how as the truth pressed upon their minds they became restive, sensitive--then perhaps angry;--but still stubborn in resisting;--until at length the conflict subsides; the truth makes no more impression, and is henceforth quite dead as to them; they apprehend it only with the greatest dimness, and care nothing about it.

And here let me ask--Have not some of you had this very experience? Have you not resisted some truth until it has ceased to affect your minds? If so, then you may conclude that you in that case quenched the Spirit of God.

2. The Spirit is often quenched by endeavoring to support error.

Men are sometimes foolish enough to attempt by argument to support a position which they have good reason to know is a false one. They argue it till they get committed; they indulge in a dishonest state of mind; thus they quench the Spirit, and are usually left to believe the very lie which they so unwisely attempted to advocate. Many such cases have I seen when men began to defend and maintain a position known to be false, and kept on till they quenched the Spirit of God--believed their own lie, and it is to be feared, will die under its delusions.

3. By uncharitable judgments.

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Perhaps nothing more certainly quenches the Spirit than to impeach the motives of others and judge them uncharitably. It is so unlike God, and so hostile to the law of love, no wonder the Spirit of God is utterly averse to it, and turns away from those who indulge in it.

4. The Spirit is grieved by harsh and vituperative language. How often do persons grieve the Spirit of God by using such language toward those who differ from them. It is always safe to presume that persons who indulge such a temper have already grieved the Spirit of God utterly away,

5. The Spirit of God is quenched by a bad temper. When a bad temper and spirit are stirred up in individuals or in a community, who has not seen how suddenly a revival of religion ceases--the Spirit of God is put down and quenched; there is no more prevailing prayer and no more sinners are converted.

6. Often the Spirit is quenched by diverting the attention from the truth. Since the Spirit operates through the truth, it is most obvious that we must attend to this truth which the Spirit would keep before our minds. If we refuse to attend, as we always can if we choose to do so, we shall almost certainly quench the Holy Spirit.

7. We often quench the Spirit by indulging intemperate excitement on any subject. If the subject is foreign from practical, divine truth, strong excitement diverts attention from such truth and renders it almost impossible to feel its power. While the mind sees and feels keenly on the subject in which it is excited, it sees dimly and feels but coldly on the vital things of salvation. Hence the Spirit is quenched. But the intemperate excitement may be on some topic really religious. Sometimes I have seen a burst--a real tornado of feeling in a revival; but in such cases, truth loses its hold on the minds of the people; they are too much excited to take sober views of the truth and of the moral duties it inculcates. Not all religious excitement however is to be condemned. By no means. There must be excitement enough to arouse the mind to serious thought--enough to give the truth edge and power; but it is always well to avoid that measure of excitement which throws the mind from its balance and renders its perceptions of truth obscure or fitful.

8. The Spirit is quenched by indulging prejudice. Whenever the mind is made up on any subject before it is thoroughly canvassed, that mind is shut against the truth and the Spirit is quenched. When there is great prejudice it seems impossible for the Spirit to act, and of

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course his influence is quenched. The mind is so committed that it resists, the first efforts of the Spirit.

Thus have thousands done. Thus thousands ruin their souls for eternity.

Therefore let every man keep his mind open to conviction and be sure to examine carefully all important questions, and especially all such as involve great questions of duty to God and man.

I am saying nothing now against being firm in maintaining your position after you thoroughly understand it and are sure it is the truth. But while pursuing your investigations, be sure you are really candid and yield your mind to all the reasonable evidence you can find.

9. The Spirit is often quenched by violating conscience. There are circumstances under which to violate conscience seems to quench the light of God in the soul forever. Perhaps you have seen cases of this sort where persons have had a very tender conscience on some subject, but all at once they come to have no conscience at all on that subject. I am aware that change of conduct sometimes results from change of views without any violation of conscience; but the case I speak of is where the conscience seems to be killed. All that remains of it seems hard as a stone.

I have sometimes thought the Spirit of God had much more to do with conscience than we usually suppose. The fact is undeniable that men sometimes experience very great and sudden changes in the amount of sensibility of conscience which they feel on some subjects. How is this to be accounted for? Only by the supposition that the Spirit has power to arouse the conscience and make it pierce like an arrow; and then when men, notwithstanding the reproaches of conscience will sin, the Spirit is quenched; the conscience loses all its sensibility; an entire change takes place, and the man goes on to sin as if he never had any conscience to forbid it.

It sometimes happens that the mind is awakened just on the eve of committing some particular sin. Perhaps something seems to say to him--if you do this you will be forsaken of God. A strange presentiment forewarns him to desist. Now if he goes on, the whole mind receives a dreadful shock; the very eyes of the mind seem to be almost put out; the moral perceptions are strangely deranged and beclouded; a fatal violence is done to the conscience on that particular subject at least, and indeed the injury to the conscience seems to affect all departments of moral action. In such circumstances the Spirit of God seems to turn away and say--"I can do no more for you--I have warned you faithfully and can warn you no more."

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All these results sometimes accrue from neglect of plainly revealed duty. Men shrink from known duty through fear of the opinions of others, or through dislike of some self-denial. In this crisis of trial the Spirit does not leave them in a state of doubt or inattention as to duty, but keeps the truth and the claims of God vividly before the mind. Then if men go on and commit the sin despite of the Spirit's warnings,--the soul is left in awful darkness--the light of the Spirit of God is quenched perhaps forever.

I know not in how many cases I have seen persons in great agony and even despair who had evidently quenched the Spirit in the manner just described. Many of you may know the case of a young man who has been here. He had a long trial on the question of preparing himself for the ministry. He balanced the question for a long time, the claims of God being clearly set before him;--but at last resisting the convictions of duty, he went off and got married, and turned away from the work to which God seemed to call him. Then the Spirit left him. For some few years he remained entirely hardened as to what he had done and as to any claims of God upon him, but finally his wife sickened and died. Then his eyes were opened; he saw what he had done. He sought the Lord, but sought in vain. No light returned to his darkened, desolate soul. It no longer seemed his duty to prepare for the ministry; that call of God had ceased. His cup of wretchedness seemed to be filled to the brim. Often he spent whole nights in most intense agony, groaning, crying for mercy, or musing in anguish upon the dire despair that spread its universe of desolation all around him. I have often feared he would take his own life, so perfectly wretched was he under these reproaches of a guilty conscience and these thoughts of deep despair.

I might mention many other similar cases. Men refuse to do known duty, and this refusal does fatal violence to their own moral sense and to the Spirit of the Lord, and consequently there remains for them only a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

10. Persons often quench the Spirit by indulging their appetites and passions. You would be astonished if you were to know how often the Spirit is grieved by this means until a crisis is formed of such a nature that they seem to quench the light of God at once from their souls. Some persons indulge their appetite for food to the injury of their health, and though they know they are injuring themselves, and the Spirit of God remonstrates and presses them hard to desist from ruinous self-indulgence, yet they persist in their course--are

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given up of God, and henceforth their appetites lord it over them to the ruin of their spirituality and of their souls. The same may be true of any form of sensual indulgence.

11. The Spirit is often quenched by indulging in dishonesty. Men engaged in business will take little advantages in buying and selling. Sometimes they are powerfully convinced of the great selfishness of this, and see that this is by no means loving their neighbor as themselves. It may happen that a man, about to drive a good bargain will raise the question--is this right?--will balance it long in his mind--will say--"now this neighbor of mine needs this article very much, and will suffer if he does not get it; this will give me a grand chance to put on a price--but then would this be doing as I would be done by?["] He looks and thinks--he sees duty but finally decides in favor of his selfishness. Eternity alone will disclose the consequences of such a decision. When the Spirit of God has followed such persons a long time--has made them see their danger--has kept the truth before them, and finally, seizing the favorable moment, makes a last effort and this proves unavailing--the die is cast--thereafter all restraints are gone and the selfish man abandoned of God, goes on worse and worse, to state's prison perhaps, and certainly to hell!

12. Often men quench the Spirit by casting off fear and restraining prayer. Indeed restraining prayer must always quench the Spirit. It is wonderful to see how naturally and earnestly the Spirit leads us to pray. If we were really led by the Spirit, we should be drawn many times a day to secret prayer, and should be continually lifting up our hearts in silent ejaculations whenever the mind unbends itself from other pressing occupations. The Spirit in the hearts of saints is pre-eminently a spirit of prayer, and of course to restrain prayer must always quench the Spirit.

Some of you, perhaps, have been in this very case. You have once had the spirit of prayer; now you have none of it: you had access to God--now you have it no longer; you have no more enjoyment in prayer--have no groaning and agonizing over the state of the church and of sinners. And if this spirit of prayer is gone where are you now? Alas, you have quenched the Spirit of God;--you have put out his light and repelled his influences from your soul.

13. The Spirit is quenched by idle conversation. Few seem to be aware how wicked this is and how certainly it quenches the Holy Spirit. Christ said "that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

14. Men quench the Holy Ghost by a spirit of levity and trifling.

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Again by indulging a peevish and fretful spirit.

Also by a spirit of indolence. Many indulge in this to such an extent as altogether to drive away the Holy Spirit.

Again by a spirit of procrastination, and by indulging themselves in making excuses for neglect of duty. This is a sure way to quench the Spirit of God in the soul.

15. It is to be feared that many have quenched the Spirit by resisting the doctrine and duty of sanctification.

This subject has been for a few years past extensively discussed; and the doctrine has also been extensively opposed. Several Ecclesiastical bodies have taken ground against it, and sometimes it is to be feared that members have said and done what they would not by any means have said or done in their own closets or pulpits. Is it not also probable that many ministers and some laymen have been influenced by this very Ecclesiastical action to oppose the doctrine--the fear of man thus becoming a snare to their souls? May it not also be the case that some have opposed the doctrine really because it raises a higher standard of personal holiness than they like--too high perhaps to permit them to hope as Christians, too high for their experience, and too high to suit their tastes and habits for future life?

Now who does not see that opposition to the doctrine and duty of Sanctification on any such grounds must certainly and fatally quench the Holy Spirit? No work can lie more near the heart of Jesus than the sanctification of his people. Hence nothing can so greatly grieve him as to see this work impeded--much more to see it opposed and frustrated.

A solemn and awful emphasis is given to these considerations when you contemplate the facts respecting the prevalent state of piety in very many churches throughout the land. You need not ask--are revivals enjoyed--are Christians prayerful, self-denying, alive in faith and in love to God and to man. You need not ask if the work of sanctifying the Church is moving on apace, and manifesting itself by abounding fruits of righteousness; the answer meets you before you can well frame the question.

Alas, that the Spirit should be quenched under the diffusion of the very truth which ought to sanctify the Church! What can save if gospel promise in all its fullness is so perverted or resisted as to quench the Spirit and thus serve only to harden the heart?

V. I am lastly to speak of the consequences of quenching the Holy Spirit.

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1. Great darkness of mind. Abandoned of God, the mind sees truth so dimly that it makes no useful impression. Such persons read the Bible without interest or profit. It becomes to them a dead letter, and they generally lay it aside unless some controversy leads them to search it. They take no such spiritual interest in it as makes its perusal delightful.

Have not some of you been in this very state of mind? This is that darkness of nature which is common to men when the Spirit of God is withdrawn.

2. There usually results great coldness and stupidity in regard to religion generally. It leaves to the mind no such interest in spiritual things as men take in worldly things.

Persons often get into such a state that they are greatly interested in some worldly matters, but not in spiritual religion. Their souls are all awake while worldly things are the subject;--but suggest some spiritual subject, and their interest is gone at once. You can scarcely get them to attend a prayer meeting. They are in a worldly state of mind you may know, for if the Spirit of the Lord was with them, they would be more deeply interested in religious services than in anything else.

But now, mark them. Get up a political meeting, or a theatrical exhibition and their souls are all on fire; but go and appoint a prayer meeting or a meeting to promote a revival, and they are not there, or if there, they feel no interest in the object.

Such persons often seem not to know themselves. They perhaps think they attend to these worldly things only for the glory of God;--I will believe this when I see them interested in spiritual things as much.

When a man has quenched the Spirit of God his religion is all outside. His vital, heart-affecting interest in spiritual things is gone.

It is indeed true that a spiritual man will take some interest in worldly things because he regards them as a part of his duty to God, and to him they are spiritual things.

3. The mind falls very naturally into diverse errors in religion. The heart wanders from God, loses its hold on the truth, and perhaps the man insists that he now takes a much more liberal and enlightened view of the subject than before.

A short time since I had a conversation with a man who had given up the idea that the Old Testament was inspired--had given up the doctrine of the atonement, and indeed every distinctive doctrine of

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the Bible. He remarked to me--"I used to think as you do; but I have now come to take a more liberal and enlightened view of the subject."

Indeed! this a more liberal and enlightened view! So blinded as not to see that Christ sanctioned the Old Testament as the oracles of God, and yet he flatters himself that he now takes a more liberal and enlightened view! There can be nothing stronger than Christ's affirmations respecting the inspiration of the Old Testament; and yet this man admits these affirmations to be true and yet denies the very thing they affirm! Most liberal and enlightened view truly!

How can you possibly account for such views except on the ground that for some reason the man has fallen into a strange, unnatural state of mind--a sort of mental fatuity in which moral truths are beclouded or distorted?

Every body knows that there cannot be a greater absurdity than to admit the divine authority of the teachings of Christ and yet reject the Old Testament. The language of Christ affirms and implies the authority of the Old Testament in all those ways in which on the supposition that the Old Testament is inspired, he might be expected to affirm and imply this fact.

The Old Testament does not indeed exhaust divine revelation; it left more things to be revealed. Christ taught much, but nothing more clearly than the divine authority of the Old Testament.

4. Quenching the Spirit often results in infidelity. What can account for such a case as that I have just mentioned, unless this--that God has left the mind to fall into very great darkness?

5. Another result is great hardness of heart. The mind becomes callous to all that class of truths which make it yielding and tender. The mobility of the heart under truth depends entirely upon its moral hardness. If very hard, truth makes no impression; if soft, then it is yielding as air, and moves quick to the touch of truth in any direction.

6. Another result is deep delusion in regard to their spiritual state. How remarkable that persons will claim to be Christians when they have rejected every distinctive doctrine of Christianity. Indeed, such persons do sometimes claim that by thus rejecting almost the whole of the Bible and all its great scheme of salvation by an atonement, they have become real Christians. Now they have got the true light! Indeed!

How can such a delusion be accounted for except on the ground that the Spirit of God has abandoned the man to his own ways and left him to utter and perfect delusion?

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7. Persons in this state often justify themselves in most manifest wrong, because they put darkness for light and light for darkness. They entrench themselves in perfectly false principles as if those principles were true and could amply justify their misdeeds.

REMARKS

1. Persons often are not aware what is going on in their minds when they are quenching the Spirit of God. Duty is presented and pressed upon them, but they do not realize that this is really the work of the Spirit of God. They are not aware of the present voice of the Lord to their hearts, nor do they see that this solemn impression of the truth is nothing other than the effect of the Holy Ghost on their minds.

2. So when they come to take different views and to abandon their former opinions, they seem not conscious of the fact that God has departed from them. They flatter themselves that they have become very liberal and very much enlightened withal, and have only given up their former errors. Alas, they do not see that the light they now walk in is darkness--all sheer darkness! "Woe to them who put light for darkness and darkness for light!"

[3.] You see how to account for the spiritual state of some persons. Without the clue which this subject affords, you might be much misled. In the case just described, suppose that I had taken it for granted that this man was in truth taking a more rational and liberal view; I should have been misguided entirely.

I have good reason to know how persons become Unitarians and Universalists, having seen at least some hundreds of instances. It is not by becoming more and more men of prayer and real spirituality--not by getting nearer and nearer to God; they do not go on progressing in holiness, prayer, communion with God, until in their high attainments they reach a point where they deny the inspiration of the Bible, give up public prayer, the ordinances of the gospel, and probably secret prayer along with the rest. Those who give up these things are not led away while wrestling in prayer and while walking humbly and closely with God; no man ever got away from orthodox views while in this state of mind. But men first get away from God and quench his Spirit;--then embrace one error after another; truth falls out of the mind and we might almost say truthfulness itself, or those qualities or moral attributes which capacitate the mind to discern and apprehend the truth; and then darkness becomes so universal and so deceptive that men suppose themselves to be wholly in the light,

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4. Such a state of mind is most deplorable and often hopeless. What can be done when a man has grieved the Spirit of God away?

5. When an individual or a people have quenched the Spirit, they are in the utmost danger of being given up to some delusion that will bring them by a short route to destruction.

6. They take entirely false ground who maintain that if a religious movement is the work of God it cannot be resisted. For example, I have often seen cases where persons would stop a revival, and then say--"It was not a real revival, for if it had been it would not have stopped."

Let a man adopt the opinion that he cannot stop the work of God in his own soul;--nothing can be more perilous. Let a people adopt the notion that revivals come and go without our agency and by the agency of God only, and it will bring perfect ruin on them. There never was a revival that could exist three days under such a delusion. The solemn truth is that the Spirit is most easily quenched. There is no moral work of his that cannot be resisted.

7. An immense responsibility pertains to revivals. There is always fearful danger lest the Spirit should be resisted.

So when the Spirit is with an individual, there is the greatest danger lest something be said, ruinous to the soul.

Many persons here are in the greatest danger. The Spirit often labors with sinners here, and many have grieved him away.

8. Many seem not to realize the nature of the Spirit's operations, the possibility always of resisting, and the great danger of quenching that light of God in the soul.

How many young men could I name here, once thoughtful, now stupid. Where are those young men who were so serious, and who attended the enquiry meeting so long in our last revival? Alas, have they quenched the Holy Spirit?

Is not this the case with you--young man; with you, young woman? Have not you quenched the Spirit until now your mind is darkened and your heart woefully hardened? How long ere the death-knell shall toll over you and your soul go down to hell? How long before you will lose your hold on all truth and the Spirit will have left you utterly?

But let me bring this appeal home to the hearts of those who have not yet utterly quenched the light of God in the soul. Do you find that truth still takes hold of your conscience--that God's word flashes on your mind--that heaven's light is not yet utterly extinguished, and there is still a quivering of conscience? You hear of

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a sudden death, like that of the young man the other day, and trembling seizes your soul, for you know that another blow may single out you. Then by all the mercies of God I beseech you take care what you do. Quench not the Holy Ghost lest your sun go down in everlasting darkness. Just as you may have seen the sun set when it dipped into a dark, terrific, portentous thunder cloud. So a benighted sinner dies! Have you ever seen such a death? Dying, he seemed to sink into an awful cloud of fire and storm and darkness. The scene was fearful, like a sunset of storms, and gathering clouds, and rolling thunders, and forked lightnings. The clouds gather low in the west--the spirit of storm rides on the blast--belching thunders seem as if they would cleave the solid earth;--behind such a fearful cloud the sun drops, and all is darkness! So have I seen a sinner give up the ghost and drop into a world of storms, and howling tempests, and flashing fire.

O how unlike the setting sun of a mild summer evening. All nature seems to put on her sweetest smile as she bids the king of day adieu.

So dies the saint of God. There may be paleness on his lip and cold sweat on his brow, but there is beauty in that eye and glory in the soul. I think of a woman, just converted, when she was taken sick--brought down to the gates of death--yet was her soul full of heaven. Her voice was the music of angels--her countenance shone, her eye sparkled as if the forms of heavenly glory were embodied in her dying features. Nature at last sinks--the moment of death has come--she stretches out her dying hands and hails the waiting spirit--"Glory to God!"--she cries--"I am coming!--I am coming!" Not going--observe--she did not say--"I am going,--but I am coming!"

But right over against this, look at the sinner dying. A frightful glare is on his countenance as if he saw ten thousand demons! As if the setting sun should go down into an ocean of storms--to be lost in a world charged with tornadoes, storms, and death!

Young man, you will die just so if you quench the Spirit of God. Jesus himself has said--"If ye will not believe, ye shall die in your sins." Beyond such a death, there is an awful hell.

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December 23, 1846

"Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." --Luke 8:18.

These words follow almost immediately after the parable of the sower--a parable which was intended to represent the various classes of hearers and the diverse results of their different or opposite courses.

Immediately after recording that parable, Luke subjoins.

"No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed, but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light."

"For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad."

The idea of this seems to be that in the ultimate results of this state of probation, God will show who have improved their opportunities and who have not. These things, however secret now, shall be made manifest. All the workings and results of our present hearing or refusing to hear, shall in due season be spread out before the universe.

Hence the solemn injunction--"Take heed, therefore, how ye hear." How forcible, if it be indeed the case that all its consequences are to be revealed before the universe!

Luke adds also--

"Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

From this and the parallel passages we infer that whoever improves the instruction proffered him shall have grace needful to understand it. He shall also have more truth revealed to him. The Providence, the word and the Spirit of God may perhaps all combine

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to fulfil this promise--more to him that improves what he has. So also will God take away from him who does not improve.

My remarks on the text will be confined chiefly to the first clause--"Take heed how ye hear." I shall, enquire;

I. WHAT IT IS TO TAKE HEED.

II. WHY PERSONS OUGHT TO TAKE HEED HOW THEY HEAR.

III. SHOW IN SEVERAL PARTICULARS HOW MEN OUGHT TO HEAR AND MUST HEAR IF THEY WOULD EVER PROFIT BY HEARING.

I. What it is to take heed.

To take heed is to be wakeful, attentive, to be very considerate. It implies that we seriously ponder the word of the Lord and consider attentively its meaning and its application to ourselves.

II. Why is this injunction given? Why should we take heed how we hear?

You will observe that it respects especially the word of God. It does not require special attention to every thing which we can hear on all possible subjects and from any source whatever; No, it only requires us always to listen when God speaks; always to hear with the utmost attention what God may say.

Now the reasons of such a requirement are surely very plain.

1. Because it is God who speaks. We are to consider that it is really God who speaks to us through his word, and through the faithful and sound preaching of his gospel. He may employ human organs; he may use the language and the types or the living voice of man--yet it is still the voice of God, for it is his chosen mode of revealing himself to mortal man.

And now how ought all men to listen to the word of God! With what profound and solemn attention!

And do any ask why we should thus listen when God speaks? I answer. Because He always has something important to say. Because he never speaks in vain. He is not an incessant talker--is not a trifler--never speaks unless to communicate truths of infinite moment for mortal man to hear and know.

How then ought men to hearken when the Infinite Jehovah speaks!

Suppose you were apprised of the fact that the Great God--the Infinite Maker of the Universe, had appointed the time and the place where he would audibly speak to mortal men--in language intelligible to them and of course on subjects of infinite concern to them. Would

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not you and would not every man living stand on tiptoe to hear every word that should go forth from the eternal God?

But what would you think if men should pay no attention? if the notice should not draw together even a respectably large congregation? What would you think if there were some who would not hear at all?

But again--God speaks to you--to you as if it were by name; as if he were to call out your name, and make his communications particularly to you. Suppose now it were known that God was about to address someone in this congregation by name--but no one knows who the individual is. How every heart would quiver with intense interest to know who it should be--each one anxious almost to agony and saying--Is it I? Will that majestic voice pronounce my name? And what will he say?

Now such a course would be striking--would be thrilling. It would doubtless startle some into wakefulness who are rarely wakeful under the ordinary mode of divine communication. But yet God as really speaks now to mortal men as if he were to call out with audible voice their very names. And, my hearer, he just as really speaks now to you, as if he were to pronounce your very name before this whole assembly.

This is one of those great truths which you need to know and fully realize. When God speaks through his word, through his providence, or through his gospel preached by his servants, he really speaks to you.

Again, you should take heed because if you do not you will certainly misunderstand what the Lord says. You cannot understand without giving your attention, and surely you must know that if God speaks to you, he will say something which is vitally important for you to know.

It is well for you to consider the fact that multitudes fail to understand these messages of the Lord, and hence go on to the judgment under a fatal mistake. God spake to them; they gave no such heed as would secure a right understanding of his message, and hence they go to perdition.

Again, you should take heed how you hear because God speaks on subjects of infinite importance to your soul. Life and death hang on every word he utters. He speaks to tell you of salvation--to show you what you must do to secure everlasting life. And should a single young man or young woman in this house be indifferent?

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Your salvation does and must depend on the manner of your hearing. If you hear so as not to understand, you can never be saved. The very things of which God speaks are the conditions on which you can be saved. How can you be saved if you fail to understand these conditions? These conditions you are yourself to fulfill;--how then can you do them and be saved unless you understand what they are?

Again, not only is your own salvation depending on your hearing the truth of God attentively, but the salvation also of many others. Perhaps thousands of persons may be deeply and personally interested in your hearing as you should. You cannot neglect to hear as you ought without wronging your family, your friends, your posterity, your whole generation. All these will have reason to blame,--yea, to reproach, and even to curse you if you do not hear as you ought.

Consider further that God is offering you eternal life. It is on this subject that he speaks to you, offering you life and threatening you with death if you will not attend and obey. When God is about to speak on such a subject, is it not fitting that he should introduce his communication with the solemn admonition--"Take heed how ye hear?"

Consider also that every thing may depend upon your present hearing. Perhaps some of you are hearing the word of the Lord now for the last time. Death may lock up all your senses forever, ere you shall enter the sanctuary or open your Bible again.

Or it may be that though you should hear the word of the Lord a thousand times hereafter, yet God may withdraw his Spirit henceforward, never to bestow it any more upon you. There is the more reason to fear it in your case since you are now solemnly warned of your responsibility and of your danger. Your whole eternity therefore may now be suspended upon the manner of your hearing the word of God this day. Will you slight that solemn word and put in peril the salvation of your soul forever?

III. I am to show in some particulars how you ought to hear and must hear if you would ever be saved.

It is perfectly plain that you cannot possibly be saved only by means of understanding and obeying the word of God. There is only one possible way of being saved, and that is by becoming holy, since "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Nor can you become holy only as you obey the truth, nor can you obey the truth only as far as you understand it. Hence the immense importance of understanding and obeying the truth of the Lord.

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If this is so, then certain other things follow and must be true.

1. You must hear with very deep and fixed attention when the word of God is spoken to you. You must give your mind up most deeply and thoroughly to understand and obey it.

2. You must hear with reverence and awe. Nothing is more displeasing to God than a state of levity of mind when He is speaking. You can readily understand this. If you were a father, think how you would feel if your children received your most solemn remarks or appeals to them with insulting levity.

3. You must hear with a most sincere desire to understand what God says. How many persons are there in this house who have never set yourselves with seriousness really to understand the Gospel as if you felt it to be a matter of infinite concernment to you? How many are there here who have never really pondered the plan of salvation--saying "I must know how I may be saved--I must understand the will of God concerning myself--I must know whether I am still held guilty and still doomed to hell, or whether I am pardoned?" Some of you perhaps have never said this honestly in all your life. Yet you have had the Bible in your hands; and you have heard sermons enough to have enlightened unto salvation a thousand heathen souls. Who of you have come to the house of God to day with an intense desire to understand every thing said to you? But how can you expect ever to understand these great things of salvation unless you give up your minds to this study in solemn earnestness?

I am often astonished to hear persons saying--"The Bible is a mysterious book; I don't understand it."

Have you ever studied it as you do your class books? Do you ever give your whole mind to understand it as you do to understand Euclid or Cicero?

Yet with what intense interest should you desire to understand it! Nothing in all the universe is so important to you as to understand this way of salvation. Your state of mind therefore by no means corresponds to your responsibilities, or to the subject you have to study;--and how can you expect the Lord to bless you?

4. You must hear with candor, and be willing to know the worst of your case. Your heart must be really open to hear the whole truth.

Few persons have really come to understand how much importance is to be attached to this state of mind. Many seem not to be sensible of being prejudiced.--Perhaps they have not even dreamed of being committed against the truth of God; but yet they are, full of

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committal--and most resolutely fixed in their false opinions. They are by no means candid.

I doubt whether a really candid man ever came to the reading of the Bible or to the hearing of the preached gospel, without being infinitely benefited by such hearing and reading. Now in revivals I have always noticed that however wicked and prejudiced men may have been yet if they could be persuaded to lay aside their prejudice and be candid, they are at once enlightened and are usually converted. They did not know really that they were not candid; yet if they had used the least reflection they must have seen that they did not give up their whole mind honestly and search for truth. So much at least they must have known.

And how is it here in this matter? Are there not persons here who know they do not give up their minds to understand the truth--who know they have not heard the gospel this morning with any real desire to learn their duty that they may do it? I wish I could go round to every individual here, with this question--Did you come here this morning with an intense desire to open your whole heart to the truth, and to give yourself up to be carried by it just where the truth might carry you? Without so much candor and so much earnestness as this, how can you hope ever to be enlightened by the truth? How can you rationally expect ever to be converted?

5. The Bible represents it as important that you should hear with fear and trembling lest you fail to understand. Surely nothing can be more reasonable than this. How would you feel if you were actually to hear the voice of Jehovah proclaiming to you your duty, or your doom? Would you not tremble?

How did Israel hear at Sinai, when the awful voice of the Lord of Hosts shook the solid mountain, and smote every heart with fear and awe! O they felt then that they could not stand before that awful Lord God! How earnestly did they implore that they might not themselves hear that dread voice again, but that Moses might stand between themselves and the Lord and hear from Him and communicate to them?

And is it not most fit that you no less than they, should hear the word of God with fear and solemn awe?

6. You should hear with an intense desire to learn what the will of God is that you may do it whatever it may be. Now if you do not hear with a determination to obey, your hearing is only tempting God. It is an insult to God of the foulest stamp. Willing and ready to know

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your duty--but your heart fully set to disregard it however clearly known! What can be more horrid impiety than this!

7. You should hear with your heart set upon present obedience. You should not merely intend to do at some future time the duty you may learn to day; but you should fully determine to do present known duty immediately.

Moreover your heart should be thoroughly set to do your duty fully--not partially; and perpetually,--not merely for the present hour.

8. You must also hear with penitence for past neglect. How many times have you heard in vain? And is it not fit that for this you should stand before God with a broken heart?

9. You must hear with implicit confidence in God. Else of what use can it be to you. The Bible says the Jews were not benefited by their hearing because it was not mixed with faith. So unless you really believe God, of what possible use can it be to you to listen to his word?

This reveals the secret why so many hear without any real profit. If they truly believed God, it would be of use to hear; but having no faith in God, all is to them as an idle tale. May it not be so with many of you?

But let us try to appreciate this subject. Imagine to yourself how you should listen if God should send an angel to speak to you, or should come to speak to you himself. Suppose that I were now to take my seat, and that God should fill this house with his own voice. You would see no physical form but you would hear a voice, and know it to be the voice of the great God. How would awe and wakeful attention hold your mind in such dread moments! Oh, you would say--this is the great God! This is that Being in whose hand our breath is, and whom by our sins we have offended! O will he forgive us graciously for Christ's sake, or frown upon us in his righteous wrath?

Or again, suppose God speaks by an angel. The angel comes and takes his position before you. Suppose you were to see him come down from heaven in robes of dazzling light and glory; you see he holds in his hand a book and every page of it is luminous with unearthly radiance. He opens it, assuring you that God sends it to you to tell you the plan of salvation and show you what you must do to be saved. Suppose the angel opens that book and expounds to you its contents;--would you not listen as for your very life? Would not the scene and its solemn responsibilities make an impression on your mind which you could never forget? Aye, indeed, as if it were embossed on your very soul;--there the living remembrance and

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impression of the truths he should explain to you would stand as if they were written with the point of a diamond.

But again, let us suppose, that an apostle should come or one of the prophets of yet more ancient time; suppose one of them to be sent from the other world and you were assured of the fact; would you not listen with amazing attention?

Or still again, suppose that God should send to you an inspired man, and you knew him to be inspired; would you not even then listen with wakeful, thrilling interest? Would you not yield your utmost attention to such messages from the living God?

But here you have the living oracles of Jehovah. Here they are in the language of men: and yet you know they come from God. Suppose it to be the fact that God has chosen to reveal himself to you just in this way, rather than by making his own voice distinctly and awfully audible, or rather than by an angel radiant with glory--or rather than by sending from the other world a prophet or an apostle, or rather than by sending to you an inspired preacher; and the reason of his choice has been that he might put you on a more effective trial and see whether you would believe him on such evidence as your reason tells you is adequate, and see moreover whether you will under such circumstances search for truth as for hid treasures. Suppose you understand the precise nature of your trial; you know that it turns very much upon the point whether you will hear the voice of God through his word and his preached gospel or not;--now, knowing all this, will you give heed to the warning voice of God and listen to his truth? O how you would search this truth if you understood the results of the trial by which the Lord is now trying you to see if you will indeed obey his voice though it comes to you through the silent words of the book and the merely human voice of one who is a frail mortal, like yourselves!

REMARKS

1. Many seem to pay as little attention to the word of God as if no such injunction were found in the bible. They act as if they had never thought of the solemn responsibility of hearing with serious attention to the word of the Lord. It would seem from their conduct as if they were not aware that God had over and over again reminded them of this solemn responsibility.

Even among us, there are those who pay not half so much attention to a solemn message which God sends by one commissioned to preach his gospel as they would to a young man's commencement

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speech, or to the monthly declamations; not half so much as they would to a stump speech on politics!

How can this be? Do such persons at all consider the contempt they thus pour upon God? Would they treat their Governor or their President, as they do God? And do they know that this is that God in whose hand their breath is?

2. Men ought to know that all their hearing of the gospel, is either "a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death." Do you realize this, dear hearer? Are you aware how much this hearing affects your moral state?

You might watch this point, and mark how your hearing of the gospel affects your moral state. You might doubtless notice how your heart becomes hardened by careless, inattentive hearing, and how declension steals on apace while you get no strength from the preached gospel.

Or on the other hand you might notice how your spiritual strength is renewed when your heart takes hold of the sermons you hear as the hungry man takes hold of suitable food set before him. By a figure at once fit and beautiful, does Paul say--"We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are a savor of death unto death, to the other, a savor of life unto life." So to some of you, no doubt, the gospel preached is "death unto death"--accumulated guilt and damnation; while to others it is "life unto life," increasing knowledge and piety, and augmented glory.

3. We may see how it is that many become so exceedingly hardened. Such persons often seem not aware that they are becoming greatly hardened, or perhaps that they have become so already. They seem not sensible of the fact that the hearing of the gospel is altogether vain and worse than vain, and that they really hear so as to resist the truth and acquire the habit of being utterly insensible to its claims.

It may be so with some of you. You may have taken so little heed to what you hear that now it does you absolutely no good at all to hear a sermon or to read your bibles. You might hear or read, but the truth has utterly ceased to make any impression.

If you have reached a state so hardened, you are in as bad a predicament as you need to be this side of hell.

4. How exceedingly mad persons are for taking credit to themselves for going to the house of God, when really they have no intention of "taking heed how they hear." They come with no desire

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whatever of obeying the word of God; indeed nothing is farther from their thoughts than this. They go to church only that they may have it to say they have been there. They go for the credit of going--because they do not like to incur the disgrace of not going.

Suppose your child should come to you each morning and say--Father, what do you want that I should do today? But having heard, he goes his way, and never thinks for a moment of doing the first thing you desire him to do. So he does day after day--hearing, but never doing, and withal congratulating himself for having done so nobly. O, indeed, who had done like him--every morning he came and asked his parent what he should do:--but never in one instance did he obey.

So that young man or woman in this assembly, may have gone a hundred times to hear what God, the Lord will say--but having heard and learned, they never in one instance have done it. So does the devil go to meeting;--the bible says he goes:--but does he hear and obey? Not he--and suppose he too should strut about and glory in his good deeds inasmuch as he goes to meeting! As well might he do this, as any of those careless hearers and proud formalists who glory in it that they do the same thing.

5. Every seventh day is a sabbath. Every seven years of your life makes up one year of sabbaths. Every sabbath school child seven years old has therefore seen one year of sabbaths. Each youth fourteen years old has spent two full years of sabbaths--time enough to go half through college. Have those youths now fourteen years old, been learning of God and of his truth so that they can pass examination?

Another class have lived twenty one years. These have filled up three years of sabbaths--time enough to have gone three fourths of the way through college. O think of your examination. Are you ready to meet it and to pass it honorably?

Others have lived twenty eight years--making four years of sabbaths--time enough to go through college--time enough to get a college education in the principal branches of literature and science.

Now suppose you had studied your Algebra and Latin as you have your bibles, and heard scientific lectures as you have sermons;--how much science would you now have?

But let us come up among the fathers--the men of gray hairs; how many years of sabbaths have you lived? Think of it; how many whole years made up of Sabbaths! O! have you taken heed? Have you studied the great things of the bible with the utmost diligence and

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intensity? What do you know of God's word? How many of its promises do you really understand?

6. How perfectly shocking and astounding is the manner in which many persons treat the word of God! Suppose an angel should visit this place--should really come down among yourselves with a message from the great God! He summons the people together, and the most of them come. But instead of attending with all your souls to what he may bring from God relating to your salvation, many of you are gazing about upon one another, and during the whole time he is speaking to you, you are thinking about any thing and every thing else except the very thing of which he is speaking, so that it would be hard to say which is the most stupid--the people that sit before him, or the seats they sit on. O, surely there is not another world in the universe where this would not be looked upon as perfect madness! What do they think of it in heaven? Suppose an angel should pass among those shining hosts and tell them how the messages of God are received in this world. And suppose he should speak of it in some such manner as this. It is common there for men to pay the least possible attention to the messengers whom God sends among them, and all this is natural enough too. O, you see the Lord is only telling them some things of little consequence about their salvation--that is all--you know all that is really nothing to them.

O tell me;--what would they think of such an angel as this? What shuddering amazement would run through all their ranks to hear such words, in such a strain!

But if such a state of mind ought to seem strange and even horrid in heaven, how ought it to seem here among you?

7. There are some here as to whom I have little hope of making any impression on their minds. O how astonishing, I have often said to myself--how astonishing that they should be always hearing, and only going still farther and farther away from God and from heaven! O how will they stand before God in the great day of trial!

Others hear with so much scepticism, it can do them no good. How surpassingly strange it is that men should be skeptical respecting the revealed word of God! Surely God has made the evidence in support of his bible clear enough to convince any unprejudiced mind.

8. In view of the solemn responsibilities of giving heed to the word of the Lord, I want to ask the listeners here to day, how will you yourselves regard it when you come to your death bed? What are your anticipations now of that solemn hour and of its reflections? Do you

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now expect that then, your conscience will pronounce its approving "well done?"

And how will it be with you when you pass beyond that death bed scene to your final account before the great God? Are you ready for that dread account? If you were then to pass an examination as to your attainments in divine science, as some of the professors here examine their pupils in human science and literature, could you pass the examination? Are you quite clear that you have at least been diligent, so that you shall have no occasion to reproach yourself for culpable neglect?

9. It is infinitely important that you should make up your mind at once to hear God's truth as you know you should. Every thing depends on your coming to this determination now, and saying--"I will at once and henceforth listen to God as for my life."

You who are professors of religion, how do you hear? Can you go before God now in your closets and say;--"Lord, I have heard thy word as for my life--I have given up my whole soul to understand and to obey all thy truth." Who of you can say this in the deep sincerity of your souls?

And what sinner in this house can say this? Who of you is prepared to say solemnly,--"O Lord God Almighty, the great and heart-searching God, I have heard thy words now these many days, and I have always listened with serious attention; my mother taught me about thee my God, and my duty to thee, and my young heart hailed the first knowledge of God with joyful welcome."

Who of you can say, "I have always been a prayerful student of the bible--I have always obeyed its heaven-sent truth?" Must you not rather say,--"I have been guilty--I am covered with shame--I have treated thy word with contempt--I have turned away my ear and my heart from hearing thy words; thou hast risen morning by morning, and sent me line upon line and precept upon precept, but my heart has always been as an adamant stone; Alas, I am still in my sins, although thou hast sent me thy word and thy Son--although thou hast done all for me that could be done, yet am I still in my sins, condemned, and ready to sink down to hell."

Sinner, let me ask you here to day, if this shall be your course any longer? Do you say No; by the grace of God it shall be so no longer--from this good hour, I give my being up to be influenced by the word of God? So do, dear hearer, and it shall be your life. By all the peril of a guilty soul in its sins, I beseech you, give up your heart

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now to most solemn and fixed attention to the word of the Lord your God.

PROFESSOR FINNEY'S LETTERS TO CHRISTIANS

December 23, 1846

Dear Bro. Cowles;

Will you permit me through the columns of the O. Evangelist, to address a few lines to Christians on several highly practical and important subjects.

I will begin with the inquiry,

WHAT IS SIN?

Sin is the transgression of the law of God. The law of God requires supreme and perfect love to God, and equal love to man. In other words, the law of God requires disinterested, perfect, universal benevolence or good will to being. The consecration of all we are and have to the promotion of his glory, and the highest good of his kingdom. That "whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we should do all for the glory of God." That we should have a good reason for all we do or omit. That this reason should be that in our estimation the glory of God and the highest good of being demands it.

Sin is the opposite of all this. It is consecration of self-interest and self-gratification. It is self-seeking instead of seeking the good of universal being. It consists in choosing the wrong end and preferring our own interest and gratification to the infinitely higher interests of God and the universe. Sin is a choice, a state of mind, and does not consist in outward actions. It is manifested by outward acts, but does not consist in them. Sin consists in willing and acting without good reasons or in a manner not demanded or approved by reason. Holiness is obedience to the demands of the reason or to the law of God as it lies revealed in the reason. Sin is obeying the law of the sensibility. That is, sin consists in giving up the will to seek the gratification of the desires, appetites, passions and propensities. Every moral agent knows and really assumes, in spite of himself, that he ought not to be selfish, that he ought to obey reason and not appetite. This knowledge he has and cannot but have from the laws of his nature. Selfishness then is sin in him, whether he thinks of it as such or not. Selfishness is

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obeying the desires, appetites, propensities, as I have said. When we act simply in obedience to appetites or passions, we sin, whether we think of it in that light or not. Sometimes, indeed, reason sanctions and demands the appeasing of appetites. Under certain circumstances this is for the glory of God, and for our highest good and for the highest good of his kingdom. In such cases the gratification is not strictly in obedience to the appetites, but obedience to reason which says, seek the object and appease the appetites. But except the reason approves the gratification, it is sin. Let it be understood then, that self-gratification is always a sin, unless it be sanctioned and demanded by the law of the intelligence, or which is the same thing, by the law of God. Unless the law of benevolence demands it, and unless we do it for that reason, or in obedience to that law, we sin.

We must have a good, that is, a benevolent reason for all we do. The question, always to be asked, is this. Does the glory of God and the highest good of being demand this? Have I a good reason for this course, such an one as I am confident God will approve? I fear that many professed Christians have very loose ideas on the subject of sin, and are living in daily and constant sin without seriously inquiring into the nature of sin. This is infinitely dangerous, and my spirit is often stirred within me when I consider the conduct of many professing Christians, and the fact that without being at all aware of it they are certainly in sin and in the way to hell.

I propose with your leave to address to them, as frequently as I can get time to write, some serious and searching questions in regard to some of their habits and practices. And may the Lord search us all out.

Your brother,
C.G. FINNEY

Sermons by the Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY

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ALL THINGS FOR GOOD TO THOSE THAT LOVE GOD

January 6, 1847

"For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." --Rom. 8:28

In illustrating the subject presented in these words, I shall,

I. SHOW WHAT THE PASSAGE MEANS.

II. ILLUSTRATE THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED.

III. NOTICE SOME PARTICULARS AS ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS TRUTH.

IV. SHOW HOW WE KNOW THIS TRUTH, AS THE TEXT AFFIRMS THAT WE DO.

I. The most important question pertaining to our first topic of remark is, Does the text affirm a universal proposition?

1. The language of the text is universal. It affirms in an unqualified manner that all things work together for good to God's friends. Now it is a good rule of interpretation to understand scripture as it reads, that is, according to its most obvious sense,--unless the nature of the affirmation, or some circumstances pertaining to it seem urgently to demand a modification of this meaning. All sound-minded men follow this rule in interpreting both the Bible and all other books and documents.

2. There is nothing in the nature of the case to limit the meaning of this language. On this point especially there is ample room to enlarge very greatly--but my time will not permit.

3. There is nothing in the context which demands any limitation, but much on the contrary which favors the universal construction.

4. There is nothing anywhere in scripture that conflicts with this, understood as a universal truth. On the contrary the Bible throughout teaches us that every thing in the whole plan of God's universal government conspires to this result. All is adapted to befriend his people and to promote their highest good. God is evermore

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controlling all things for the good of his children. He is their great and good Father.

II. The manner in which this result is accomplished.

This point deserves special consideration, because there are many things, affecting true Christians, which in their present operation seem to work together for their evil and not for their good.

It would require many sermons to investigate this subject thoroughly. At present I can only sketch a few leading principles.

The highest well-being of moral agents depends upon their holiness. This is perfectly obvious. Their holiness, moreover, is conditioned upon knowledge. There can be no holiness in intelligent being without knowledge, and holiness can advance only as knowledge advances. In fact, holiness is nothing else but conformity of heart to knowledge, so that of course there must be knowledge or there could not be holiness. Hence knowledge is both the condition and measure of holiness.

Consequently every thing that is a means of knowledge is also a means of holiness. Whatever gives moral agents a knowledge of themselves will if they are holy in character, increase their holiness, for they would cease to be holy if they did not use their knowledge to increase their holiness.

Now all events that occur are providential;--that is, they occur under the universal government of God, and occur as they do either because the hand of God controls and shapes them, or because his wisdom permits them to occur as they do, rather than interpose to prevent them. Hence all events reveal God. No event can possibly occur which shall not teach moral agents something concerning God, or themselves, or something useful that they need to know. These events also teach us very much that reveals our relations to God, and hence our duties towards him. And these are precisely the things that are requisite to augment the blessedness of intelligent moral agents.

These remarks apply especially to all those events that fall directly within the range of our present knowledge. But things not within our present knowledge are so related to things that are, as to have a remote bearing upon us, and hence will ultimately come to be known to us. It is probably not too much to presume that all events that ever did or ever shall occur in this world will ultimately be known to all the people of God, and hence will have an important bearing upon their holiness and highest well-being.

III. I am to specify some particulars which serve to illustrate the doctrine of our text.

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1. What we call mercies work out the good of those that love God. For if men love God, these mercies quicken their love and gratitude. Every real Christian knows this. It is a precious part of his daily experience.

2. What we call rebukes have also the same tendency to good. Though they may seem evil, yet are they really among the good things that flow to us from the hand of our great Father. They serve to increase our knowledge of God. They show us his faithfulness and assure us that his heart is thoroughly set upon correcting all in us that is wrong--and strengthening all that is right.

The rebukes of God's providence naturally serve to increase our virtue, and hence are often among the very best things God can give us.

3. Again, the crosses of saints work together for their good. Those very things that disappoint their plans, and frustrate their schemes are often among the indispensable things for their real and highest welfare. They are the means by which God breaks them off from their own ways and shows them that they must not have any ways of their own at all. While men are in a state in which they can be crossed, they of course need more discipline. You may recollect the remark made by Dr. Payson that since he had given up his own will and quite lost it so as to have no will of his own, he had not known a single disappointment. He was perfectly satisfied with every thing just as God arranged and ordered it, for he had no other will than God's. Now God is seeking to produce such a state of mind in his children that they will say--"I want only to do this or that according to the will of God. Nothing pleases me except what pleases Him. I want to learn His will before I have any special preference of my own. Then if His apparent will changes, I am perfectly pleased, for His will is always best."

Now this state of mind should extend to all events wherein the special will of God is not known by revelation. Hence crosses are exceedingly well calculated for doing good to God's people and are most kindly and wisely designed for this end. We are not to suppose that it is agreeable to our Father to perplex and distress us; but it is agreeable to Him to discipline and chasten us, because he knows that the results are so precious.

It often happens that persons come to see the truth of this in their own case. Then they say, "Now I see how well it has been for me to be disappointed, and how good and wise my Heavenly Father has been in doing it." When I have seen men eagerly set upon some

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earthly good, I have said to myself, They need to be disappointed, and God will doubtless do it. I shall think it strange if He does not. If they are real Christians and God loves and cares for them as his children, He will surely bring them under discipline to break off their hold upon the world and save their souls.

4. Afflictions should doubtless be accounted among our good things. The Bible teaches this in many passages. One says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Another testifies-- "I know that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me." Afflictions therefore are not to be regarded as evidences of peculiarly great guilt in those who experience them. The case of Job seems to have been designed to teach us this lesson. They rather evince the special faithfulness of God. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

5. All those trials which we call temptations are to be accounted among these good things. They very often establish our virtue and greatly develop and strengthen our graces. For this manifestly they were intended. Hence the Apostle says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."--James 1:2, 3.

6. The responsibilities which God throws upon His children are among the things that work for their good. We may perhaps be made to groan out under these things, and possibly stagger under their burden, yet shall they work out good at last. They are perhaps the very things that are needed to develop our powers. It may be that nothing less than these burdens would make us feel our need of God's daily support, and thus discipline us to daily dependence.

Moreover, some perhaps are naturally so sluggish that God could not save them if He should not lay upon them almost crushing responsibilities.

7. Our own infirmities work out our good. How often do we see this! Physical infirmities and frailties teach us our dependence upon God, and bring us to walk softly with Him and before Him. They often compel us to exercise sobriety, temperance and self-control, and in this way often become our greatest blessings.

Paul had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him. What it was we are not told, but the result plainly shows that it was greatly useful to him.

Now all such things are in certain points of view greatly trying and painful, yet in other respects, they are exceedingly valuable. And when we shall ultimately come to see all their bearings, we shall see

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that Infinite Wisdom sent them, or at least permitted them, and then overrules them for our good.

8. Our very mistakes often work for our good. Said a pious man once who had fallen into a great error--"Now that is just like me"--that is just like me. I see it now. I might not have seen myself as I am, if that had not happened."

9. The same is doubtless true of the sins of those that love God. Peter's great sin in denying his Lord seems to have been greatly blessed--that is overruled so as to work out good to him. So with the sins of the children of God generally. Yet they have no excuse for themselves and are none the less guilty for committing them, because God is so good and wise as to counteract some of their evil tendencies and bring good out from them instead of unmingled evil.

10. The infirmities, mistakes and sins of others are among the things that work for our good. Who does not know how much we are benefited by witnessing the sins of others! No thanks indeed to them that their sins are a warning to us, nor can this circumstance lessen their guilt.

Also the afflictions of others often work out great good to us. The afflictions which we see others suffering may and often do have much the same beneficial result as if we endured them ourselves. So wonderfully has God framed the social economy of our nature and of society.

Finally, it is plain that all events that occur under the providence of God serve to promote the good of His people.

But we must hasten to enquire,

IV. How is it that we know this.

The Apostle says, "We know that all things work together for good to those that love God." Now we cannot suppose he meant to say merely that all inspired men know this. His meaning doubtless is that all Christians may know it. For,

(1.) Reason affirms that it must be so under the government of an infinitely wise and benevolent God. No one can take just views of the character of God without seeing that He must have had a plan for governing this world--must have foreseen all possible and actual results--and must have provided that nothing should occur in vain. That is, He must have determined to prevent the occurrence of all those events which He could not overrule for so much good as on the whole to justify Him in permitting their occurrence. These conclusions are either the direct affirmation of reason, or they are arrived at by the plainest inferences from its intuitions.

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(2.) But it is a truth of revelation, and Christians may know it because the Bible teaches it. The Bible every where directly or indirectly teaches that God is overruling all events for the good of the righteous.

(3.) Experience and observation universally teach the same thing. Who does not know that all real Christians can say this. Looking over their past history, they can say-- "This and that--yea all these things, have been made, through divine mercy and wisdom, to work out my good and fit me for more usefulness here, or, at least for more glory hereafter.["] It is instructive to see how many of the saints of God can set up here their Ebenezer,. and testify-- "Hitherto has the Lord helped me!"

REMARKS

1. We may blame ourselves for that which upon the whole we do not regret. For example, a man may commit a sin, and of course, he is guilty and inexcusable for this, and ought most surely to blame himself for committing it. His intention is all wrong and he is entirely to blame for it. Yet on the whole it may not be a matter of regret that the sin viewed as an event, occurred, because God has brought a vast amount of good from it.

As a full illustration of this point, take the sin of Satan in tempting Judas and the sin of Judas in yielding to the temptation to betray Christ. This transaction in both Satan and Judas was all evil and nothing else but evil; and was none the less a sin and a great sin because the Lord overruled it for so much good. Yet this good result has been infinitely great. The event therefore is not to be regretted on the whole though Satan and Judas are none the less to be blamed because the wisdom and the love of God have brought so much good from their sins.

You will all recollect the view given in the Bible of the sin of Joseph's brethren in selling him into Egypt. "Be not grieved, said he, nor angry with yourselves that ye sent me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life." They had sinned, but God had educed so much good from their sinful act, that it was now fit that they should rejoice in those manifestations of wisdom and love.

2. God may blame us and often does, when perhaps on the whole He does not see cause to regret the occurrence of the event. Doubtless God blamed both Judas and Satan, yet He does not regret on the whole that great event towards which their sin directly contributed. Referring to this event, Peter said, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and

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with wicked hands have crucified and slain." Their hands were none the less wicked for the good which the Lord brought forth as a result from their evil doing. And it surely may be that the event as a whole even, including the sins of Judas and of the wicked Jews, is not regretted by the Most High.

3. It does not follow from this that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good; or that God could not bring about a still greater good if all his creatures were perfectly obedient. It cannot be shown that in every instance where sin occurs, more good results than would have resulted if holiness had been in its stead. Indeed we cannot conceive of any higher blessedness to the created universe than universal holiness and its consequent happiness. Now if in every instance when sin occurs, holiness under the same circumstances had occurred, the result would of course be universal holiness, and a degree of blessedness, than which we can conceive of none higher. But it is not my intention now to enter at length into this often disputed subject.

I am aware that those who maintain that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good argue thus;--all holiness depends upon knowledge of God; many truths respecting the character of God could never have been revealed if sin had not occurred; hence sin is necessary to the greatest amount of holiness and consequently of real good.

This reasoning would have weight if the case were such that creatures could not be holy without such knowledge of God as nothing can reveal but the occurrence of sin. But none can suppose that such can be the case of moral agents under the government of God. The argument therefore only shows that, sin having occurred, the Lord makes the wisest possible use of it--a fact which none can reasonably doubt.--It altogether fails to prove that the state of the universe is better now than it would have been if all had persevered in holiness under the light they had.

But it is especially to my purpose to maintain that God's overruling all things for good to his people forms no apology or excuse for sin. No thanks to the guilty sinner that a God of infinite wisdom can and does manage to work good out of his intended evil. No thanks to him;--he is altogether evil and wicked. He does not use it for good himself, nor mean it for good, no more than the devil did in the case of Judas, or than Judas himself did. Suppose that Christ's death, and his death in precisely that manner, was the very best thing that could have occurred;--no thanks to Judas or Satan for that; they

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meant only evil, and all the resulting good must be ascribed to God alone.

Hence it does not follow that we should do evil that good may come. In fact, it is in the nature of the case impossible that a man should do evil for the sake of its resulting good. It is impossible that a man should sin for the sake of doing good thereby, and with this design. Suppose a man to say--let me sin on now for this is the way to do good! Pause a moment and ask--What is sin? Surely it is not doing anything with the design of bringing about good; no but, sin is mere selfishness--is always a trampling down of the greater good for the sake of a far less good for myself. Sin, therefore, never can have the greatest good for its object. Every act that has the greatest good for its design, object or motive, is holiness, not sin.

I am fully aware that the doctrine of my text has been greatly abused. Men have said, "Because sin results in good, therefore let us sin on, and leave it with God to bring out the good which he needs sin in order to educe."--But this is an outrageous perversion of this precious truth. The fact that God can overrule sin for good affords not the least mitigation of the guilt of any sinner. Every sinner is just as guilty as if all sin tended to evil only and as if God had no power or disposition to bring any good out of it whatever.

4. It often happens that we are unable to see how the providence of God will result in our ultimate good. Events that affect us or our friends look utterly dark and we seem almost compelled to say with Jacob, "All these things are against me. All this must be evil to me and mine, and cannot work out my good.["] But in such cases we are bound as believing children to dismiss the views which sight gives us, and fall back upon faith. We must now believe God, who says "All things shall work together for good to those that love me." Let all my children believe that and trust their own kind Father!

Now it is not wonderful that in a world like this, framed for a state of trial, events should often assume such an aspect as this. It results in the trial of our faith. And here apply those most pertinent and consoling words of Jesus Christ-- "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Howmuchsoever, then, the events of divine providence may make us smart, or throw us into perplexity, still let us fall back upon the unfailing promise-- "All things shall work together for good to those that love God."

5. We see why we should give thanks for all things, and why every thing that occurs is, in reference to God and His agency in it, [a] matter of gratitude. We see why we should thank Him for every

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thing he brings about directly by his providence, and also for every thing He suffers to be done by moral agents, Himself not preventing them from doing it. We should thank God for not preventing the murderous deeds of Judas and of Satan; for He had wise and good ends in view in not preventing them. Under the circumstances, the Lord did the very best thing he could in permitting those wicked beings to go on, and consummate the murder of his own dear Son.

The same is true of every sin that occurs in the universe. So far as God has any thing to do with it, we thank Him, because He does all things well; always doing even in respect to sin the very best thing that under all the circumstances of the case, He can do.--For this then, we thank Him. But for what sinners do, we cannot thank them, for they intend only evil. They are to be cursed--not thanked for their sins, and cursed none the less because God always overrules their sin to make it result in just as much incidental good as He can.

6. We see why it is that we are required to rejoice always. Why should not saints rejoice always in all that God is doing? Many of these things, I know, often seem for the present, not joyous but grievous, yet in their remote and ultimate bearings, they always work out great good, and the greatest good which under the circumstances God could effect. A man who is sick may need to resort to many unpleasant medicines; if maimed, he may need for his best good a painful surgical operations; and these things though sad in many of their bearings, are yet good in their ultimate results, and therefore it is cause of gratitude, when they are skilfully and successfully performed. So with many of the events of life. They come, unmingled with sorrow, but good in their ultimate result, and it would be a great mistake to estimate them only by their present evil, leaving out of view the greater resulting good.

7. It sometimes happens that persons are in this state; "I know," say they, that "all things work together for good to those that love God;" but I am thrown into such circumstances of perplexity and darkness that I cannot tell whether I am one of those who love God or not. The only emotions of which I am sensible are those of pain and agony. I am full of distress, and I can scarcely think of any thing else. Especially I cannot feel on any other subjects but my own trials and sufferings.

Now all such persons should look at the attitude of their will and not of their emotions. If they would do so, they would see through this mist, and their perplexities would no longer harass them.

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How often have I seen individuals in great distress, under deep trials and perplexities; but strengthening themselves in the Lord their God, they came forth from those scenes of tempest as the sun breaks out from an ocean of storms, all the more glorious for the long and fearful hiding of his beams. So the tried and believing Christian comes forth from his sorest trials, having learned lessons concerning God unknown to him before. Now he sees that his trials are among the greatest blessings he ever received from the Lord.

8. What ever befalls the saints is to be rejoiced in. Trials may befall our friends,--perhaps our own children; but if we have evidence that they love God, we may rejoice in every thing that occurs to them. What if afflictions come--wave after wave; all things shall issue in their ultimate good;--this is as sure as the word and the government of the eternal God. Even if we should see such a case as that of Job--and none perhaps ever looked more dark--yet even in view of such a case we should rejoice; for we might know that in every similar case as in that, God prepares his afflicted child for a double blessing.

So also in the trial of Abraham's faith in the matter of offering up Isaac. In this case some things are developed, not often noticed--things pertinent to the case of some Christians at the present day. You recollect, God commanded him to go and take his own son and put him to death, and then offer him as a sacrifice on an altar. What! Abraham might naturally have said, what! God command me to kill my own son? The devil might do this--but how can it be that God should do it? Surely I never heard any thing like this in the ways of God before! This contradicts every thing I have ever seen or heard of the Lord Jehovah! He commands me to commit one of the most horrid crimes that ever can be committed. And then this is my son of promise, and God has said that out of him he would make a great nation.

Surely this was one of the most severe trials. It threw Abraham upon his naked faith. He had no resource but to fall back upon simple trust in the Lord, and say, God has spoken--even the wise, the good, the just God, and now let me trust his name! He can raise my Isaac from the dead if need be in order to fulfill his promise.

Thus he stood his ground, and passed this great and fearful trial. O, how useful and blessed were the results of this trial to Abraham, during all his future life and through all his glorious existence. How gloriously has this example of faith stood out before all the children of God from that day to this! How many have had their faith quickened, directed, edified, by this great example! And perhaps it is

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not too much to suppose that sooner or later all the angels of heaven will be blessed by the far-reaching influence of this example of trusting and obeying God.

It is a great mistake to overlook these future results of our trials. We ought ever to keep them full in our view. Doing so is indispensable in order to be able to rejoice continually in the Lord, and in all the events that occur under his all-pervading providence. If we fail to do so, how many things will disconcert us and make us stumble to the sore wounding of our peace with God and of our confidence in him.

In continuing this subject I shall show that the opposite to the doctrine of the text is true of the wicked; --all things shall work together for their evil.

ALL EVENTS, RUINOUS TO THE SINNER

January 20, 1847

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." -
-Rom. 8:28

In my further discussion of this subject I shall attempt to show that all events conspire to ruin the obstinate and finally impenitent sinner.

This is not directly taught in the text, but is implied in it, and is abundantly taught us in the Bible.

It will be my object,

I. TO SHOW THAT THIS IS AND MUST BE A UNIVERSAL TRUTH.

II. TO POINT OUT SOME PARTICULARS THAT WILL ILLUSTRATE IT.

III. TO SHOW THAT WE REALLY KNOW THIS TO BE TRUE, EVEN AS WE KNOW ITS OPPOSITE TO BE TRUE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

I. To show that this is and must be a universal truth.

It may be shown to be so in a great many ways. For example, thus: Moral obligation is conditioned upon knowledge and is always equal to knowledge. Whatever, therefore, increases knowledge increases guilt, if obligation is not complied with but the individual continues to resist the light and its claims.

One other point. Increasing guilt augments the sinner's ruin. The more guilty, the greater his punishment. Hence whatever augments his guilt conspires and conduces to aggravate his ruin.

It cannot be doubted a moment that all events that fall under the sinner's observation, or become known to him by any means whatever in this life, will increase his knowledge of God and of course his duty and obligation. All these will consequently conspire at once to augment his guilt and damnation.

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All those events that remain unknown to the sinner during his present life may become known to him in the future life, and then may work out their legitimate results--increased knowledge--augmented guilt--more aggravated doom.

This whole point may be rendered more plain and practical by some detail of illustration.

All the gifts of providence conspire to work out the sinner's ruin.

Of these the first is the gift of existence. The existence which God gives the sinner is a blessing to him if he uses it aright, but a fearful curse to him if he abuses it. But he does abuse it in the worst possible manner so long as he lives in sin. Just so long, he devotes the existence which God gives him to rebellion against his Maker--and what can be a greater and fouler abuse of existence than this! Every moment of life spent in sin must therefore prove a curse to the sinner. It goes to aggravate his guilt and of course, his ruin.

And no sinner can avoid this fearful result, if he will persist in sinning. Exist he must--he cannot prevent it--cannot put an end to his existence--for death only changes its place and mode--does not bring it to an end. Live, then, each sinner must, and if he will go on in sin, he must go on augmenting his guilt and consequent ruin.

Reason is another gift of providence--a precious blessing if devoted to God--if used legitimately and faithfully according to its nature and design;--but if trampled down, abused, set at naught--if its demands for right and for God are all repelled and denied--how fearful the guilt which its possession and abuse involves!

In what respect do you differ from the lower orders of created beings? They have understanding; they have will;--but they lack reason;--this then is your pre-eminence above them. And will you abuse this and bring yourself quite down to a level with them in your conduct? How can you do so without awful, shameful, damning guilt?

Conscience is one of the functions of the reason.--Did your conscience ever stand up and accuse you? Did it ever set your sins in order before your eyes and make you see and feel their perfect guilt? If so, then you know something of that deathless worm of your future cup;--you have had a little foretaste of the horrors of self-accusation and self-condemnation. O there is nothing in your existence so terrible as this! If you allow yourself to trample down this law of God developed in your reason, you will arouse against your own soul a fearful power within your own bosom that you can never resist or appease! It will be heard--that dreadful tone of self-accusing--self-

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reproach;--what can ever allay the pungency and anguish of its tortures!

Next look at what are most commonly intended by the gifts and bounties of providence--the things on which you are wont to lay much stress. Suppose you have health and wealth, friends and education;--what are they? are they working together for your good--your real, highest, eternal good? This turns entirely on the question whether they lead you to repentance, gratitude and love to God, or whether they only yield you the pleasures of sin for a season, augment your mercies, your ingratitude, your guilt and consequent damnation. You may call these things good, and if you would use them in serving God and let them lead your heart to Him in love and gratitude and sweet obedience, they would be truly a good to you; but if you remain a sinner, you are of course the greater sinner for having received and abused these greater mercies, and they can only work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of damnation. You suffer the Lord to load you down with his blessings here, and then abuse them so that they shall become only as mill-stones about your neck in the lake that burneth with fire forever. You know it must be so, and cannot be otherwise.

So it will be with all those things by which you amuse yourself and seek to augment your enjoyment in sin. You count yourself most happy if you can secure things;--but Oh! your final disappointment when you shall see how they are converted into curses to your soul! These very amusements may have diverted your attention from saving your soul. They may have fanned and fed the fires of unhallowed passion--they may have made you ten fold more the child of hell than otherwise you could have been, and thus they may have exceedingly augmented your final ruin.

Again, what you deem your good fortune results in the same augmentation of guilt and damnation.--You deem yourself most fortunate if you can secure earthly good;--but O! how do these things--abused--work out your deeper damnation! How they help to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath! Your Father sent that good fortune to turn your eye toward his kind hand--to touch your heart with gratitude, and lead you to repentance;--you abuse and pervert every thing, and swell the fearful measure of your awful doom!

Let the wicked go on his way according to his heart's desire, filling his cup with earthly joy, and finding all things prosper in his hand;--yet saith the word of Jehovah--"Say ye to the wicked, it shall be ill with him;--for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

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Yet again, the trials and the curses that fall to the sinner's lot shall all have the same result. You complain of these things as if they worked out only evil and as if God designed them for no other end; but in this you altogether fail to comprehend the gracious designs of your Heavenly Father. He sends you earthly good to melt your heart and you abuse it and wax more hard in sin;--then why should he not change his hand and at least make trial, of possibly reverses and disappointments will not bring you to reflection; or to see whether He cannot tear you away from your idols and make you search for the living God. He does so; but all is of no avail; you only fret and complain. Not so do Christians. If God sends them mercies they are grateful;--if chastisements, they are submissive. But how different is it with you! If God sends you mercies, you are thankless. You sit every day at the table which your Heavenly Father spreads and loads down for you; but you can do it each day with a heart as cold as a stone. It seems to be entirely out of the question for you to think of recognizing your Father's hand, or your own augmented obligation to serve and please him.

If on the other hand He sends afflictions upon you, you complain and harden, not humble, yourself under his chastising hand. O, you ought to understand that these trials are a part of the discipline with which God seeks to subdue your soul to his scepter. And you ought to know that if his efforts fail, it is all evil to you, utterly and infinitely evil. Oh, indeed! if all the resources of infinite power, wisdom and love fail to change you, what can be more desperate than your case or more guilty than your heart?

Your whole life of impenitence is filled up with such results. Does the Lord take away your friend? Then you repine; you feel that there never was a case so aggravated as yours, and you will not bow under the hand that chastises you. How unlike the Christians who when smitten looks up to his own Father's hand, and bows beneath it; smiles, loves, trusts, adores. But not so do you accept the punishment of your iniquity. Every effort the Lord makes to reclaim you renders you only more hardened, more guilty, more fitted for destruction.

It is indeed grievous beyond expression to see how these things work and what results are produced by all the varied discipline which the Lord employs to save your soul. It is painful to see that all these efforts only serve to harden your heart, until the Lord is forced to say of you as in Isaiah 1. of the ancient Jews;--"Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the

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head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." The original in this passage seems to convey the idea that they had been chastised till from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet there was no longer a sound spot where another blow could be inflicted. The resources of chastisement were exhausted, and still no good result followed. So it sometimes happens that a parent will chastise his child until he has no hope that mere chastisement can do any good. This seems to be the state of mind which the Lord expresses respecting the Jews. And He often has occasion for this state of feeling towards impenitent sinners. He watches all round their path, searches out all the avenues of their heart; tries now mercies and then afflictions, and follows up the alternations perhaps year after year through a long life--but all in vain. Ah, worse,--often infinitely worse than in vain, for it only serves to augment the sinner's fearful guilt and final condemnation. Strange that sinners do not see that this is true and in the nature of the case must be. Strange you do not see that sickness, losses, judgments of every kind are designed to subdue your refractory spirit, and of course if they only serve to make you the more refractory, the result can be nothing less than a fearful aggravation of your guilt and ruin.

Thus all your sins, instead of being overruled for your good, serve only to heap up a mountain load of guilt, and swell the miseries of your doom.

Again, the deeds of others, good, or bad, only enhance your guilt. I beg of you to look a moment at this fact. You live among professed Christians. If they are faithful to God and to your soul, and adorn the gospel by their life, this only hardens your heart, for you resist all the influences of their entreaties, prayers, tears and godly life. On the other hand, if they dishonor the gospel, you take offence--you stumble over them, and become the more bold and hardened in your sins.

Now you know it would not be thus in either case with Christians. If they fell in with truly pious brethren, their hearts would be refreshed and their piety quickened; if with bad professors, the result would be to quicken them to pray, to revive their own love for Zion and their sympathy for the cause of Jesus Christ.

So also, if Christians are persecuted, it only works good to them, teaching them forbearance and forgiveness of injuries; training them to love their enemies and bless those that curse them.

Far otherwise with you, sinner. In fact, you never know what it is to be benefited by any conduct, good or bad, of your fellow-beings.

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All works only evil to you. Indeed, every thing works out evil and only evil to you. The law of God--the gospel of God--the smiles of providence or its frowns; all possible conduct of your fellow-men and all possible varieties in the course of the Lord towards you--rain or sunshine--storm or calm--prosperity or adversity--each and all serve only the one dreadful end with you--that of augmenting your guilt, and of course your final doom of misery.

Dreadful consideration!--that your character should be such that all possible events work evil and evil only to your soul! If you had a full and a just view of your case as it is, you might truly say--"Whatever happens is all evil to me. Whatever the times are--times of revival, or times of declension;--all is evil to me; times of plenty, or times of famine--all is evil to me; times of health, or times of pestilence--all is alike, evil to me. All conspire to fill up the measure of my guilt and aggravate my eternal doom."

Often in looking at this have I felt as if I should sink--the view is so saddening, so awful; sinners seem so stubborn and so refractory, and it is so obvious and sure that every thing that occurs to the sinner must work evil and evil only to his guilty soul.

Again, all those providential circumstances that befall others, result alike in evil, to the sinner. If his neighbors are sick, or if they are well, this sinner will abuse the warning voice of God through his providence. Perhaps the sinner thinks that such things as these are not going to affect his own case, but they surely will, and inevitably must. They are the voice of God to him, and he must hear or refuse. Continuing in sin, he does the latter, and of course augments his own guilt and damnation.

It matters not how these events may affect your neighbor, whether for good or for evil; they are in either case evil and only evil to you. The same event may work good to another; yet shall it be only evil to you. That funeral we attended this morning when a dead child of God was laid in the grave of the saints; they may have touched your sympathies, and you may have been moved to pity over so early a death, but you might much more reasonably pity yourself.--When I see sinners at a funeral, I know they are often saying to themselves--"I am glad that I am not there in the place of the dead;" and yet it may be better far that you should die now than that you should be spared any longer, Beyond all question it is better for you to die and be laid in the grave in the place of the first death that occurs rather than that you should live longer to make every death you hear of, only an augmented curse to yourself. O, how horrible is this!

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So also to live in a land of Bibles and Sabbaths and enjoy instruction and choice influences enough to make you and Angel of light:--and yet abusing and perverting them all, you convert them into the worst form of curses. All the means God uses to save you are working evil to you. God means them for good, but you pervert them into evil. God would bless you, but you will curse yourself by the very means He uses for blessing you. He would fain make all the events of his providence work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, but despite of the endeavors of infinite love, you persist in working out of all these things your own deeper damnation.

III. We know it to be true that all things work out evil to the sinner. Though the text does not affirm this, yet the Bible does, and so does reason, and experience and observation. It is a truth that every man's reason must affirm. Every man knows that the occurring events of God's providence increase his knowledge of God and hence his obligation to love and obey him. Of course with this increase of light comes also increasing guilt in resisting its claims, and in the train of increasing guilt comes augmented ruin.

Now every sinner must know all this to be true. There is not a sinner in this house whose reason does not affirm each step in this process of argumentation to be true, and true as to himself.

This leads me to say that every man's own experience will testify that until he turns from sin by real repentance, all the course of divine providence serves only to harden his heart. He knows that the longer he resists and the more light he has to oppose, the more hardened he becomes.

So all our observation of others testifies. We see the sinner growing old in his sins--resisting one call of God after another, breaking through every restraint, setting at naught the repeated warnings of divine providence;--and we always see such a sinner waxing fearfully hard of heart against God and the voice of his own conscience. I have often been shocked to see how fearfully hardened sinners sometimes become by resisting a long succession of means and influences adapted to bring them to repentance.

The truth we have been illustrating is evinced also by ample testimony from the word of God. The Bible seems every where to assume that all things do and shall work evil to the sinner who will not repent. Being "often reprov'd and still hardening his neck, he shall be suddenly destroyed and that without remedy."

REMARKS

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1. I remarked in my sermon this morning that Christians sometimes blame themselves for things the occurrence of which upon the whole they do not regret; so wondrously will God overrule those evil deeds of theirs for great good. Thus God will not leave them to bitter and eternal regret over the consequences of their failures or their sins, though they must forever condemn their own sins and blame themselves for sinning. It is one of the great mercies of the Lord towards them that He does not leave them under the pang of everlasting regret in view of unmingled evil resulting from their misdeeds.

But sinners are left to the double anguish of everlasting self-blame, and eternal regret over the utterly ruinous results to themselves of all their sins. Every event of their lives has been sin and only sin, and all have worked out the legitimate results of sinning, all evil to them and evil only and continually. Since they would not repent and would not open their hearts to the healing and restoring influences of God's providence and Spirit, the Lord could not counteract the natural tendency of sin on their heart to augment its moral hardness and consequently their own eternal ruin.

2. Sinners have never any good reason to rejoice as respects their own prospects. In fact, remaining in sin, they have nothing in which they can reasonably rejoice. Those very events of their lives in which they are most apt to rejoice will probably be those which above all others will fill them with anguish hereafter. Those very seasons of prosperity in which you rejoice most now may be your bitterest grounds for regret and sorrow when you shall come to see all their legitimate results upon your character and doom. So long then as you continue in sin, so long you have absolutely nothing to rejoice in. The more you rejoice and deem yourselves prosperous and happy in earthly good, the more will these very things pierce and sting your soul through all your future existence.

3. Others have no good reason to rejoice in any thing that befalls you, so long as you remain in an impenitent sinner. The only valuable hope they can have is that it may lead you to repentance. This failing, all will work for evil and only evil to the sinner.

It often happens that parents rejoice in events that befall their ungodly children. They rejoice perhaps to see them well settled in life, or peculiarly fortunate in business. But none of these things are ever looked upon on their true light except through the medium of the great truth we are now considering. Whatever leaves them still in their sins works fearful ruin to their souls, and the more joy it seems

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to bring, the more fearful will be its power to curse and embitter all their future being.

4. While it is true that no event, however grievous in itself, can befall a Christian which should make us grieve for him, it is equally true that no event can befall[1] the sinner in which we are not compelled to grieve for its results upon him. Nothing can happen to him that will not fearfully curse him, if he still persists in sin. It may be ever so well adapted for his improvement, for his best good, for his happiness;--yet shall he pervert it all to the greatest of evils to his soul.

See that young man about going to college. It might prove a blessing to him, but it will prove to him only a curse. It will increase his knowledge, and thus augment his guilt. It will give him greater pre-eminence and influence; but if he improves this for greater sin and mischief, it will curse him at the last with tenfold destruction.

Another has married him a wife--beautiful, accomplished, pious;--so much the worse for him. It only serves to swell the sum of his guilt and ruin. He may live in a land of Sabbaths, and in the midst of revivals;--so much the worse; he may have pious, praying parents;--so much the worse.

5. Sinners need not stumble at the trials of the people of God. No more or greater trials shall befall the Christian than are indispensable as means to work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The truth is, God's people need these trials. They must be carried through many a fiery ordeal.--What then? Let them rejoice, for all shall work out their good. Let them be made to weep;--it shall work for their good. Let them be sick;--it shall do them good. Let them lose their property;--it shall be for their good. Let their friends die;--all shall augment their good. Every Christian may say--whatever befalls me, the Lord will cause it to result in my greater good. Let a mighty wave dash over him, lifting high its crest and sweeping him along with torrent power--it does him good. Let another come with mighty force--it does him good. Another still;--all is good. There he stands amid those mountain-waves, happy in his God, for he believes that all shall work out good to his soul. This is only the discipline his Father sends him, and why should it not cheer his soul to think how all shall work out his eternal good.

Right over against this, every thing is occasion of grief and dismay to the sinner, no matter how joyous his soul in its approach. Whatever befalls me, he must say if he sees rightly--all is evil to me.

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Be it storm or sunshine; whether I lie down in peace, or take my bed of pain and languishing, all is prospectively evil to my soul!

How awful this condition! But it is even so; and the intelligence of every being in the universe affirms that these results are all right and as they should be.

6. All events to all eternity will make the impassable gulf between saints and sinners only the more deep and broad. The fact is, these two classes are oppositely affected by all the providences of God, and doubtless will be so, by all that shall occur to them throughout eternity. God has so constituted the human mind that in its selfish state, all right events shall work out only evil; while in its renewed state all shall work out good. Difference of character lays the foundation for this wide contrast in the result. Only the sinner himself is ultimately to blame that all things work evil to him. If he will do evil, then shall all things be converted into evil in their results to him.

7. It is infinite folly for man to estimate events only according to their present and most obvious bearings and relations. The result of this course is and always must be that men will constantly and fatally deceive themselves. If every sinner in this house could see all the final results of the events that are transpiring now, he would stand amazed and transfixed with horror. What! he would say--is untold anguish and horror coming out of this cup of my earthly joy? Oh, if sinners could clearly see these things, they would not so often bless themselves for their good fortune.

8. The arrangements of providence in respect to both saints and sinners are made with a design to illustrate the character of God. All the events of this life and all that occur throughout eternity also, will all serve to illustrate the perfections of Jehovah. Not to have arranged all things for this end would have been a great mistake--but God never makes such mistakes. A wise and glorious end in view characterized all he does.

9. It is the perverse course of the sinner and nothing else but this that makes the providences of God work out evil to him. Sinners are wont to pity themselves, and say, alas for me, for God has made my lot such that all things work only evil to me! Let all sinners know that the fault is wholly and only their own, and that God has made the best possible arrangements for their good. It is only their perversion that makes the best things become to them the worst.

And sinners cannot help knowing this. After all their complaining and fault-finding, they know that they have no plea to make against God. You know, sinners, that it is all your own fault that

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every day is not a blessing to you--that every sun-rising and sun-setting does not come fraught with mercies to your soul. You know that you might place yourself in such an attitude towards God that all his providences should work out your real and highest good. You are now an enemy of God; but you know you may at once become his friend. I can make the appeal to every sinner's own conscience. You know that if you would not harden your own heart, all the events of divine providence would result in your good. They would bring admonitions that you would give heed to with the greatest profit to your soul, and would throw you into scenes of discipline which could not fail to prove a blessing to you. Only yield your heart to the providences, the truth, and the Spirit of God, and you would become a child of God, and all things would work your good.

I can well remember how it seemed to me before my conversion. I then saw most clearly that all was good to the Christian;--if he was sick, all was well to him;--or if in health, it was a real blessing. If he lives, it was to enjoy the friendship of God;--if he died it was to enter upon his eternal reward. Being himself a friend of God, evil could no sooner befall him than it could befall his great friend, Jehovah. Nothing could be an evil to him, for if he were ever so much afflicted, it would only make him the more self-denying, meek, patient, heavenly.

But right over against this--the opposite in every respect, is the case of the self-hardening sinner. He puts on an air of self-confidence and enjoyment;--he would fain make you think that sinners are the only happy men on earth. He dances along his way for a brief season, but it is on slippery places;--and suddenly his feet slide--and he is in hell! So transient is all the bliss that sin and Satan give. It is only a lure to endless woe.

If sinners only appreciated their real condition, they could not rest in sin one moment. All their levity would appear infinitely shocking to themselves. I recollect to have seen several cases in which sinners were in such a state of mind that they could not rejoice in any possible event. There is one lady among you who could tell you a great deal about this state of mind--a state of darkness, despair and anguish, in which every thing was clearly seen to be evil and only evil, and all things however apparently prosperous were working out evil and nothing else to her soul and her eternal state. If the sun shown sweetly, all was gloom, for that God who smiled through those sunbeams was her enemy. Each storm only reminded her of Jehovah's wrath against the sinner. If friends loved her and sympathized with her, all was evil;--she had no friends above, and deserved none here

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below. So of every thing that could occur. All was evil, undiluted, unassuaged.

But when her soul came into the light and glory of the gospel, and found peace and joy in God, the whole scene was at once perfectly changed. Her husband has told me that he never knew her to fret or repine since that blessed hour. I asked her once what was the secret of her remarkable equanimity. She replied--"Once I escaped from the jaws of hell--from the dark iron castle of Giant Despair. Ever since I have looked upon myself as a miracle of grace, and I cannot regard any of the little troubles of life as anything to be compared with those indescribable agonies. I am often amazed to see how small a thing can disturb the equanimity of saints, or raise the mirth of sinner."

If sinners are going to continue in their sins, they may as well bid farewell at once to all peace and joy; and welcome anguish and black despair to their souls. Let them say at once--All things are evil and nothing but evil to me. Let them give themselves up to universal mourning, no matter how soon, or how utterly. "Hail everlasting horrors, hail!"

But there is only one way of escape--open yet a moment longer. Turn to God; yield your whole soul to him; accept his Son your Savior, and his service as your choice for life;--then you are a child of God and his foe no longer. Then all things are yours--and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. You are welcomed at once to the bosom of that glorious family above, and the possession of the riches and joys of heaven is all your own.

But if you remain in your sins, as from present appearances you are likely to do, all events and all agencies possible will work out your destruction. Every step you take brings you nearer the vortex of that awful whirlpool--the great Maelstrom of perdition. "Your steps take hold of hell."

HEART-CONDEMNATION, A PROOF THAT GOD ALSO CONDEMNS

February 17, 1847

"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."--1 John 3:20

Our text suggests as our leading subject of investigation, the **CONDITION OF OUR ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD**. It implies that if our heart condemn us, God will much more condemn us, being greater than our heart, and knowing all our evil things, a part only of which are distinctly noticed and remembered by ourselves.

In discussing this subject, I shall,

I. **TO AVOID MISTAKES, SHOW WHAT IS NOT IMPLIED IN OUR HEART'S CONDEMNING US;**

II. **WHAT IS IMPLIED IN OUR HEART'S CONDEMNING US;**

III. **SHOW WHAT IS NOT IMPLIED IN THE LAST CLAUSE OF THE TEXT; "GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEARTS AND KNOWETH ALL THINGS."**

IV. **WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS LANGUAGE.**

I. It is obvious that the term "heart" as here used is synonymous with conscience. The term is not used as it is frequently elsewhere in the Bible in passages where moral character is predicated of it, in which cases it plain means the will, that is, the voluntary and moral power. In our text it evidently means, the conscience, that power or faculty which approves or condemns our own moral acts and states of mind.

In reference to conscience it seems important to remark that it is not a mere feeling of any kind. Persons not unfrequently confound remorse, or a feeling of pungent sorrow, with conscience; and hence if they feel no remorse, no painful self-accusation, they say and really think that they have no conscience in reference to those points. Thus they quite overlook the fact that conscience may really condemn, and

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yet they may care so little for its condemnation that it shall occasion no painful emotions, no agony of feeling.

In fact such persons are in a great mistake, for they entirely misapprehend the true nature of conscience. Conscience is not a function of the sensibility as they seem to suppose, but of the reason. Its province is to apprehend intuitively the relations of right and wrong; and not directly to create either pain or pleasure. It is indeed true that in every well balanced and unperverted mind, pain and pleasure do accompany the decisions of conscience; pain its condemnation and pleasure its approval. Yet these are only secondary and not primary results of its action. The mind may come into such a state that no pain shall follow the most deliberate and aggravated violation of conscience.

This fact, it should be well considered, by no means proves that the individual has no conscience on those subjects, nor that his conscience does not disapprove his actions. So far as I have observed this mistake is very common, and certainly, wherever it exists, is very injurious and often fatal. It ought to be well understood that conscience does often condemn although no painful feelings of remorse ensue, because the man is so hardened that his sensibility is in a state of torpor. In this state he may imagine that his conscience approves, or at least does not condemn him;--a mistake of most dangerous nature.

Again, a condemning conscience does not necessarily imply that state of mind commonly called conviction of sin. The difference between the two turns mainly upon the greater degree of thought, reflection, and consideration which belongs to the latter. Conscience may condemn us without our reflecting upon the nature of our conduct and deliberately comparing it with God's revealed law. But conviction is thoughtful. A convicted state implies that the individual is thinking and has thought upon his own guilt; that he turns the subject over and over in his mind and compares it with the demands of God's righteous law. Herein lies an important distinction between a state of real conviction for sin, and a state in which there exists only the tacit condemnation of conscience.

Indeed it seems to be the fact that in a great majority of cases, when the conscience condemns a man he is not conscious at the time of thinking deliberately on the subject. His reason tacitly assumes that he is wrong, without his being conscious at the time of making such an assumption;--that is, he does not think at all of the assumption, and consequently is unconscious that he makes it; but that he really does

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make such an assumption may be evident in various ways; for example, he may condemn another for doing what he does himself, and this would show that he knows the rule and knows that his violation of it is wrong.-- He notices this wrong in others but does not notice it in himself; and yet the reason all the time silently assumes and knows that the course he is taking is wrong.

As an illustration of this; a man may be selfish; his conscience may silently assume that he is wrong, and so certain may he be at the bottom of his mind that he is wrong that if he should be told and should know with certainty that he should die in five minutes, he would discover in a moment that he is not prepared to die, but is in his sins, and is altogether wrong in his moral state before God.

Every person will see that this is the process of the mind in respect to conscience if he will notice the operations of his own. Let him also consider how often a person may know himself to be wrong without being distinctly conscious that he knows it. Every one should make the difference between knowing an act or state of his own to be wrong, and being conscious of the fact that he knows it.

Hence we see that our conscience may condemn us when we are not conscious of its condemning sentence. We fail of being thus conscious, however, not because its decisions are in their nature occult, not appearing at all upon the field of consciousness;--but because we feel so little interest in its decisions as not to notice them when they are made.

II. If our conscience condemns us, we shall not have the present evidence of pleasing God. The sweet consciousness that we are accepted of God will be wanting.

On this point it is important to distinguish between being sure we do not please God, and not being sure that we do. The clear, present evidence of pleasing God is lacking in both of these states; though in the latter the individual may not be conscious that his state does displease God. But even he lacks the present consciousness of pleasing God--the clear testimony of his conscience approving his own state.

Again, it of course implies being conscious of not having the decided approval of conscience. Persons are often in a state in which they feel no approval of conscience, and are not sensible of any disapproval.

Again, our heart's condemning us implies a perhaps unnoticed assumption that all is not right between the soul and God. This is

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often assumed, as has been said, without the mind's taking notice enough of it to fasten the truth thoroughly on the mind.

For example, suppose a man is suddenly arrested by the prospect of death just before him. It may be that this prospect will waken up his mind to see that his heart is by no means right with God. All previous decisions of his conscience to this effect have been unnoticed;--now all suddenly they start forth upon the field of distinct consciousness and the man sees and knows with the clearness of mid-day brightness that his soul is utterly condemned before God. He might have known the same thing before, but he did not care enough to notice the affirmations of his own conscience.

Careless sinners often live in such a way that they think they are in the main prepared to die; but let them for once see that they certainly shall die, and their view of their case may be suddenly and utterly changed. Before this, they may have seemed to be in a certain sense honest: but let them come to this last, decisive test--to this really honest hour, and a new aspect may come over their former apparent honesty.

Suppose I sit down to converse with a man, and say to him--Friend, are you prepared to die? I think so, he says, indeed I suppose so. He seems honest perhaps. Now let him be seized with a fit--not affecting his reason, and let him know that in a few hours he must die. He wails out in agony of soul--"O my God, have mercy on me, for I am utterly unprepared to die."

Now what does this change in his views on this point reveal? Plainly this,--that all along he had not been prepared to die, and that his conscience had condemned him; but he did not come to its light--did not listen to its condemning voice.

Hence we see that it is of the greatest importance that men should get at the deepest convictions of their conscience--those inner convictions that will spring out upon the field of most distinct and vivid consciousness in the honest hour of approaching death. Let all living men be awake to this danger lest they fatally deceive themselves by taking up the mere floating thoughts of a careless hour as the testimony of their conscience to their real state before God.

Again, persons often attempt to pray, and the conviction comes over their mind that they can get no access to God. They find it impossible to expect that God will hear them. They know they shall not have the blessing they ask for. They have not by any means the same confidence of obtaining the blessing as I should have of getting a dollar if any honest man had promised it. Suppose I had promised a

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student here a dollar if he would call on me for it. I tell him to come to my study at such a time and that I have the money ready for him;-- would he not expect it? Would he have any doubt? Would he find it impossible to have faith that he should realize his money on fulfilling the conditions?

Now what is the reason men will not believe God? If you will get at this, you will learn something of the utmost importance to you to know. But to learn it you must let your enquires go down into the bottom of your heart. There you will find the conviction that you are not in a state of acceptance with God.

Have not many of you, brethren and sisters, had such an experience as this;--You have gone to the Lord in prayer to ask for things that you really needed; but your inward frame, your state of heart is such and your life too that you know you cannot honestly expect he will hear you. You go to the throne of grace and kneel down for prayer;--but you dare not, and cannot expect he will answer you. You may indeed sometimes go so carelessly as not to be aware of your state before God; but when you awake sufficiently to consider your own state, and look at all after the probability of being heard, you find you have none at all, for the reason that your own heart condemns you altogether as not being right with God.

Again, when our conscience condemns us in any one thing, God does not accept us in any thing. It is impossible that our heart should be wrong in one thing and right on another at the same time. If conscience condemns in one thing, it does really for the time being in every thing. It condemns us as not right before God, and shows conclusively that we are radically wrong. For the word of God has definitely decided that "whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." This cannot mean less than that he who offends in one point shows himself to have the spirit of disobedience, and shows that of course the law must utterly condemn his moral state of mind. The decisions of conscience harmonize with this.

Some persons are prone to regard this as a hard saying, and are sorely averse to admitting its truth. They know that conscience condemns them in some particular things, for they feel a stinging remorse in view of them; but since they feel no such remorse in reference to other things, they suppose that in the latter their conscience is clear. But if they have good reasons to feel remorse for some things, they may know that if they were to go down to the

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bottom and see the real state of their hearts, they would find themselves condemned universally.

Again, if our conscience condemns us, we may know that in the deepest conviction of our own minds we are not honest before God. A man may not see, on the broad face of his own consciousness, that he is dishonest; but if his conscience does not really condemn him in one thing he may rest assured that he has no well-grounded confidence of being really honest before God. Let the inner voice of his own conscience be heard, and it will tell him so.

Again, conscience condemns us when, though we do not see any thing outward that is wrong; yet we are not conscious of being inwardly right with God. We may think ourselves very right indeed in our external morality, and yet we may know very well that we are not right in regard to zeal, faith and love--not right in our state of mind towards our enemies--not right in our sympathy with Christ for the salvation of a dying world.

Now when our conscience really condemns us in one of these latter things, we may know that all is not right; indeed we may know that nothing is really right as seen and estimated by a holy God.

It is remarkable how often men think they are right in some things though they know they are wrong in many other things at the same time. For example, a merchant may think that in his trade he is right, and has a right heart altogether. He thinks he is honest, accommodating, and perfectly honorable in his business transactions. Yet he knows that he does not feel for the souls of his customers--does not love their souls, and really seek for their best spiritual good. Oh, he is little aware how much he wrongs his neighbor by not having this love for his soul, and by consequently withholding all proper care and effort for his spiritual good. He might far better, if the thing were possible, save his neighbor's soul, and yet rob him at his counter of every dollar of his money, then give him all his just coppers, but withhold from him all just sympathy, care and effort for his soul's salvation.

Yet how often does such a merchant say--I have a conscience void of offence in my business affairs; I deal in perfect honesty with all men, and no man ever accuses me of wrong;--and yet you know you have not a clear conscience in respect to their souls; you know you do not love them and pray for them, and honestly labor to bring them to real salvation.

Just so in all the common relations of life. I have mentioned the case of the merchant only to illustrate the principle; not because it

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applied in his case only, or in his care more frequently than in any other. The mechanic who works for other men in his appropriate business does his work well and according to contract and expectation;--now, he says, he has a conscience void of offence. But has he indeed? Has he? Has he done all his duty to the man's soul? Has he done even any part of this branch of his duty? Will his conscience rise up and say, Well done! Will you say--I have done my work well, and what have I more to do? So much, and so far is in itself right; but is this all? Have you no other responsibilities?

Besides, even that you did not do from love to his soul; nor from regard to the just demands of your conscience, or of your God. How very far then are you from having answered the proper demands of an enlightened conscience!

But I must pass to speak,

III. Of what is not implied in the last clause of the text; "God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things."

It does not imply that God of course justifies us if we justify ourselves. This cannot be implied, for if it were, then must God justify some of the most wicked men on earth.

Nor again is it implied that God condemns us, if we really live up to and according to all the light we have. It would militate against every feature in the character of God to suppose this to be the case.

IV. We are to state, lastly, what is implied in this clause of our text.

It implies that God often sees wrong in us when we do not notice it ourselves. "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." We know but little in the sense of being conscious of our knowledges, and may fail to notice many of the evil things in our spirit, temper, heart and life; but God knows them all; and hence may condemn where we do not.

It is also implied that if we are not clear that we are right, God does not accept us. If we see good reason apparently to doubt, we have great reason to presume that God sees abundant reasons to condemn. How can God believe that we are right, if we do not believe it ourselves?

Again, if in anything, we can see that we are not right, God sees that we are right in nothing, but are for the time being wrong in every thing. He sees that we are not conformed to his will heartily in any thing. This seems to follow conclusively from the remarks we have made and the points we have adduced already.

REMARKS

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1. Many see that they are wrong in some things, and yet upon the whole imagine that they are acceptable before God. They notice the fact that conscience does condemn them, but they flatter themselves that these particular things are exceptions to their general conduct.

This is a very common case, yet nothing can be more dangerous, or more delusive. It is throughout and utterly a deep delusion. You are entirely deceived if you think you are right in the main, while in any particular thing whatever, you know that you indulge in transgression. There can be no such thing. It is impossible there should be a right state of heart as to obedience to God while you can allow yourself in some particular form of sin.

2. Some will not admit the conviction of being themselves wholly wrong, although they know themselves to be wrong in some things. The longer I live and hear persons converse the more I am satisfied that many would yield up their hopes at once if they would only admit that they are in truth wholly wrong, and that this must be the case because they do in fact indulge themselves in some things which their conscience condemns. Indeed there can be as I think no doubt that their hope rests not on the conviction that they honestly seek to do God's will in all things, but on the belief that they mean to do right in some things, while they know they do not in fact obey, and honestly seek to obey in all things. Their hope rests on a little supposed good; while in fact some admitted evil ought to banish their hopes forever. And yet they hold on to their hopes as if their salvation depended not on faith in Christ, but on faith in their old hope. Often are they to be seen indulging in that evasive state of mind in which the conviction is struggling to come forth that all is wrong with them, but they resist it and will not give it scope for even a fair examination.

Some who are now in this state of mind were once really converted. Once they knew what it is to have that peace of God which passes all understanding.--They lay down at night absorbed in the love of God, and awoke in the morning to renew his praises. Then they knew the prevalence of prayer; but now they have lost their power with the Lord. They may not know clearly the point where they departed from the Lord, but the fact of grievous backsliding is most obvious, to all but themselves. They are so blind and have so much deep spiritual apathy that they do not perceive how far and how fearfully they have fallen! They think, or at least seem to think that all is fair and about right with them, although they see very plainly that if they make religious visits, or pray, they have no power with either

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God or man. Yet they will not ascribe this lack of power to the fact that they are really fallen from being right with God. Such persons should read the epistles sent to the seven churches of Asia. They should study those epistles thoroughly and with much prayer, and mark the traits of character which distinguished those of them that were sorely backslidden. Then they should also observe the counsel given by our Lord to those who had forsaken him and were puffed up with pride. Mark how he shows them that they are really poor and wretched, blind and naked.

3. Others have the conviction pretty thoroughly lodged in their minds that they are wrong, but they hide it as much as they can from both themselves and their neighbors. I have known wives who would for years conceal from their pious husbands the fact that they knew they were not Christians. Sometimes they will continue in this state till their souls are wrung with such unutterable anguish that they are compelled to come out and break down in humiliating confessions.

I once knew a most striking case in the city of New York. A deacon from another church came to our meeting. For a long time, he had been anxious about himself, full of apprehension that he was not right, and yet so proud that he would not make his fears about himself known to others. His wife was an active and ardent-souled Christian. Inasmuch as he had sought for years to maintain in her view a fair reputation for piety, and withal thought much of her good opinion, he could not endure that she should know his present conviction. So dreadfully did this matter agitate his mind and so fearfully did his pride of heart rise up that as he afterwards told us, he was often tempted to take her life to save himself the mortification of disclosing his real character to her eye. At length he came one evening to our meeting and left at its close under horrible convictions, his soul writhing in agony. All the way home his wife continued talking to him about the sermon, delighted herself with such searching truth. He came home, all the way making up his mind that when he reached home, he would at least take his horsewhip and flog his wife! He entered the house, walked the room; was just stepping up to reach his whip for the purpose when his heart smote him so horribly that his hand fell; he dropped on his knees; confessed his horrible purpose; opened all the rottenness of his heart; cast himself at her feet and told her what a hypocrite he had been; and in short utterly broke down and become a new man in Christ Jesus.

How can such persons ever get into the kingdom of heaven with such satanic pride?

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4. It sometimes happens that such persons are too proud to confess their sins freely even to God. Before Him, even, they will say; "If I am wrong, I pray to be forgiven"--whereas if they were truly honest, they would say--"O Lord, I know I am altogether wrong." But they will not even confess to God;--how much less to their neighbors!

5. Many are so taken up with looking at their own outward conduct that they do not look narrowly into their own hearts. They seem to suppose that if the outward man is all right, the inner man is right of course.

Now, brethren, suppose conscience be questioned respecting your real state of heart. I do not ask whether you live in outward, open sin; I do not ask whether your conduct tramples on civil law, or on the external proprieties of a Christian life; I presume it does not; but let us come and call for an examination of the inner man. Let us call up conscience to the bar, and say--Conscience, are you satisfied with the state of that heart? Are you satisfied that God is as much loved, adored, believed in, and served as he should be? Are you satisfied that all is right towards God? And still further, are you satisfied that this mind is in a right state towards all the brethren? Is there real, genuine, warm-hearted brotherly love? How have you found the facts to be touching this point?

And now before I close, I have one request to make. It is that when you retire from this place, you would go by yourself and solemnly, honestly, question your conscience. Make the questioning patient and thorough. Say, "O my conscience, are you satisfied with my state before God? Can you approve it, in view of the light I have had, or could have had, of God's holy law and hence of my duty?"

I beseech you to do this without fail. I beg you to do it for my sake,--and for your own sake. Honestly push the question at the tribunal of conscience--"Is my heart right before God?" I will not ask you to look for those loathsome evidences of sin that appear so often among the ungodly. For the present at least, you may leave those points out of the account, and ask for the state of your heart as it stand before the great and holy God! And if when conscience is thus catechised respecting your heart, it condemns you, how much more will God condemn you?

Do you want to know whether you are justified before God? How easy from the point where we now are is it to answer this question. For if your conscience does not justify you, how much less can God?

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But if on the other hand, your conscience, in all points approves, then we need to ask, Is your conscience enlightened, honestly dealt with, and does it speak with a firm yet modest tone?

But these points would anticipate the remarks I am to make in the afternoon in speaking upon the two verses next following our text this morning, and of course I shall defer them to that occasion.

AN APPROVING HEART— CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER

March 3, 1847

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."--1 John 3:21, 22.

In resuming and pursuing this subject, I shall,

I. SHOW THAT IF OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE HAVE AND CANNOT BUT HAVE CONFIDENCE TOWARD GOD THAT HE ACCEPTS US.

II. THAT IF WE HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE SHALL ALSO HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WILL GRANT US WHAT WE ASK.

III. SHOW WHY THIS IS SO, AND WHY WE KNOW IT TO BE SO.

I. If our heart really does not condemn us, it is because we are conscious of being conformed to all the light we have, and of doing the whole will of God as far as we know it. While in this state it is impossible that with right views of God's character, we should conceive of him as condemning us. Our intelligence instantly rejects the supposition that he does or can condemn us, that is for our present state. We may be most deeply conscious that we have done wrong heretofore, and we may feel ourselves to be most guilty for this, and may be sure that God disapproves those past sins of ours, and would condemn us for them even now, if the pardoning blood of Christ had not intervened. But where pardon for past sins has been sought and found through redeeming blood, "there is therefore no more condemnation" for the past. And in reference to the present, the obvious truth is that if our conscience fully approves of our state, and we are conscious of having acted according to the best light we have, it contradicts all our just ideas of God to suppose that He condemns

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us. He is a Father, and he cannot but smile on his obedient and trusting children.

Indeed, ourselves being in this state of mind, it is impossible for us not to suppose that God is well pleased with our present state. We cannot conceive of Him as being otherwise than pleased; for if he were displeased with a state of sincere and full obedience, he would act contrary to his own character; he would cease to be benevolent, holy, and just. We cannot therefore conceive of Him as refusing to accept us when we are conscious of obeying his will so far as we know it. Suppose the case of a soul appearing before God, fully conscious of seeking with all the heart to please God. In this case the soul must see that this is such a state as must please God.

Let us turn this subject over till we get it fully before our minds. For what is it that our conscience rightly condemns us? Plainly for not obeying God according to the best light we have. Suppose now we turn about and fully obey the dictates of conscience. Then its voice approves and ceases to condemn. Now all just views of the Deity require us to consider the voice of conscience in both cases as only the echo of his own. The God who condemns all disobedience must of necessity approve of obedience, and to conceive of him as disapproving our present state would be in the conviction of our own minds to condemn him.

It is therefore by no means presumption in us to assume that God accepts those who are conscious of really seeking supremely to please and obey him.

Again let it be noted that in this state with an approving conscience, we should have no self-righteousness. A man in this state would at this very moment ascribe all his obedience to the grace of God. From his inmost soul he would say--"By the grace of God, I am what I am;" and nothing could be farther from his heart than to take praise or glory to himself for anything good. Yet I have sometimes been exceedingly astonished to hear men and even ministers of the gospel speak with surprise and incredulity of such a state as our text presupposes--a state in which a man's conscience universally approves of his moral state.--But why be incredulous about such a state? Or why deem it a self-righteous and sinful state! A man in this state is as far as can be from ascribing glory to himself. No state can be farther from self-righteousness. So far is this from being a self-righteous state, that the fact is, every other state but this is self-righteous, and this alone is exempt from that sin. Mark how the man in this state ascribes all to the grace of God. The Apostle Paul when

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in this state of conscious uprightness most heartily ascribes all to grace. "I laboured, says he, more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that is in me."

But, observe that while the Apostle was in that state, it was impossible that he should conceive of God as displeased with his state. Paul might greatly and justly condemn himself for his past life, and might feel assured that God disapproved and had condemned Saul, the proud persecutor, though he had since pardoned Saul, the praying penitent. But the moral state of Paul the believer, of Paul, the untiring labourer for Christ--of Paul whose whole heart and life divine grace has now moulded into its own image--this moral state Paul's conscience approves, and his views of God compel him to believe that God approves.

So of the Apostle John. Hear what he says.--"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." But here rises up a man to rebuke the Apostle. What! he says, did you not know that your heart is corrupt, that you never can know all its latent wickedness, that you ought never to be so presumptuous as to suppose that you "do those things that please God?" Did you not know that no mere man does ever, even by any grace received in this life, really "keep the commandments of God so as to do those things that are pleasing in his sight?" No, says John, I did not know that. "What, rejoins his reprover, not know that sin is mixed with all you do, and that the least sin is displeasing to God!" Indeed, replies John, I knew I was sincerely trying to please God, and verily supposed I did please him and did keep his commandments, and that it was entirely proper to say so--all to the praise of upholding, sanctifying grace.

Again, when a man prays disinterestedly, and with a heart in full and deep sympathy with God, he may and should have confidence that God hears him.--When he can say in all honesty before the Lord--["]Now, Lord, thou knowest that through the grace of thy Spirit my soul is set on doing good to men for thy glory; I am grieved for the dishonour done to Thee, so that rivers of water run down my eyes, because men keep not thy law," then he cannot but know that his prayers are acceptable to God.

Indeed no one, having right views of God's character, can come to him in prayer in a disinterested state of mind, and feel otherwise than that God accepts such a state of mind. Now since our heart cannot condemn us when we are in a disinterested state of mind, but must condemn any other state, it follows that if our heart does not

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condemn us, we shall have, and cannot but have confidence that God hears our prayers and accepts our state as pleasing in his sight.

Again, when we are conscious of sympathizing with God himself, we may know that God will answer our prayers. There never was a prayer made in this state of sympathy with God, which He failed to answer.--God cannot fail to answer such a prayer without denying himself. The soul, being in sympathy with God, feels as God feels; so that for God to deny its prayers, is to deny his own feelings, and refuse to do the very thing he himself desires. Since God cannot do this, he cannot fail of hearing the prayer that is in sympathy with his own heart.

In the state we are now considering, the Christian is conscious of praying in the Spirit, and therefore must know that his prayer is accepted before God. I say, he is conscious of this fact. Do not some of you know this? Ye who thus live and walk with God, do you not know that the Spirit of God helps your infirmities and makes intercession for you according to the will of God? Are you not very conscious of these intercessions made for you, and in your very soul as it were, with groanings that cannot be uttered? Your heart within pants and cries out after God, and is lifted up continually before him as spontaneously as it is when your heart sings, pouring out its deep outushings of praise. You know how sometimes your heart sings, though your lips move not and you utter no sound;--yet your heart is full of music, making melody to the Lord. Even so, your soul is sometimes in the mood of spontaneous prayer, and pours out its deep felt supplications into the ears of the Lord of Hosts just as naturally as you breathe. The silent and ceaseless echoing of your heart is, Thy kingdom come--Thy kingdom come; and although you may not utter these words, and perhaps not any words at all, yet these words are a fair expression of the overflowing desires of your heart.

And this deep praying of the heart goes on while the Christian is still pursuing the common vocations of life. The man perhaps is behind the counter, or in his workshop driving his plane, but his heart is communing or interceding with God. You may see him behind his plow--but his heart is deeply engrossed with his Maker;--he follows on, and only now and then, starts up from the intense working of his mind and finds that his land is almost finished. The student has his book open to his lesson, but his deep musings upon God, or the irrepressible longings of his soul in prayer consume his mental energies, and his eye floats unconsciously over the unnoticed page. God fills his thoughts. He is more conscious of this deep communion

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with God than he is of the external world. The team he is driving or the book he professes to study is by no means so really and so vividly a matter of conscious recognition to him as is his communion of soul with his God.

In this state the soul is fully conscious of being perfectly submissive to God. Whether he uses these words or not, his heart would always say--"Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done." Hence he knows that God will grant the blessing he asks if he can do so without a greater evil to his kingdom than the resulting good of bestowing it. We cannot but know that the Lord delights to answer the prayers of a submissive child of his own.

Again, when the conscience sweetly and humbly approves, it seems impossible that we should feel so ashamed and confounded before God as to think that he cannot hear our prayer. The fact is, it is only those whose heart condemns them who come before God ashamed and confounded, and who cannot expect God to answer their prayers. These persons cannot expect to feel otherwise than confounded, until the sting of conscious guilt is taken away by repentance and faith in a Redeemer's blood.

Yet again, the soul in this state is not afraid to come with humble boldness to the throne, as God invites him to do, for he recognizes God as a real and most gracious Father, and sees in Jesus a most compassionate, and condescending high Priest. Of course he can look upon God only as being always ready to receive and welcome himself to his presence.

Nor is this a self-righteous state of mind. O, how often have I been amazed and agonized to hear it so represented! But how strange is this! Because you are conscious of being entirely honest before God, therefore it is maintained that you are self-righteous! You ascribe every good thing in yourself most heartily to divine grace, but yet you are (so some say) very self-righteous notwithstanding! How long will it take some people to learn what real self-righteousness is? Surely it does not consist in being full of the love and Spirit of God; nor does humility consist in being actually so full of sin and self-condemnation that you cannot feel otherwise than ashamed and confounded before both God and man.

II. We are next to consider this position, namely, that if our heart does not condemn us, we may have confidence that we shall receive the things we ask.

1. This must be so, because it is his Spirit working in us that excites these prayers. God himself prepares the heart to pray;--the

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Spirit of Christ leads this Christian to the throne of grace and keeps him there; then presents the objects of prayer, enkindles desire, draws the soul into deep sympathy with God; and now--all this being wrought by the grace and Spirit of God, will He not answer these prayers? Indeed He will. How can He ever fail to answer them?

2. It is a remarkable fact that all real prayer seems to be summed up in the Lord's prayer, and especially in those two most comprehensive petitions--"Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The mind in a praying frame runs right into these two petitions, and seems to centre here continually. Many other and various things may be specified; but they are all only parts and branches of this one great blessing--Let God's kingdom come, and bear sway on earth as it does in heaven. This is the sum of all true prayer.

Now let it be observed that God desires this result infinitely more than we do. When therefore, we desire it too, we are in harmony with the heart of God, and He cannot deny us. The blessing we crave is the very thing which of all others He most delights to bestow.

3. Yet let it be noted here that God may not answer every prayer according to its letter; but He surely will according to its spirit. The real spirit is evermore this--"Thy kingdom come--thy will be done;" and this, God will assuredly answer, because he has so abundantly promised to do this very thing in answer to prayer.

III. Why will God certainly answer such a prayer, and how can we know that He will?

1. The text affirms that "whatsoever we ask we receive of him because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Now we might perhaps understand this to assign our obedience as the reason of God's giving the blessing sought in prayer. But if we should, we should greatly err. The fundamental reason always of God's bestowing blessings is his goodness--his love. Let this be never forgotten. All good flows down from the great fountain of infinite goodness. Our obedience is only the condition of God's bestowing it--never the fundamental reason or ground of its bestowment. It is very common for us in rather loose and popular language to speak of a condition as being a cause or fundamental reason. But on a point like the present, we ought to use language with more precision. The true meaning on this point undoubtedly is that obedience is the condition. This being fulfilled on our part, the Lord can let his infinite benevolence flow out upon us without restraint. Obedience takes away the obstacle;--then the

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mighty gushings of divine love break forth.--Obedience removes the obstacles;--never merits, or draws down the blessing.

2. If God were to give blessings upon any other condition, it would deceive multitudes, either respecting ourselves or himself. If he were to answer our prayers, we being in a wrong state of mind, it would deceive others very probably; for if they did not know us well, they would presume that we were in a right state, and might be led to consider those things in us right which are in fact wrong.

Or, if they knew that we were wrong, and yet knew that God answered our prayers, what must they think of God? They could not avoid the conclusion that He patronizes wrong doing, and lifts up the smiles of his love upon iniquity;--and how grievous must be the influence of such conclusions!

It should be borne in mind that God has a character to maintain. His reputation is a good to himself, and he must maintain it as an indispensable means of sustaining his moral government over other creatures. It could not be benevolent for Him to take a course which would peril his own reputation as a holy God and as a patron and friend of holiness and not of sin.

3. God is well pleased when we remove the obstacles out of the way of his benevolence. He is infinitely good, and lives to do good and for no other purpose--for no other end whatever except to pour forth blessings upon his creatures wherever He can without peril to the well being of other creatures under his care and love. He exists for ever in a state of entire consecration to this end. Such benevolence as this is infinitely right in God, and nothing less than this could be right for him.

Now, if it is his delight and his life to do good, how greatly must he rejoice when we remove all obstacles out of the way! How does his heart exult when another and yet another opportunity is afforded him of pouring out blessings in large and rich measure. Think of it, sinner, for it applies to you! Marvellous as you may think it, and most strange as it may seem--judged of by human rules and human examples, yet of God it cannot fail of being always true that He delights supremely in doing you good, and only waits till you remove the obstacles;--then would his vast love break forth and pour its ocean tides of mercy and of grace all around about you. Go and bow before your injured Sovereign in deep submission and real penitence, with faith also in Jesus for pardon, and thus put this matter to a trial! See if you do not find that his mercies are high above the heavens! See if anything is too great for his love to do for you!

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And let each Christian make a similar proof of this amazing love. Place yourself where mercy can reach you without violating the glorious principles of Jehovah's moral government; and then wait and see if you do not experience the most overwhelming demonstrations of his love! How greatly does your Father above delight to pour out his mighty tides of blessings! O, He is never so well pleased as when he finds the channel open and free for these great currents of blessings to flow forth upon his dear people!

A day or two since I received a letter from the man in whose behalf you will recollect that I requested your prayers at a late church prayer meeting. This letter was full of precious interest. The writer has long been a stranger to the blessedness of the gospel; but now he writes me--"I am sure you are praying for me, for within a week I have experienced a peace of mind that is new to me."

I mention this now as another proof of the wonderful readiness of our Father in heaven to hear and answer prayer. O what love is this! To what shall I compare it, and how shall I give you any adequate view of its amazing fullness and strength? Think of a vast body of water, pent up and suspended high above our heads, pressing and pressing at every crevice to find an outlet where it may gush forth. Suppose the bottom of the vast Pacific should heave and pour its ocean tides over all the continents of the earth. This might illustrate the vast overflowings of the love of God; how grace and love are mounting up far and infinitely above all the mountains of your sins. Yes, let the deep, broad Pacific ocean be elevated on high and there pent up, and then conceive of its pressure. How it would force its way and pour out its gushing floods wherever the least channel might be opened! And you would not need to fear that your little wants would drain it dry! O, No! you would understand how there might be enough and to spare,--how it might be said--"Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it;" how the promises might read--"Bring ye all the tithes into my store house, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out blessings till there be not room enough to receive them." The great oceans of divine love are never drained dry. Let Christians but bring in their tithes and make ready their vessels to receive, and then, having fulfilled the conditions, they may "stand still and see the salvation of God." O how those mountain floods of mercy run over and pour themselves all abroad till every capacity of the soul is filled! O how your little vessels will run over and run over--as in the case of the prophet when the widow's vessels were all full and he cried out--O

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hasten, hasten--"is there not another vessel?" Still the oil flows on--is there not another vessel? No more, she says; all are full; then and only then was the flowing oil stayed. How often have I thought of this in seasons of great revival, when Christians really get into a praying frame, and God seems to give them every thing they ask for; until at length the prophet cries out--Is there not yet another vessel? O bring more vessels, more vessels yet, for still the oil is flowing and still runs over;--but ah, the church has reached the limit of her expectation--she has provided no more vessels;--and the heavenly current is stayed. Infinite love can bless no more; for faith is lacking to prepare for, and receive it.

REMARKS

I. Many persons, being told that God answers prayer for Christ's sake, overlook the condition of obedience. They have so loose an idea of prayer and of our relations to God in it and of his relations to us and to his moral government, that they think they may be disobedient and yet prevail through Christ. How little do they understand the whole subject! Surely they must have quite neglected to study their Bible to learn the truth about prayer. They might very easily have found it there declared, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." All this surely teaches us that if there be the least sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer. Nothing short of entire obedience for the time being is the condition of acceptance with God. There must be a sincere and honest heart--else how can you look up with humble confidence and say--My Father; else how can you use the name of Jesus, as your prevailing Mediator;--and else, how can God smile upon you before all the eyes of angels and of pure saints above!

When men come before God with their idols set up in their hearts, and the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face, the Lord says, "Should I be enquired of at all by them?" Read and see. (Ezekiel 14:3-5) The Lord commissions his prophet to declare unto all such:--"I, the Lord, will answer him that cometh thus, according to the multitude of his idols." Such prayers God will answer by sending not a divine fullness, but a wasting leanness; not grace and mercy and peace, but barrenness and cursings and death.

Do not some of you know what this is? You have found in your own experience that the more you pray, the harder your heart is. And what do you suppose the reason of this can be? Plainly there can be

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no other reason for it than this;--you come up with the stumbling block of your iniquity before your face, and God answers you according--not to his great mercies, but to the multitude of your idols.

Should you not take heed how you pray?

2. Persons never need hesitate because of their past sins, to approach God with the fullest confidence. If they now repent, and are conscious of fully and honestly returning to God with all their heart, they have no reason to fear being repulsed from the footstool of mercy.

I have sometimes heard persons express great astonishment when God heard and answered their prayers, after they had been very great and vile sinners. But such astonishment indicates but little knowledge of the matchless grace and loving kindness of our God. Look at Saul of Tarsus. Once a bitter and mad persecutor, proud in his vain Pharisaism;--but now repenting, returning, and forgiven--mark, what power he has with God in prayer. In fact, after penitence, God pardons so fully that, as his word declares--he remembers their iniquities no more. Then the Lord places the pardoned soul on a footing where he can prevail with God as truly and as well as any angel in heaven can! So far as the Bible gives us light on this subject, we must conclude that all this is true. And why? Not because the pardoned Christian is more righteous than an angel; but because he is equally accepted with the purest angel, and has besides the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ,--all made available to him when he uses this all-prevalent name. Oh, there is a world of meaning in this so-little-thought-of arrangement for prayer in Jesus' name. The value of Christ's merits is all at your disposal. If Jesus Christ could obtain any blessing at the court of heaven, you may obtain the same by asking in his name--it being supposed of course that you fulfil the conditions of acceptable prayer. If you come and pray in the spirit of Christ; his Spirit making intercession with your spirit, and your faith taking hold of his all-meritorious name, you may have his intercessions before the throne in your behalf, and whatever Christ can obtain there, He will obtain for you. "Ask, therefore, now--so Christ Himself invites and promises--ask and receive, that your joy may be full."

O, what a vantage ground is this upon which God has placed Christians! O what a foundation on which to stand and plead with most prevailing power! How wonderful! First, God bestows pardon, takes away the sting of death; restores peace of conscience and joy in believing; then gives the benefit of Christ's intercession; and then invites Christians to ask what they will! O, how mighty! how

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prevalent might every Christian become in prayer! Doubtless we may say that a church living with God, and fully meeting the conditions of acceptable prayer might have more power with God than so many angels. And shall we hear professed Christians talk of having no power with God! Alas, alas! Surely such surely know not their blessed birthright. They have not yet begun to know the gospel of the Son of God!

3. Many continue the forms of prayer when they are living in sin, and do not try to reform, and even have no sincere desire to reform. All such persons should know that they grievously provoke the Lord to answer their prayers with fearful judgments.

4. It is only those that live and walk with God whose prayers are of any avail to themselves, to the church, or to the world. Only those whose conscience does not condemn them, and who live in a state of conscious acceptance with God. They can pray. According to our text they receive whatever they ask because they keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

5. When those who have been the greatest sinners will turn to God, they may prevail as really as if they had never sinned at all. When God forgives through the blood of Jesus, it is real forgiveness and the pardoned penitent is welcomed as a child to the bosom of infinite love. For Jesus' sake God receives him without the least danger of its being inferred that Himself cares not for sin. Oh, He told the Universe once for all how utterly he hated sin. He made this point known when he caused his well-beloved Son to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, and it pleased the Father to bruise him and hide his face from even the Son of his love. O, what a beautiful, glorious thing this gospel system is! In it God has made such manifestations of his regard for his law that now He has nothing to fear in showing favour to any and every sinner who believes in Christ. If this believing sinner will also put away his sin--if he will only say--In the name of the Lord I put them all away--all--now--forever; let him do this with all his heart, and God will not fear to embrace him as a son;-this penitent need fear nothing so long as he hides himself in the open cleft of this blessed Rock of Ages.

Look at the case of the prodigal son. Famished, ragged, poor, ready to perish, he remembers his father's house and the plenty that abounds there; he comes to himself and hence looks upon things once more according to their reality. Now he says--"In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare, but here I am perishing with hunger.["] But why is he ready to perish with hunger? Ah, he ran

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away from a bountiful and kind father, and spent all his substance in riotous living. But he comes to himself. There, see him drawing near his father's mansion--once his own dear home;--see;--the father rushes to embrace him; he hastens to make this penitent son most welcome to his home and to his heart. So God makes haste to show that He is not afraid to make the vilest sinner welcome if he only comes back a penitent and rests on the name of Jesus. O what a welcome is this!

Follow on that beautiful illustration of it which the Saviour has given us. Bring forth the best robe. Invite together all our friends and neighbours. Prepare the music. Spread the table, and kill the fatted calf. It is fit that we should make merry and be glad. Lead forward this long lost son and put on him my best robe. Let there be joy throughout my house over my returned and penitent son.

And what does all this show? One thing--that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, and joy in the very heart of God himself over one sinner that repenteth. O, I wonder sinners will not come home to their Father in heaven!

6. Sinner, if you will come back to the Lord, you may not only prevail for yourself, but for your associates and friends. I was once in a revival where a large company of young men banded themselves together under a mutual pledge that they would not be converted. Father Nash was with me in that revival season, and on one occasion while the young men alluded too were all present, he made a declaration which startled me, and almost shocked himself. Yet, as he said afterward, he dared not take it back for he did not know how he came to say it, and perhaps the hand of God might be in it. "Young men, said he, God will break your ranks within one week, or He will send some of you to hell."

It was an awful time. We feared that possibly it might not prove to be so, and that then the result would be exceeding bad upon the minds of that already hardened band. But it was spoken, and we could only cry unto God.

Time rolled along. About two or three days after this declaration was made, the leader of this band called to see me, all broken down and as mellow as he could be. As soon as he saw me, he cried out, What shall I do? What are you thinking about? said I. About my wicked companions, said he--all of them in the way to hell. Do you pray for them? I asked. Oh, yes, said he, I cannot help praying for them every moment. Well, then, said I, there is one thing more; go to them and entreat them in Christ's name to be reconciled to God. He

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darted out of my room and began this work in earnest. Suffice it to say that before the week was closed almost all of that band of young men were converted.

And now let me say to the impenitent sinners in this assembly, If others do not labour to promote a revival, begin at once and do it yourself. Learn from such a case as I have just stated, what you can do. Don't you think you could do something of the greatest value to souls if you would seriously try? Who is there here--let me see--what young man or young woman is there here now impenitent;--do not you believe that if you would repent yourself, you might then go and pray and labour and secure the conversion of others, perhaps many others of your companions?

Sinners are usually disposed to throw all the responsibility of this labour and prayer upon Christians. I throw it back upon you. Do right yourselves and then you can pray. Do right, and then none can labour with more effect than yourselves in this great work of bringing back wandering prodigals to their father's house.

Christian hearer, is it not a dreadful thing for you to be in a state in which you cannot prevail with God? Let us look around;--how is it with you? Can you prevail with God; and you--and you? Who are they and how many are there in such a state that their prayers avail nothing, and who know before they pray and while they are praying that they are in no fit state to offer prevailing prayer? One of the brethren, you recollect said to us at a recent church meeting--"I have lost my power to prevail with God. I know I am not ready for this work." How many others are there, still in the same awful condition?

O how many have we here who are the salt of the earth, whose prayers and redeeming influence save the community from becoming perfectly putrid with moral corruption? I hope they will be found alive and at work in this trying hour. O we must have your prayers for the impenitent--for the anxious--for backsliders;--or if you cannot pray--at least come together and confess your sins;--tell your brethren and sisters you cannot pray and beg of them to pray for you that you may be brought back to the light and the peace and the penitence of real salvation.

CONDITIONS OF PREVAILING PRAYER [Pt. 1]

May 26, 1847

"Ask, and it shall be given you." Matt. 7:7, 8

"Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3

These passages are chosen as the foundation of several discourses which I design to preach on the condition of prevailing prayer.

Before entering directly upon the consideration of those conditions, however, I deem it important to make several remarks upon the general subject of prayer and of answers to prayer. These will occupy our attention on the present occasion.

1. The Bible most unequivocally asserts that all that is properly called prayer is heard and answered. "Every one that asketh," that is, in the scriptural sense of the term, "receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth." This declaration is perfectly explicit and to the point.

2. Prayer is not always answered according to the letter, but often only according to the spirit.

This is a very important distinction. It can be made plain by an example taken from scripture. Paul informs us that he was afflicted with a thorn in the flesh. He has not told us precisely what this was. He calls it his "temptation that was in the flesh," and evidently implies that it was a snare and a trouble to him, and a thing which might naturally injure his influence as an apostle. For this latter reason, probably, he was led to "beseech the Lord thrice that it might depart from him." This prayer was obviously acceptable to God, and was graciously answered--answered, however, you will observe, not in the letter of it, but only in its spirit. The letter of the prayer specified the removal of this thorn in the flesh; and in this view of his prayer it was not answered. The spirit of the prayer was doubtless that his influence might not be injured, and that his "temptation" from this evil thing, whatever it was, might not overpower him and draw him

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into sin. Thus far, and in these respects, his prayer was answered. The Lord assured him, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." This was a real answer to Paul's prayer, although it did not follow the particular way of doing it that Paul had named in his prayer. Paul had asked that certain desired results might be secured to him in a particular manner. The results sought constituted the spirit of the prayer; the specified manner constituted the letter. The Lord secured to him the results, and perhaps even more fully than Paul expected or specifically asked; but He did it, not in Paul's specified way, but in his own.

So it often happens when we pray. The ways of the Lord are so much wiser than our own, that he kindly and most benevolently declines to follow our way, and takes his own. The great end, however, which we seek, if our prayer is acceptable to Him, He will certainly secure, perhaps more perfectly in his own way than he could in ours.

If, therefore, we suppose that prayer must always be answered according to the letter, we shall find ourselves greatly mistaken. But the spirit of acceptable prayer God will always answer. If the letter and the spirit of prayer were in any case identical, the Lord would answer both; when they are not identical, he may answer only according to its spirit.

3. No person can be saved unless in such a state of mind as to offer acceptable prayer. No man can be justified before God at all, unless in such a state of mind as would be accepted in prayer. This is so plain as to need no proof--so plain as to preclude all doubt.

4. Many things are really answers to prayer which are not recognized as such by the suppliant, nor by observers.

This you will see may very easily happen in cases where the spirit and the letter of prayer are diverse from each other. An observer, of course, is not likely to notice any thing but the letter of another's prayer. Consequently, if his prayer is answered only in the spirit of it, and not in the letter at all, he will fail to recognize the answer. And the same thing may occur in respect to the suppliant himself. Unless he notices particularly the inner state of his own mind, he may not get definitely before his eye the real thing which constitutes the spirit of his own prayer. If his attention is chiefly turned towards the letter of it, he may receive an answer to its spirit, and may not notice it as a real answer to his prayer.

The acceptable prayer of any Christian may be quite a different thing from what others suppose it to be, and sometimes different from

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what himself supposes. In such cases, the answer will often fail to be recognized as an answer. Hence it is of vital importance that we should ourselves understand the real spirit of our own prayer.

All this applies yet more frequently in respect to others than to the suppliant himself. Usually they see only the letter of a prayer and not the spirit. Hence if the latter is answered and not the former, they will naturally suppose that the prayer is not answered, when really it is answered and in the best possible way. Skeptics often stand by tauntingly, and cry out, "You Christians are always praying; but your prayers are never answered." Yet God may be really answering their prayer in the spirit of it, and in the most effectual and glorious manner. I think I could name many instances in which, while skeptics were triumphing as if God did not hear prayer, He was really hearing it in regard to the true spirit of it, and in such a way as most signally to glorify Himself.

5. Much that is called prayer is not answered in any sense whatever, and is not real prayer. Much that goes under the name of prayer is offered merely for the form of it, with neither care nor expectation to be answered. Those who pray thus will not watch to see whether their prayers are answered in any sense whatever.

For example, there are some who pray as a matter of cold duty--only because they must, and not because they feel their need of some specific blessing. Hence their prayer is nothing but a form. Their heart is not set upon any particular object. They only care to do what they call a duty; they do not care with anxious heart for any object they may specify in their prayers. Hence the thing they really care for, is not the thing they pray for. In words they pray for this thing; in heart for quite another thing. And the evidence of this is in the fact that they never look after the thing they pray for in words. If they prayed in heart for any thing, they would certainly look to see whether the blessing asked for is given.

Suppose a man had petitioned for some appointment to office, and had sent on his application to the President or to the appointing power. Probably his heart is greatly set on attaining it. If so you will see him watching the mail for the reply to his communication. Every day you may see him at the office ready to seize his letter at the earliest possible moment. But if on the other hand, he applied only for form's sake; and cares nothing about the office, or does not at all expect it, you will see him about other business or pleasure, which he does care for.

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The latter case rarely occurs in human affairs, but in religious things nothing is more common. Multitudes are engaged from time to time in what they call praying; their object being often only to appease their consciences--not to obtain any desired blessing. Of course the quiet of their conscience is the only thing they really seek by prayer, and it would be absurd in them to look after any other answer than this. They are not wont to be guilty of this absurdity.

Of course those who pray thus are not disappointed if they are not heard. It would be so in case of petitions addressed to men; it is so naturally when petitions are addressed to God.

A real Christian sometimes asks in the letter of prayer for what he finds God cannot give. In such a case he can be satisfied only with the consideration that God always exercises his own infinite wisdom and his not less infinite love. One great thing that lay nearest his heart if he was in the true spirit of prayer will be granted, namely, that God may be honored in the exercise of his own wisdom and love. This God will surely do. So far forth, therefore, the spirit of his prayer will be granted.

It deserves special notice that those who pray as a matter of form only, and with no heart set upon the blessing named in the prayer, never enquire for the reasons why they are not answered. Their minds are entirely at ease on this point, because they feel no solicitude about the answer at all. They did not pray for the sake of an answer. Hence they will never trouble themselves to enquire why the answer to the words of their prayer fails of being given.

How many of you who hear me, may see in this the real reason why you so rarely look after any answer to your prayers; or the reason why you care so little about it, if your mind should chance to advert to it at all?

Again, when our petitions are not answered either in letter or in their spirit, it is because we have not fulfilled the revealed conditions of acceptable prayer. Many persons seem to overlook the fact that there are conditions of acceptable prayer revealed in the Bible. But this is a fact by far too important to be ever wisely overlooked. It surely becomes every Christian to know not only that there are conditions, but also what they are.

Let us, then, fully understand that if our prayers are not answered, it is because we have failed of fulfilling the revealed conditions. This must be the reason why our prayers are not answered, for God has assured us in his word that all real prayer is always answered.

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Nothing can be more important than that we should thoroughly understand the conditions of prevailing prayer. If we fail thus to understand them, we shall very probably fail to fulfill them, and of course fail to offer prevailing prayer. Alas, how ruinous a failure must this be to any soul!

There are those, I am aware, who do not expect to influence God by their prayers; they expect to produce effects upon themselves only. They hope by means of prayer to bring themselves to a better state of mind, and this is all they expect to gain by means of prayer.

To all such I have two things to say:

(1.) It may be that an individual not in a right state of mind may be benefited by giving himself to prayer. If the prayer is offered with sincerity and solemnity--with a real feeling of want, as it is sometimes in the case of a convicted sinner, it may have a very happy effect upon his own state of mind. When such a man gives himself up to confession and supplication, and spreads out his case before the Lord, it is usually a most important step towards his real conversion. It helps to bring the character and claims of God distinctly before his mind, and has a natural tendency to make his own soul realize more deeply its guilt, its need of pardon, and its duty of submission and of faith in Christ.

But if any person should suppose that a case of this sort involves all that is included in prevailing prayer, he mistakes greatly. In prevailing prayer, a child of God comes before him with real faith in his promises and asks for things agreeable to his will, assured of being heard according to the true intent of the promises; and thus coming to God he prevails with him, and really influences God to do what otherwise he would not do by any means. That is, prayer truly secures from God the bestowment of the blessing sought. Nothing less than this corresponds either with the promises of scripture, or with its recorded facts in respect to the answers made to prevailing prayer.

(2.) God is unchangeably in the attitude of answering prayer. This is true for the same reason that He is unchangeably in the attitude of being complacent in holiness whenever he sees it. The reason in both cases, lies in his infinitely benevolent nature. Because he is infinitely good, therefore and for no other reason is it that He is evermore in the attitude of answering suitable prayer, and of being complacent towards all real holiness. As in the latter case, whenever a moral change takes place in a sinner of such a nature that God can love him, his infinite love gushes forth instantaneously and without

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bounds; so in the former case, as soon as any suppliant places himself in such an attitude that God can wisely answer his prayer, then instantly the ear of Jehovah inclines to his petition, and the answer is freely given.

To illustrate this point, suppose that for a season some obstacle interposes to obstruct the sunbeams from the rosebush at your door; it fades and it looks sickly. But take away the obstacle, and instantly the sunbeams fall in their reviving power upon the rose. So sin casts its dark shadow upon the soul, and obstructs the sunbeams of Jehovah's smiles. But take away the obstacle--the sin--and the smiles fall in of course, and in their full blaze on that penitent and morally changed heart. The sun of Jehovah's face shines always; shines in its own nature; and its beams fall on all objects which are not cast into some deep shade by interposing sin and unbelief. On all objects not thus shaded, its glorious beams forever fall in all their sweetness and beauty.

Hence all real prayer moves God, not merely by benefiting the suppliant through its reflex action, but really and in fact inducing Him to grant the blessing sought. The notion that the whole benefit of prayer is its reflex influence upon the suppliant, and not the obtaining of any blessing asked for, is both vain and preposterous. You might as well suppose that all the good you get by removing obstacles that cut off the sunbeams, is the physical exercise attending the effort. You might as well deny that the sunbeams will actually reach every object as soon as you take away that which throws them into the shade.

God does truly hear and answer prayer, even as an earthly parent hears the petition of a dutiful child, and shapes his course to meet the petition. To deny this involves the denial of the very nature of God. It is equivalent to denying that God is benevolent. It seems most obviously to deny that God fulfills his promises; for nothing can be more plain than the fact that God promises to be influenced by prayer so as to bestow blessings to the suppliant which are given to none others, and on no other condition. If God is pure and good, then it must needs follow that--the obstacle of sin being removed in the case of a fallen being--the divine love must flow out towards him as it did not and could not before. God remains forever the same, just as the sun forever shines; and then his love meets every object that lies open to his beams, just as the sun's rays cheer every thing not shaded by positive obstructions.

Again, God may hear the mere cry of distress and speedily send help. He "hears the young ravens when they cry," and the young lion

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too when they roar and seek their meat from God. The storm-tossed mariners also, "at their wit's end, cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distress." His benevolence leads him to do all this, wherever he can without detriment to the interests of his government. Yet this case seems not to come under the promises made to believing prayer. These cases of distress often occur in the experience of wicked men. Yet sometimes God seems obviously to hear their cry. He has wise reasons for doing so; probably often his object is to open their eyes to see their own Father, and to touch their hearts with a sense of their ingratitude in their rebellion against such a God.

But be the reason what it may, the fact cannot be disputed. Cases not unfrequently occur, in which persons not pious are afflicted by the dangerous illness of near friends or relatives, and lift their imploring cry of distress to the Lord and He hears them. It is even said in scripture that Christ heard the prayer of devils when they "besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country," and said, "Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them."

Manifestly the Lord often hears this kind of prayer, whenever no special reason exists for refusing to hear it. Yet this is far from being that peculiar kind of prayer to which the special promises of hearing and answering prayer are made.

It is however both interesting and instructive to see how often the Lord does hear even such prayer as these cries of distress. When the cattle moan in the fields because there is no water, and because the grass is withered, there is One on high who listens to their moans. Why should he not? Has he not a compassionate heart? Does not his ear bend under the quick impulse of spontaneous affection, when any of his creatures cry unto him as to their Father, and when no great moral considerations forbid his showing favor?

It is striking to see how much the parental character of the great Jehovah is developed in the course of his providence by his hearing this kind of prayer. A great multitude of facts are exhibited both in the Bible and in history, which set this subject in a strong light. I once knew a wicked man who under deep affliction from the dangerous illness of his child, set himself to pray that God would spare and restore the dear one; and God appeared to answer his prayer in a most remarkable manner.

Those of you who have read the "Bank of Faith," know that Mr. Huntington, before his conversion, in many instances seemed to experience the same kind of signal answers to his prayers. Another

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anecdote was told me the past winter which I should relate more freely if it were not somewhat amusing and laughable as well as instructive. A wicked man who had perhaps never prayed since he was a child, was out with a hunting party, on the confines of Iowa, hunting wild buffalo. Mounted on trained horses, lasso in hand, they came up to a herd of buffalo, and this man encountered a fierce buffalo bull. The animal rushed upon him, and at his first push unhorsed him; but quick as thought in his fall, the man seized his own horse's neck, swung upon the under side of the neck, and there held on in the utmost peril of his life; his horse being at full gallop, pursued by a ferocious wild bull. To break his hold and fall, was almost certain death, and he was every moment in the utmost danger of falling under the flying feet of his rushing horse. In this predicament he bethought himself of prayer; but the only words he could think of, were,

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

Perhaps he had never heard much other prayer than this. This lay embalmed among the recollections of his childhood days. Yet even this prayer the Lord in his infinite mercy seemed to hear and answer by rescuing the man unhurt from this perilous condition. The case affords us a striking exemplification not only of the fact that God hears the cry of mere distress, sometimes even when made by wicked men, but also of another fact, namely, that the spirit of a prayer may be a very different thing from its letter. In this case, the letter and the spirit had no very close resemblance. The spirit of the prayer was for deliverance from imminent peril. This the Lord seems to have heard.

But it should be continually borne in mind, that these are not the prayers which God has pledged himself by promise to hear and answer. The latter are evermore the believing prayers of his own children.

Our great enquiry now has respect to this class of prayers, namely, those which God has solemnly promised to answer. Attached to the promises made respecting this class of prayers are certain conditions. These being fulfilled, God holds himself bound to answer the prayer according to the letter and spirit both, if they both correspond; or if they do not correspond, then He will answer according to the spirit of the prayer. This is evermore the meaning of his promise. His promise to answer prayer on certain conditions is a pledge at least to meet it in its true spirit, and do or give what the spirit of the prayer implies.

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It now becomes us to enquire most diligently and most earnestly for the conditions of prevailing prayer. This point I shall enter upon in my next discourse.

CONDITIONS OF PREVAILING PRAYER

[Pt. 2]

June 9, 1847

"Ask, and it shall be given you." Matt. 7:7, 8.

"Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3.

I will commence the present discourse by briefly recapitulating the prefatory remarks which I made in my first sermon on this subject. I then observed,

1. That all real prayer is heard and answered.
2. Prayer is not always answered according to the letter of it, but often only according to its spirit. As an instance of this, I spoke of the striking case recorded respecting Paul's thorn in the flesh.
3. None can be saved who are not in a state of mind to prevail in prayer.
4. Many things are really answers to prayer which are not recognized by the suppliant as such nor by those who witness the prayer, the blessing bestowed, or the thing done in connection with it.
5. Much that is called prayer is not really prayer at all.
6. Many neither care nor expect to be heard, and therefore do not watch to see whether their prayers are answered. They pray merely as a duty; their heart being set on doing the duty and appeasing their consciences, and not on obtaining the blessing nominally asked for.
7. Nor do such persons feel disappointed if they fail of obtaining what they profess to ask for in prayer.
8. They do not trouble themselves to enquire why they are not answered. If they can only discharge their duty and appease their consciences, they have their desire.
9. Failure to obtain the blessing sought is always because the revealed conditions are not fulfilled.
10. Nothing is more important for us than to attend to, and understand the revealed conditions of prevailing prayer.

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11. God may answer the mere cry of distress when benevolence does not forbid it. He often does hear the sailor in the storm--the young ravens in their hunger; but this is a very different thing from that prayer which God has pledged himself by promise to hear and answer on the fulfilment of certain conditions.

This brings us to a consideration of the conditions of prevailing prayer.

1. The first condition is, a state of mind in which you would offer the Lord's prayer sincerely and acceptably.

Christ at their request taught his disciples how to pray. In doing so, He gave them an epitome of the appropriate subjects of prayer, and also threw a most important light upon the spirit with which all prayer should be offered. This form is exceedingly comprehensive. Every word is full of meaning. It would seem very obvious however that our Lord did not intend here to specify all the particular things we may pray for, but only to group together some of the great heads of subjects which are appropriate to be sought of God in prayer, and also to show us with what temper and spirit we should come before the Lord.

This is evidently not designed as a mere form, to be used always and without variation. It cannot be that Christ intended we should evermore use these words in prayer and no other words; for he never again used these precise words himself--so far as we know from the sacred record--but did often use other and very different words, as the scriptures abundantly testify.

But this form answers a most admirable purpose if we understand it to be given us to teach us these two most important things, namely, what sort of blessings we may pray for, and in what spirit we should pray for them.

Most surely, then, we cannot hope to pray acceptably unless we can offer this prayer in its real spirit--our own hearts deeply sympathizing with the spirit of this prayer. If we cannot pray the Lord's prayer sincerely, we cannot offer any acceptable prayer at all.

Hence it becomes us to examine carefully the words of this recorded form of prayer. Yet, be it remembered, it is not these words, as mere words, that God regards, or that we should value. Words themselves, apart from their meaning, and from their meaning as used by us, would neither please nor displease God.--He looks on the heart.

Let us now refer to the Lord's prayer, and to the connection in which it stands.

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"When ye pray," says our Lord, "use not vain repetitions as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Hence there is no need that you continue to clamor unceasingly, "O Baal, hear us; O Baal, hear us." Those were indeed vain repetitions--just such as the heathen use. It is a most singular fact that the Roman Catholic church has fallen into the practice here condemned. Like the priests of Baal, in Elijah's time, they demand and practise everlasting repetitions of the same words, numbering their repetitions of Pater Nosters and Ave Marias by their beads, and estimating the merit of praying by the quantity and not the quality of their prayers. The more repetitions, the greater the value. This principle, and the practice founded upon it, our Saviour most pointedly condemns.

So, many persons, not Roman Catholics or heathen, seem to lay much more stress upon the amount of prayer than upon its character and quality. They think if there can only be prayer enough, that is, repetitions enough of the same or similar words, the prayer will be certainly effective, and prevalent with God.--No mistake can be greater. The entire word of God rebukes this view of the subject in the most pointed manner.

Yet be it well considered, the precept, "Use not vain repetitions," should by no means be construed to discourage the utmost perseverance and fervency of spirit in prayer. The passage does not forbid our renewing our requests from great earnestness of spirit. Our Lord himself did this in the garden, repeating his supplication "in the same words." Vain repetitions are what is forbidden;--not repetitions which gush from a burdened spirit.

This form of prayer invites us, first of all to address the great God as "Our Father who art in heaven." This authorizes us to come as children and address the Most High, feeling that He is a Father to us.

The first petition follows--"Hallowed be thy name." What is the exact idea of this language? To hallow is to sanctify; to deem and render sacred.

There is a passage in Peter's Epistle which may throw light on this.

He says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." The meaning seems plainly to be this;--Set apart the Lord God in your hearts as the only true object of supreme, eternal adoration, worship, and praise. Place Him alone on the throne of your hearts. Let Him be the only hallowed object there.

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So here in the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, we pray that both ourselves and all intelligent beings may in this sense hallow the name of the Lord God and sanctify Him in their hearts. Our prayer is--Let all adore Thee--the infinite Father--as the only object of universal adoration, praise, worship, and love.

This prayer hence implies:

(1.) A desire that this hallowing of Jehovah's name should be universal.

(2.) A willingness to concur heartily ourselves in this sentiment. Our own hearts are in deep sympathy with it. Our inmost souls cry out--Let God be honoured, adored, loved, worshipped and revered by all on earth and all in heaven. Of course, praying in this spirit, we shall have the highest reverence for God.--Beginning our prayer thus, it will so far be acceptable to God. Without such reverence for Jehovah's name, no prayer can possibly be acceptable. All irreverent praying is mockery, most abhorrent to the pure and exalted Jehovah.

"Thy kingdom come." What does this language imply?

(1.) A desire that God's kingdom should be set up in the world and all men become holy. The will is set upon this as the highest and most to be desired of all objects whatever. It becomes the supreme desire of the soul, and all other things sink into comparative insignificance before it. The mind and the judgment approve and delight in the kingdom of God as in itself infinitely excellent, and then the will harmonizes most perfectly with this decision of intelligence.

Let it be well observed here that our Lord in giving this form of prayer, assumes throughout that we shall use all this language with most profound sincerity. If any man were to use these words and reject their spirit from his heart, his prayer would be an utter abomination before God. Whoever would pray at all, should consider that God looks on the heart, and is a holy God.

(2.) It is implied in this petition that the suppliant does what he can to establish this kingdom. He is actually doing all he can to promote this great end for which he prays. Else he fails entirely of evincing his sincerity. For nothing can be more sure than that every man who prays sincerely for the coming of Jehovah's kingdom, truly desires and wills that it may come; and if so, he will neglect no means in his power to promote and hasten its coming. Hence every man who sincerely offers this petition will lay himself out to promote the object. He will seek by every means to make the truth of God universally prevalent and triumphant.

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(3.) I might also say that the sincere offering of this petition implies a resistance of every thing inconsistent with the coming of this kingdom. This you cannot fail to understand.

We now pass to the next petition;--"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

This petition implies that we desire to have God's will done, and that this desire is supreme.

It implies also a delight in having the will of God done by all his creatures, and a corresponding sorrow whenever it fails of being done by any intelligent being.

There is also implied a state of the will in harmony with this desire. A man whose will is averse to having his own desires granted is insincere even although his desires are real. Such a man is not honest and consistent with himself.

In general I remark respecting this petition that if it be offered sincerely, the following things must be true:

(1.) The suppliant is willing that God should require all He does, and as He does. His heart will acquiesce both in the things required and in the manner in which God requires them. It would indeed be strange that a man should pray sincerely that God's will might be done, and yet not be willing himself that God should give law, or carry his will into effect. Such inconsistencies never can happen where the heart is truly sincere and honest before God. No, never. The honesthearted suppliant is as willing that God's will should be done as the saints in heaven are. He delights in having it done, more than in all riches--more than in his highest earthly joy.

(2.) When a man offers this petition sincerely, it is implied that he is really doing, himself, all the known will of God. For if he is acting contrary to his actual knowledge of God's will, it is most certain that he is not sincere in praying that God's will may be done. If he sincerely desires and is willing that God's will should be done, why does he not do it himself?

(3.) It implies a willingness that God should use his own discretion in the affairs of the universe, and just as really and fully in this world as in heaven itself. You all admit that in heaven God exercises a holy sovereignty. I do not mean by this, an arbitrary unreasonable sovereignty, but I mean a control of all things according to his own infinite wisdom and love--exercising evermore his own discretion, and depending on the counsel of none but himself. Thus God reigns in heaven.

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You also see that in heaven, all created beings exercise the most perfect submission, and confidence in God. They all allow him to carry out his own plans framed in wisdom and love, and they even rejoice with exceeding joy that He does. It is their highest blessedness.

Such is the state of feeling towards God universally in heaven.

And such it should be on earth. The man who offers this petition sincerely must approximate very closely to the state of mind which obtains in heaven.--

He will rejoice that God appoints all things as He pleases, and that all beings should be, and do, and suffer as God ordains. If man has not such confidence in God as to be willing that he should control all events respecting his own family, his friends, all his interests, in short, for time and eternity, then certainly his heart is not submissive to God, and it is hypocrisy for him to pray that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven. It must be hypocrisy in him because his own heart rebels against the sentiment of his own words.

This petition, offered honestly implies nothing less than universal, unqualified submission to God. The heart really submits, and delights in its submission.

No thought is so truly pleasing as that of having God's will done evermore. A sincere offering of this prayer or indeed of any prayer whatever involves the fullest possible submission of all events for time and for eternity to the hands of God. All real prayer puts God on the throne of the universe, and the suppliant low before Him at his footstool.

(4.) The offering of this petition sincerely, implies conformity of life to this state of the will. You will readily see that this must be the case, because the will governs the outward life by a law of necessity. The action of this law must be universal so long as man remains a voluntary moral agent. So long therefore the ultimate purpose of the will must control the outward life.

Hence the man who offers this prayer acceptably must live as he prays; must live according to his own prayers. It would be a strange and most unaccountable thing indeed if the heart should be in a state to offer this prayer sincerely and yet should act itself out in the life directly contrary to its own expressed and supreme preference and purpose.

Such a case is impossible. The very supposition involves the absurdity of assuming that a man's supreme preference shall not control his outward life.

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In saying this, however, I do not deny that a man's state of mind may change, so as to differ the next hour from what it is this. He may be in a state one hour to offer this prayer acceptably, and the next hour may act in a manner right over against his prayer.

But if in this latter hour you could know the state of his will, you would find that it is not such that he can pray acceptably--"Thy will be done." No, his will is so changed as to conform to what you see in his outward life.

Hence a man's state of heart may be to some extent known from his external actions. You may at least know that his heart does not sincerely offer this prayer if his life does not conform to the known will of God.

We pass to the next petition;--"Give us this day our daily bread."

It is plain that this implies dependence on God for all the favors and mercies we either possess or need.

The petition is remarkably comprehensive. It names only bread, and only the bread for "this day;" yet none can doubt that it was designed to include also our water and our needful clothing--whatever we really need for our highest health, and usefulness, and enjoyment on earth. For all these we look to God.

Our Saviour doubtless meant to give us in general the subjects of prayer, showing us for what things it is proper for us to pray; and also the spirit with which we should pray. These are plainly the two great points which he aimed chiefly to illustrate in this remarkable form of prayer.

Whoever offers this petition sincerely is in a state of mind to recognize and gratefully acknowledge the providence of God. He sees the hand of God in all the circumstances that affect his earthly state. The rain and the sunshine--the winds and the frosts, he sees coming, all of them from the hand of his own Father. Hence he looks up in the spirit of a child--saying, "Give me this day my daily bread."

But there are those who philosophize and speculate themselves entirely out of this filial dependence on God. They arrive at such ideas of the magnitude of the universe that it becomes in their view too great for God to govern by a minute attention to particular events. Hence they see no God, other than an unknowing Nature in the ordinary processes of vegetation, or in the laws that control animal life. A certain indefinable but unintelligent power which they call Nature, does it all. Hence they do not expect God to hear their prayers, or notice their wants. Nature will move on in its own determined channel whether they pray or restrain prayer.

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Now men who hold such opinions cannot pray the Lord's prayer without the most glaring hypocrisy.--How can they offer this prayer and mean anything by it, if they truly believe that everything is nailed down to a fixed chain of events in which no regard is had or can be had to the prayers or wants of man?

Surely, nothing is more plain than that this prayer recognizes most fully the universal providence of that same infinite Father who gives us the promises and who invites us to plead them for obtaining all the blessings we can ever need.

It practically recognizes God as Ruler over all.

What if a man should offer this prayer, but should add to it an appendix of this sort--"Lord, although we ask of thee our daily bread, yet Thou knowest we do not believe Thou hast any thing at all to do with giving us each day our daily bread; for we believe Thou art too high and Thy universe too large to admit of our supposing that Thou canst attend to so small a matter as supplying our daily food. We believe that Thou art so unchangeable, and the laws of nature are so fixed that no regard can possibly be had to our prayers or our wants.["]

Now would this style of prayer correspond with the petitions given us by Christ, or with their obvious spirit?

Plainly this prayer dictated by our Lord for us, implies a state of heart that leans upon God for every thing--for even the most minute things that can possibly affect our happiness or be to us objects of desire. The mind looks up to the great God, expecting from Him, and from Him alone, every good and perfect gift. For every thing we need, our eye turns naturally and spontaneously towards our great Father.

And this is a daily dependence. The state of mind which it implies is habitual.

We must pass now to the next petition, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

In this immediate connection, the Saviour says, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The word trespasses, therefore doubtless explains what is meant by debts in the Lord's prayer. Luke, in reciting this Lord's prayer, has it--"Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." These various forms of expression serve to make the meaning quite plain. It may often happen that in such a world as this, some of my fellow men may

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wrong or at least offend me--in some such way as I wrong and displease God. In such cases this petition of the Lord's prayer implies that I forgive those who injure me, even as I pray to be forgiven myself.

The phraseology in Matthew makes the fact that we forgive others either the measure, or the condition of our being forgiven; while as given by Luke, it seems to be at least a condition if not a ground or reason of the request for personal forgiveness. The former reads--"Forgive us as we forgive," &c. and the latter;-- "Forgive us, for we also forgive every one indebted to us."

Now on this petition I remark,

(1.) It cannot possibly imply that God will forgive us our sins while we are still committing them. Suppose one should use this form of petition;--"Lord, forgive me for having injured Thee as Thou knowest that I do most freely forgive all men who injure me;" while yet it is perfectly apparent to the man himself and to every body else that he is still injuring and abusing God as much as ever. Would not such a course be equivalent to saying, "Lord, I am very careful, Thou seest, not to injure my fellow men, and I freely forgive their wrongs against me; but I care not how much I abuse and wrong Thee!" This would be horrible! Yet this horrible prayer is virtually invoked whenever men ask of God forgiveness with the spirit of sin and rebellion in their hearts.

(2.) This petition never reads thus; "Forgive us our sins and enable us to forgive others also." This would be a most abominable prayer to offer to God; certainly if it be understood to imply that we cannot forgive others unless we are specially enabled to do so by power given us in answer to prayer; and worse still, if this inability to forgive is imputed to God as its Author.

However the phraseology be explained, and whatever it be understood to imply, it is common enough in the mouths of men; but no where found in the book of God.

(3.) Christ, on the other hand, says;--Forgive us as we forgive others. We have often injured, abused, and wronged Thee. Our fellow men have also often injured us, but Thou knowest we have freely forgiven them. Now, therefore, forgive us as Thou seest we have forgiven others. If Thou seest that we do forgive others, then do Thou indeed forgive us and not otherwise. We cannot ask to be ourselves forgiven on any other condition.

(4.) Many seem to consider themselves quite pious if they can put up with it when they are injured or slighted; if they can possibly

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control themselves so as not to break out into a passion. If, however, they are really wronged, they imagine they do well to be angry. O, to be sure! somebody has really wronged them, and shall they not resent it and study how to get revenge, or at least, redress? But mark; the Apostle Peter says, "If when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." "For even hereunto were ye called," as if all Christians had received a special call to this holy example. O how would such an example rebuke the spirit of the world!

(5.) It is one remarkable condition of being answered in prayer that we suffer ourselves to harbour no ill will to any human being. We must forgive all that wrong us, and forgive them too from the heart. God as really requires us to love our enemies as to love our friends,--as really requires us to forgive others as to ask forgiveness for ourselves. Do we always bear this in mind? Are you, beloved, always careful to see to it that your state of mind towards all who may possibly have wronged you is one of real forgiveness, and do you never think of coming to God in prayer until you are sure you have a forgiving spirit yourself?

Plainly, this is one of the ways in which we may test our fitness of heart to prevail with God in prayer. "When thou standest, praying, forgive, if thou hast ought against any." Think not to gain audience before God unless thou dost most fully and heartily forgive all who may be thought to have wronged thee.

Sometimes persons of a peculiar temperament lay up grudges against others. They have enemies against whom they not only speak evil, but know not how to speak well. Now such persons who harbor such grudges in their hearts, can no more prevail with God in prayer than the devil can. God would as soon hear the devil pray and answer his prayers as hear and answer them. They need not think to be heard;--not they!

How many times have I had occasion to rebuke this unforgiving spirit! Often while in a place laboring to promote a revival, I have seen the workings of this jealous, unforgiving spirit, and I have felt like saying, Take these things hence! Why do you get up a prayer-meeting and think to pray to God when you know that you hate your brother; and know moreover that I know you do? Away with it! Let such professed Christians repent, break down, get into the dust at the feet of God and men too, before they think to pray acceptably! Until they do thus repent all their prayers are only a "smoke in the nose" before God.

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Our next petition is, "Lead us not into temptation"

And what is implied in this?

A fear and dread of sin;--a watchfulness against temptation; an anxious solicitude lest by any means we should be overcome and fall into sin. On this point Christ often warned his disciples, and not them only, but what He said unto them, He said unto all,--"Watch."

A man not afraid of sin and temptation cannot present this petition in a manner acceptable to God.

You will observe, moreover, that this petition does not by any means imply that God leads men into temptation in order to make them sin so that we must needs implore of Him not to lead us thus, lest He should do it. No, that is not implied at all; but the spirit of the petition is this;--O Lord, Thou knowest how weak I am, and how prone to sin; therefore let thy providence guard and keep me that I may not indulge in any thing whatever that may prove to me a temptation to sin.--Deliver us from all iniquity--from all the stratagems of the devil. Throw around us all Thy precious guardianship, that we may be kept from sinning against Thee.

How needful this protection, and how fit that we should pray for it without ceasing!

This form of prayer concludes:--"For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever, amen."

Here is an acknowledgment of the universal government of God. The suppliant recognizes his supremacy and rejoices in it.

Thus it is when the mind is in the attitude of prevailing prayer. It is most perfectly natural then for us to regard the character, attributes, and kingdom of God as infinitely sacred and glorious.

How perfectly spontaneous is this feeling in the heart of all who really pray, "I ask all this because Thou art a powerful, universal, and holy Sovereign.--Thou art the infinite Source of all blessings. Unto Thee, therefore, do I look for all needed good either for myself or my fellow beings!"

How deeply does the praying heart realize and rejoice in the universal supremacy of the great Jehovah! All power, and glory, and dominion are thine and thine only, forever and ever, amen and amen. Let my whole soul re-echo, amen. Let the power and the glory be the Lord's alone for evermore. Let my soul for ever feel and utter this sentiment with its deepest and most fervent emphasis. Let God reign supreme and adored through all earth and all heaven, henceforth and forever.

REMARKS

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1. The state of mind involved in this prayer must be connected with a holy life. Most manifestly it can never co-exist with a sinning life. If you allow yourself in sin, you certainly cannot have access to God in prayer. You cannot enter into the spirit of the Lord's prayer and appropriately utter its petitions.

2. The appropriate offering of this prayer involves a corresponding sensibility--a state of feeling in harmony with it. The mind of the suppliant must sympathize with the spirit of this form of prayer. Otherwise he does, by no means, make this prayer his own.

3. It is nothing better than mockery to use the Lord's prayer as a mere form. So multitudes do use it, especially when public worship is conducted by the use of forms of prayer. Often you may hear this form of prayer repeated over and over in such a way as seems to testify that the mind takes no cognizance of the sentiments which the words should express. The chattering of a parrot could scarcely be more senseless and void of impression on the speaker's mind. How shocking to hear the Lord's prayer chattered over thus! Instead of spreading out before God what they really need, they run over the words of this form, and perhaps of some other set forms, as if the utterance of the right words served to constitute acceptable prayer!

If they had gone into the streets and cursed and swore by the hour, every man of them would be horribly shocked, and would feel that now assuredly the curse of Jehovah would fall upon them. But in their senseless chattering of this form of prayer by the hour together, they as truly blaspheme God as if they had taken his name in vain in any other way.

Men may mock God in pretending to pray, as truly as in cursing and swearing. God looks on the heart and He estimates nothing as real prayer into which the heart does not enter. And for many reasons it must be peculiarly provoking to God to have the forms of prayer gone through with and no heart of prayer attend them.

Prayer is a privilege too sacred to be trifled with.--The pernicious effects of trifling with prayer are certainly not less than the evils of any other form of profanity. Hence God must abhor all public desecration of this solemn exercise.

Now, brethren, in closing my remarks on this one great condition of prevailing prayer, let me beseech you never to suppose that you pray acceptably unless your heart sympathizes deeply with the sentiments expressed in the Lord's prayer. Your state of mind must be such that these words will most aptly express it. Your heart must run into the very words, and into all the sentiments of this form

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of prayer. Our Saviour meant here to teach us how to pray; and here you may come and learn how. Here you may see a map of the things to pray for, and a picture of the spirit in which acceptable prayer is offered.

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[Pt. 3]

July 21, 1847

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3

In a former discourse on this text, I mentioned, among other conditions of prevailing prayer, that confession should be made to those whom our sins have injured, and also to God. It is most plain that all sins should be confessed to God, that we may obtain forgiveness and be reconciled to him; else how can we have communion of soul with him? And who can for a moment doubt that our confessions should not omit those of our fellow beings whom we have injured?

In the next place I remark that restitution should be made to God and to man.

To man we should make restitution in the sense of undoing as far as possible the wrong we have done, and repairing and making good all the evil. If we have impeached character wrongfully, we must recall and undo it. If we have injured another even by mistake, we are bound, if the mistake come to our knowledge, to set it right,-- else we are criminal in allowing it to remain uncorrected. If the injury done by us to our neighbor affect his property, we must make restitution.

But I wish to call your attention more especially to the restitution which we are to make to God. And in respect to this, I do not mean to imply that we can make good our wrongs against God in the sense of really restoring that which we have withheld or taken away; but we can render to him whatever yet remains. The time yet to be given us we can devote to him, although the past has gone beyond recall. Our talents and influence and wealth, yet to be used, we may freely and fully use for God; and manifestly, so much as this, God and reason require of us, and it were vain for us to hope to be

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accepted in prayer unless we seriously intend to render all the future to God.

Let us look more closely into this subject. How many of you have been robbing God,--robbing him for a long time, and on a large scale? Let us see.

We all belong to God. We are his property in the highest possible sense. He brought us into being, gave us all we have, and made us all we are; so that He is our rightful owner in a far higher sense than that in which any man can own any thing whatever.

All we have and are, therefore, is due to God. If we withhold it, we are just so far forth guilty of robbing God. And all this robbery from God, we are unquestionably bound, as far as possible, to make up.

Do any of you still question whether men ever do truly rob God? Examine this point thoroughly. If any of you were to slip into a merchant's store and filch money from his drawer; you could not deny that the act is theft. You take, criminally, from your fellow-man what belongs to him and does not at all belong to yourself. Now can it be denied that, whenever by sin you withhold from God what is due to him, you as really rob God as any one can steal from a merchant's drawer? God owns all men and all their services in a far higher sense than that in which any merchant owns the money in his drawer. God rightfully claims the use of all your talents, wealth, and time for himself,--for his own glory and the good of his creatures. Just so far, therefore, as you use yourselves for yourselves, you as really rob God as if you appropriated to yourself any thing that belongs of right to your neighbor.

Stealing differs from robbery chiefly in this: the former is done secretly;--the later by violence, in spite of resistance, or, as the case may be, of remonstrance. If you go secretly, without the knowledge of the owner, and take what is his, you steal; if you take aught of his openly--by force--against his known will, you rob. These two crimes differ not essentially in spirit; either is considered a serious trespass upon the rights of a fellow-man. Robbery has usually this aggravation; viz. that it puts the owner in fear. But the case may be such that the owner may do all he wisely can to prevent being robbed, and yet you may rob him without exciting alarm and causing him the additional evil of fear. Even in this case, there might still be the essential ingredient of robbery; forcibly taking from another what is his and not yours.

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Now how is it that we sin against God? The true answer is, we tear ourselves away from his service. We wrest our hearts by a species of moral violence away from the claims he lays upon us. He says--Ye shall serve me, and no other God but me. This is his first and great command; and verily, none can be greater than this. No claim can be stronger than God's upon us.

Still, it evermore leaves our will free, so that we can rebel and wrest ourselves away from the service of God, if we will do so. And what is this but real robbery?

Suppose it were possible for me to own a man. I know we all deny the possibility of this, our relations to each other as men being what they are; but for illustration it may be supposed that I have created a man and hence own him in as full a sense as God owns us all. Still he remains a free agent,--yet solemnly bound to serve me continually. But despite of my claims on him and of all I can wisely do to retain him in my service, he runs away; tears himself from my service. Is not this real robbery? Robbery too of a most absolute kind? He owed me every thing; he leaves me nothing.

So the sinner robs God. Availing himself of his free agency, he tears himself away from God, despite of all his rightful owner can do to enlist his affections, enforce his own claims, and retain his willing allegiance. This is robbery. It is not done secretly, like stealing, but openly, before the sun; and violently too, as in the case of real robbery. It is done despite of all God can wisely do to prevent it.

Hence all sin is robbery. It can never be any thing less than wresting from God what is rightfully his. It is therefore by no figure of speech that God calls this act robbery. Will a man rob God? "Yet ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." Sin is never any thing less than this,--a moral agent owned by the highest possible title, yet tearing himself away from his rightful owner, despite of all persuasions and of all claims.

Hence, if any man would prevail with God, he must bring back himself and all that remains not yet squandered and destroyed. Yes, let him come back saying--Here I am, Lord; I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly, I am ashamed that I have used up so much of thy time,--have consumed in sin so much of that strength of mind and body which is thine;--ashamed that I have employed these hands and this tongue and all these members of my body in serving myself and Satan, and have wrested them away from thy service: Lord, I have done most wickedly and meanly; thou seest that I am

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ashamed of myself, and I feel that I have wronged thee beyond expression.

So you should come before God. See that thief, coming back to confess and make restitution. Does he not feel a deep sense of shame and guilt? Now unless you are willing to come back and humbly confess and freely restore to God the full use of all that yet remains, how can you hope to be accepted?

You may well be thankful that God does not require of you that you restore all you have wrested from him and guiltily squandered; all your wasted time and health perhaps, and influence;--if He were to demand this, it would at once render your acceptance before him, and your salvation too, impossible. It would be forever impossible, on such a condition, that you should prevail in prayer.

Blessed be God, He does not demand this. He is willing to forgive all the past--but remember, only on the condition that you bring back all the rest--all that yet remains to be used of yourself and of the powers God has given or may yet give you.

So much as this God must require as a condition; and why should He not? Suppose you have robbed a man of all you can possibly get away from him; and you know that the facts are all known to him. Yet you come before him without a confession or a blush and ask him to receive you to his confidence and friendship. He turns upon you--Are not you the man who robbed me? Where is that money you took from me? You come to me as if you have never wronged me, and as if you had done nothing to forfeit my confidence and favor;--do you come and ask my friendship again? Monstrous!

Now would it be strange if God were, in a similar case, to repel an unhumiliated sinner in the same way? Can the sinner who comes back to God with no heart to make any restitution, or any consecration of himself to God, expect to be accepted? Nothing can be more unreasonable.

It is indeed nothing less than infinite goodness that God can forgive trespasses so great, so enormous as ours have been;--O what a spectacle of loving-kindness is this! Suppose a man had stolen from you ten thousand pounds, and having squandered it all, should be thrown in his rags and beggary at your door. There you see him wasted and wan, hungry and filthy, penniless and wretched; and your heart is touched with compassion. You freely forgive all. You take him up; you weep over his miseries; you wash him, clothe him, and make him welcome to your house and to all the comforts you can

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bestow upon him. How would all the world admire your conduct as generous and noble in the very highest degree!

But O, the loving-kindness of God in welcoming to his bosom the penitent, returning sinner! How it must look in the eyes of angels! They see the prodigal returning, and hear him welcomed openly to the bosom of Jehovah's family. They see him coming along, wan, haggard, guilty, ashamed, in tattered and filthy robes, and downcast mien--nothing attractive in his appearance; he does not look as if he ever was a son, so terribly has sin defaced the lineaments of sonship; but he comes, and they witness the scene that follows. The Father spies him from afar, and rushes forth to meet him. He owns him as a son; falls upon his neck, pours out tears of gladness at his return, orders the best robe and the fatted calf, and fills his mansion with all the testimonies of rejoicing.

Angels see this--and O, with what emotions of wonder and delight! What a spectacle must this be to the whole universe--to see God coming forth thus to meet the returning penitent! To see that He not only comes forth to take notice of him, but to answer his requests and enter into such communion with him, and such relations, that this once apostate sinner may now ask what he will and it shall be done unto him.

I have sometimes thought that if I had been present when Joseph made himself known to his brethren, I should have been utterly overwhelmed. I can never read the account of that scene without weeping.

I might say the same of the story of the prodigal son. Who can read it without tears of sympathy? O, to have seen it with one's own eyes--to have been there, to have seen the son approaching, pale and trembling;--the father rushing forth to meet him with such irrepressible tenderness and compassion;--such a spectacle would be too much to endure!

And now let me ask--What if the intelligent universe might see the great God receiving to his bosom a returning, penitent sinner. O, what an interest must such a scene create throughout all heaven! But just such scenes are transpiring in heaven continually. We are definitely told there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents. Surely all heaven must be one perpetual glow of excitement--such manifestations are ever going forward there of infinite compassion towards sinners returning from their evil ways.

Yet be it evermore remembered,--no sinner can find a welcome before the face of God unless he returns most deeply penitent. Ah!

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you do not know God at all if you suppose He can receive you without the most thorough penitence and the most ample restitution. You must bring back all that remains unwasted and unsquandered. You must look it all over most carefully and honestly, and say--Here, Lord, is the pitiful remnant--the small amount left: all the rest I have basely and most unprofitably wasted and used up in my course of sin and rebellion. Thou seest how much I have squandered, and how very little is left to be devoted now to thy service. O! what an unprofitable servant I have been; and how miserably unprofitable have I made myself for all the rest of my life.

It were well for every hearer to go minutely into this subject. Estimate and see how many years of your life have gone, never to be recalled. Some of these young people have more years remaining, according to the common laws of life, than we who are farther advanced in years. Yet even you have sad occasion to say--Alas, how many of the best years of my life are thrown away, yes, worse than thrown into the sea; for in fact they have been given to the service of the devil. How many suits of clothing worn out in the ways of sin and the work of Satan. How many tons of provisions--food for man, provided under the bounty of a gracious Providence--have I used up in my career of rebellion against my Maker and Father! O, if it were all now to rise up before me and enter with me into judgment--if each day's daily bread, used up in sin, were to appear in testimony against me; what a scene must the solemn reckoning be!

Let each sinner look this ground all over, and think of the position he must occupy before an abused yet most gracious God, and then say--How can you expect to prevail with God if you do not bring back with a most penitent and devoted heart, all that remains yet to you of years and of strength for God.

How much more, if more be possible, is this true of those who are advanced in years. How fearfully have we wasted our substance and our days in vain! How then shall we hope to conciliate the favor of God and prevail with him in prayer, unless we bring back all that remains to us, and consecrate it a whole offering to the Lord our God?

We must pass now to another condition of prevailing prayer; namely, that we be reconciled to our brother.

On this subject you will at once recollect the explicit instructions of our Lord; "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

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This passage states very distinctly one important condition of acceptable prayer, and shows that all men are not at all times in a fit state to pray. They may be in a state in which they have no right to pray at all. If they were to come before the Lord's altar in this state, He would bid them suspend their offering of prayer, go back at once, and be reconciled to their brother.

It is important for men to understand that they should approach God in prayer only when they have a right to pray. Others seem entirely to misconceive the relations of prayer to God and to themselves, and think that their prayers are a great favor to God. They seem to suppose that they lay the Lord under great obligations to themselves by their prayers, and if they have made many prayers, and long, they think it quite hard if the Lord does not acknowledge his obligation to them, and grant them a speedy answer. Indeed, they seem almost ready to fall into a quarrel with God if He does not answer their prayers.

I knew one man who on one occasion prayed all night. Morning came, but no answer from God. For this he was so angry with God, that he was tempted to cut his own throat. Indeed, so excited were his feelings and so sharp was this temptation, that he threw away his knife the better to resist it. This shows how absurdly men feel and think on this subject.

Suppose you owed a man a thousand dollars, and should take it into your head to discharge the debt by begging him to release and forgive it. You renew your prayer every time you see him, and if he is at any distance you send him a begging letter by every mail. Now inasmuch as you have done your part as you suppose, you fall into a passion if he won't do his and freely relinquish your debt. Would not this be on your part sufficiently absurd, sufficiently ridiculous and wrong?

So with the sinner and God. Many seem to suppose that God ought to forgive. They will have it that He is under obligation to them to pardon and put away from his sight all their sins the moment they choose to say.

Now God has indeed promised on certain conditions to forgive; and the conditions being fulfilled, He certainly will fulfil his promise; yet never because it is claimed as a matter of justice or right. His promises all pertain to an economy of mercy and not of strict justice.

When men pray aright, God will hear and answer; but if they pray as a mere duty, or pray to make it a demand on the score of justice, they fundamentally mistake the very idea of prayer.

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But I must return to the point under consideration.

Sometimes we have no right to pray. "When thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift, and go, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." The meaning of this precept seems to be plain. If you are conscious of having wronged your brother, go at once and undo that wrong. If you know that he has any good reason for having aught against you, go and remove that reason as far as lies in your power to do so. Else how can you come before God to ask favors of Him?

Here it is important to understand certain cases which though they may seem, yet do not really come under the spirit of this rule. Another man may suppose himself to have been injured by me, yet I may be entirely conscientious in feeling that I have done no otherwise than right towards him, and still I may be utterly unable to remove from his mind the impression that I have wronged him. In this case, I am by no means cut off from the privilege of prayer.

Thus it often happens when I preach against backsliders that they feel exceedingly hurt and think I have wronged them unpardonably; whereas I may have been only honest and faithful to my Master and to their own souls. In such a case I am not to be debarred the privileges of prayer in consequence of their feelings towards me. It were indeed most absurd that this should shut me away from the mercy-seat. If I am conscious of having done no wrong, the Lord will draw me near to himself. In such a case as this I can make no confession of wrong-doing.

But the case contemplated by our Lord is one which I know I have done wrong to my neighbor. Knowing this, I have no right to come before God to pray until I have made restitution and satisfaction.

Sometimes professors of religion have come to me and asked, Why are we not heard and answered? We pray a great deal, yet the Lord does not answer our prayers.

Indeed, I have asked them--Do you not recollect many times when in the act of prayer you have been reminded of having injured a brother, and yet you did not go to him and make restitution, or even confession? Yes, many have said; I can recollect such cases; but I passed them over, and did not trouble myself with them, I do not know that I thought much about the necessity of making confession and restitution, at all events I know I soon forgot those thoughts of having wronged my neighbor.

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You did, indeed; but God did not forget. He remembered your dishonesty and your neglect, or perhaps contempt of one of his plainly taught conditions of acceptable prayer, and he could not hear you. Until you had gone and become reconciled to your brother, what have you to do with praying? Your God says to you--Why do you come here before me to lie to my very face, pretending to be honest and upright towards your fellow-beings, when you know you have wronged them, and have never made confession and restitution?

In my labors as an Evangelist, I have sometimes fallen into a community who were most of them in this horrible state. Perhaps they had sent for me to come among them saying that they were all ready and ripe for a revival, and thus constrained me to go. On coming among them I have found the very opposite to be the fact. I would preach to the impenitent; many would be convicted; and awful solemnity would prevail; but no conversions. Then I would turn to the church and beg them to pray, and soon the fact would come out that they had no fellowship with each other and no mutual confidence; almost every brother and sister had hard feelings towards each other; many knew they had wronged their brethren and had never made confession or restitution; some had not even spoken kindly to one another for months; in short it was a state of real war; and how could the Dove of Peace abide there? and how could a righteous God hear their prayers? He could do no such thing till they repented in dust and ashes, and put away these abominable iniquities from before his face.

It often happens that professors of religion are exceedingly careless in respect to the conditions of prevailing prayer. What! Christian men and women in such a state that they will not speak to each other! In such relations to each other that they are ready to injure one another in the worst way--ready to mangle and rend each other's characters! Away with it! It is an offence to God! It is an utter abomination in his sight! He loathes the prayers and the professed worship of such men, as he loathes idolatry itself.

Now although cases as outrageous as those I have described, do not occur very frequently, yet many cases do occur which involve substantially the same principle. In respect to all such, let it be known that God is infinitely honest, and so long as he is so, he will not hold communion and fellowship with one who is dishonest. He expects us to be honest and truthful, willing ever to obey him, and ever anxious to meet all the conditions of acceptable prayer. Until this is the case with us, He cannot and will not hear us, however much and long we pray. Why should he? "Thou requirest truth in the inward parts," said

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the Psalmist of his God, as if fully aware that entire sincerity of heart, and of course uprightness of life towards others, is an unalterable condition of acceptance before God. It is amazing to see how much insincerity there often is among professed Christians, both in their mutual relations to each other, and also in the relations to God.

Again, we ought always to have an honest and good reason for praying and for asking for the specific things we pray for. It should be remembered that God is infinitely reasonable, and therefore does nothing without a reason. Therefore in all prayer you should always have a reason or reasons that will commend themselves to God as a valid ground for his hearing and answering your prayers.

You can have a rational confidence that God will hear you only when you know what your reasons are for praying and have good grounds to suppose they are such as will commend themselves to an infinitely wise and righteous God.

Beloved, are you in the habit of giving your attention sufficiently to this point? When you pray, do you ask for your own reasons? Do you enquire; Now have I such reasons for this prayer as God can sympathize with--such as I can suppose will have weight with his mind?

Surely this is an all-important enquiry. God will not hear us unless He sees that we have such reasons as will satisfy his own infinite intelligence--such reasons that He can wisely act in view of them;--such that He will not be ashamed to have the universe know that on such grounds He answered our prayers. They must be such that he will not be ashamed of them himself. For we should evermore consider that all God's doings are one day to be perfectly known. It will yet be known why he answered every acceptable prayer, and why he refused to answer each one that was not acceptable.

Hence if we are to offer prayer, or to do any thing else in which we expect God to sympathize with us, we ought to have good and sufficient reasons for what we ask or do.

You can not help seeing this at your first glance at the subject. Your prayer must not be selfish but benevolent--else how can God hear it? Will he lend himself to patronize and befriend your selfishness?

Suppose a man asks for the Holy Spirit to guide him in any work; or suppose he ask for that Spirit to sanctify himself or his friends. Let him be always able to give a good reason for what he asks. Is his ultimate reason a selfish one--for example, that he may become more distinguished in the world, or may prosecute some

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favorite scheme for himself and his own glory or his own selfish good? Let him know that the Lord has no sympathy with such reasons for prayer.

Thus a child comes before its parent, and says, Do give me this or that favor. Your reason, my child, says the parent;--give me your reason; what do you want it for?

So God says to us, his children;--your reason, my child; what is your reason? You ask, it may be, for an education; why do you want an education? You say, Lord furnish me the means to pay my tuition bills and by board bills and my clothing bills, for I want to get an education. Your reason, my child, the Lord will answer; your reason; for what end to you want to get an education? You must be able to give a good reason. If you want these things you ask for, only that you may consume them upon your lusts; if your object be to climb up to some higher post among men, or to get your living with less toil, or with more respectability, small ground have you to expect that the Lord will sympathize with any such reasons. But if your reasons be good: if they are such that God will not be ashamed to recognize them as his own reasons for acting, then you will find him infinitely ready to hear and to answer. O, he will bow his ear with infinite grace and compassion.

Your hope of success in prayer therefore should not lie in the amount, but in the quality of your prayers. If you have been in the habit of praying without regard to the reasons why you ask, you have probably been in the habit of mocking God. Unless you have an errand when you come before the Lord, it is mocking to come and ask for any thing. There should always be something which you need. Now, therefore, ask yourself;--Why do I want this thing which I ask of God? Do I need it? For what end do I need it?

A woman of my acquaintance was praying for the conversion of an impenitent husband. She said, "it would be so much more pleasant for me to have him go to meeting with me, and to have him think and feel as I do." When she was asked--Is your heart broken because your husband abuses God, because he dishonors Jesus Christ, she replied, she never had thought of that--never; her husband had troubled and grieved her, she knew; but she had not once thought of his having abused and provoked the great and holy God.

How infinitely different must that woman's state of mind become before the Lord can hear and answer her prayer! Can she expect an answer so long as she takes only a selfish view of the case? No, never until she can say, O my God, my heart is full of bleeding

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and grief because my husband dishonors thee; my soul is in agony because he scorns the dying blood and the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

So when parents urge their requests for the salvation of their children, let them know that if they sympathize with God, he will sympathize with them. If they are chiefly distressed because their children do not love and serve their own God and Savior, the Lord will most assuredly enter into the deep sympathies of their hearts, and will delight to answer their requests. So of the wife when she prays for her husband, so universally when friend prays for friend. The great God seems to say evermore--"If you sympathize with me, I sympathize with you." He is a being of infinite sympathies, and never can fail to reciprocate the holy feelings of his creatures. Let the humblest subject in his universe feel sincere regard for the honor and glory of God and the well being of his kingdom, and how suddenly is it reciprocated by the Infinite Father of all! Let one of all the myriads of his creatures in earth or heaven be zealous for God, then assuredly will God be zealous for him, and will find means to fulfil his promise,--"Them that honor me I will honor." But if you will not feel for him and will not take his part, it is vain for you to ask or expect that he will feel for you and take your part.

It is indeed a blessed consideration that when we go out of ourselves and merge our interest in the interests of God and of his kingdom, then he gathers himself all round about us, throws his banner of love over us, and draws our hearts into inexpressible nearness of communion with himself. Then the Eternal God becomes our own God, and underneath us are his almighty arms. Then whoever should "touch us, would touch the apple of his eye." There can be no love more watchful, more strong, more tender, than that borne by the God of infinite love towards his affectionate, trustful children. He would move heaven and earth if need be, to hear prayer offered in such a spirit.

O for a heart to immerse and bathe ourselves, as it were, in the sympathies of Jehovah--to yield up really our whole hearts to him, until our deepest and most perfect emotions should gush and flow out only in perfect harmony with his will, and we should be swallowed up in God, knowing no will but his, and no feelings but in sympathy with his. Then wave after wave of blessings would roll over us, and God would delight to let the universe see how intensely he is pleased with such a spirit in his creatures. O then you would need only put yourself in an attitude to be blessed and you could not fail of

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receiving all you could ask that could be really a good to your soul and to God's kingdom. Almost before you should call, He would answer and while you were yet speaking he would hear. Opening wide your soul in large expectation and strong faith before God, you might take a large blessing, even "until there should not be room enough to receive it."

PROFESSOR FINNEY'S LETTERS TO CHRISTIANS
No. 2

WHY DO YOU USE TOBACCO?

January 6, 1847

The practice of using tobacco is very general even among professing Christians. Have they any good reason for it?

Now, my Brother, my Sister, if you are in the habit of using tobacco in any way, will you consider yourself as personally addressed by me upon this subject? Please to consider what I now write as written expressly to and for you.

Why do you use tobacco?

In my last letter I showed that every thing is sin in a moral agent, whether he considers it as such or not, for which he has not in his mind a good, that is, a benevolent reason; unless in his honest view it is demanded by the great law of love to God and man.

My Brother, what reasons may I suppose you to have for this practice? In many instances when I have spoken to professed Christians and others, on the subject of their using tobacco, they have promptly replied, I do not consider it sinful. Now the question is not whether you so consider it, but whether it is sinful in fact. Sin is self-indulgence, and that too whether the sinfulness of self-indulgence is considered or not. Suppose I ask you in reply, do you consider the use of tobacco a solemn duty you owe to God and your neighbors? You are a moral agent; whatever you do intelligently must have some moral character. It must be either sinful or holy. It must be done for God, or for the gratification of self. Do you consider it as a duty you owe to God and your neighbor, and do you do it for the sake of promoting the honor of God and the good of the world? Do you think that God would be displeased with you if you should neglect it? If you do not do it as a work of love to God and your neighbor; if you do not act from a regard to the highest good of being in such a sense as to have the solemn conviction upon your mind that it would be sin

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and displeasing to God for you to neglect is, you sin in using it. Remember this, my brother! You cannot but be aware that tobacco is one of the most virulent and destructive poisons that exists in the whole vegetable kingdom. Do you think it a solemn duty to take poison habitually?

Do you think it your duty to promote by your own example the practice of using tobacco? If you are a Christian you not only ought but you actually do live for the good of the world. Now do you think the use of tobacco to be so important to the rising generation as to feel called upon to use all the influence you possess to extend and perpetuate its use and to render its use universal among men?

Do you desire to live and to die and go down to the grave with the reflection that you have exerted the highest influence in your power to entail this practice upon all future generations? Do you think that future generations will rise up and call you blessed should they read on your tomb stone, "Here lies a man who lived and died in the use of tobacco and did what he could to entail its use upon all future generations?" Will they say to you "Blessed man, how much the world is indebted to him for his self-denying labor of love in doing so much by his self-denying use of tobacco to entail this most blessed and indispensable practice upon all generations"?

Your Brother,
C.G. FINNEY

PROFESSOR FINNEY'S LETTERS TO CHRISTIANS
No. 3

WHY DO YOU USE TOBACCO?

January 20, 1847

Example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted.

Said a father, who used tobacco, "I do not know how it is, I have told my boys again and again not to use tobacco, but, in spite of all my advice, every one of them has got into the practice." "Yes, father," said one of them, "example is more forcible than precept. By precept you taught us not to use it, and by example you taught us to use it. We follow your example because it has more weight than precept."

In my last, I inquired of professed Christians--tobacco users--whether they deliberately intend to promote the use of tobacco among all classes and especially among the rising generation, to the utmost of their ability. Now, Brother, to this inquiry I presume you will answer--no. This, you say, is not the reason why you use it. You do not use it for the purpose of promoting its use. By why do you use it? "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." Do you do it for the glory of God? If you do not, the use of it by you is sin. Of this you may rest assured. If you habitually use it for any lower reason than as a duty to God, you live in habitual sin. But you say, I do not mean to sin. The thing at which you aim is not sin. You do not use tobacco because it is sinful, but notwithstanding it is so. So with the intemperate man in any thing else. The drinker of strong drink, for example, does not drink because it is sinful, but notwithstanding it is so.

But, you say, I don't think it is sinful to use tobacco. But remember that all self-indulgence, not demanded and approved by the law of love to God and man, is sin, whether you consider it so or not. But, you say, I do not think it sin in me to use it. Why not? "Because I have become so habituated to it that I cannot give it up." Then this form of self-indulgence is your master. You have become so

PROFESSOR FINNEY'S LETTERS TO CHRISTIANS

accustomed to this indulgence that you cannot live without it. Now if this is your excuse, remember and mark what I say. If you can't mortify this appetite, you can't possibly be saved. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die. But if through the Spirit ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

If you suffer any appetite, passion, or propensity whatever to have dominion over you, you cannot possibly be saved. Cleaving to any one form of self-indulgence is just as fatal to your salvation as if you wallowed in all filth. If you but clearly realized what sin is, you would see that indulging in the use of tobacco for the sake of the gratification, or because you have so long been accustomed to it, is just as really sinful as for the inebriate to do the same. His habit is no more really and truly self-indulgence than yours, and he has the same excuse for it, namely, that he can't break off the form of habit.

But you say, perhaps, I am sure that my tobacco does me good. I feel decidedly better when I use it than when I do not use it. I have tried this experiment and find that I can perform more labor, think better, and even pray better when I have my tobacco. Yes, and the drunkard might with equal truth say the same. It may be true that both you and the drunkard feel decidedly better when you have your accustomed stimulants, but does that prove that either of you receive any real benefit from your indulgence? It gives you present relief to the seen and lasting injury of your body, and if you persist for such a reason, to the certain ruin of your soul.

But you say I was directed to use it by a physician. If so, surely "he was a physician of no value." ["I take it for the tooth-ache, or for a cold, or acid stomach, or some ailment for which my physician prescribed the use of tobacco." Now you ought to know that all such advice is mere quackery and nonsense.-- There is not one of those or any other form of disease that is not aggravated by the use of tobacco.

Tobacco like alcohol may appear to afford relief by rallying the vital powers to resist its action. But it rapidly exhausts the vitality of the system upon which life and health depend, and thus in the end but aggravates instead of curing the disease.

But suppose it really was a benefit to you. Is this a sufficient reason why you should use it? Every body will not know why you use it. You do not believe it is well for all persons to use it. Ought you not then to suffer an evil if it be useful to you rather than run the risk of entailing the curse of it by your example on those to whom the use will be a greater injury than it is to you a benefit? If you should injure

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others by the use of it, ought you not to deny yourself even if it be a real sacrifice?

You recollect that when the temperance reformation began, the pledge was to abstain from ardent spirits, except as a medicine. A worthy brother in N. York, said; The use of spirits is a great evil in the land--While I use a little as a medicine, others will use it as an indulgence; therefore I will sacrifice my life if die I must without it, before I will use it even as a medicine.

This was noble. The fact is, you do not need it for your health. Just set down your foot that you will not use it come what may, and look to God for help against the temptation, and in a few months you will see that you are much better off even in the very respect for which you take it, than you are with it. But even if you think you need it, yet for the sake of doing good or of preventing evil, deny yourself. Do you think that you would or could be the worse by it? I tell you nay. Your life is the Lord's. It is good for nothing only as it can be used to promote the glory of God and the good of man. Why should you try to prolong it if it can be done only by means that will tend only to the injury of others? Will you strive to live by means that are deeply injurious to your fellowmen? Why right have you to live if you must live by such means?

But that you cannot live without it is all a mistake. Go to the records of the state-prison and learn that the total abandonment of the use of tobacco by the tobacco-takers that go there is found in no case to be an injury to them, but on the contrary invariably a benefit.

By Brother, you do not really need it. But if you did, can you not at once abandon it, rather than be so powerfully instrumental in entailing it upon all succeeding generations?

Your Brother,
C.G. FINNEY

PROF. FINNEY'S VIEWS OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST

October 13, 1847

By The Oberlin Evangelist Editor

In place of our usual sermon, we have thought it best to lay before our readers some extracts from Prof. Finney's recently published volume, on the point of justification. Our reasons for this are,

(1.) The intrinsic importance of the subject.

(2.) To give our readers a specimen of the book that they may the better judge of its value, and the desirableness to themselves of owning it.

(3.) That the public may see in the light of our standard Theological works, how near the truth are the recent allegations that the Oberlin system puts faith in the place of Christ, and conjoins good feelings along with Christ as the ground, or foundation of the sinner's justification before God.

It may be also not amiss to show that we do not hold the doctrine that Christ's obedience is imputed to us, so as to be reckoned ours, and why we reject it.

Prof. Finney introduces the subject of justification by inquiring in what sense it is a governmental act. To what branch of the functions of government does it appertain?

It may be conceived to pertain to the judicial branch, in which case manifestly justice according to law and testimony must take its firm, undeviating course. Under the legitimate action of this branch of government there can be no mercy. Law knows nothing about pardon.

On the other hand, the legislative or executive branches of government are often vested with the pardoning power.

And here that great question in theology is simply this--Does the sinner's justification involve the idea of pardon, or does it not? Prof. Finney, we hardly need say, holds in the strongest manner that it

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does. It is nothing else but the pardon of sinners--the pardon of those who have broken the law of God--whom justice dooms to hell--for whom nothing can avail but interposing mercy, moving the great Executive Power of the universe for his pardon.

Right over against this it is observed that Dr. Chalmers and his school of Theologians hold that justification is strictly a judicial and forensic transaction, proceeding upon mere justice. Yet the assumed ground of it is not the sinner's actual, but his imputed innocence--not his own personal and perfect obedience, but the perfect obedience of Christ reckoned in the eye of the law as his, because of his faith in Christ. On this scheme the sinner has rendered perfect obedience by proxy, and hence the most rigid demands of law--supposing it to recognize the proxy--cannot fail to be satisfied. A sinner on this ground might claim his own acquittal. There is no occasion for the exercise of mercy in the transaction. The transfer, or imputation once made, then justice proceeds of course to pronounce the sinner's perfect obedience (imputed) to be most satisfactory.

Widely different from this, Prof. Finney holds that justification "consists in a governmental decree of pardon or amnesty--in arresting and setting aside the execution of the incurred penalty of the law--in pardoning and restoring to favor those who have sinned," and are under sentence of death by the law. He maintains that this view of justification is taught by the whole system of Old Testament symbols and teachings --by the New Testament also; and that in the nature of the case, sinners cannot be justified in any other sense. That "sinners should be forensically pronounced just, is impossible and absurd."

We now quote Prof. Finney's remarks on the Conditions of Justification.

"As has been already said there can be no justification in a legal or forensic sense, but on condition of universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience to law. This is of course denied by those who hold that gospel justification or the justification of penitent sinners, is of the nature of a forensic or judicial justification.-- They hold to the legal maxim that what a man does by another, he does by himself, and therefore the law regards Christ's obedience as ours on the ground that he obeyed for us. To this I reply,

1. The legal maxim just repeated does not apply except in cases where one acts in behalf of another by his own consent, which was not the case with the obedience of Christ; and

2. The doctrine of an imputed righteousness or that Christ's obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a

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most false and nonsensical assumption; namely, that Christ owed no obedience to the law in his own person, and that therefore his obedience was altogether a work of supererogation, and might be made a substitute for our own obedience; that it might be set down to our credit, because he did not need to obey for himself.

I must here remark, that justification respects the moral law; and that it must be intended that Christ owed no obedience to the moral law, and therefore his obedience to this law being wholly a work of supererogation, is set down to our account upon condition of faith in Him. But surely this is an infinite mistake. We have seen that the spirit of the moral law requires good will to God and the universe. Was Christ under no obligation to do this? Nay, was He not rather under infinite obligation to be perfectly benevolent? Was it possible for Him to be more benevolent than the law requires God and all beings to be? Did He not owe entire consecration of heart and life to the highest good of universal being? If not, then benevolence in Him were no virtue, for it would not be a compliance with moral obligation. It was naturally impossible for Him, and is naturally impossible for any being to perform a work of supererogation, that is, to be more benevolent than the moral law requires him to be. This is, and must be as true of God as it is of any other being. Would not Christ have sinned had He not been perfectly benevolent? If He would, it follows that He owed obedience to the law as really as any other being. Indeed a being that owed no obedience to the moral law must be wholly incapable of virtue, for what is virtue but obedience to moral law?

But if Christ owed personal obedience to the moral law, then his obedience could no more than justify Himself. It can never be imputed to us. He was bound for Himself to love God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and his neighbor as Himself. He did no more than this. He could do no more. It was naturally impossible, then, for Him to obey in our behalf. This doctrine of the imputation of Christ's obedience to the moral law to us, is based upon the absurd assumptions,

(1 .) That the moral law is founded in the arbitrary will of God, and

(2.) That of course, Christ, as God, owed no obedience to it; both of which assumptions are absurd. But if these assumptions are given up, what becomes of the doctrine of an imputed righteousness as a condition of a forensic justification? "It vanishes into thin air."

The conditions of justification Prof. Finney arranges as follows.

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1. The vicarious sufferings or atonement of Christ.
2. Repentance.
3. Faith in Christ.
4. Sanctification.
5. Perseverance in faith and obedience, or in consecration to God.

[Of these we select at present only a few remarks on Faith; although we should delight to lay before our readers the argument made under the last two heads. Possibly we may at some future time.]

"Faith in Christ is another condition of justification. We have already examined into the nature and necessity of faith. I fear that there has been much of error in the conceptions of many upon this subject. They have talked of justification by faith as if they supposed that by an arbitrary appointment of God, faith was the condition and the only condition of justification. This seems to be the antinomian view. The class of persons alluded to, speak of justification by faith as if it were by faith, and not by Christ through faith that the penitent sinner is justified; as if faith and not Christ was our justification. They seem to regard faith, not as a natural, but as a mystical condition of justification; as bringing us into a covenant and mystical relation to Christ, in consequence of which his righteousness or personal obedience is imputed to us. We have seen that repentance as well as faith is a condition of justification. We shall see that sanctification and perseverance in obedience to the end of life are also conditions of justification. Faith is often spoken of in scripture as if it were the sole condition of salvation, because, as we have seen, from its very nature it implies repentance and every virtue.

That faith is naturally a necessary condition of justification we have seen. Let the following passages of scripture serve as examples of the manner in which the scriptures speak upon the subject.

Mark 16:15. Jn. 1:12, and 3:16, 36, and 6:28, 29, 40 and 8:24, 44, 47 and 11:25, 26. Acts 10:43 and 16:31. Rom. 4:5 and 10:4. Gal. 2:16. 2 Th. 2:10, 11, 12. Heb. 11:6. I Jn. 2:23 and 5:10, 11, 12, 13.

It is especially to our purpose to quote the remarks made on the foundation or ground of justification. We therefore extract these entire.

Foundation of the justification of penitent believers in Christ. That is, what is the ultimate ground or reason of their justification.

I. "It is not founded in Christ's literally suffering the exact penalty of the law for them, and in this sense literally purchasing their

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justification and eternal salvation. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith affirms as follows: Chapter on Justification, Section 3.

"Christ by his obedience and death did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet inasmuch as He was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for any thing in them, their justification is only of free grace, that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners."

What is to be understood here by exact justice and by a real, full satisfaction of his Father's justice? I suppose all orthodox Christians to hold that every sinner and every sin, strictly on the score of justice, deserves eternal death or endless suffering. Did the framers of this Confession hold that Christ bore the literal penalty of the law for all the saints? Or did they hold that by virtue of his nature and relations, his suffering, though indefinitely less in amount than was deserved by the transgressors, was a full equivalent to public justice, or governmentally considered, for the execution of the literal penalty upon the transgressors? If they meant this latter, I see no objection to it. But if they meant the former, namely, that Christ suffered in his own person the full amount strictly due to all the elect, I say,

(1.) That it is naturally impossible.

(2.) That his nature and relation to the government of God was such as to render it wholly unnecessary to the safe forgiveness of sin, that He should suffer precisely the same amount deserved by sinners.

(3.) That is, as their substitute, Christ suffered for them the full amount deserved by them, then justice has no claim upon them, since their debt is fully paid by the surety, and of course the principal is, in justice discharged.

(4.) If He satisfied justice for them in the sense of literally and exactly obeying for them, why should his suffering be imputed to them as a condition of their salvation? Surely they could not need both the imputation of his perfect obedience to them so as to be accounted in law as perfectly righteous, and also the imputation of his sufferings to them, as if He had not obeyed for them. Is God unrighteous? Does He exact of the surety first, the literal and full payment of the debt, and secondly, perfect and full obedience for and in behalf of the sinner? Does He first exact full and perfect obedience, and then the same amount of suffering as if there had been no obedience? And this, too, of his beloved Son?

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2. Our own works or obedience to the law or to the gospel, are not the ground or foundation of our justification. That is, neither our faith, nor repentance, nor love, nor life, nor any thing done by us or wrought in us, is the ground of our justification. These are conditions of our justification, but not the ground of it. We are justified upon condition of our faith, but not for our faith; upon condition of our repentance, love, obedience, perseverance, unto the end, but not for these things. These are the conditions, but not the reason, ground, or procuring cause of our justification. We cannot be justified without them, neither are we or can we be justified by them. None of these things must be omitted on pain of eternal damnation. Nor must they be put in the place of Christ upon the same penalty. Faith is so much insisted upon in the gospel as the sine qua non of our justification, that some seem disposed or at least to be in danger of making faith the procuring cause, or of substituting faith in the place of Christ; of making faith instead of Christ the Savior.

3. Neither is the atonement of Christ the foundation of our justification. This too is a condition and means of our justification, but not the foundation of it.

4. Nor is any thing in the mediatorial work of Christ the foundation of our justification. The work and death and resurrection and advocacy of Christ are indispensable conditions, but not the fundamental reason of our justification.

5. Nor is the work of the Holy Spirit in converting and sanctifying the soul the foundation of justification. This is only a condition or means of bringing it about, but is not the fundamental reason.

6. But the disinterested and infinite love of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the true and only foundation of the justification and salvation of sinners. God is love, that is, He is infinitely benevolent. All He does, or says, or suffers, permits or omits, is for one and the same ultimate reason, namely, to promote the highest good of universal being.

7. Christ, the Second Person in the glorious Trinity is represented in Scripture, as taking so prominent a part in this work that the number of offices and relations which He sustains to God and man in it are truly wonderful. For example, He is represented as being:

1. King. 2. Judge. 3. Mediator. 4. Advocate. 5. Redeemer. 6. Surety. 7. Wisdom. 8. Righteousness. 9. Sanctification. 10. Redemption. 11. Prophet. 12. Priest. 13. Passover or Lamb of God.

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14. The bread and water of life. 15. True God and eternal Life. 16. Our life. 17. Our all in all. 18. As the repairer of the breach. 19. As dying for our sins. 20. As rising for our justification. 21. As the resurrection and the life. 22. As bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows. 23. As He by whose stripes we were healed. 24. As the head of his people. 25. As the bridegroom or husband of his church. 26. As the shepherd of his flock. 27. As the door by which they enter. 28. As the way to salvation. 29. As our salvation. 30. As the truth. 31. As being made sin for us. 32. That we are made the righteousness of God in Him. 33. That in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead. 34. That in Him all fulness dwells. 35. All power in heaven and earth are said to be given to Him. 36. He is said to be the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 37. Christ in us the hope of glory. 38. The true vine of which we are branches. 39. Our brother. 40. Wonderful. 41. Counsellor. 42. The mighty God. 43. The everlasting Father. 44. The Prince of peace. 45. The captain of salvation. 46. The captain of the Lord's host.

These are among the official relations of Christ to his people and to the great work of our justification. I shall have frequent occasion to consider Him in some of these relations as we proceed in this course of study. Indeed, the office, relations, and work of Christ, are among the most important topics of Christian theology.

Christ is our justification in the sense that He carries into execution the whole scheme of redemption devised by the adorable Godhead. To Him, the scripture every where directs the eyes of our faith and of our intelligence also. The Holy Spirit is represented not as glorifying Himself, but as speaking of Jesus, as taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to his people, as glorifying Christ Jesus, as being sent by Christ, as being the Spirit of Christ, as being Christ Himself, dwelling in the hearts of his people. But I must forbear at present. This subject of Christ's relations needs illucidation in future lectures.

REMARKS

The relations of the Old School view of justification to their view of depravity is obvious. They hold, as we have seen, that the constitution in every faculty and part is sinful. Of course, personal, present holiness, in the sense of entire conformity to law, cannot with them be a condition of justification. They must have a justification while yet at least in some degree of sin. This must be brought about by imputed righteousness. The intelligence revolts at a justification in sin. So a scheme is devised to divert the eye of the law and the

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lawgiver from the sinner to his substitute who has perfectly obeyed the law. But in order to make out the possibility of his obedience being imputed to them, it must be assumed that He owed no obedience for Himself; than which a greater absurdity cannot be conceived. Constitutional depravity or sinfulness being once assumed, physical regeneration, physical sanctification, physical Divine influence, imputed righteousness, and justification while personally in the commission of sin, follow of course. Shame on a theology that is incumbered with such absurdities.

Sermons by the Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY

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REFUGES OF LIES

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"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." --Isaiah 28:17.

If we would understand this passage, it is important that we should consider the context attentively. This will show what class of people are referred to in the text, and what position they are supposed to occupy.

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, and precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: for with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to his people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place."

The class of persons spoken of here enjoyed great religious privileges. The word of the Lord came to them, "precept upon precept," and they had most abundant means of knowing its revealed

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truths and enjoined duties. But they did not love these truths and would not do these duties. Consequently, restive under the unwelcome pressure of truth upon their consciences, they sought relief under some refuge of lies. It will be my present object to notice some of the many refuges of lies to which men are wont to resort when their consciences are ill at ease.

1. A selfish religion. This is one of the most common delusions among men. In this case selfishness, instead of seeking worldly good alone, elevates its aim and seeks heaven. Selfishness is usually distinguished for its grasping some earthly good, in a spirit of reckless disregard alike of others' rights and interests, and of the known will of God. But it is not the character of the good it seeks which makes it selfishness; but rather the spirit with which the good is sought.

Thus in the case of the selfish religionist, his general end is the same now as ever--personal happiness; and the spirit in which he seeks it is the same as ever--a spirit that seeks and cares for nothing but its own individual good; but the means by which he pursues his end are changed, for now he resorts to religion as his means, while heretofore he has been content to seek it from the world, with no semblance of religion in his course. Now while his ultimate end remains the same, no change of the means for attaining it can change the man's moral character, or the moral quality of his conduct. In this case now contemplated, the individual aims at securing an interest for himself as really and as exclusively as ever. While he was careless about religion, he sought this selfish good from the world; now he seeks it from religion: before, he sought to press his fellow men and every earthly agency into his service; now he seeks to make the Almighty God his infinite servant, and to dragoon the gospel into an instrumentality for securing his own eternal interests. This form of delusion is, as I have said, exceedingly common.

It is also very subtle, often so subtle that the deluded man is not at all aware that he has not in fact the very religion of the Bible. He might indeed see the truth if he would be faithful and honest, for it would stand out most plain and palpable to the eye of honest scrutiny. Whoever will may know as to himself whether all his religion is or is not selfish;--whether or not all his seeking of heaven is a merely selfish seeking.

2. Another refuge of lies exists in a religion of impulse.

This also is a selfish religion, but of a different form from the preceding, and it manifests itself in a different way. The man of this kind of religion is governed by his sensibility, or in other words, by

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his feelings, and not by the law of God as revealed to his intelligence. He thinks himself very religious because he has so much feeling. He supposes himself to be very sincere, for he is conscious of having much feeling and many strong desires, and of being exercised by these feelings and desires. And as he assumes this to be religion, he infers that he has real religion, and has it in an unusual degree.

This also is a very subtle form of delusion. For it is intrinsically right that the sensibility should be affected by religious truth. That it should be, will always appear fitting and proper to the human mind. But the mistake lies in making religion consist in this, and in making this the whole of religion; whereas nothing is more demonstrable than that religion must essentially consist in the will's allegiance to truth as revealed from God to man and apprehended by his intelligence. But more of this anon. This type of delusion is subtle because the subject of it is entirely conscious of having great feeling, and of being governed by it also. If he had no feeling, or if he had but little, he would suspect himself of being deceived as to his own piety; but having much feeling, as he very well knows, he feels quite sure of possessing most extraordinary and praiseworthy piety.

Now it should be considered that true religion carries with it deep feelings; but deep feelings may exist without religion; for true religion consists in the mind's being influenced by the intelligence and not by the sensibility. Deep feeling is in the Christian's mind, but it does not govern there. True and well-instructed Christians know that the impulses of the sensibility, however strong, are not religion. They regard these impulses as accompanying, but not as constituting real piety. They know that these feelings are the natural result of certain views presented to the mind, and hence they see at once the mistake of regarding them as in themselves either the evidence or the measure of piety.

I have often been struck with developments of this delusion in seasons of revival. Persons of naturally strong feelings will often seem to act like real Christians. They do indeed feel strongly, and for a season they are governed by these feelings. But these states and exercises do not involve the action of the will, in subservience to the demands of the intelligence, and hence in regard to their moral nature they are passive and not active, and therefore not virtuous. And yet these persons in revival appear not only religious but eminently so. But these impulses soon subside--their excitements cool off; they become no less excited on other subjects, and then they show to every one what spirit they have. Being creatures of feeling and sensibility,

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they follow the current of public feeling and the popular mind as sure as the straw floats down the rippling flood. Who has not seen persons of this stamp in every community? You may always expect them to be powerfully moved in every great revival, but they will just as certainly be moved by anything else that appeals strongly to their sensibility. Indeed they are constitutionally excitable and easily moved, and have not learned the solemn duty of being governed by the will and the intelligence, but float along in the uniform practice of being governed by their feelings.

Now I am not speaking against having feeling on religious subjects, but against being governed by it. I urge that it is wrong to seek supremely to gratify these feelings, irrespective of the claims of the intelligence. This is my position.

No subject more deeply interests the sensibility than religion. None with more power breaks up the fountains of the great deep of human feeling than this. Hence persons who make their excited feelings the whole of their religion, may luxuriate in their exercise and float along upon their current, deceiving and being deceived till they die. How fatally subtle oftentimes is this delusion!

3. Another refuge of lies consists in a religion of opinion--or mere orthodoxy.

It might be supposed that in this place there would be very little danger of this form of delusion. But there is danger even among us. Some even here hold in theory the doctrine of sanctification, think much of it, glory in defending it and make it a great thing, and yet seem to be very far from embracing the doctrine in the love of it, and from imbibing the spirit of it into their hearts. Now it matters not how good or how true your orthodoxy may be; if it is only opinion and theory in your head and not love and obedience in your heart, it is nothing better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

There is a great deal of this adoration of orthodoxy in the churches, and hence it is not strange that so many should practically estimate it as the chief thing in religion. Hence results a delusion which makes shipwreck of the souls of thousands.

4. Sectarian religion is another form of delusion.

But can this be found among us? Do we not all belong to one church? Can it be that we need to have sectarianism preached against here? Many even among us I fear, are in this sin who are not themselves aware of it. I fear that some who defend Oberlin, do it on sectarian grounds and in a sectarian spirit. To be sure they are not sticklish for baptism, or election, or any of the common points of

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sectarian controversy; but they are most zealous for Oberlin, and often may be really more zealous to make men friends of Oberlin than to make them friends of Christ.

This is a most insidious delusion, where ever it may develop itself. It is perilous out of Oberlin, and no less perilous in Oberlin. And its danger does not turn upon the question whether the points contended for are true or false. It is dangerous to contend for the best truth ever revealed from God, if your zeal for it is a selfish zeal, and if you judge yourself a Christian because you have it.

5. Another delusion to be considered, is really a form of self-righteousness. It often manifests itself in this way. Men put external right-doing in the place of real benevolence of heart. They mean to do right towards their fellow men, but confine themselves to executive acts and overlook that in which real moral character inheres. They quite overlook the heart, and seem to forget that if there be not true love to God in all they do, nothing can be right at all. Suppose a man seeks to be honest in his business; is this all that God requires? Do we need to be told that nothing can be right even in our commercial business unless done for God, unless the motive be to glorify God--unless the great end be to honor God and do good to men? And yet a man will talk about being honest in his business, as if he might have this virtue, though he has no regard for God and no religion whatever at heart. He looks upon his own moral conduct very complacently. If a man comes into his store to trade he means to deal fairly with him. He estimates the cost of his articles--add a fair profit--takes no advantage by deceiving either as to quality or quantity. Very well; so he thinks. But suppose a man should pursue this honest course his life long; is this the whole of doing right? Is it in fact even the beginning of it? Must we not go farther back and ask--for what end is all this honesty? What does this honest man really aim at? Is it his aim to glorify God, or to benefit himself? Is all this a real love to man because God requires such love, or is it a wise and far-sighted seeking of his own personal advantages?

Said an individual very sick and apparently near death, "I have always been honest in all my dealings with men; in all this I have nothing to reproach myself with; but O, as far as my God is concerned, all is dark--I have done nothing right to my God."

Now there is embodied here one of the most common forms of delusion--one of the most common and also the most perfectly fatal. It overlooks the fact that unless the mind be consecrated to God, there can be no real honesty at all; that unless a man treat his fellow men

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right for God, in view of the claims of God, and as obedience to God, it is no right doing at all. For how does God require you to treat your brother man? Does He ask only that you would not cheat him in business? Does God ask nothing more than this? Does not the law of God require that you should love your neighbor as yourself? And is it not also implied that you are to love him as one of God's created children, and in the spirit as to yourself of a dutiful and affectionate son towards God? Your love to him must therefore be that of a dutiful brother in the great family of God--a brother whom God, your Father, requires you to love as yourself.

Hence the man who thinks his duty all done towards his fellow man if he has simply forborne to cheat him, is egregiously deceived. Doing duty to God is indispensable for really doing duty to man. If anyone has loved his brother man right, then has he also loved his Father, God; for there can be nothing right in this matter which does not most fully and heartily recognize this great and blessed family relation. Loving man must be done as duty to God--from love to God, and with a distinct recognition of God as the common Father of both myself and my brother.

Thus, really to love man right implies loving God also. And on the other hand a proper love to God implies loving man also. You can not be in a benevolent state of mind towards God, without being also in a benevolent state towards his creatures. The very nature of religion and love implies that if we love God we shall also love his offspring. We can not keep the first great command without keeping the second also.

It is remarkable that you may often detect the real state of your heart towards God by observing closely your state towards man; and so on the other hand you may learn your true position towards man by noticing your position towards God. For nothing can be more certain and invariable than this law of mind, namely, that if it be really in a benevolent state, its benevolence will be exercised towards both God and man, and indeed towards all known sentient beings.

Hence when a man on his death-bed says--"I have done all my duty towards man, but alas! all is wrong in regard to my duties to God," he certainly deceives himself. There can not be such a state as that which he supposes his to be. For he certainly has not done his duty towards man if his heart has at the same time been alien and apostate from God.

6. Another refuge of lies consists in an Antinomian religion. In this, men rest in a faith which is not sanctifying. They have

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abandoned the idea of being saved by works, and have fallen back upon faith, but yet it is upon a faith that fails to sanctify--a faith which does not lead them to consecrate their all to God. This is an Antinomian faith--the very same of which the apostle James said, "Show me thy faith without thy works, (if thou canst) and I will show thee my faith by my works." An Antinomian faith can never bear this test; for by the very supposition it begets no good works at all.

A sister in the church once said in a prayer meeting, "I used to dwell much upon faith, but had little regard for works. My mind was constantly ranging upon faith, faith, but it was a faith which never led me to duty--it only kept me waiting, and--idle."

Now this is a most dangerous delusion. This resting in a faith which acts only as an opiate; which gives no stimulus at all to the soul towards either love, or the labor which love begets; this must be a gross and most fatal delusion. You will see at a glance that this is not that Bible faith which worketh by love, and which in the ancient worthies "wrought righteousness, obtained promises, quenched the violence of fire, made the weak strong, and put to flight the armies of the aliens." O this do-nothing religion, which professes to live upon Christ, but does nothing that Christ commands--this is not the religion of our ancient Bible! It is the same which our Lord portrays only to condemn it; one in which men cry, "Lord, Lord," but do not the things which He says. What can be a more fatal delusion than this?

7. Universalism is another refuge of lies. This system varies in some of its minor points, but in one great leading feature it remains ever the same--it always denies the justice of endless punishment. However much the advocates of Universalism may differ from each other in the less important points, they all agree that all men will ultimately be saved; that sin does not deserve an endless punishment; and that it would therefore be unjust in God to inflict it.

Hence, whatever modification this system may put on, it will practically make sin out to be a mere trifle. For example, they will tell you that men are fully punished for all their sin as they go along--that the evil necessarily incidental to sinning in this life is all the punishment it deserves. The slight compunction of conscience, more or less, that wicked men feel for sin, together with possibly some providential evils, is all that God can justly inflict upon them as a punishment!

Think of this! Look at it! What sort of religion is this? To say that all the punishment which sin deserves is a little compunction of conscience, and perhaps some providential trials in this life!--a little

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trouble which some men have as they go along in consequence of sinning! I want to know if this is not blaspheming God in the worst possible manner! It lifts up its brazen front before heaven and tells God--"Thou great Jehovah--sin against thee is a small matter--thy laws are a mean affair--if I trample on them and roll them in the dust, and grind my heel upon them, what is that to thee? Who art Thou that Thou shouldst take in hand to punish such things in thy creatures with any positive inflictions of suffering? Dost Thou not know that the sinner's troubles in this life are full as much punishment as his sin deserves?"

Now see in this what Universalism is. See how it spits at God! Hear it proclaim, "Who art Thou that sin against Thee should be a thing of any account?"

And what is this but an attempt to dethrone Jehovah? It would fain make sin the merest trifle in the universe. And shall not the hail sweep away this refuge of lies? If it does not, then God will have forgotten to sustain his own honor and his own glorious throne.

But you say that you don't deserve any other punishment than the natural compunctions of your conscience, and the attendant troubles of sinning in this life!

Indeed! all the time receiving good from the hand of God, cradled from your birth in his very arms--fed from his own table--every want supplied from his exhaustless bounty--and yet, though you scorn to remember God with gratitude, and though you trample his law in the dust, yet you don't deserve any other punishment for your sin than you get from your conscience and from providence, as you go along! O what outrageous abuse of God! And what a shameless perversion of human reason! I know not how to express the indignation I feel at such insults offered to God. O, to think how they are contemning their own most gracious Father! He is fattening them on the bounties of his providence, and yet they deserve, they say, no punishment for sin--no hell after death! What a ridiculous delusion is this! Was there ever a more striking proof afforded of the degree to which sin can stultify the human intelligence!

This doctrine of Universalism of course rejects salvation by Christ. Its advocates may sometimes talk about being saved by Christ; but they mean nothing by it, for they hold that men are punished all they deserve in this world as they go along. Of course if punished all they deserve in this world they are not pardoned at all. But salvation by Christ is pardon; if it mean any thing it must include the idea of forgiveness, or pardon, so that the sinner saved by Christ is not

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punished, but pardoned. But Universalism punishes the sinner all he deserves, and yet pardons him too! It makes him suffer the full and utmost penalty of God's law, and at the same time saves him by Christ., so that he shall be pardoned, and not punished at all! What superb nonsense is this!

And again, what curious ideas of law and government are these which make the penalty of sin only the slight evils endured here from an uneasy conscience, and from a disciplinary providence. Here, in this world, is the sinner's hell--here, where sinners are in the main happy in all their sins, and yet are suffering the full penalty of God's law! Ah, what notions of God's law must Universalists have!

This system strangely confounds justice with mercy. It punishes men to chasten and reform them, and this strange process is identical with forgiveness! Inflicting the penalty of law on principles of strict justice is with them the same thing as forgiveness and mercy! For here, in this world, on every sinner, precisely this development takes place--God punishes him all he deserves, in his justice; and yet pardons him most freely through Christ, in his mercy! Surely this is mixing up and confounding together justice and mercy--very much as if men had no just idea of either.

Again, Universalists confound the benevolence of God with mere good nature. God is in their view so good-natured that He will make no discrimination as to character. O He loves all men most comprehensively and altogether alike! So pure good-natured is He!

The favorite term with them to designate their opponents is "partialists," assuming that it would be partial in God to save one and not another. This can appear plausible only to the most short-sighted intelligence. For, consider--Is a ruler impartial who treats the righteous and the wicked alike--who treats the law-abiding and the law breaker alike? Is this impartiality? Can justice treat men of opposite character and opposite merits, just alike? There is the case of Abraham's prayer for Sodom, "O Lord," he says, "wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Would that be right? That the righteous should be treated as the wicked are--"be this far from Thee, O Lord!" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Now here, with the best good sense and reason, Abraham assumes that God would be partial and unjust if He were to treat the righteous and the wicked all alike, and he pleads as if he felt most sure that the Judge of all the earth would do no such thing. Abraham was no Universalist.

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Impartiality implies dealing with men according to their deserts. Therefore if God saves all men, be they righteous or wicked, he can not be impartial, but must be partial.

Again, persons who hold this delusion must count Paul a madman. Hear him: "I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience bears me witness that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren;" and why?

He tells us, moreover, that in one city, "by the space of three years he ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears."

But why is all this? If Paul really believed that all men will certainly be saved, what is he warning them against? And why those tears, and that continual heaviness and agony of spirit? Is he warning them to flee from the wrath to come? O no--no; but he trembles lest they should not all become Universalists. He finds that some of them are skeptical upon this doctrine, and hence are afraid of being finally lost, and he can not endure that their minds should be disturbed by such fears for the few days of the mortal life. O he is in the greatest agony lest he shall not convert all his Jewish brethren and all the Gentiles of Ephesus to the belief of universal salvation!! He is in dreadful agony of soul lest they should be troubled with fears of being lost! Alas, lest they should never become Universalists! And this is the Universalist's version of the character of the great apostle of the Gentiles!

But what does Paul say of himself? Does he tell us that in his view of the matter, Christ saves all? Aye, he says, that for himself, "he becomes all things to all men if by any means he might save some." And this is the extent of his Universalism!

Again, this doctrine represents Christ as either full of deceit or void of sense. Hear its explanation of Christ's words: Christ says, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Now look at the exposition put on this language by the Universalists. "Hell," he says, "means nothing but the grave. There is no other hell but the grave." Of course he makes Jesus Christ say this in the passage just cited--"Fear not the assassin or the executioner, who can only kill you; but I will forewarn you whom you should fear: fear him," who after you are dead can throw your soul and body into--the grave--aye, yes, fear the sexton!! Ah, consider--he has power to bury you after you are dead--I say unto you, fear him! Now if Universalism makes no other hell but the grave, then Universalism

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makes Christ either a consummately deceitful man, or a man sadly deficient of intellect!

I might pursue the follies and absurdities of this delusion much farther; but time forbids, and I must therefore forbear.

REMARKS

1. These delusions are only refuges to which people betake themselves to evade the claims of God. Who does not know this? Do men resort to these refuges for any other purpose? Does any man resort to Universalism in order to make himself more holy? Does he incline towards that doctrine because he thirsts after holiness, and longs to make himself and others more like God? Whoever saw an instance of this kind?

So of all these forms of delusion. They are refuges, and nothing else. They are got up to screen the soul from the pressure of obligation to do duty, or to avert the dreaded displeasure and wrath of God against sin.

2. A hail storm is one of the most striking emblems of the wrath of God against sin, which is ever seen in this world. Have you ever seen one? Its roar is dreadful. Rolling up its dark, heavy mass of cloud, it moves along in grand and awful majesty, as if the very ocean had burst from its bed and broken over its bounds, and were ready in an instant to dash its mountain torrents over us. I have not seen a hail storm for these many years without being reminded of this passage of Isaiah: "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." How full of terror and sublimity is this image of Jehovah's wrath! The roaring, rushing storm of all-destructive hail! It is as if the chariots of God were coming--coming with fire and storm and terrific indignation to overwhelm the guilty sinner in ruin under the out-burstings of his wrath.

Mark also how we are taught by varied figures, that the Lord will hunt out and destroy the fleeing, hiding sinner in the day of his enkindled anger. If the sinner has built up a refuge of lies, walling it in and supporting it with toil and care, the hail shall sweep it all away. If he betakes himself to caverns or to holes of the earth, "the waters shall overflow the hiding-place"--shall search him out and engulf him in ruin even there. What the wind and storm can not batter down the overflowing waters will search out and sweep with remorseless ruin. For him who stands up against God there shall be no escape--no remedy--no hiding-place forever!

And now let me ask--Where are your hiding-places? Are you seeking to construct them with lies, and under falsehood to hide

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yourselves? Or are you standing firmly and calmly on the rock of eternal truth? Seek not to avoid the point of this question. Meet it I pray you in candor and honesty; for the sinner's refuge is in God alone.

Before I was myself a Christian, a man once said to me, "If Universalism is true, we are all safe; if false, all who rest on it for salvation are lost. I think it will be well to be on the safe side."

True enough, thought I, the view of the Universalist, if false, is an infinite mistake; it forfeits every thing. Why then should I try to be a Universalist? Besides, if the doctrine be true, it can not make me any better. Looking round on all the Universalists I knew, I asked myself, are they really holy men? Are they made any better men by their belief in this system? Are they made more holy by its influence? I could not even pretend that they were. Of course I must infer that the system had nothing of real value to commend it.

But aside entirely from this, I do not believe that there are many men who are able to believe in Universalism. They may be able to deceive themselves so far as to hope that the system will prove true--just as many professors of religion cannot believe themselves to be Christians, but they can gather evidence perhaps to hope that they may be. But let them be summoned to die in one hour, and they would be in utter consternation! Perhaps they do not know that they are deceived, but they are very far from knowing that they are not. They content themselves to slide along, and put over their anxieties and cares about the certainty of the matter to some unknown future.

So the Universalist has no such assurance as would make him calm in death. I well recollect the case of Dr. B., who loved to converse with me before my conversion about his favorite doctrine of universal salvation. On one occasion our conversation took a very serious turn without our being aware of it. I asked him, "Doctor, are you satisfied with Universalism as a system of religious faith?" "No," said he, "I must confess, I am not. I told Elder J. the other day (his own Universalist preacher) that I really had so many doubts that I could get no peace from the doctrine; and he told me it was just so with himself, he could get no peace of mind in the doctrine, and he did not believe that any one else could."

For myself, this shocked me beyond measure. What, indeed! a professedly gospel minister preaching what does not convince himself of its truth--what he does not believe himself!--what gives him no peace of mind! Horrible!! This put an end forever to all my desire to

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be a Universalist. I had no longer any desire to hide myself under such a refuge of lies.

THE SPIRIT NOT STRIVING ALWAYS

October 11, 1848

"And the Lord said--my Spirit shall not always strive with man."
Gen. 6:3.

In speaking from this text, I shall pursue the following outline of thought, and attempt to show,

I. What is implied in the assertion, My Spirit shall not always strive with man;

II. What is not intended by the Spirit's striving;

III. What is intended by it;

IV. How it may be known when the Spirit strives with an individual;

V. What is intended by his not striving always;

VI. Why He will not always strive; and

VII. Some consequences of his ceasing to strive with men.

I. What is implied in the assertion--"My Spirit shall not always strive with man?"

1. It is implied in this assertion, that the Spirit does sometimes strive with men. It is nonsense to affirm that He will not strive always, if the fact of his striving sometimes be not implied. Beyond all question the text assumes the doctrine that God by his Spirit does strive sometimes with sinning men.

2. It is also implied that men resist the Spirit. For there can be no strife unless there be resistance. If sinners always yielded at once to the teachings and guidance of the Spirit, there could be no "striving" on the part of the Spirit, in the sense here implied, and it would be altogether improper to use the language here employed. In fact, the language of our text implies long-continued resistance--so long continued that God declares that the struggle shall not be kept up on his part forever.

I am well aware that sinners are prone to think that they do not resist God. They often think that they really want the Spirit of God to be with them, and to strive with them. What, indeed! Think of this! If

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a sinner really wanted the Spirit of God to convert or to lead him, how could he resist the Spirit? But in fact he does resist the Spirit. What Stephen affirmed of the Jews of his time, is true in general of all sinners--"Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." For if there were no resistance on the sinner's part, there could be no striving on the part of the Spirit. So that it is a mere absurdity that a sinner in a state of mind to resist the Spirit should yet sincerely desire to be led into truth and duty by the Spirit. But sinners are sometimes so deceived about themselves as to suppose that they want God to strive with them, while really they are resisting all He is doing, and are ready to resist all He will do. So blinded to their own true characters, are sinners.

II. But we must notice secondly, what is not intended by the Spirit's striving. Here the main thing to be observed is that it is not any form of physical struggling, or effort whatever. It is not any force applied to our bodies. It does not attempt to urge us literally along toward God or heaven. This is not to be thought of at all.

III. What then is the striving of the Spirit? I answer, it is an energy of God, applied to the mind of man, setting truth before his mind, debating, reasoning, convincing, and persuading. The sinner resists God's claims, cavils and argues against them; and then God by his Spirit meets the sinner and debates with him, somewhat as two men might debate and argue with each other. You are not however to understand that the Holy Ghost does this with an audible voice, to the human ear, but He speaks to the mind and to the heart. The inner ear of the soul can hear its whispers.

Our Saviour taught that when the Comforter should come, He would "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment." (John 16:7-11.) The term here rendered "reprove" refers in its proper sense to judicial proceedings. When the judge has heard all the testimony and the arguments of counsel, he sums up the whole case, and lays it before the jury, bringing out all the strong points and making them bear with all their condensed and accumulated power, upon the condemnation of the criminal. This is reproofing him in the original and legitimate sense of the word used here by our Saviour. Thus the Holy Ghost reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Thus does the Spirit convince or convict the sinner by testimony, by argument, by arraying all the strong points of the case against him under circumstances of affecting solemnity and power.

IV. How may it be known when the Spirit of God strives with an individual.

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Not by direct perception of his agency, through any of your physical senses; for his presence is not manifested to these organs. Not directly by our consciousness; for the only proper subjects of consciousness are the acts and states of our own minds. But we know the presence and agency of the Spirit by his works. The results He produces are the legitimate proofs of his presence. Thus a person under the Spirit's influence, finds his attention arrested to the great concerns of his soul. The solemn questions of duty and responsibility to God are continually intruding themselves upon his mind. If he is a student over his lesson, his mind is drawn away continually ere he is aware, to think of God and of the judgment to come. He turns his attention back to his books, but soon it is off again. How can he neglect these matters of infinite moment to his future well-being?

So with men of every calling; the Spirit of God turns the mind, and draws it to God and the concerns of the soul. When such results take place, you may know that the Spirit of God is the cause. For who does not know that this drawing and inclining of the mind toward God is by no means natural to the human heart? When it does occur therefore, we may know that the special agency of God is in it.

Again, when a man finds himself convinced of sin, he may know that this is the Spirit's work. Now it is one thing to know one's self to be a sinner, and quite another to feel a realizing sense of it, and to have the truth take hold mightily of the deepest sensibilities of the soul. The latter sometimes takes place. You may see the man's countenance fallen, his eye downcast, his whole aspect is as if he had disgraced himself by some foul crime, or as if he had suddenly lost all the friends he ever had. I have often met with impenitent sinners who looked condemned, as if conscious guilt had taken hold of their inmost soul. They would not be aware that they were revealing in their countenances the deep workings of their hearts, but the observing eye could not help seeing it. I have also seen the same among backslidden professors,--resulting from the same cause--the Spirit of God reproving them of sin.

Sometimes this conviction is of a general and sometimes of a more special nature. It may enforce only the general impression--"I am all wrong--I am utterly odious and hateful to God--my whole heart is a sink of abomination in his sight;" or in other cases it may seize upon some particular form of sin, and hold it up before the sinner's mind, and make him see his infinite odiousness before God for this sin. It may be a sin he has never thought of before, or he may have deemed it a very light matter; but now, through the Spirit, it

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shall rise up before his mind in such features of ugliness and loathsomeness, that he will abhor himself. He sees sin in a perfectly new light. Many things are sins now, which he never deemed sins before.

Again, the Spirit not only convinces of the fact that such and such things are sins, but convicts the mind of the great guilt and ill-desert of sin. The sinner is made to feel that his sin deserves the direst damnation.

The case of an infidel of my acquaintance may serve to illustrate this. He had lived in succession with two pious wives; had read almost every book then extant on the inspiration of the Scriptures--had disputed, and caviled, and often thought himself to have triumphed over believers in the Bible, and in fact he was the most subtle infidel I ever saw. It was remarkable that in connection with his infidelity he had no just views of sin. He had indeed heard much about some dreadful depravity which had come down in the current of human blood from Adam, and was itself a physical thing; but as usual he had no oppressive consciousness of guilt for having his share of this original taint. His mind consequently was quite easy in respect to the guilt of his own sin.

But at length a change came over him, and his eyes were opened to see the horrible enormity of his guilt. I saw him one day so borne down with sin and shame that he could not look up. He bowed his head upon his knees, covered his face, and groaned in agony. In this state I left him and went to the prayer-meeting. Ere long he came into the meeting as he never came before. As he left the meeting he said to his wife--"You have long known me as a strong-hearted infidel; but my infidelity is all gone. I cannot tell you what has become of it--it all seems to me as the merest nonsense--I cannot conceive how I could ever have believed and defended it. I seem to myself like a man called to view some glorious and beautiful structure, in order to pass his judgment upon it; but who presumes to judge and condemn it after having caught only a dim glimpse of one obscure corner. Just so have I done in condemning the glorious Bible and the glorious government of God.["]

Now the secret of all this change in his mind towards the Bible lay in the change of his views as to his own sin. Before, he had not been convicted of sin at all; now he sees it in some of its true light, and really feels that he deserves the deepest hell. Of course he now sees the pertinence and beauty and glory of the gospel system. He is now in a position in which he can see clearly one of the strongest

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proofs of the truth of the Bible--namely, its perfect adaptation to meet the wants of a sinning race.

It is remarkable to see what power there is in conviction for sin to break up and annihilate the delusions of error. For instance, no man can once thoroughly see his own sin, and remain an Universalist, and deem it unjust for God to send him to hell. When I hear a man talking in defence of Universalism, I know he does not understand anything about sin. He has not begun to see his own guilt in its true light. It is the blindest of all mental infatuations to think that the little inconveniences of this life are all that sin deserves. Let a man once see his own guilt, and he will be amazed to think that he ever held such a notion. The Spirit of God, pouring light upon the sinner's mind, will soon use up Universalism.

I once labored in a village in the State of New York where Universalism prevailed extensively. The leading man among them had a sick wife who sympathized with him in sentiment. She being near death, I called to see her, and endeavored to expose the utter fallacy of her delusion. After I had left, her husband returned, and his wife, her eyes being now opened, cried out to him as he entered--"O my dear husband, you are in the way to hell--your Universalism will ruin your soul forever!" He was greatly enraged, and learning that I had been talking with her, his rage was kindled against me. "Where is he now?" said he. "Gone to the meeting," was the reply. "I'll go there and shoot him," he cried; and seizing his loaded pistol, as I was informed, he started off. When he came in I was preaching I think from the text--"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" I knew at the time nothing about his purpose--nothing about his pistol. He listened awhile--and then all at once in the midst of the meeting he fell back on his seat, and cried out--"O, I am sinking to hell;-- O, God, have mercy on me." Away went his Universalism in a twinkling; he sees his sin, and now he is sinking to hell. This change in him was not my work, for I could produce no such effects as these. I was indeed trying to show from my text what sinners deserve; but the Spirit of God and nothing less, could set home conviction of sin after this sort.

Again, another fruit of the Spirit is developed in the case of those persons who are conscious of great hardness and insensibility. It not unfrequently happens that men suppose themselves to be Christians because they have so much sensibility on religious subjects. To undeceive them, the Spirit directs their attention to some truth that dries up all their sensibility, and leaves their hopes stranded

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on the sea-beach. Now they are in great agony. "The more I hear," say they, "the less I feel. I was never in the world so far from being convicted of sin. I shall certainly go to hell. I have not a particle of feeling. I cannot feel if I die."

Now the explanation of this singular state is usually this: The Spirit of God sees their danger--sees them deceiving themselves by relying on their feelings, and therefore brings some truths before their minds which array the opposition of their hearts against God and dry up the fountains of their sensibility. Then they see how perfectly callous their hearts are toward God. This is the work of the Spirit.

Again, the Spirit convicts the soul of the guilt of unbelief. Sinners are very apt to suppose that they do believe the gospel. They confound faith with a merely intellectual assent, and so blind themselves as to suppose that they believe God in the sense of gospel faith.

But let the Spirit once reveal their own hearts to them and they will see that they do not believe in God as they believe in their fellow men, and that instead of having confidence in God and resting on his words of promise as they do on men's promises, they do not rest on God at all, but are full of anxiety lest God should fail to fulfill his own words. They see that instead of being child-like and trustful, they are full of trouble, and solicitude, and in fact of unbelief. And they see also, that this is a horribly guilty state of heart. They see the guilt of not resting in his promises--the horrible guilt of not believing with the heart every word God ever uttered.

Now this change is the work of the Spirit. Our Saviour mentions it as one of the effects wrought by the Spirit, that He shall "reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." And in fact we find that this is one of the characteristic works of the Spirit. In conversing recently with a man who has been for many years a professor of religion, but living in the seventh chapter to the Romans, he remarked--"I have been thinking of this truth, that God cares for me and loves me, and has through Jesus Christ offered me eternal life; and now I deserve to be damned if I do not believe." Stretching out his pale hand, he said with great energy, "I ought to go to hell if I will not believe." Now all this is the work of the Spirit--this making a man see the guilt and hell-desert of unbelief--this making a sinner see that every thing else is only straw compared with the eternal rock of God's truth.

Again, the Spirit makes men see the danger of dying in their sins. Said a young man, "I am afraid to go to sleep at night, lest I

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should awake in hell." Sinners often know what this feeling is. I recollect having this thought once impressed upon my mind, and so much agonized was I, that I almost thought myself to be dying on the spot! O, I can never express the terror and the agony of my soul in that hour! Sinner, if you have these feelings, it is a solemn time with you.

Moreover, the Spirit makes sinners feel the danger of being given up of God. Often does it happen that sinners, convicted by the Spirit, are made to feel that if they are not given up already, they are in the most imminent peril of it, and must rush for the gate of life now or never. They see that they have so sinned and have done so much to provoke God to give them over, that their last hope of being accepted is fast dying away. Sinners, have any of you ever felt thus? Have you ever trembled in your very soul lest you should be given over to a reprobate mind before another Sabbath, or perhaps before another morning? If so, you may ascribe this to the Spirit of God.

Yet further; the Spirit often convicts sinners of the great blindness of their minds. It seems to them that their minds are full of solid darkness, as it were a darkness that may be felt.

Now this is really the natural state of the sinner; but he is not sensible of it until enlightened by the Spirit of God. When thus enlightened, he begins to appreciate his own exceeding great blindness. He now becomes aware that the Bible is a sealed book to him--for he finds that though he reads it, its meaning is involved in impenetrable darkness.

Have not some of you been conscious of such an experience as this? Have you not read the Bible with the distressing consciousness that your mind was by no means suitably affected by its truth--indeed, with the conviction that you did not get hold of its truth to any good purpose at all? Thus are men enlightened by the Spirit to see the real state of their case.

Again, the Spirit shows sinners their total alienation from God. I have seen sinners so strongly convicted of this, that they would say right out; "I know that I have not the least disposition to return to God--I am conscious that I don't care whether I have any religion or not."

Often have I seen professed Christians in this state, conscious that their hearts are utterly alienated from God and from all sympathy with his character or government. Their deep backslidings, or their utter want of all religion has been so revealed to their minds by the

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Spirit, as to become a matter of most distinct and impressive consciousness.

Sinners thus made to see themselves by the Spirit, often find that when they pour out their words before God for prayer, their heart won't go. I once said to a sinner, "Come, now, give up your heart to God." "I will," said he; but in a moment he broke out--"My heart won't go." Have not some of you been compelled to say the same, "My heart won't go?" Then you know by experience one of the fruits of the Spirit's convicting power.

When the Spirit of God is not with men, they can dole out their long prayers before God and never think or seem to care how prayerless their hearts are all the time, and how utterly far from God. But when the Spirit sheds his light on the soul, the sinner sees how black a hypocrite he is. Oh, then he cannot pray so smoothly, so loosely, so self-complacently.

Again, the Spirit of God often convinces men that they are ashamed of Christ, and that in truth they do not wish for religion. It sometimes happens that sinners do not feel ashamed of being thought seriously disposed, until they come to be convicted. Such was the case with myself. I bought my first Bible as a law-book, and laid it by the side of my Blackstone. I studied it as I would any other law-book, my sole object being to find in it the great principles of law. Then I never once thought of being ashamed of reading it. I read it as freely and as openly as I read any other book. But as soon as I became awakened to the concerns of my soul, I put my Bible out of sight. If it were lying on my table when persons came into my office, I was careful to throw a newspaper over it. Ere long, however, the conviction that I was ashamed of God and of his word came over me with overwhelming force, and served to show me the horrible state of my mind toward God. And I suppose that the general course of my experience is by no means uncommon among impenitent sinners.

The Spirit also convicts men of worldly-mindedness. Sinners are always in this state of mind; but are often not fully aware of the fact until the Spirit of God makes them see it. I have often seen men pushing their worldly projects most intensely, but when addressed on the subject they would say, "I don't care much about the world; I am pursuing this business just now chiefly because I want to be doing something;" but when the Spirit shows them their own hearts, they are in agony lest they should never be able to break away from the dreadful power of the world upon their souls. Now they see that they

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have been the veriest slaves on earth--slaves to the passion for worldly good.

Again, the Holy Spirit often makes such a personal application of the truth as to fasten the impression that the preacher is personal and intends to describe the case and character of him who is the subject of his influence. The individual thus convinced of sin may think that the preacher has in some way come to a knowledge of his character, and intends to describe it. That the preacher means him, and is preaching to him. He wonders who has told the preacher so much about him. All this often takes place when the preacher perhaps does not know that such an one is in the assembly, and is altogether ignorant of his history. Thus the Holy Spirit who knows his heart and his entire history becomes very personal in the application of truth.

Have any of you this experience? Has it at present or at any other time appeared to you as if the preacher meant you, and that he was describing your case? Then the Spirit of the living God is upon you. I have often seen individuals drop their heads under preaching almost as if they were shot through. They were perhaps unable to look up again during the whole service. Afterwards I have often heard that they thought I meant them, and that others thought so too and perhaps imagined that many eyes were turned on them, and that therefore they did not look up, when in fact neither myself nor any one in the congregation, in all probability, so much as thought of them.

Thus a bow drawn at a venture often lodges an arrow between the joints of the sinner's coat of mail. Sinner, is it so with you?

Again, the Holy Spirit often convinces sinners of the enmity of their hearts against God. Most impenitent sinners, and perhaps all deceived professors, unless convinced to the contrary by the Holy Spirit, imagine that they are on the whole friendly to God. They are far from believing that this carnal mind is enmity against God. They think they do not hate, but on the contrary, that they love God. Now this delusion must be torn away or they must be lost. To do this, the Spirit so orders it that some truths are presented which develop their real enmity against God. The moralist who has been the almost Christian, or the deceived professor, begins to cavil, to find fault, finally to rail; to oppose the preaching and the meetings and the measures and the men. The man perhaps who has a pious wife and who has thought himself and has been thought by her to be almost a Christian, begins by caviling at the truth, finds fault with the measures, and with the manners; then refuses to go to meeting, and

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finally forbids his wife and family going, and not infrequently his enmity of heart will boil over in a horrible manner. He perhaps has no thought that this boiling up of hell within him is occasioned by the Holy Spirit revealing to him the true state of his heart. His Christian friends also may mistake his case and be ready to conclude that something is wrong in the matter or manners or measures of the preacher that is doing this man a great injury. But beware what you say or do. In many such cases which have come under my own observation, it has turned out that the Holy Spirit was at work in those hearts, revealing to them their real enmity against God. This He does by presenting those truths in that manner and under those circumstances that produce these results. He pushes this process until He compels the soul to see that it is filled with enmity to God, and to what is right; that yet it is not man, but God to whom he is opposed; that it is not error, but truth; not the manner, but the matter; not the measures, but the God of truth which it hates.

The Spirit, moreover, often convicts sinners powerfully of the deceitfulness of their own hearts. Sometimes this conviction becomes really appalling. They see they have been deluding themselves in matters too plain to justify any mistake, and too momentous to admit of any apology for wilful blindness. They are confounded with what they see in themselves.

The Spirit also not infrequently strips the sinner of his excuses, and shows him clearly their great folly and absurdity. I recollect this was one of the first things in my experience in the process of conviction. I lost all confidence in any of my excuses, for I found them to be so foolish and futile that I could not endure them. This was my state of mind before I had ever heard of the work of the Spirit, or knew at all how to judge whether my own mind was under its influence or not. I found that whereas I had been very strong in my excuses and objections, I was now utterly weak, and it seemed to me that any child could overthrow me. In fact I did not need to be overthrown by any body, for my excuses and cavils had sunk to nothing of themselves, and I was deeply ashamed of them. I had effectually worked myself out of all their mazes, so that they could bewilder me no longer. I have since seen multitudes in the same condition--weak as to their excuses--their old defensive armor all torn off, and their hearts laid naked to the shafts of God's truth.

Now, sinners, have any of you known what this is--to have all your excuses and apologies failing you--to feel that you have no courage and no defensible reasons for pushing forward in a course of

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sin? If so, then you know what it is to be under the convicting power of the Spirit.

The Spirit convicts men of the folly of seeking salvation in any other way than through Christ alone. Often, without being aware of it, a sinner will be really seeking salvation in some other way than through Christ, and he will be looking to his good deeds--to his own prayers, or the prayers of some Christian friends; but if the Spirit ever saves him, he will tear away these delusive schemes and show him the utter vanity of every other way than through Christ alone. The Spirit will show him that there is but this one way in which it is naturally possible for a sinner to be saved, and that all attempts toward any other way are forever vain and worse than worthless. All self-righteousness must be rejected entirely, and Christ be sought alone.

Have you ever been made to see this? You who are professed Christians, is this your experience?

Again, the Spirit convinces men of the great folly and madness of clinging to an un sanctifying hope. The Bible teaches that every one who has the genuine gospel hope purifies himself, even as Christ is pure. In this passage, the apostle John plainly means to affirm a universal proposition. He states a universal characteristic of the Christian hope. Whoever has a Christian hope should ask, Do I purify myself even as Christ is pure? If not, then mine is not the true gospel hope.

But yet thousands of professed Christians have a most inefficient hope. What is it? Does it really lead them to purify themselves as Christ is pure? Nothing like it. It is not a hope that they shall see Christ as He is, and be forever with Him, and altogether like Him too; but it is mainly a hope that they shall escape hell, and go as an alternative to some unknown heaven.

Such professed Christians cannot but know that their experience lacks the witness of their own consciences that they are living for God and bearing His image. If such are ever saved, they must first be convinced of the folly of a hope that leaves them un sanctified.

Ye professors of religion who have lived a worldly life so long, are you not ashamed of your hope? Have you not good reason to be ashamed of a hope that has no more power than yours has had? Are there not many in this house who in the honesty of their hearts must say, "Either there is no power in the gospel, or I don't know anything about it?" For the gospel affirms as a universal fact of all those who are not under the law but under grace, "sin shall not have dominion

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over you." Now will you go before God and say, "Lord, thou hast said, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you;' but, Lord, that is all false, for I believe the gospel and am under grace, but sin still has dominion over me?" No doubt in this case there is a mistake somewhere; and it becomes you to ask solemnly, Shall I charge this mistake and falsehood upon God, or shall I admit that it must be alone in myself?

The apostle Paul has said, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Is it so to you?

He has also said, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you know this by your own experience? He adds also that we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Is all this in accordance with your experience, professed Christian? Is it true that your hope makes not ashamed? Does it produce such glorious fruits unto holiness as are here described? If you were to try your experience by the word of the living God, and open your heart to be searched by the Spirit, would not you be convinced that you do not embrace the gospel in reality?

Again, the Spirit convinces men that all their goodness is selfish; and that self is the end of all their efforts, of all their prayers and religious exercises. I once spent a little time in the family of a man who was a leading member in a Presbyterian Church. He said to me, "What should you think of a man who is praying for the Spirit every day, but does not get the blessing?" I answered, "I should presume that he is praying selfishly." "But suppose," replied he, "that he is praying for the sake of promoting his own happiness?" "He may be purely selfish in that," I replied; "the devil might do as much, and would perhaps do just the same if he supposed he could make himself happier by it." I then cited the prayer of David: "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joys of thy salvation: then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." This seemed to be new doctrine to him, and he turned away--as I found afterwards, in great anger and trouble. In the first gush of feeling he prayed that God would cut him down and send him to hell, lest he should have to confess his sin and shame before all the people. He saw that in fact his past religion had been all selfish--but the dread

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of confessing this was at first appalling. He saw however the possibility of mistake, that his hopes had been all delusive, and that he had been working his self-deceived course fast down toward the depths of hell.

Finally, it is the Spirit's work to make self-deceived men feel that they are now having their last call from the Spirit. When this impression is made, let it by all means be heeded. It is God's own voice to the soul. Out of a great multitude of cases under my observation, in which God has distinctly made sinners feel that the present was their last call, I do not recollect one in which it did not prove to be so. This is a truth of solemn moment to the sinner, and ought to make the warning voice of God ring in his ear like the forewarning knell of the second death.

V. What is intended by the Spirit's not striving always?

The meaning I take to be, not that he will at some period withdraw from among mankind, but that He will withdraw from the individual in question, or perhaps as in the text from a whole generation of sinners. In its general application now, the principle seems to be that the Spirit will not follow the sinner onward down to his grave--that there will be a limit to his efforts in the case of each sinner, and that this limit is perhaps ordinarily reached a longer or a shorter time before death. At some uncertain, awful point he will reach and pass it; and it therefore becomes every sinner to understand his peril of grieving the Spirit forever away.

VI. We, are next to inquire, WHY God's Spirit will not strive always.

I answer, not because God is not compassionate, forbearing, slow to anger and great in mercy;--not because He gets out of patience and acts unreasonably--by no means; nothing of this at all. But the reasons are:

1. Because longer striving will do the sinner no good. For by the very laws of mind, conversion must be effected through the influence of truth. But it is a known law of mind that truth once and again resisted, loses its power upon the mind that resists it. Every successive instance of resistance weakens its power. If the truth does not take hold with energy when fresh, it is not likely to do so ever after. Hence when the Spirit reveals truth to the sinner, and he hardens himself against it, and resists the Spirit, there remains little hope for him. We may expect God to give him up for lost. So the Bible teaches.

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2. If again we ask, Why does God cease to strive with sinners? The answer may be, Because to strive longer not only does the sinner no good, but positive evil. For guilt is graduated by light. The more light the greater guilt. Hence more light revealed by the Spirit and longer striving might serve only to augment the sinner's guilt, and of course his final woe. It is better then for the sinner himself, after all hope of his repentance is gone, that the Spirit should leave him, than that his efforts should be prolonged in vain, to no other result than to increase the sinner's light and guilt, and consequently his endless curse. It is in this case a real mercy to the sinner, that God should withdraw His Spirit and let him alone.

3. Because sinners sin willfully when they resist the Holy Ghost. It is the very work of the Spirit to throw light before their minds. Of course in resisting the Spirit they must sin against light. Hence their dreadful guilt.

We are often greatly shocked with the bold and daring sins of men who may not after all have much illumination of the Spirit, and of course comparatively little guilt. But when God's ministers come to the souls of men with His messages of truth, and men despise or neglect them; when God's providence also enforces His truth, and still men resist, they are greatly guilty. How much more so when God comes by His Spirit, and they resist God under the blazing light of His Spirit's illuminations! How infinitely aggravated is their guilt now!

4. Again, their resistance tempts the forbearance of God. Never do sinners so grievously tempt the forbearance of God as when they resist His Spirit. You may see this developed in the Jews of Stephen's time. "Ye stiff-necked," said H[h]e, "and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did so do ye." He had been following down the track of their national history, and running fearlessly across their Jewish prejudices, laboring in the deep sincerity and faithfulness of his soul, to set before them their guilt in persecuting and murdering the Son of God. And what do they do? Enraged at these rebukes, they gnashed on him with their teeth--they set upon him with the spirit of demons, and stoned him to death, although they saw the very glory of God beaming in his eye and on his countenance as if it had been an angel's. And did not this fearful deed of theirs seal up their damnation? Read the history of their nation and see. They had tempted God to the last limit of His forbearance; and now what remained for them but swift and awful judgments? The wrath of God arose against them, and there was no

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remedy. Their resistance of the Holy Ghost pressed the forbearance of God till it could bear no more.

It is a solemn truth that sinners tempt God's forbearance most dangerously when they resist His Spirit. Think how long some of you have resisted the Holy Spirit. The claims of God have been presented and pressed again and again, but you have as often put them away. You have said unto God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." And now have you not the utmost reason to expect that God will take you at your word?

5. There is a point beyond which forbearance is no virtue. This is and must be true in all governments. No government could possibly be maintained which should push the indulgence of a spirit of forbearance toward the guilty beyond all limits. There must be a point beyond which God cannot go without peril to His government; and over this point we may be assured He will never pass.

Suppose we should as often see old, gray-headed sinners converted as youthful sinners, and this should be the general course of things. Would not this work ruin to God's government--ruin even to sinners themselves? Would not sinners take encouragement from this, and hold on in their sins till their lusts were worn out, and till they themselves should rot down in their corruptions? They would say, "We shall be just as likely to be converted in our old age, putrid with long-indulged lusts, and rank with the unchecked growth of every abomination of the heart of man, as if we were to turn to God in the freshness of our youth;--so let us have the pleasures of sin first, and the unwelcomeness of religion when the world can give us no more to enjoy."

But God means to have men converted young if at all, and one reason for this is that He intends to convert the world, and therefore must have laborers trained up for the work in the morning of life. If He were to make no discrimination between the young and the aged, converting from each class alike, or chiefly from the aged, the means for converting the world must utterly fail, and in fact on such a scheme the result would be that no sinners at all would be converted. There is therefore a necessity for the general fact that sinners must submit to God in early life.

VII. Consequences of the Spirit's ceasing to strive with men.

One consequence will be a confirmed hardness of heart. It is inevitable that the heart will become much more hardened, and the will more fully set to do evil.

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Another consequence will be a confirmed opposition to religion. This will be wont to manifest itself in dislike to every thing on the subject, often with great impatience and peevishness when pressed to attend to the subject seriously. Perhaps they will refuse to have anything said to themselves personally, so settled is their opposition to God and his claims.

You may also expect to see them opposed to revivals and to gospel ministers, and pre-eminently to those ministers who are most faithful to their souls. All those means of promoting revivals which are adapted to rouse the conscience, will be peculiarly odious to their hearts. Usually such persons become sour in their dispositions, misanthropic, haters of all Christians, delighting if they dare to retail slander and abuse against those whose piety annoys and disturbs their stupid repose in sin.

Another consequence of being forsaken of the Spirit is, that men will betake themselves to some refuge of lies, and will settle down in some form of fatal error. I have often thought it almost impossible for men to embrace fatal error heartily, unless first forsaken by the Spirit of God. From observation of numerous cases, I believe this to be the case with the great majority of universalists. They are described by Paul. "They receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved, and for this cause God sends them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." They hate the truth--are more than willing to be deceived--are restive when pressed with gospel claims, and therefore are ready to grasp at any form of delusion which sets aside these claims and boldly asserts--"Ye shall not surely die." It has long been an impression on my mind that this is the usual course of feeling and thought which leads to universalism. There may be exceptions; but the mass go into this delusion from the starting point of being abandoned by the Spirit. Thus abandoned, they become cross and misanthropic--they hate all Christians, and all those truths that God and his people love. This could not be the case if they had the love of God in their hearts. It could not well be the case if they were enlightened and restrained by the present agency of the divine Spirit.

Again, generally those who are left of God, come to have a seared conscience. They are distinguished by great insensibility of mind. They are of choice blind and hardened in respect to the nature and guilt of sin. Although their intelligence affirms that sin is wrong, yet they do not feel it, or care for it. They can know the truth and yet be reckless of its application to their own hearts and lives. God has

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left them, and of course the natural tendencies of a depraved heart are developed without restraint.

Again, this class of sinners will inevitably wax worse and worse. They become loose in habits--lax in their observance of the Sabbath--slide backwards in regard to temperance and all kindred moral subjects;--slip into some of the many forms of sin and perhaps vice and crime; if they have been conscientious against the use of tobacco, they relinquish their conscientiousness and throw a loose rein on their lusts; in short they are wont to wax worse and worse in every branch of morals, and often become so changed that you would hardly recognize them. It will be no strange thing if they become profane swearers--steal a little and anon a good deal; and if God does not restrain them, they go down by a short and steep descent to the depths of hell.

Another consequence of being abandoned by the Spirit will be certain damnation. There can be no mistake about this. It is just as certain as if they were already there.

This state is not always attended with apathy of feeling. There may be at times a most intense excitement of the sensibility. The Bible describes the case of some who "sin willfully after they have received a knowledge of the truth, and there remains for them only a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Some persons of this description I have seen, and such agony and such wretchedness I pray God I may never see again. I have seen them, the very pictures of despair and horror. Their eyes fully open to see their ruined state--exclaiming, "I know I am abandoned of God forever--I have sinned away my day of hope and mercy, and I know I never shall repent--I have no heart to repent, although I know that I must, or be damned;" such language as this they utter with a settled, positive tone, and an air of agony and despair which is enough to break a heart of stone.

Another consequence often is that Christians find themselves unable to pray in faith for such sinners. There are some in almost every community for whom Christians cannot pray. It is I believe common for many Christians without being aware of each other's state, to have a similar experience. For example, several Christians are praying in secret for some one individual, and with considerable freedom up to a certain moment, and then they find that they can pray for him no longer. They chance to meet together, and one says--"I have been praying a long time with great interest for that certain impenitent sinner; but at a particular time I found myself all shut up; I

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could not get hold of the Lord again for him, and never have been able to since." Says another, and another--"I have felt just so myself. I did not know that any one else felt as I have, but you have described my case precisely."

Now if you will go to that sinner, he will tell you a story which will develop the whole case, and show that he came at that eventful moment to some fatal determination, grieved the Spirit, and was abandoned of God. The Spirit ceased to strive with him, and consequently ceased to elicit prayer in his behalf in the hearts of God's people.

Finally when God has ceased to strive with sinners, no means whatever, employed for the purpose can be effectual for their salvation. If you, sinner, have passed that dreadful point, you will no more be profited by my preaching though I were to preach to you five thousand sermons; nay, you could not be profited though an angel should come and preach to you, or even Christ himself. All would be only in vain. You are left of God to fill up the measure of your iniquities.

REMARKS

1. Christians may understand how to account for the fact already noticed, that there are some for whom they cannot pray. Even while they are walking with God, and trying to pray for particular individuals, they may find themselves utterly unable to do so; and this may be the explanation. I would not however in such a case take it for granted that all is right with myself, for perhaps it is not; but if I have the best evidence that all is right between myself and God, then I must infer that God has forsaken that sinner and does not wish me to pray any longer for him.

2. Sinners should be aware that light and guilt keep pace with each other. They are augmented and lessened together. Hence the solemn responsibility of being under the light and the strivings of the Spirit.

While enlightened and pressed to duty by the Spirit sinners are under the most solemn circumstances that can ever occur in their whole lives. Indeed no period of the sinner's existence through its eternal duration can be so momentous as this. Yes, sinner, while the Spirit of God is pleading and striving with you, angels appreciate the solemnity of the hour--they know that the destiny of your soul is being decided for eternity. What an object of infinite interest! An immortal mind on the pivot of its eternal destiny--God debating and persuading--he resisting, and the struggle about to be broken off as

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hopeless forever. Suppose sinner, you could set yourself aside and could look on and be a spectator of such a scene. Were you ever in a court of justice when the question of life and death was about to be decided? The witnesses have all been heard--the counsel have been heard--it is announced that the jury are ready to deliver their verdict. Now pause and mark the scene. Note the anxiety depicted in every countenance and how eagerly and yet with what awful solemnity they wait for the decision about to be made; and with good reason--for a question of momentous interest is to be decided. But if this question, involving only the temporal life, is so momentous, how much more so is the sinner's case when the life of the soul for eternity is pending!! O how solemn while the question still pends--while the Spirit still strives, and still the sinner resists, and none can tell how soon the last moment of the Spirit's striving may come!

This ought to be the most solemn world in the universe. In other worlds, the destinies of the souls are already fixed. It is so in hell. All there is fixed and changeless forever. It is a solemn thing indeed for a sinner to go to hell, but the most solemn point in the whole duration of his existence is that one in which the decision is made.

O what a world is this! Throughout all its years and centuries we cannot see one moment on whose tender point there hangs not a balancing of the question of eternal life or eternal death! And is this a place to trifle?--this a place to be mad and foolish and vain? Ah, no! it were more reasonable to trifle in any other world than in this. The awful destinies of the soul are being determined here. Heaven sees it and hell too, and all are filled with solicitude, swelling almost to agony;--but you who are the subjects of all this anxiety--you can trifle and play the fool and dance on the brink of everlasting woe. The Psalmist says--

"I heard the wretch profanely boast,
Till at thy frown he fell;
His honors in a dream were lost,
And he awoke in hell."

God represents the sinner as on a slippery steep, his feet just sliding--on the very verge of an awful chasm--God holding him up a short moment, and he trifling away even this short moment in mad folly. All hearts in heaven and in hell are beating and throbbing with intense emotion: but he can be reckless! O what madness!

If sinners duly estimated this danger of resisting the Spirit, they would be more afraid of it than of anything else whatever. They

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would deem no other dangers worthy of a moment's thought or care compared with this.

Again, it is a very common thing for sinners to grieve away the Spirit long before death. So I believe, although some, I am aware, are greatly opposed to this doctrine. Do you doubt it? Think of almost the whole Jewish nation in the time of the Saviour, given up to unbelief and reprobacy--abandoned of the Spirit of God--yet they sinned against far less light and of course with much less guilt than sinners now do. If God could give them up then, why may He not do so with sinners now? If He could give up the whole population of the world in Noah's time when he alone stood forth a preacher of righteousness, why may He not give up individual sinners now who are incomparably more guilty than they, because they have sinned against greater light than had ever shone then? O it is infinitely cruel to sinners themselves to conceal from them this truth. Let them know that they are in peril of grieving away the Spirit beyond recall, long before they die. This truth ought to be proclaimed over all the earth. Let its echo ring out through every valley and over every mountain-top, the world around. Let every living sinner hear it and take the timely warning!

Again, we see why so few aged sinners are converted. The fact is striking and unquestionable. Take the age of sixty, and count the number converted past that age. You will find it small indeed. Few and scattered are they, like beacons on mountain-tops, just barely enough to prevent the aged from utter despair of ever being converted. I am aware that infidels seize upon this fact to extort from it a cavil against religion, saying, "How does it happen that the aged and wise, whose minds are developed by thought and experience, and who have passed by the period of warm youthful passion, never embrace the gospel?" They would fain have it, that none but children and women become religious, and that this is to be accounted for on the ground that the Christian religion rests on its appeal to the sensibilities, and not to the intelligence. But infidels make a most egregious mistake in this inference of theirs. The fact under consideration should be referred to an entirely different class of causes. The aged are converted but rarely, because they have grieved away the Spirit--have become entangled in the mazes of some loved and soul-ruinous delusion, and hardened in sin past the moral possibility of being converted. Indeed, it would be unwise on the part of God to convert many sinners in old age;--it would be too great a temptation for human nature to bear. At all the earlier periods of life,

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sinner would be looking forward to old age as the time for conversion.

I have already said what I wish here to repeat--that it is an awfully interesting moment when God's Spirit strives with sinners. I have reason to know that the Spirit is striving with some of you. Even within the past week your attention has been solemnly arrested, and God has been calling upon you to repent. And now are you aware that while God is calling, you must listen--that when He speaks, you should pause and give Him your attention? Does God call you away from your lesson, and are you replying--O, I must, I must get my lesson? Ah, your lesson! and what is your first and chief lesson? "Prepare to meet thy God." But you say--"O the bell will toll in a few minutes, and I have not got my lesson!!["] Yes, sinner, soon the great bell will toll--unseen spirits will seize hold of the bell-rope and toll the dread death-knell of eternity, echoing the summons--come to judgment;--and the bell will toll, toll, TOLL! and where sinner, will you be then! Are you prepared? Have you got that one great lesson--"Prepare to meet thy God?"

In the long elapsing ages, of your lost doom you will be asked, how and why you came into this place of torment; and you will have to answer--"Oh, I was getting my lesson there in Oberlin when God came by his Spirit, and I could not stop to hear his call! So I exchanged my soul for my lesson! O what a fool was I!"

Let me ask the people of God, should you not be awake in such an hour as this? How many sinners during the past week have besought you to pray for their perishing souls? And have you no heart to pray? How full of critical interest and peril are these passing moments? Did you ever see the magnetic needle of the compass vacillate, quiver, quiver, and finally settle down fixed to its position? So with the sinner's destiny today.

Sinners, think of your destiny, as being now about to assume its fixed position. Soon you will decide it forever and forever!

Do you say, let me first go to my room, and there I will give myself up to God? No, sinner, no! go not away hence in your sin; for now is your accepted time--now--today, after so long a time--now is the only hour of promise--now is perhaps the last hour of the Spirit's presence and grace to your soul!

EXCUSES CONDEMN GOD

October 25, 1848

"Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" Job 40:8.

Although in the main, Job had spoken correctly of God, yet in his great anguish and perturbation under his sore trials, he had said some things which were hasty and abusive. For these the Lord rebuked him. This rebuke is contained in our context:

"Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said--Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.

Then Job answered the Lord, and said--Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further.

Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said,--Gird up thy loins now like a man; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?"--Job 40:1-8

It is not, however, my object to discuss the original purpose and connection of these words, but rather to consider their present application to the case of sinners. In pursuing this object, I shall

I. SHOW THAT EVERY EXCUSE FOR SIN CONDEMNS GOD.

II. CONSIDER SOME OF THESE EXCUSES IN DETAIL.

III. SHOW THAT EXCUSE FOR SIN ADDS INSULT TO INJURY.

I. Every excuse for sin condemns God.

This will be apparent if we consider,

1. That nothing can be sin for which there is a justifiable excuse.

This is entirely self-evident. It therefore needs neither elucidation nor proof.

2. If God condemns that for which there is a good excuse, He must be wrong. This also is self-evident. If God condemns what we

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have good reason for doing, no intelligence in the universe can justify Him.

3. But God does condemn all sin. He condemns it utterly, and will not allow the least apology or excuse for it. Hence, either there is no apology for it, or God is wrong.

4. Consequently, every excuse for sin charges blame upon God, and virtually accuses him of tyranny. Whoever pleads an excuse for sin, therefore, charges God with blame.

II. We will consider some of these excuses, and see whether the principles I have laid down are not just and true.

1. INABILITY. No excuse is more common. It is echoed and re-echoed over every Christian land, and handed down age after age, never to be forgotten. With unblushing face it is proclaimed that men cannot do what God requires of them.

Let us examine this and see what it amounts to. God, it is said, requires what men cannot do. And does He know that men cannot do it? Most certainly. Then He has no apology for requiring it, and the requisition is most unreasonable. Human reason can never justify it. It is a natural impossibility.

But again, upon what penalty does God require what man cannot do? The threatened penalty is eternal death! Yes, eternal death, according to the views of those who plead inability as an excuse. God requires me on pain of eternal death to do that which He knows I cannot do. Truly this condemns God in the worst sense. You might just as well charge God outright with being an infinite tyrant.

Moreover, it is not for us to say whether on these conditions we shall or shall not charge God with infinite tyranny, for we cannot help it. The law of our reason demands it.

Hence, those who plant themselves upon these grounds charge God with infinite tyranny. Perhaps, sinner, you little think when you urge the excuse of inability, that you are really arraigning God on the charge of infinite tyranny. And you, Christian, who make this dogma of inability a part of your "orthodox" creed, may have little noticed its blasphemous bearings against the character of God; but your failure to notice it alters not the fact. The black charge is involved in the very doctrine of inability, and cannot be explained out of it.

I have intimated that this charge is blasphemous against God--and most truly. Far be it from God to do any such thing! Shall God require natural impossibilities, and denounce eternal death upon men for not doing what they have no natural power to do? Never! Yet good men and bad men agree together to charge God with doing this

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very thing, and doing it not once or twice only, but uniformly, through all ages, with all the race, from the beginning to the end of time! Horrible! Nothing in all the government of God ever so insulted and abused Jehovah! Nothing was ever more blasphemous and false! God says, "his commandments are not grievous;" but you, by this excuse of inability, proclaim that God's words are false. You declare that his commands are not only grievous, but are even naturally impossible! Hark! what does the Lord Jesus say? "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." And do you deny this? Do you rise up in the very face of his words and say--"Lord, thy yoke is so hard that no man can possibly endure it; thy burden is so heavy that no man can ever bear it?" Is not this gainsaying and blaspheming Him who cannot lie?

But you take the ground that no man can obey the law of God. As the Presbyterian Confession of Faith has it, "No man is able, either by himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed." Observe, this affirms not only that no man is naturally able to keep God's commands, but also that no man is able to do it "by any grace received in this life;" thus making this declaration a libel on the gospel, as well as a palpable misrepresentation of the law, of its Author, and of man's relations to both. It is only moderate language to call this assertion from the Confession of Faith a libel. If there is a lie either in hell or out of hell, this is a lie, or God is an infinite tyrant. If reason be allowed to speak at all, it is impossible for her to say less or otherwise than thus. And has not God constituted the reason of man for the very purpose of taking cognizance of the rectitude of all his ways?

Let God be true though every man be proved a liar. In the present case, the remarkable fact that no man can appease his own conscience and satisfy himself that he is truly unable to keep the law, shows that man lies--not God.

2. A second excuse which sinners make is want of time.

Suppose I tell one of my sons--"Go, do this or that duty, on pain of being whipped to death." He replies--"Father, I can't possibly do it, for I have not time. I must be doing that other business which you told me to do; and besides, if I had nothing else to do, I could not possibly do this new business in the time you allow." Now if this statement be the truth, and I knew it when I gave him the command, then I am a tyrant. There is no evading this charge. My conduct toward my son is downright tyranny.

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So if God really requires of you what you have not time to do, He is infinitely to blame. For He surely knows how little time you have, and it is undeniable that He enforces his requisitions with most terrific penalties. What! is God so reckless of justice, so regardless of the well-being of his creatures, that He can sport with red-hot thunder-bolts, and hurl them, despite of justice and right, among his unfortunate creatures? Never! NEVER! This is not true; it is only the false assumption which the sinner makes when he pleads as his excuse, that he has not time to do what God demands of him.

Let me ask you, sinner, how much time will it take you to do the first great duty which God requires--namely, give Him your heart? How long will this take? How long need you be in making up your mind to serve and love God? Do you not know that this, when done, will be done in one moment of time? And how long need you be in persuading yourself to do it?

Your meaning then may be this; Lord, it takes me so long to make up my mind to serve thee, it seems as if I never should get time enough for this; even the whole of life seems almost too short for me to bring my mind to this unwelcome decision. Is this your meaning, sinner?

But let us look on all sides of the subject. Suppose I say to my son--"Do this now my son;" and he replies, "I can't, father, for I must do that other thing you told me to do." Does God do so? No. God only requires the duty of each moment in its time. This is all. He only asks us to use faithfully just all the power He has given us--nothing more. He only requires that we do the best we can. When He prescribes the amount of love which will please him, He does not say--Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with the powers of an angel--with the burning heart of a seraph--no, but only "with all thy heart"--this is all. An infinitely ridiculous plea is this of the sinner's, that he can not do as well as he can--cannot love God with all his own heart, and soul and mind, and strength. Thou shalt do the best that thou art able to do, says God to the sinner. Ah, says the sinner, I am not able to do that. Oh, what stupid nonsense!

You charge that God is unreasonable. The truth is, God is the most reasonable of all beings. He asks only that we should use each moment for Him, in labour or in rest, whichever is most for his glory. He only requires that with the time, talents and strength which He has given us, we should do all we can to serve Him.

Says that mother--"How can I be religious? I have to take care of all my children." Indeed! and can't you get time to serve God? What

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does God require of you? That you should forsake and neglect your children? No indeed; He asks you to take care of your children--good care of them; and do it all for God. He says to you--those are my children; and He puts them into your hands, saying--Take care of them for me, and I will give thee wages. And now will it require more time to take care of your children for God, than to take care of them for yourself? O, but you say, I cannot be religious, for I must be up in the morning and get my breakfast. And how much longer will it take you to get your breakfast ready to please God, than to do the same to please yourself? How much longer time must you have to do your duties religiously, than to do them selfishly?

What then do you mean by this plea? The fact is, all these excuses show that the excuser is mad--not insane, but mad. For what does God require so great that you should be unable to do it for want of time? Only this, that you should do all for God. Persons who make this plea seem to have entirely overlooked the real nature of religion, and of the requisitions that God makes of them. So it is with the plea of inability. The sinner says, "I am unable." Unable to do what? Just what you can do; for God never requires anything beyond this. Unless, therefore, you assume that God requires more than you can do, your plea is false, and even ridiculous. If, on the other hand you do not assume this, then your plea if true would show God to be unjust.

But I was saying that in this plea of having no time to be religious, men entirely overlook or pervert the true idea of religion. The farmer pleads--"I can't be religious; I can't serve God--I must sow my wheat." Well, sow your wheat; but do it for the Lord. O but you have so much to do! Then do it all for the Lord. Another can't be religious for he must get his lesson. Well, get your lesson, but get it for the Lord, and this will be religious. The man who should neglect to sow his wheat, or neglect to get his lessons because he wants to be religious is crazy. He perverts the plainest things in the worst way. If you are to be religious, you must be industrious. The farmer must sow his wheat, and the student must get his lesson. An idle man can no more be religious than the devil can be. This notion that men can't be religious, because they have some business to do, is the merest nonsense. It utterly overlooks the great truth that God never forbids our doing the appropriate business of life, but only requires that we shall do all for Himself. If God did require us to serve Him in such a way as would compel us to neglect the practical duties of life, it would be truly a hard case. But now the whole truth is, that He

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requires us to do precisely these duties, and do them all honestly and faithfully for Him, and in the best possible manner. Let the farmer take care of his farm, and see that he does it well, and above all, do it for God. It is God's farm, and the heart of every farmer is God's heart, therefore let the farm be tilled for God, and the heart be devoted to Him alone.

3. Men plead a sinful nature for their excuse. And pray, what is this sinful nature? Do you mean by it that every faculty and even the very essence of your constitution were poisoned and made sinful in Adam, and came down in this polluted state by inheritance to you? Do you mean that you were so born in sin that the substance of your being is all saturated with it, and so that all the faculties of your constitution are themselves sin? Do you believe this?

I admit if this were true, it would make out a hard case. A hard case indeed! Until the laws of my reason are changed, it would compel me to speak out openly and say--Lord, this is a hard case, that thou shouldst make my nature itself a sinner, and then charge the guilt of its sin upon me! I could not help saying this; the deep echoings of my inner being would proclaim it without ceasing, and the breaking of ten thousand thunderbolts over my head would not deter me from thinking and saying so. The reason God has given me would forever affirm it.

But the dogma is an utter absurdity. For, pray, what is sin? God answers--"Transgression of law." And now you hold that your nature is itself a breach of the law of God--nay, that it has always been a breach of God's law, from Adam to the day of your birth; you hold that the current of this sin came down in the veins and blood of your race--and who made it so? Who created the veins and blood of man? From whose hand sprang this physical constitution and this mental constitution? Was man his own creator? Did sin do a part of the work in creating your physical and your mental constitution? Do you believe any such thing? No; you ascribe your nature and its original faculties to God, and upon Him, therefore, you charge the guilty authorship of your "sinful nature."

But how strange a thing is this! If man is in fault for his sinful nature, why not condemn man for having blue or black eyes? The fact is, sin never can consist in having a nature, nor in what nature is; but only and alone in the bad use which we make of our nature. This is all. Our Maker will never find fault with us for what He has Himself done or made; certainly not. He will not condemn us if we will only make a right use of our powers--of our intellect, our sensibility, and

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our will. He never holds us responsible for our original nature. If you will observe, you will find that God has given no law prescribing what sort of nature and constitutional powers we should have. He has given no law on these points, the transgression of which if given might somewhat resemble the definition of sin. But now, since there is no law about nature, nature cannot be a transgression.

Here let me say that if God were to make a law, prescribing what nature or constitution a man must have, it could not possibly be otherwise than unjust and absurd, for the reason that man's nature is not a proper subject for legislation, precept, and penalty, inasmuch as it lies entirely without the pale of voluntary action, or of any action of man at all. And yet thousands of men have held the dogma that sin consists in great part in having a sinful nature. Yes, through long ages of past history, grave theologians have gravely taught this monstrous dogma; it has resounded from pulpits, and has been stereotyped for the press, and men have seemed to be never weary of glorifying this dogma as the surest test of sound orthodoxy! Orthodoxy!! There never was a more infamous libel on Jehovah! It would be hard to name another dogma which more violently outrages common sense. It is nonsense--absurd and utter NONSENSE! I would to God that it were not even worse than nonsense! Think what mischief it has wrought! Think how it has scandalized the law, the government, and the character of God! Think how it has filled the mouths of sinners with excuses from the day of its birth to this hour!

Now I do not mean to imply that the men who have held this dogma have intelligently insulted God with it. I do not imply that they have been aware of the impious and even blasphemous bearings of this dogma upon Jehovah;--I am happy to think that some at least have done all this mischief ignorantly. But the blunder and the mischief have been none the less for the honest ignorance in which they were done.

4. Sinners, in self-excuse, say they are willing to be Christians. They are willing, they say, to be sanctified. O yes, they are very willing; but there is some great difficulty lying further back or something else--perhaps they do not know just where--but it is somewhere, and it will not let them become Christians.

Now the fact is, if we are really willing, there is nothing more which we can do. Willing is all we have to do morally in the case, and all we can do. But the plea as in the sinner's mouth maintains that God requires of us what is naturally impossible. It assumes that God requires of us something more than right willing; and this, be it what

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it may, is of course, to us, an impossibility. If I will to move my muscles, and no motion follows, I have done all I can do; there is a difficulty beyond my reach, and I am in no blame for its existence, or for its impediment. Just so, if I were to will to serve God, and absolutely no effect should follow, I have done my utmost, and God never can demand anything more. In fact, to will is the very thing which God does require. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted." Do tell me, parent, if you had told your child to do anything and you saw him exerting himself to the utmost, would you ask anything more? If you should see a parent demanding and enforcing of a child more than he could possibly do, however willing, would you not denounce that parent as a tyrant? Certainly you would. Even the slave-driver is not wont to beat his slave, if he sees him willing to do all he can.

This plea is utterly false, for no sinner is willing to be any better than he actually is. If the will is right, all is right; and universally the state of the will is the measure of one's moral character. Those men therefore who plead that they are willing to be Christians while yet they remain in their sins, talk mere nonsense.

5. Sinners say they are waiting God's time. A lady in Philadelphia had been in great distress of mind for many years. On calling to see her, I asked--"What does God require of you? What is your case?" "Oh," said she, "God waited on me a long time before I began to seek Him at all, and now I must wait for Him as long as He did for me. So my minister tells me. You see therefore, that I am waiting in great distress for God to be ready to receive me."

Now what is the real meaning of this? It comes to this;--God urges me to duty, but is not ready for me to do it; He tells me to come to the Gospel feast, and I am ready; but He is not ready to let me in.

Now does not this throw all the blame upon God? Could anything do so, more completely than this does? The sinner says--"I am ready, and willing, and waiting; but God is not yet ready for me to stop sinning. His hour has not yet come."

When I first began to preach, I found this notion almost universal. Often after pressing men to duty, I have been accosted;--"What, you throw all the blame upon the sinner!" "Yes, indeed I do," would be my reply. An old lady once met me after preaching and broke out, "What! you set men to getting religion themselves! You tell them to repent themselves? You don't mean so, do you?" "Indeed I do," said I. She had been teaching for many years that the sinner's chief duty is to await God's good time.

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6. Sinners plead in excuse, that their circumstances are very peculiar. I know my duty well enough, but my circumstances are so peculiar. And does not God understand your circumstances? Nay, has not his providence been concerned in making them what they are? If so, then you are throwing blame upon God. You say--"O Lord, thou art a hard master, for thou hast never made any allowance for my circumstances."

But how much, sinner, do you really mean in making this plea? Do you mean that your circumstances are so peculiar that God ought to excuse you from becoming religious, at least for the present? If you do not mean as much as this, why do you make your circumstances your excuse at all? If you do mean this, then you are just as much mistaken as you can be. For God requires you, despite of your circumstances, to abandon your sin. If now your circumstances are so peculiar that you cannot serve God in them, you must abandon them or lose your soul. If they are such as admit of your serving God in them, then do so at once.

But you say--"I can't get out of my circumstances." I reply, you can;--you can get out of the wickedness of them; for if it is necessary in order to serve God, you can change them; and if not, you can repent and serve God in them.

7. The sinner's next excuse is that his temperament is peculiar. "Oh," he says, "I am very nervous;" or "my temperament is very sluggish; I seem to have no sensibility." Now what does God require? Does He require of you another, or a different sensibility from your own? Or does He require only that you should use what you have according to the law of love?

But such is the style of a multitude of excuses. One has too little excitement; and another too much; so neither can possibly repent and serve God! A woman came to me, and pleaded that she was naturally too excitable and dared not trust herself; and therefore could not repent. Another has the opposite trouble--too sluggish--scarce ever sheds a tear--and therefore could make nothing out of religion if he should try. But does God require you to shed more tears than you are naturally able to shed? Or does He only require that you should serve Him? Certainly this is all. Serve Him with the very powers He has given you. Let your nerves be ever so excitable, come and lay those quivering sensibilities over into the hands of God--pour out that sensibility into the heart of God; this is all that He requires. I know how to sympathize with that woman, for I know much about a

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burning sensibility; but does God require feeling and excitement? Or only a perfect consecration of all our powers to Himself?

8. But says another, my health is so poor that I can't go to meeting, and therefore can't be religious.

Well, what does God require? Does He require that you should go to all the meetings, by evening or by day, whether you have the requisite health for it or not? Infinitely far from it. If you are not able to go to meeting, yet you can give God your heart. If you cannot go in bad weather, be assured that God is infinitely the most reasonable being that ever existed. He makes all due allowance for every circumstance. Does He not know all your weakness? Indeed He does. And do you suppose that He comes into your sick-room and denounces you for not being able to go to meeting, or for not attempting when unable, and for not doing all in your sickness that you might do in health? No, not He; but He comes into your sick-room as a Father. He comes to pour out the deepest compassions of his heart in pity and in love; and why should you not respond to his loving-kindness? He comes to you and says--"Give me your heart, my child." And now you reply--"I have no heart." Then He has nothing to ask of you--He thought you had; and thought, too, that He had done enough to draw your heart in love and gratitude to Himself. He asks--"What can you find in all my dealings with you that is grievous? If nothing, why do you bring forward pleas in excuse for sin that accuse and condemn God?"

9. Another excuse is in this form, "My heart is so hard, that I cannot feel." This is very common, both among professors and non-professors. In reality it is only another form of the plea of inability. In fact, all the sinner's excuses amount only to this--"I am unable"--"I can't do what God requires." If the plea of a hard heart is any excuse at all, it must be on the ground of real inability.

But what is hardness of heart? Do you mean that you have so great apathy of the sensibility that you can not get up any emotion? Or, do you mean that you have no power to will or to act right? Now on this point, it should be considered that the emotions are altogether involuntary. They go and come according to circumstances, and therefore are never required by the law of God, and are not properly speaking either religion itself, or any part of it. Hence, if by a hard heart you mean a dull sensibility, you mean what has no concern with the subject. God asks you to yield your will, and consecrate your affections to Himself, and He asks this, whether you have any feeling or not.

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Real hardness of heart, in the Bible use of the phrase, means stubbornness of will. So in the child, a hard heart means a will set in fixed stubbornness against doing its parent's bidding. The child may have in connection with this either much or little emotion. His sensibilities may be acute and thoroughly aroused, or they may be dormant; and yet the stubborn will may be there in either case.

Now the hardness of heart of which God complains in the sinner is precisely of this sort. The sinner cleaves to his self-indulgence, and will not relinquish it, and then complains of hardness of heart. What would you think of a child, who, when required to do a most reasonable thing, should say,--"My heart is so hard, I can't yield." "O," he says, "my will is so set to have my own way that I cannot possibly yield to my father's authority."

This complaint is extremely common. Many a sinner makes it who has been often warned, often prayed with and wept over, who has been the subject of many convictions. And does he really mean by this plea that he finds his will so obstinate that he cannot make up his mind to yield to God's claims? Does he mean this, and does he intend really to publish his own shame? Suppose you go to the devils in hell, and press on them the claims of God, and they should reply--"O, my heart is so hard, I can't"--What would be their meaning? Only this--I am so obstinate--my will is so set in sin that I cannot for a moment indulge the thought of repentance. This would be their meaning, and if the sinner tells the truth of himself and uses language correctly, he must mean the same. But oh, how does he add insult to injury by this declaration! Suppose a child should plead this--"I cannot find it in my heart to love my father and my mother; my heart is so hard towards them, I never can love them; I can feel pleasure only in abusing them, and trampling down their authority;--what a plea is this! Does not this heap insult upon wrong? Or suppose a murderer arraigned before the court, and permitted before his sentence, to speak, if he had aught to say why sentence should not be passed;-- suppose he should rise and say--"May it please the court, my heart for a long time has been as hard as a millstone. I have murdered so many men, and have been in the practice so long, that I can kill a man without the least compunction of conscience. Indeed, I have such an insatiable thirst for blood that I cannot help murdering whenever I have a good opportunity. In fact my heart is so hard that I find I like this employment full as well as any other."

Well, how long will the court listen to such a plea? Hold there! hold! the judge would cry--you infamous villain, we can hear no more

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such pleas! Here, sheriff, bring in a gallows and hang the man within these very walls of justice, for I will not leave the bench until I see him dead! He will murder us all here in this house if he can!"

Now what shall we think of the sinner who says the same thing! O God, he says, my heart is so hard I never can love thee! I hate thee so sincerely, I never can make up my mind to yield this heart to thee in love and willing submission.

Sinners, how many of you in this house have made this plea--"My heart is so hard, I can't repent. I can't love and serve God?" Go write it down; publish it to the universe--make your boast of being so hard-hearted that no claims of God can ever move you. Methinks if you were to make such a plea, you would not be half through before the whole universe would hiss you from their presence and chase you from the face of these heavens till you would cry out for some rocks or mountains to hide you from their scathing rebukes! Their voice of indignation would rise up and ring along the arch of heaven like the roar of ten thousand tornadoes, and overwhelm you with unutterable confusion and shame! What! do you insult and abuse the Great Jehovah! Oh! do you condemn that very God who has watched over you in unspeakable love--fanned you with his gentle zephyrs in your sickness--feasted you at his own table, and you would not thank him, or even notice his providing hand? And then when the sympathy of your Christian friends has pressed you with entreaties to repent, and they have made you a special subject of their prayers--when angels have wept over you, and unseen spirits have lifted their warning voices in your pathway to hell, you turn up your face of brass towards Jehovah and tell Him your heart is so hard you can't repent, and don't care whether you ever do or not! You seize a spear and plunge it into the heart of the crucified One, and then cry out--"I can't be sorry, not I;--my heart is hard as a stone! I don't care and I will not repent!" What a wretch you are, sinner, if this is your plea!

But what does your plea amount to? Only this--that your heart is fully set to do evil. The sacred writer has revealed your case most clearly--"Because vengeance against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." You stand before the Lord just in this daring, blasphemous attitude--fully set in your heart to do evil.

10. Another form of the same plea, is, my heart is so wicked, I can't. Some do not hesitate to avow this wickedness of heart. What do they mean by it? Do they mean that they are so hardened in sin, and

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so desperately wicked that they will not bow? This is the only proper sense of their language, and this is the precise truth.

Since you bring this forward, sinner, as your excuse, your object must be to charge this wickedness of heart upon God. Covertly perhaps, but really you imply that God is concerned in creating that wicked heart! This is it, and this is the whole of it. You would feel no interest in the excuse, and it would never escape your lips, but for this tacit implication that God is in fault for your wicked heart. This is only the plea of inability, coupled with its twin sister, original sin, coming down in the created blood and veins of the race, under the Creator's responsibility.

11. Another kindred plea, is--My heart is so deceitful. Suppose a man should make this excuse for deceiving his neighbour--"I can't help cheating you. I can't help lying to you, and abusing you;--my heart is so deceitful!" Would any man in his senses ever suppose that this could be an apology or excuse for doing wrong? Never. Of course, unless the sinner means in this plea to set forth his own guilt and condemn himself, he must intend it as some sort of justification; and if so, he must in just so far, cast the blame upon God. And this is usually his intention. He does not mean sincerely to confess his own guilt; no, he charges the guilt of his deceitful heart upon God.

12. Another excuses himself by the plea, I have tried to become a Christian. I have done all I can do; I have tried often, earnestly, and long.

You have tried, then, you say, to be a christian; what is being a christian? Giving your heart to God. And what is giving your heart to God? Devoting your voluntary powers to Him;--ceasing to live for yourself and living for God. This is being a Christian--the state you profess to have been trying to attain.

No excuse is more common than this. And what is legitimately implied in this trying to be a christian? A willingness to do your duty is always implied;--that the heart, that is, the will is right already; and the trying refers only to the outward efforts--the executive acts. For there is no sense whatever in a man's saying that he is trying to do what he has no intention or will to do. The very statement implies that his will is not only in favor but is thoroughly committed and really in earnest to attain the end chosen.

Consequently if a man tries to be a Christian, he heart is obedient to God, and his trying must respect his outward action. These are so connected with the will that they follow by a law of neces[s]ity unless the connection is broken, and when this takes place,

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no sin attends our failure to secure the outward act. God does not hold us responsible.

Hence the sinner ought to mean by this plea--"I have obeyed God a long time--I have had a right heart--and I have tried sincerely to secure such external action as comports with Christian character.["]

Now if this be true, you have done your duty. But do you mean to affirm all this? No, you say. Then what do you mean?

Suppose I should say to my son, do this; do it my son; why have you not done it? O, he says, father, "I have tried;" but he does not mean that he has ever intended to do it--that he has ever made up his mind to obey me; he only means,--I have been willing to try--I made up my mind to try to be willing; that is all! O he says I have brought myself to be willing to try to will to do it!

So you say--I have tried to get religion. And what is religion that you could not get it? How did you fail? You have been trying probably in this way. God has said "Give me thy heart," and you turned round and asked God to do it Himself, or perhaps you simply waited for Him to do it. He commanded you to repent, and you have tried to get Him to repent for you. He said, believe the gospel, and you have only been thinking of getting Him to believe for you. No wonder you have tried for a long time in vain. How could it be otherwise? You have not been trying to do what God commanded you to do, but to induce God to change his system of moral government and put himself in your place to do Himself the duty He enjoins upon you. What a miserable perversion is this?

Now as to this whole plea of having tried to be a Christian, what is the use of it? you will easily see its use when you realize duly;

- (1.) That it is utterly false when understood as you intend it.
- (2.) That it is a foul implication of the character of God.

You say--Lord, I know I can't--I have tried all I can and I know I cannot become a Christian. I am willing to get religion, but I cannot make it out.

Who then is to blame? Not yourself, according to your statement of your case. Where then is the blame? Let me ask--what would be said in the distant regions of the universe if you were believed there, when you say, I have tried with all my heart to love and serve God but I can't?

But they never can believe such a libel on their own infinite Father! Of course they will pronounce your doom as you deserve!

13. Another excuses himself by the plea--it will do no good to try. And what do you mean by this? Do you mean that God will not

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pay well for service done Him? Or do you mean that He will not forgive you if you do repent? Do you think (as some do) that you have sinned away your day of grace?

Well, suppose you have; is this any reason why you should go on in sin? Do you not believe that God is good? O yes. And that He will forgive you if the good of the universe admits? Most certainly. Then, is the impossibility of his forgiving you any reason why you should go on in sin forever, and forever rage against a God of infinite goodness? You believe Him to be compassionate and forgiving;--then should you not say, I will at least stop sinning against such a God! Why not say with the man who dreamed that he was just going to hell, and as he was parting with his brother--going as his dream had it, to heaven, he said--"I am going down to hell, but I want you to tell God from me that I am greatly obliged to Him for ten thousand mercies which I never deserved; He has never done me the least injustice--give Him my thanks for all the unmerited good he has done me." At this point he awoke, and found himself bathed in tears of repentance and gratitude to his Father in heaven. O, if men would only act as reasonably as that man dreamed, it would be noble--it would be right. If when they suppose themselves to have sinned away the day of grace, they would say, "I know God is good--I will at least send him my thanks--he has done me no injustice;" if they would take this course they might have at least the satisfaction of feeling that it is a reasonable and a fit one in their circumstances. Sinner, will you do this?

14. Another, closely pressed, says, "I have offered to give my heart to Christ, but He won't receive me." "I have no evidence that he receives me or ever will." In the last inquiry meeting, a young woman told me she had offered to give her heart to the Lord, but He would not receive her. This was charging the lie directly upon Christ, for he has said--"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." You say, I came and offered myself and he would not receive me. Jesus Christ says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man--not if some particular, some favored one--but if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." And yet when you offered him your heart did He spurn you away? Did he say--away sinner, BEGONE? No, sinner, he never did it, never. He has said he never would do it. His own words are, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "He that seeketh, findeth: to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." But you say, I have sought and I did not find. Do you mean to make out that Jesus Christ is a liar? Have you charged

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this upon Him to his very face? Do you make your solemn affirmation--"Lord I did seek--I laid myself at thy gate and knocked--but all in vain?" And do you mean to bring this excuse of yours as a solemn charge of falsehood against Jesus Christ and against God? This will be a serious business with you before it is done with.

15. But another says--"there is no salvation for me." Do you mean that Christ has made no atonement for you? But he says, he tasted death for every man. It is declared that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whomsoever believeth on Him shall have eternal life. And now do you affirm that there is no salvation provided and possible for you? Are you mourning all your way down to hell because you cannot possibly have salvation? When the cup of salvation is placed to your lips, do you dash it away, saying, That cannot be for me? And do you know this? Can you prove it even against the word of God Himself? Stand forth then, if there be such a sinner on this footstool of God--speak it out, if you have such a charge against God and if you can prove it true. Ah, is there no hope? none at all? Oh, the difficulty is not that there is no salvation provided for and offered to you, but that there is no heart for it. "Wherefore is there a price put into the hands of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart for it?"

16. But perhaps you say in excuse--"I cannot change my own heart." Cannot? Suppose Adam had made this excuse when God called him to repent after his first sin. "Make you a new heart and a right spirit,"--said the Lord to him. "I cannot change my own heart myself," replies Adam. Indeed, responds his Maker, how long is it since you changed your heart yourself? You changed it a few hours ago from holiness to sin, and will you tell your Creator that you can't change it from sin to holiness?

The sinner should consider that the change of heart is a voluntary thing. You must do it for yourself or it is never done. True there is a sense in which God changes the heart, but it is only this:--God influences the sinner to change, and then the sinner does it. The change is the sinner's own voluntary act.

17. You say, again, you can't change your heart without more conviction. Do you mean by this that you have not knowledge enough of your duty and your sin? You can not say this. You do know your sin and your duty. You know you ought to consecrate yourself to God. What then do you mean? Can't you do that which you know you ought to do? Ah, there is the old lie--that shameless refuge of lies--that same foul dogma of inability. What is implied in this new form of

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it? This--that God is not willing to convict you enough to make it possible for you to repent. There is a work and a responsibility for God, and he will not do his work: will not bear his responsibility. Hence you, alas, have no alternative but to go down to hell. And because God will not do his part towards your salvation! Do you really believe that, sinner.

18. Again you say in excuse, that you must first have more of the Spirit. And yet you resist the Spirit every day. God offers you his Spirit, nay more, God bestows his Spirit; but you resist it. What then do you mean when you pretend to want more of the Spirit's influence?

The truth is, you do not want it--you only want to make it appear that God does not do his part to help you to repent, and that as you can't repent without his help, therefore the blame of your impenitence rests on God. It is only another refuge of lies--another form of the old slander upon God--he has made me unable and won't help me out of my inability.

19. The sinner also excuses himself by saying--God must change my heart. But in the sense in which God requires you to do it, he cannot do it himself. God is said to change the heart only in the sense of persuading you to do it. As in a man's change of politics--one might say--"such a man changed my heart--he brought me over," which however by no means implies that you did not change your own mind. The plain meaning is that he persuaded and you yielded.

But this plea made by the sinner as his excuse, implies that there is something more for God to do before the sinner can become religious. I have heard many professors of religion take this very ground. Yes, thousands of Christian ministers, too have said to the sinner--"wait for God; he will change your heart in his own good time; you can[']t do it yourself, and all that you can do is to put yourself in the way for the Lord to change your heart. When this time comes, he will give you a new heart, while you are asleep perhaps, in a state of unconsciousness. God acts in this matter as a sovereign, and does his own work in his own way."

So they teach--filling the mouth of the sinner with excuses and making his heart like an adamant against the real claims of God upon his conscience.

20. The sinner pleads, again, "I can't live a Christian life if I were to become a Christian. It is unreasonable for me to expect to succeed where I see so many fail." I recollect the case of a man who said, "It is of no use for me to repent and be a Christian, for it is

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altogether irrational for me to expect to do better than others have done before me." So sinners who make this excuse come forward very modestly and tell God, "I am very humble--thou seest, Lord, that I have a very low opinion of myself; I am so zealous of thine honor and so afraid that I shall bring disgrace upon thy cause; it does not seem at all best for me to think of becoming a Christian, I have such a horror of dishonoring thy name!["]

Yes, and what then? "Therefore, I will sin on and trample the blessed gospel under my feet. I will persecute Thee, O my God, and make war on Thy cause, for it is better by far not to profess religion than to profess and then disgrace my profession." What logic! Fair specimen of the absurdity of the sinner's excuses.

This excuse assumes that there is not grace enough provided and offered, to sustain the soul in a Christian life. The doctrine is that it is irrational to expect that we can, by any grace received in this life, perfectly obey the law of God. There is not grace and help enough afforded by God! And this is taught as BIBLE THEOLOGY! Away with such teaching to the nether pit whence it came!

What! is God so weak that He can't hold up the soul that casts itself on Him? Or is He so parsimonious in bestowing his gracious aid that it must be expected always to fall short of meeting the wants of his dependent and depending child? So you seem to suppose. So hard to persuade the Lord to give you a particle of grace! Can't get grace enough to live a Christian life with honor! What is this but charging God of withholding sufficient grace.

But what say the word and the oath of Jehovah? We read that "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." You say, however, "If I should flee and lay hold of this hope, I should fail for want of grace. I could have no "consolation" in reposing upon the word of Him who cannot lie. The oath of the immutable God can never suffice for me."

So you belie the word of God, and make up a miserably slim and guilty apology for your impenitence.

21. Another excuse claims that this is a very dark, mysterious subject. This matter of faith, and regeneration--I can't understand it.

Sinner, did you ever meet the Lord with this objection, and say, "Lord thou hast required me to do things which I can't understand?" You know that you can understand well enough that you are a sinner-

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-that Christ died for you--that you must believe on Him and break off your sins by repentance. All this is so plain that "the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein." Your plea therefore is as false as it is foul. It is nothing better than a base libel on God!

22. But you say, "I can't believe." You mean, (do you?) that you can't believe a God of infinite veracity, as you can believe a fellow man? Would you imply that God asks you to believe things that are really incredible--things so revolting to reason that you cannot admit them on any testimony that even God Himself can adduce?

And do you expect to make out this case against God? Do you even believe the first point in it yourself?

But you urge again that you can't realize these things. You know these things to be true, but you can't realize--you can't realize that the Bible is true--that God does offer to forgive--that salvation is actually provided and placed within your reach. What help can there be for a case like yours? What can make these truths more certain? But on your own showing, you do not want more evidence. Why not then act upon the known truth? What more can you ask?

Do you ever carry your case before God and say, "O Lord, Thou sayest that Christ died for me, but I can't realize that it is so, and therefore Lord, I can't possibly embrace Him as my Saviour?" Would this be a rational excuse?

But you also plead that you can't repent. You can't be sorry you have abused God. You can't make up your mind now to break off from all sin. If this be really so, then you cannot make up your mind to obey God, and you may as well make up your mind to go to hell! There is no alternative!

But at any rate, you can't become a Christian now. You mean to be converted some time, but you can't make up your mind to it NOW. Well, God requires it now, and of course you must yield or abide the consequences.

But do you say, You can't now? Then God is very much to blame for asking it. If however the truth be that you can, then the lie is on your side, and it is a most infamous and abusive lie against your Maker.

III. All excuses for sin add insult to injury.

1. A plea that reflects injuriously upon the court or the lawgiver is an aggravation of the original crime. It is always so regarded in all tribunals. It must be pre-eminently so between the sinner and his infinite Lawgiver and Judge.

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2. The same is true of any plea made in self-justification. If it be false, it is considered an aggravation of the crime charged. This is a case which sometimes happens, and whenever it does, it is deemed to add fresh insult and wrong. For a criminal to come and spread out his lie upon the records of the court--to declare what he knows to be false;--nothing can prejudice his case so fearfully.

On the other hand, when a man before the court appears to be honest and confesses his guilt, the judge, if he has any discretion in the case, puts down his sentence to the lowest point possible. But if the criminal resorts to dodging--if he equivocates and lies, then you will see the strong arm of the law come down upon him. The judge comes forth in all the thunders of judicial majesty and terror, and feels that he may not spare his victim. Why? The man has lied before the very court of justice. The man sets himself against all law, and he must be put down, or law itself is down.

3. It is truly abominable for the sinner to abuse God and then excuse himself for it. Ah, this is only the old way of the guilty. Adam and Eve in the garden fled and hid themselves when they heard the voice of the Lord approaching. And what had they done? The Lord calls them out and begins to search them: "Adam what hast T[t]hou done? Has thou eaten of the forbidden tree in the centre of the garden?" Adam quailed, but fled to an excuse: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." God, he says, gave him his tempter. God, according to his excuse, had been chiefly to blame in the transaction.

Next he turns to the woman: "What is that thou hast done?" She too has an excuse: "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat." Ah, this perpetual shuffling the blame back upon God! It has been kept up through the long line of Adam's imitators down to this day. For six thousand years God has been hearing it, and still the world is spared, and the vengeance of God has not yet burst forth to smite all His guilty calumniators to hell! O! what patience in God! And who have ever abused his patience and insulted Him by their excuses more than sinners in this house?

REMARKS

1. No sinner under the light of the Gospel lives a single hour in sin without some excuse, either tacit or avowed, by which he justifies himself. It seems to be a law of man's intelligent nature that when accused of wrong, either by his conscience or by any other agent, he must either confess or justify. The latter is the course taken by all impenitent sinners. Hence the reason why they have so much

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occasion for excuses, and why they find it convenient to have so great a variety. It is remarkable with what facility they fly from one to another, as if these refuges of lies might make up in number what they lack in strength. Conscious that not one of all the multitude is valid in point of truth and right, they yet, when pressed on one, fly to another, and when driven from all in succession they are ready to come back and fight the same ground over again. It is so hard to abandon all excuses, and admit the humbling truth that they themselves are all wrong, and God all right.

Hence it becomes the great business of a gospel minister to search out and expose the sinner's excuses; to go all round and round, and, if possible demolish the sinner's refuges of lies and lay his heart open to the shafts of truth.

2. Excuses render repentance impossible. For excuses are justifications, and who does not know that justification is the very opposite of confession and repentance? To seek after and embrace excuses therefore, is to place one's self at the farthest possible remove from repentance.

Of course the self-excusing sinner makes it impossible for God to forgive him. He places the Deity in such a position toward himself, and I might say, places himself in such an attitude toward the government of God, that his forgiveness would be ruin to the very throne of God. What would heaven say, and hell too, and earth besides, if God were to forgive a sinner while he by his excuses is justifying himself and condemning his Maker?

3. Sinners should lay all their excuses at once before God. Surely this is most reasonable. Why not? If a man owed me, and supposed he had a reasonable excuse for not paying the debt, he should come to me and let me understand the whole case. Perhaps he will satisfy me that his views are right.

Now, sinner, have you ever done so in regard to God? Have you ever brought up one excuse before the Lord, saying, "Thou requirest me to be holy, but I can't be;" "Lord, I have a good excuse for not obeying Thee?" No, sinner, you are not in the habit of doing this--probably you have not done it the first time yet in all your life. In fact, you have no particular encouragement to carry your excuses before God, for you have not one yet that you yourself believe to be good for anything except to answer the purpose of a refuge of lies. Your excuses won't stand the ordeal of your own reason and conscience. How then can you hope they will stand before the searching eye of

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Jehovah? The fact that you never come with your excuses to God shows that you have no confidence in them.

4. What infinite madness to rest on excuses which you dare not bring before God now! How can you stand before God in the judgment, if your excuses are so mean that you cannot seriously think of bringing one of them before God in this world? O, sinner, that coming day will be far more searching and awful than any thing you have seen yet. See that dense mass of sinners drawn up before the great white throne--far as the eye can sweep, they come surging up--a countless throng;--and now they stand, and the awful trump of God summons them forward to bring forth their excuses for sin. Ho, sinners--any one of you all--what have you to say why sentence should not be passed on you? Where are all those excuses you were once so free and bold to make? Where are they all? Why don't you make them now? Hark! God waits;--He listens;--there is silence in heaven--all through the congregated throng--for half an hour--an awful silence--that may be felt; but not a word--not a moving lip among the gathered myriads of sinners there;--and now the great and dreadful Judge arises and lets loose his thunders. O see the waves of dire damnation roll over the ocean--masses of self-condemned sinners! Did you ever see the judge rise from his bench in court to pass sentence of death on a criminal? There, see, the poor man reels--he falls prostrate, there is no longer any strength in him, for death is on him and his last hope has perished! O, sinner, when that sentence from the dread throne shall fall on thee! Your excuses are as millstones around your neck as you plunge along down the sides of the pit to the nethermost hell!

5. Sinners don't need their excuses. God does not ask for even one. He does not require you to justify yourself--not at all. If you needed them for your salvation I could sympathize with you, and certainly would help you all I could. But you don't need them. Your salvation does not turn on your successful self-vindication. You need not rack your brain for excuses. Better say, I don't want them--don't deserve them--have not one that is worth a straw. Better say, "I am wicked. God knows that's the truth, and it were vain for me to attempt to conceal it. I AM WICKED, and if I ever live, it must be on simple mercy!["]

I can recollect very well the year I lived on excuses, and how long it was before I gave them up. I had never heard a minister preach on the subject. I found however by my experience, that my excuses and lies were the obstacles in the way of my conversion. As soon as I

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let these go utterly, I found the gate of mercy wide open. And so, sinner, would you.

6. Sinners ought to be ashamed of their excuses, and repent of them. Perhaps you have not always seen this as plainly as you may now. With the light now before you, it becomes you to beware. See to it that you never make another excuse, unless you intend to abuse God in the most horrible manner. Nothing can be a more grievous abomination in the sight of God than excuses made by a sinner who knows they are utterly false and blasphemous. O you ought to repent of the insult you have already offered to God--and NOW, too, lest you find yourself thrust away from the gate of mercy.

7. You admit your obligation, and of course are estopped from making excuses. For if you have any good excuse, you are not under obligation. If any one of you has a good excuse for disobeying God, you are no longer under obligation to obey. But since you are compelled to admit obligation, you are also compelled to relinquish excuses.

8. Inasmuch as you do and must admit your obligation, then if you still plead excuses, you insult God to his face. You insult Him by charging Him with infinite tyranny.

Now, what use do you calculate to make of this sermon? Are you ready to say, "I will henceforth desist from all my excuses, now and for ever, and God shall have my whole heart?" What do you say? Will you set about to hunt up some new excuse? Do you at least say, "Let me go home first--don't press me to yield to God here on the spot;--let me go home and then I will?" Do you say this? And are you aware how tender is this moment--how critical this passing hour? Remember it is not I who press this claim upon you--but it is God. God Himself commands you to repent today--this hour. You know your duty--you know what religion is--what it is to give God your heart. And now I come to the final question--Will you do it? Will you abandon all your excuses, and fall, a self-condemned sinner, before a God of love, and yield to Him yourself--your heart and your whole being, henceforth and for ever? WILL YOU COME?

CONDITIONS OF BEING SAVED

November 8, 1848

"What must I do to be saved?"--Acts 16:30.

I bring forward this subject to-day not because it is new to many in this congregation, but because it is greatly needed. I am happy to know that the great inquiry of our text is beginning to be deeply and extensively agitated in this community, and under these circumstances it is the first duty of a Christian pastor to answer it, fully and plainly.

The circumstances which gave occasion to the words of the text were briefly these. Paul and Silas had gone to Philippi to preach the gospel. Their preaching excited great opposition and tumult; they were arrested and thrown into prison, and the jailer was charged to keep them safely. At midnight they were praying and singing praises--God came down--the earth quaked and the prison rocked--its doors burst open, and their chains fell off; the jailer sprang up affrighted, and supposing his prisoners had fled, was about to take his own life, when Paul cried out, "Do thyself no harm--we are all here." He then called for a light, and sprang in and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

This is briefly the history of our text; and I improve it now, by showing,

- I. WHAT SINNERS MUST NOT DO TO BE SAVED; and
- II. WHAT THEY MUST DO.

It has now come to be necessary, and very important to tell men what they must not do in order to be saved. When the gospel was first preached Satan had not introduced as many delusions to mislead men as he has now. It was then enough to give, as Paul did, the simple and direct answer, telling men only what they must at once do. But this seems to be not enough now. So many delusions and perversions have bewildered and darkened the minds of men that they need often a great deal of instruction to lead them back to those simple views of

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the subject which prevailed at first. Hence the importance of showing what sinners must not do, if they intend to be saved.

1. They must not imagine that they have nothing to do. In Paul's time nobody seems to have thought of this. Then the doctrine of Universalism was not much developed. Men had not begun to dream that they should be saved without doing anything. They had not learned that sinners have nothing to do to be saved. If this idea, so current of late, had been rife at Philippi, the question of our text would not have been asked. No trembling sinner would have cried out, What must I do to be saved?

If men imagine they have nothing to do they are never likely to be saved. It is not in the nature of falsehood and lies to save men's souls, and surely nothing is more false than this notion. Men know they have something to do to be saved. Why then do they pretend that all men will be saved whether they do their duty, or constantly refuse to do it? The very idea is preposterous, and it is entertained only by the most palpable outrage upon common sense and an enlightened conscience.

2. You should not mistake what you have to do. The duty required of sinners is very simple, and would be easily understood were it not for the false ideas that prevail as to what religion is, and as to the exact things which God requires as conditions of salvation. On these points erroneous opinions prevail to a most alarming extent. Hence the danger of mistake. Beware lest you be deceived in a matter of so vital moment.

3. Do not say or imagine that you can not do what God requires. On the contrary, always assume that you can. If you assume that you cannot, this very assumption will be fatal to your salvation.

4. Do not procrastinate. As you ever intend or hope to be saved, you must set your face like a flint against this most pernicious delusion. Probably no other mode of evading present duty has ever prevailed so extensively as this, or has destroyed so many souls. Almost all men in gospel lands intend to prepare for death--intend to repent and become religious before they die. Even Universalists expect to become religious at some time--perhaps after death--perhaps after being purified from their sins by purgatorial fires--but somehow they expect to become holy, for they know they must before they can see God and enjoy His presence. But you will observe, they put this matter of becoming holy off to the most distant time possible. Feeling a strong dislike to it now, they flatter themselves that God will take care that it shall be done up duly in the

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next world, howmuchsoever they may frustrate his efforts to do it in this. So long as it remains in their power to choose whether to become holy or not, they improve the time to enjoy sin; and leave it with God to make them holy in the next world--if they can't prevent it there! Consistency IS a jewel!

And all those who put off being religious now in the cherished delusion of becoming so in some future time, whether in this world or the next, are acting out this same inconsistency. You fondly hope that will occur which you are now doing your utmost to prevent.

So sinners by myriads press their way down to hell under this delusion. They often, when pressed with the claims of God, will even name the time when they will repent. It may be very near--perhaps as soon as they get home from the meeting, or as soon as the sermon is over;--or it may be more remote, as for example, when they have finished their education, or become settled in life, or have made a little more property, or get ready to abandon some business of questionable morality;--but no matter whether the time set be near or remote, the delusion is fatal--the thought of procrastination is murder to the soul. Ah, such sinners are little aware that Satan himself has poured out his spirit upon them and is leading them whithersoever he will. He little cares whether they put off for a longer time or a shorter. If he can persuade them to a long delay, he likes it well; if only to a short one, he feels quite sure he can renew the delay and get another extension--so it answers his purpose fully in the end.

Now mark, sinner, if you ever mean to be saved you must resist and grieve away this spirit of Satan. You must cease to procrastinate. You can never be converted so long as you operate only in the way of delaying and promising yourself that you will become religious at some future time. Did you ever bring anything to pass in your temporal business by procrastination? Did procrastination ever begin, prosecute, and accomplish any important business?

Suppose you have some business of vast consequence, involving your character, or your whole estate, or your life, to be transacted in Cleveland, but you do not know precisely how soon it must be done. It may be done with safety now, and with greater facility now than ever hereafter; but it might possibly be done although you should delay a little time, but every moment's delay involves an absolute uncertainty of your being able to do it at all. You do not know but a single hour's delay will make you too late. Now in these circumstances what would a man of sense and discretion do? Would he not be awake and up in an instant? Would he sleep on a matter of

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such moment, involved in such risks and uncertainties? No. You know that the risk of a hundred dollars, pending on such conditions, would stir the warm blood of any man of business, and you could not tempt him to delay an hour. O, he would say, this is the great business to which I must attend, and every thing else must give way. But suppose he should act as a sinner does about repentance, and promise himself that to-morrow will be as this day and much more abundant--and do nothing to[-]day, nor to-morrow, nor the next month, nor the next year--would you not think him beside himself? Would you expect his business to be done, his money to be secured, his interests to be promoted?

So the sinner accomplishes nothing but his own ruin so long as he procrastinates. Until he says--"Now is my time--to-day I will do all my duty"--he is only playing the fool and laying up his wages accordingly. O, it is infinite madness to defer a matter of such vast interest and of such perilous uncertainty!

5. If you would be saved you must not wait for God to do what He commands you to do.

God will surely do all that He can for your salvation. All that the nature of the case allows of his doing, he either has done or stands ready to do as soon as your position and course will allow him to do it. Long before you were born he anticipated your wants as a sinner, and began on the most liberal scale to make provision for them. He gave his Son to die for you, thus doing all that need be done by way of an atonement. Of a long time past He has been shaping his providence so as to give you the requisite knowledge of duty--has sent you his word and Spirit. Indeed He has given you the highest possible evidence that He will be energetic and prompt on his part--as one in earnest for your salvation. You know this. What sinner in this house fears lest God should be negligent on his part in the matter of his salvation? Not one. No, many of you are not a little annoyed that God should press you so earnestly and be so energetic in the work of securing your salvation. And now can you quiet your conscience with the excuse of waiting for God to do your duty?

The fact is, there are things for you to do which God cannot do for you. Those things which he has enjoined and revealed as the conditions of your salvation, He can not and will not do Himself. If He could have done them Himself, He would not have asked you to do them. Every sinner ought to consider this. God requires of you repentance and faith because it is naturally impossible that any one else but you should do them. They are your own personal matters--the

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voluntary exercises of your own mind; and no other being in heaven, earth, or hell can do these things for you in your stead. As far as substitution was naturally possible, God has introduced it, as in the case of the atonement. He has never hesitated to march up to meet and to bear all the self-denials which the work of salvation has involved.

6. If you mean to be saved, you must not wait for God to do anything whatever. There is nothing to be waited for. God has either done all on his part already, or if anything more remains, He is ready and waiting this moment for you to do your duty that He may impart all needful grace.

7. Do not flee to any refuge of lies. Lies can not save you. It is truth--not lies, that alone can save. I have often wondered how men could suppose that Universalism could save any man.

Men must be sanctified by the truth. There is no plainer teaching in the Bible than this, and no Bible doctrine is better sustained by reason and the nature of the case.

Now does Universalism sanctify anybody? Universalists say you must be punished for your sins, and that thus they will be put away--as if the fires of purgatory would thoroughly consume all sin, and bring out the sinner pure. Is this being sanctified by the truth? You might as well hope to be saved by eating liquid fire! You might as well expect fire to purify your soul from sin in this world, as in the next! Why not?

It is amazing that men should hope to be sanctified and saved by this great error, or indeed by any error whatever. God says you must be sanctified by the truth. Suppose you could believe this delusion, would it make you holy? Do you believe that it would make you humble, heavenly-minded, sin-hating, benevolent? Can you believe any such thing? Be assured that Satan is only the father of lies, and he can not save you--in fact, he would not if he could; he intends his lies not to save you, but to destroy your very soul, and nothing could be more adapted to its purpose. Lies are only the natural poison of the soul. You take them at your peril!

8. Don't seek for any self-indulgent method of salvation. The great effort among sinners has always been to be saved in some way of self-indulgence. They are slow to admit that self-denial is indispensable--that total, unqualified self-denial is the condition of being saved. I warn you against supposing that you can be saved in some easy, self-pleasing way. Men ought to know, and always

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assume that it is naturally indispensable for selfishness to be utterly put away and its demands resisted and put down.

I often ask--Does the system of salvation which I preach so perfectly chime with the intuitions of my reason that I know from within myself that this gospel is the thing I need? Does it in all its parts and relations meet the demands of my intelligence? Are its requisitions obviously just and right? Do its prescribed conditions of salvation obviously befit man's moral position before God, and his moral relations to the government of God?

To these and similar questions I am constrained to answer in the affirmative. The longer I live the more fully I see that the gospel system is the only one that can alike meet the demands of the human intelligence, and supply the wants of man's sinning, depraved heart. The duties enjoined upon the sinner are just those things which I know must in the nature of the case be the conditions of salvation. Why then should any sinner think of being saved on any other conditions? Why desire it even if it were ever so practicable?

9. Don't imagine you will ever have a more favourable time.

Impenitent sinners are prone to imagine that just now is by no means so convenient a season as may be expected hereafter. So they put off in hope of a better time. They think perhaps that they shall have more conviction, and fewer obstacles, and less hindrances. So thought Felix. He did not intend to forego salvation, any more than you do; but he was very busy just then--had certain ends to be secured which seemed peculiarly pressing, and so he begged to be excused on the promise of very faithful attention to the subject at the expected convenient season. But did the convenient season ever come? Never. Nor does it ever come to those who in like manner resist God's solemn call, and grieve away His Spirit. Thousands are now waiting in the pains of hell who said just as he did--"Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Oh, sinner, when will your convenient season come? Are you aware that no season will ever be "convenient" for you, unless God calls up your attention earnestly and solemnly to the subject? And can you expect Him to do this at the time of your choice, when you scorn his call at the time of his choice? Have you not heard Him say--"Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh

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upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." O, sinner, that will be a fearful and a final doom! And the myriad voices of God's universe will say, amen!

10. Do not suppose that you will find another time as good, and one in which you can just as well repent as now.

Many are ready to suppose that though there may be no better time for themselves, there will at least be one as good. Vain delusion! Sinner, you already owe ten thousand talents, and will you find it just as easy to be forgiven this debt while you are showing that you don't care how much and how long you augment it? In a case like this, where everything turns upon your securing the good will of your creditor, do you hope to gain it by positively insulting Him to his face?

Or take another view of the case. Your heart you know must one day relent for sin, or you are forever damned. You know also that each successive sin increases the hardness of your heart, and makes it a more difficult matter to repent. How then can you reasonably hope that a future time will be equally favourable for your repentance? When you have hardened your neck like an iron sinew, and made your heart like an adamant stone, can you hope that repentance will yet be as easy to you as ever?

You know, sinner, that God requires you to break off from your sins now. But you look up into his face and say to Him--"Lord, it is just as well to stop abusing thee at some future convenient time. Lord, if I can only be saved at last, I shall think it all my gain to go on insulting and abusing thee as long as it will possibly answer. And since thou art so very compassionate and long-suffering, I think I may venture on in sin and rebellion against thee yet these many months and years longer. Lord, don't hurry me--do let me have my way--let me abuse thee if thou pleasest, and spit in thy face--all will be just as well if I only repent in season so as finally to be saved. I know indeed that thou art entreating me to repent now, but I much prefer to wait a season, and it will be just as well to repent at some future time."

And now do you suppose that God will set his seal to this--that He will say--"You are right, sinner, I set my seal of approbation upon your course--it is well that you take so just views of your duty to your Maker and your Father; go on; your course will ensure your salvation." Do you expect such a response from God, as this?

11. If you ever expect to be saved, don't wait to see what others will do or say.

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I was lately astonished to find that a young lady here under conviction was in great trouble about what a beloved brother would think of her if she should give her heart to God. She knew her duty; but he was impenitent, and how could she know what he would think if she should repent now! It amounts to this. She would come before God and say--"O thou great God, I know I ought to repent, but I can't; for I don't know as my brother will like it. I know that he too is a sinner, and must repent or lose his soul, but I am much more afraid of his frown than I am of thine, and I care more for his approbation than I do for thine, and consequently, I dare not repent till he does!" How shocking is this! Strange that on such a subject men will ever ask--"What will others say of me?" Are you amenable to God? What then have others to say about your duty to Him? God requires you and them also to repent, and why don[']t you do it at once?

Not long since, as I was preaching abroad, one of the principal men of the city came to the meeting for inquiry, apparently much convicted and in great distress for his soul. But being a man of high political standing, and supposing himself to be very dependent upon his friends, he insisted that he must consult them, and have a regard for their feelings in this matter. I could not possibly beat him off from this ground, although I spent three hours in the effort. He seemed almost ready to repent--I thought he certainly would; but he slipped away, relapsed by a perpetual back-sliding, and I expect will be found at last among the lost in perdition. Would you not expect such a result if he tore himself away under such an excuse as that?

O, sinner, you must not care what others say of you--let them say what they please. Remember, the question is between your own soul and God, and "he that is wise shall be wise for himself, and he that scorneth, he alone shall bear it." You must die for yourself, and for yourself must appear before God in judgment! Go, young woman, ask your brother--"Can you answer for me when I come to the judgment? Can you pledge yourself that you can stand in my stead and answer for me there?" Now until you have reason to believe that he can, it is wise for you to disregard his opinions if they stand at all in your way. Whoever interposes any objection to your immediate repentance, fail not to ask him--"Can you shield my soul in the judgment? If I can be assured that you can and will, I will make you my Saviour; but if not, then I must attend to my own salvation, and leave you to attend to yours.

I never shall forget the scene which occurred while my own mind was turning upon this great point. Seeking a retired place for

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prayer, I went into a deep grove, found a perfectly secluded spot behind some large logs, and knelt down. All suddenly, a leaf rustled and I sprang, for somebody must be coming and I shall be seen here at prayer. I had not been aware that I cared what others said of me, but looking back upon my exercises of mind here, I could see that I did care infinitely too much what others thought of me.

Closing my eyes again for prayer, I heard a rustling leaf again, and then the thought came over me like a wave of the sea--"I am ashamed of confessing my sin!["] What! thought I, ashamed of being found speaking with God! O, how ashamed I felt of this shame! I can never describe the strong, and overpowering impression which this thought made on my mind. I cried aloud at the very top of my voice, for I felt that though all the men on earth, and all the devils in hell were present to hear and see me I would not shrink and would not cease to cry unto God; for what is it to me if others see me seeking the face of my God and Saviour? I am hastening to the judgment--there I shall not be ashamed to have the Judge my friend. There I shall not be ashamed to have sought his face and his pardon here. There will be no shrinking away from the gaze of the universe. O, if sinners at the judgment could shrink away, how gladly would they; but they can not! Nor can they stand there in each other's places to answer for each other's sins. That young woman, can she say then--O, my brother, you must answer for me; for to please you, I rejected Christ and lost my soul? That brother is himself a guilty rebel, confounded, and agonized, and quailing before the awful Judge, and how can he befriend you in such an awful hour! Fear not his displeasure now, but rather warn him while you can, to escape for his life ere the wrath of the Lord wax hot against him, and there be no remedy.

12. If you would be saved, you must not indulge prejudices against either God, or his ministers, or against Christians, or against any thing religious.

There are some persons of peculiar temperament who are greatly in danger of losing their souls because they are tempted to strong prejudices. Once committed either in favour of or against any persons or things, they are exceedingly apt to become so fixed, as never more to be really honest. And when these persons or things in regard to which they become committed, are so connected with religion, that their prejudices stand arrayed against their fulfilling the great conditions of salvation, the effect can be nothing else than ruinous. For it is naturally indispensable to salvation, that you should be

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entirely honest. Your soul must act before God in the open sincerity of truth, or you can not be converted.

I have known persons in revivals to remain a long time under great conviction, without submitting themselves to God, and by careful inquiry I have found them wholly hedged in by their prejudices, and yet so blind to this fact that they would not admit that they had any prejudice at all. In my observation of convicted sinners, I have found this among the most common obstacles in the way of the salvation of souls. Men become committed against religion, and remaining in this state it is naturally impossible that they should repent. God will not humour your prejudices, or lower his prescribed conditions of salvation to accommodate your feelings.

Again, you must give up all hostile feelings in cases where you have been really injured. Sometimes I have seen persons evidently shut out from the kingdom of heaven, because having been really injured, they would not forgive and forget, but maintained such a spirit of resistance and revenge, that they could not in the nature of the case, repent of the sin towards God, nor could God forgive them. Of course they lost heaven. I have heard men say--"I can not forgive--I will not forgive--I have been injured, and I never will forgive that wrong." Now mark:--you must not hold on to such feelings; if you do, you can not be saved.

Again, you must not suffer yourself to be stumbled by the prejudices of others. I have often been struck with the state of things in families, where the parents or older persons had prejudices against the minister, and have wondered why those parents were not more wise than to lay stumbling-blocks before their children to ruin their souls. This is often the true reason why children are not converted. Their minds are turned against the gospel, by being turned against those from whom they hear it preached. I would rather have persons come into my family, and curse and swear before my children, than to have them speak against those who preach to them the gospel. Therefore I say to all parents--take care what you say, if you would not shut the gate of heaven against your children!

Again, do not allow yourself to take some fixed position, and then suffer the stand you have taken to debar you from doing any obvious duty. Persons sometimes allow themselves to be committed against taking what is called "the anxious seat;" and consequently they refuse to go forward under circumstances when it is obviously proper that they should, and where their refusal to do so, places them

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in an attitude unfavourable, and perhaps fatal to their conversion. Let every sinner beware of this!

Again, do not hold on to any thing about which you have any doubt of its lawfulness or propriety. Cases often occur in which persons are not fully satisfied that a thing is wrong, and yet are not satisfied that it is right. Now in cases of this sort it should not be enough to say--"such and such Christians do so"--you ought to have better reasons than this for your course of conduct. If you ever expect to be saved, you must abandon all practices which you even suspect to be wrong. This principle seems to be involved in the passage, "He that doubteth is damned if he eat; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." To do that which is of doubtful propriety is to allow yourself to tamper with the divine authority, and cannot fail to break down in your mind that solemn dread of sinning which if you would ever be saved, you must carefully cherish.

Again, if you would be saved, do not look at professors and wait for them to become engaged as they should be in the great work of God. If they are not what they ought to be, let them alone. Let them bear their own awful responsibility. It often happens that convicted sinners compare themselves with professed Christians, and excuse themselves for delaying their duty, because professed Christians are delaying theirs. Sinners must not do this if they would ever be saved. It is very probable that you will always find guilty professors enough to stumble over into hell if you will allow yourself to do so.

But on the other hand, many professors may not be nearly so bad as you suppose, and you must not be censorious, putting the worst constructions upon their conduct. You have other work to do than this. Let them stand or fall to their own master. Unless you abandon the practice of picking flaws in the conduct of professed Christians, it is utterly impossible that you should be saved.

Again, do not depend upon professors--on their prayers or influence in any way. I have known children hang a long time upon the prayers of their parents, putting those prayers in the place of Jesus Christ, or at least in the place of their own present efforts to do their duty. Now this course pleases Satan entirely. He would ask nothing more to make sure of you. Therefore--depend on no prayers--not even those of the holiest Christians on earth. The matter of your conversion lies between yourself and God alone, as really as if you were the only sinner in all the world, or as if there were no other beings in the universe but yourself and your God.

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Do not seek for any apology or excuse whatever. I dwell upon this and urge it the more because I so often find persons resting on some excuse without being themselves aware of it. In conversation with them upon their spiritual state, I see this and say, "There you are resting on that excuse." "Am I?" say they, "I did not know it."

Do not seek for stumbling-blocks. Sinners, a little disturbed in their stupidity, begin to cast about for stumbling-blocks for self-vindication. All at once they become wide awake to the faults of professors, as if they had to bear the care of all the churches. The real fact is, they are all engaged to find something to which they can take exception, so that they can thereby blunt the keen edge of truth upon their own consciences. This never helps along their own salvation.

Do not tempt the forbearance of God. If you do, you are in the utmost danger of being given over forever. Do not presume that you may go on yet longer in your sins, and still find the gate of mercy. This presumption has paved the way for the ruin of many souls.

Do not despair of salvation and settle down in unbelief, saying, "there is no mercy for me." You must not despair in any such sense as to shut yourself out from the kingdom. You may well despair of being saved without Christ, and without repentance; but you are bound to believe the gospel, and to do this is to believe the glad tidings that Jesus Christ has come to save sinners, even the chief, and that "him that cometh to Him He will in no wise cast out." You have no right to disbelieve this, and act as if there were no truth in it.

You must not wait for more conviction. Why do you need any more? You know your guilt and know your present duty. Nothing can be more preposterous therefore than to wait for more conviction. If you did not know that you are a sinner, or that you are guilty for sin, there might be some fitness in seeking for conviction of the truth on these points.

Do not wait for more or for different feelings. Sinners are often saying--"I must feel differently before I can come to Christ," or, "I must have more feeling," as if this were the great thing which God requires of them. In this they are altogether mistaken.

Do not wait to be better prepared. While you wait you are growing worse and worse, and are fast rendering your salvation impossible.

Don[']t wait for God to change your heart. Why should you wait for Him to do what He has commanded you to do, and waits for you to do in obedience to his command?

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Don't try to recommend yourself to God by prayers or tears or by anything else whatever. Do you suppose your prayers lay God under any obligation to forgive you? Suppose you owed a man five hundred talents, and should go a hundred times a week and beg him to remit to you this debt; and then should enter your prayers in account against your creditor, as so much claim against him. Suppose you should pursue this course till you had canceled the debt as you suppose--could you hope to prove anything by this course except that you were mad? And yet sinners seem to suppose that their many prayers and tears lay the Lord under real obligation to them to forgive them.

Never rely on anything else whatever than Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is preposterous for you to hope as many do, to make some propitiation by your own sufferings. In my early experience, I thought I could not expect to be converted at once, but must be bowed down a long time. I said to myself--"God will not pity me till I feel worse than I do now. I can't expect Him to forgive me till I feel a greater agony of soul than this.["] Not even if I could have gone on augmenting my sufferings till they equalled the miseries of hell, it could not have changed God. The fact is, God does not ask of you that you should suffer. Your sufferings cannot in the nature of the case avail for atonement; why, therefore, should you attempt to thrust aside the system of God's providing, and thrust in one of your own?

There is another view of the case. The thing God demands of you is that you should bow your stubborn will to Him. Just as a child in the attitude of disobedience, and required to submit, might fall to weeping and groaning, and to every expression of agony, and might even torture himself in hope of moving the pity of his father, but all the time refuses to submit to parental authority[.] He would be very glad to put his own sufferings in the place of the submission demanded. This is what the sinner is doing. He would fain put his own sufferings in the place of submission to God, and move the pity of the Lord so much that He would recede from the hard condition of repentance and submission.

If you would be saved you must not listen at all to those who pity you, and who impliedly take your part against God, and try to make you think you are not so bad as you are. I once knew a woman who after a long season of distressing conviction fell into great despair, her health sank, and she seemed about to die. All this time she found no relief, but seemed only to wax worse and worse, sinking down in stern and awful despair. Her friends instead of dealing

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plainly and faithfully with her, and probing her guilty heart to the bottom, had taken the course of pitying her, and almost complained of the Lord that He would not have compassion on the poor, agonized, dying woman. At length, as she seemed in the last stages of life--so weak as to be scarcely able to speak in a low voice, there happened in a minister who better understood how to deal with convicted sinners. The woman's friends cautioned him to deal very carefully with her, as she was in a dreadful state and greatly to be pitied; but he judged it best to deal with her very faithfully. As he approached her bed-side, she raised her faint voice and begged for a little water. "Unless you repent, you will soon be," said he, "where there is not a drop of water to cool your tongue." "O," she cried, "must I go down to hell?" "Yes, you must, and you will, soon, unless you repent and submit to God. Why don't you repent and submit immediately?" "O," she replied, "it is an awful thing to go to hell!" "Yes, and for that very reason God has provided an atonement through Jesus Christ, but you won't accept it. He brings the cup of salvation to your lips, and you thrust it away. Why will you do this? Why will you persist in being an enemy of God and scorn his offered salvation, when you might become his friend and have salvation if you would?"

This was the strain of their conversation, and its result was, that the woman saw her guilt and her duty, and turning to the Lord, found pardon and peace.

Therefore I say, if your conscience convicts you of sin, don't let anybody take your part against God. Your wound needs not a plaster, but a probe. Don't fear the probe; it is the only thing that can save you. Don't seek to hide your guilt, or veil your eyes from seeing it, nor be afraid to know the worst, for you must know the very worst, and the sooner you know it the better. I warn you, don't look after some physician to give you an opiate, for you don't need it. Shun, as you would death itself, all those who would speak to you smooth things and prophesy deceits. They would surely ruin your soul.

Again, do not suppose that if you become a Christian, it will interfere with any of the necessary or appropriate duties of life, or with anything whatever to which you ought to attend. No; religion never interferes with any real duty. So far is this from being the case, that in fact a proper attention to your various duties is indispensable to your being religious. You cannot serve God without.

Moreover, if you would be saved you must not give heed to anything that would hinder you. It is infinitely important that your soul should be saved. No consideration thrown in your way should be

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allowed to have the weight of a straw or a feather. Jesus Christ has illustrated and enforced this by several parables, especially in the one which compares the kingdom of heaven to "a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price went and sold all that he had and bought it." In another parable the kingdom of heaven is said to be like "treasure hid in a field, which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." Thus forcibly are men taught that they must be ready to make any sacrifice whatever, which may be requisite in order to gain the kingdom of heaven.

Again, you must not seek religion selfishly. You must not make your own salvation or happiness the supreme end. Beware, for if you make this your supreme end you will get a false hope, and will probably glide along down the path-way of the hypocrite into the deepest hell.

II. What sinners must do to be saved.

1. You must understand what you have to do. It is of the utmost importance that you should see this clearly. You need to know that you must return to God, and to understand what this means. The difficulty between yourself and God is that you have stolen yourself and run away from his service. You belong of right to God. He created you for Himself, and hence had a perfectly righteous claim to the homage of your heart, and the service of your life. But you, instead of living to meet his claims, have run away--have deserted from God's service, and have lived to please yourself. Now your duty is to return and restore yourself to God.

2. You must return and confess your sins to God. You must confess that you have been all wrong, and that God has been all right. Go before the Lord and lay open the depth of your guilt. Tell Him you deserve just as much damnation as He has threatened.

These confessions are naturally indispensable to your being forgiven. In accordance with this the Lord says, "If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant." Then God can forgive. But so long as you controvert this point, and will not concede that God is right, or admit that you are wrong, He can never forgive you.

You must moreover confess to man if you have injured any one. And is it not a fact that you have injured some, and perhaps many of your fellow men? Have you not slandered your neighbour and said things which you have no right to say? Have you not in some

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instances which you could call to mind if you would, lied to them, or about them, or covered up or perverted the truth; and have you not been willing that others should have false impressions of you or of your conduct? If so, you must renounce all such iniquity, for "he that covereth his sins shall not prosper; while he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." And furthermore you must not only confess your sins to God and to the men you have injured, but you must also make restitution. You have not taken the position of a penitent before God and man until you have done this also. God cannot treat you as a penitent until you have done it. I do not mean by this that God cannot forgive you until you have carried into effect your purpose of restitution by finishing the outward act, for sometimes it may demand time, and may in some cases be itself impossible to you. But the purpose must be sincere and thorough before you can be forgiven of God.

3. You must renounce yourself. In this is implied,

(1.) That you renounce your own righteousness, forever discarding the very idea of having any righteousness in yourself.

(2.) That you forever relinquish the idea of having done any good which ought to commend you to God, or be ever thought of as a ground of your justification.

(3.) That you renounce your own will, and be ever ready to say not in word only, but in heart--"Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." You must consent most heartily that God's will shall be your supreme law.

(4.) That you renounce your own way, and let God have his own way in everything. Never suffer yourself to fret and be rasped by anything whatever; for since God's agency extends to all events, you ought to recognize his hand in all things, and of course to fret at anything whatever is to fret against God who has at least permitted that thing to occur as it does. So long therefore as you suffer yourself to fret you are not right with God. You must become before God as a little child, subdued and trustful at his feet. Let the weather be fair or foul, consent that God should have his way. Let all things go well with you, or as men call it, ill; yet let God do his pleasure, and let it be your part to submit in perfect resignation. Until you take this ground you can not be saved.

4. You must come to Christ. You must accept of Christ really and fully as your Saviour. Renouncing all thought of depending on any thing you have done or can do, you must accept of Christ as your atoning sacrifice, and as your ever living Mediator before God.

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Without the least qualification or reserve you must place yourself under his wing as your Saviour.

5. You must seek supremely to please Christ, and not yourself. It is naturally impossible that you should be saved until you come into this attitude of mind--until you are so well pleased with Christ in all respects as to find your pleasure in doing his. It is in the nature of things impossible that you should be happy in any other state of mind, or unhappy in this. For, his pleasure is infinitely good and right. When therefore his good pleasure becomes your good pleasure, and your will harmonizes entirely with his, then you will be happy for the same reason that He is happy, and you cannot fail of being happy any more than Jesus Christ can. And this becoming supremely happy in God's will is essentially the idea of salvation. In this state of mind you are saved. Out of it you cannot be.

It has often struck my mind with great force, that many professors of religion are deplorably and utterly mistaken on this point. Their real feeling is that Christ's service is an iron collar, an insufferably hard yoke. Hence they labour exceedingly to throw off some of this burden. They try to make it out that Christ does not require much if any self-denial--much if any deviation from the course of worldliness and sin. O, if they could only get the standard of Christian duty quite down to a level with the fashions and customs of this world! How much easier then to live a Christian life and wear Christ's yoke!

But taking Christ's yoke as it really is, it becomes in their view an iron collar. Doing the will of Christ, instead of their own is a hard business. Now if doing Christ's will is religion, (and who can doubt it?) then they only need enough of it, and in their state of mind, they will be supremely wretched. Let me ask those who groan under the idea that they must be religious--who deem it awful hard--but they must--how much religion of this kind would it take to make hell? Surely not much! When it gives you no joy to do God's pleasure, and yet you are shut up to the doing of His pleasure as the only way to be saved, and are thereby perpetually dragooned into the doing of what you hate, as the only means of escaping hell, would not this be itself a hell? Can you not see that in this state of mind you are not saved and cannot be?

To be saved you must come into a state of mind in which you will ask no higher joy than to do God's pleasure. This alone will be forever enough to fill your cup to overflowing.

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You must have all confidence in Christ, or you cannot be saved. You must absolutely believe in Him--believe all his words of promise. They were given you to be believed, and unless you believe them, they can do you no good at all. So far from helping you without you exercise (sic.) faith in them, they will only aggravate your guilt for unbelief. God would be believed when He speaks in love to lost sinners. He gave them these "exceeding great and precious promises, that they by faith in them, might escape the corruption that is in the world through lust." But thousands of professors of religion know not how to use these promises, and as to them or any profitable use they make, the promises might as well have been written on the sands of the sea.

Sinners too, will go down to hell in unbroken masses, unless they believe and take hold of God by faith in his promise. O, his awful wrath is out against them! And He says--"I would go through them, I would burn them up together; or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." Yes, let him stir up himself and take hold of my arm, strong to save, and then he may make peace with me. Do you ask how take hold? By faith. Yes, by faith; believe his words and take hold; take hold of his strong arm and swing right out over hell, and don't be afraid any more than if there were no hell.

But you say--I do believe, and yet I am not saved. No you don't believe. A woman said to me--"I believe, I know I do, and yet here I am in my sins." No, said I, you don't. Have you as much confidence in God as you would have in me if I had promised you a dollar? Do you ever pray to God? and, if so, do you come with any such confidence as you would have if you came to me to ask for a promised dollar? Oh, until you have as much faith in God as this, aye and more--until you have more confidence in God than you would have in ten thousand men, your faith does not honour God, and you can not hope to please Him. You must say--"Let God be true though every man be a liar."

But you say--"O, I am a sinner, and how can I believe? I know you are a sinner, and so are all men to whom God has given these promises. "O, but I am a great sinner!" Well, "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom," Paul says, "I am the chief" So you need not despair.

7. You must forsake all that you have, or you cannot be Christ's disciple. There must be absolute and total self-denial.

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By this I do not mean that you are never to eat again, or never again to clothe yourself, or never more enjoy the society of your friends--no, not this; but that you should cease entirely from using any of these enjoyments selfishly. You must no longer think to own yourself--your time, your possessions, or anything you have ever called your own. All these things you must hold as God's, not yours. In this sense you are to forsake all that you have, namely, in the sense of laying all upon God's altar to be devoted supremely and only to his service. When you come back to God for pardon and salvation, come with all you have to lay all at his feet. Come with your body, to offer it as a living sacrifice upon his altar. Come with your soul and all its powers, and yield them in willing consecration to your God and Saviour. Come, bring them all along--every thing, body, soul, intellect, imagination, acquirements--all, without reserve. Do you say--Must I bring them all? Yes, all--absolutely ALL; do not keep back any thing--don't sin against your own soul like Ananias and Sapphira, by keeping back a part, but renounce your own claim to every thing, and recognize God's right to all. Say, Lord, these things are not mine. I had stolen them, but they were never mine. They were always thine; I'll have them no longer. Lord, these things are all thine, henceforth and forever. Now, what wilt Thou have me to do? I have no business of my own to do--I am wholly at thy disposal--Lord, what work hast thou for me to do?

In this spirit you must renounce the world, the flesh, and Satan. Your fellowship is henceforth to be with Christ, and not with those objects. You are to live for Christ and not for the world, the flesh, or the devil.

8. You must believe the record God hath given of his Son. He that believes not does not receive the record--does not set to his seal that God is true. "This is the record that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." The condition of your having it is that you believe the record, and of course that you act accordingly. Suppose here is a poor man living at your next door, and the mail brings him a letter stating that a rich man has died in England, leaving him 100,000 pounds sterling, and the cashier of a neighbouring bank writes him that he has received the amount on deposit for him, and holds it subject to his order. Well, the poor man says, I can't believe the record. I can't believe there ever was any such rich man; I can't believe there is 100,000 pounds for me. So he must live and die as poor as Lazarus, because he won't believe the record.

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Now, mark; this is just the case with the unbelieving sinner. God has given you eternal life, and it waits your order--but you don't get it because you will not believe, and therefore will not make out the order, and present in due form the application.

Ah, but you say, I must have some feeling before I can believe--how can I believe till I have the feeling? So the poor man might say--How can I believe that the 100,000 pounds is mine--I have not got a farthing of it now--I am as poor as ever. Yes, you are poor because you will not believe. If you would believe, you might go and buy out every store in this country. Still you cry, I am as poor as ever. I can't believe it;--see my poor worn clothes--I was never more ragged in my life; I have not a particle of the feeling and the comforts of a rich man. So the sinner can't believe till he gets the inward experience! He must wait to have some of the feeling of a saved sinner before he can believe the record and take hold of the salvation! Preposterous enough! So the poor man must wait to get his new clothes and fine house before he can believe his documents and draw for his money. Of course he dooms himself to everlasting poverty, although mountains of gold were all his own.

Now, sinner, you must understand this. Why should you be lost when eternal life is bought and offered you by the last will and testament of the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you not believe the record and draw for the amount at once! Do for mercy's sake understand this and not lose heaven by your own folly!

I must conclude by saying, that if you would be saved you must accept a prepared salvation, one already prepared and full, and present. You must be willing to give up all your sins, and be saved from them, all, now and henceforth! Until you consent to this, you cannot be saved at all. Many would be willing to be saved in heaven, if they might hold on to some sins while on earth,--or rather they think they would like heaven on such terms. But the fact is they would as much dislike a pure heart and a holy life in heaven as they do on earth, and they deceive themselves utterly in supposing that they are ready or even willing to go to such a heaven as God has prepared for his people. No, there can be no heaven except for those who accept a salvation from all sin in this world. They must take the gospel as a system which holds no compromise with sin--which contemplates full deliverance from sin even now, and makes provision accordingly. Any other gospel is not the true one, and to accept of Christ's gospel in any other sense is not to accept it all. Its first and its last condition is sworn and eternal renunciation of all sin.

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REMARKS

1. Paul did not give the same answer to this question which a consistent Universalist would give. The latter would say, You are to be saved by being first punished according to your sin. All men must expect to be punished all that their sins deserve. But Paul did not answer thus. Miserable comforter had he been if he had answered after this sort: "You must all be punished according to the letter of the law you have broken." This could scarcely have been called gospel.

Nor again did Paul give the Universalist's answer and say, "Do not concern yourself about this matter of being saved, all men are sure enough of being saved without any particular anxiety about it." Not so Paul; no; he understood and did not forbear to express the necessity of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ as the condition of being saved.

2. Take care that you do not sin willfully after having understood the truth concerning the way of salvation. Your danger of this is great precisely in proportion as you see your duty clearly. The most terrible damnation must fall on the head of those who "knew their duty, but who did it not." When therefore you are told plainly and truly what your duty is, be on your guard lest you let salvation slip out of your hands. It may never come so near your reach again.

3. Do not wait, even to go home, before you obey God. Make up your mind now, at once, to close in with the offers of salvation. Why not? Are they not most reasonable?

4. Let your mind act upon this great proposal and embrace it just as you would any other important proposition. God lays the proposition before you; you hear it explained, and you understand it; now the next and only remaining step is--to embrace it with all your heart. Just as any other great question--(we may suppose it a question of life or death) might come before a community--the case be fully stated; the conditions explained, and then the issue is made. Will you subscribe? Will you engage to meet these conditions? Do you heartily embrace the proposition? Now all this would be intelligible.

Just so now in the case of the sinner. You understand the proposition. You know the conditions of salvation. You understand the contract into which you are to enter with your God and Saviour. You covenant to give your all to God--to lay yourself upon his altar to be used up there just as He pleases to use you. And now the only remaining question is--Will you consent to this at once? Will you go for full and everlasting consecration with all your heart?

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5. The jailer made no excuse. When he knew his duty, in a moment he yielded. Paul told him what to do, and he did it. Possibly he might have heard something about Paul's preaching before this night; but probably not much. But now he hears for his life. How often have I been struck with this case! There was a dark-minded heathen. He had heard, we must suppose, a great deal of slang about these apostles; but notwithstanding all, he came to them for truth;--hearing, he is convinced, and being convinced, he yields at once. Paul uttered a single sentence--he received it, embraced it, and it is done.

Now you, sinner, know and admit all this truth, and yet infinitely strange as it is, you will not in a moment believe and embrace it with all your heart. O, will not Sodom and Gomorrah rise up against you in the judgment and condemn you! That heathen jailer--how could your (sic.) bear to see him on that dread day, and stand rebuked by his example there!

6. It is remarkable that Paul said nothing about the jailer's needing any help in order to believe and repent. He did not even mention the work of the Spirit, or allude to the jailer's need of it. But it should be noticed that Paul gave the jailer just those directions which would most effectually secure the Spirit's aid and promote his action.

7. The jailer seems to have made no delay at all, waiting for no future or better time; but as soon as the conditions are before him he yields and embraces; no sooner is the proposition made than he seizes upon it in a moment.

I was once preaching in a village in New York, and there sat before me a lawyer who had been greatly offended with the gospel. But that day I noticed he sat with fixed eye and open mouth, leaned forward as if he would seize each word as it came. I was explaining and simplifying the gospel, and when I came to state just how the gospel is offered to men, he said to me afterwards--I snatched at it--I put out my hand, suiting the action to the thought, and seized it--and it became mine.

So in my own case while in the woods praying, after I had burst away from the fear of man, and began to give scope to my feelings, this passage fell upon me--"Ye shall seek for me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart." For the first time in the world I found that I believed a passage in the Bible. I had supposed that I believed before, but surely never before as I now did. Now, said I to myself--"This is the word of the everlasting God. My God, I take Thee at Thy word. Thou sayest I shall find Thee when I search for

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Thee with all my heart, and now, Lord, I do search for Thee, I know, with all my heart." And true enough, I did find the Lord. Never in all my life was I more certain of any thing than I was now that I had found the Lord.

This is the very idea of his promises--they were made to be believed--to be laid hold of as God's own words, and acted upon as if they actually meant just what they say. When God says, "Look unto me and be ye saved," He would have us look unto Him as if he really had salvation in his hands to give, and withal a heart to give it. The true spirit of faith is well expressed by the psalmist--"When Thou saidst--'Seek ye my face,' my heart replied, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." This is the way--let your heart at once respond to the blessed words of invitation and of promise.

Ah, but you say, I am not a Christian. And you never will be till you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. If you never become a Christian, the reason will be because you do not and will not believe the gospel and embrace it with all your heart.

The promises were made to be believed, and belong to any one who will believe them. They reach forth their precious words to all, and whoever will may take them as his own. Now will you believe that the Father has given you eternal life? This is the fact declared;--will you believe it?

You have now been told what you must not do and what you must do to be saved; are you prepared to act? Do you say, I am ready to renounce my own pleasure, and henceforth seek no other pleasure than to please God? Can you forego everything else for the sake of this?

Sinner, do you want to please God, or would you choose to please yourself? Are you willing now to please God and to begin by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation? Will you be as simple-hearted as the jailer was? And act as promptly?

I demand your decision now. I dare not have you go home first, lest you get to talking about something else, and let slip these words of life and this precious opportunity to grasp an offered salvation. And whom do you suppose I am now addressing? Every impenitent sinner in this house--every one. I call heaven and earth to record that I have set the gospel before you to-day. Will you take it? Is it not reasonable for you to decide at once? Are you ready now to say before high heaven and before this congregation--"I will renounce myself and yield to God"? I am the Lord's, and let all men and angels

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bear me witness--I am forevermore the Lord's." Sinner, the infinite God waits for your consent!

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"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."--2 Cor. 5:21

The present occasion in which a large number of youth are about to unite with our church, together with the circumstance that many are still enquiring the way of salvation, seems to render the subject presented by this passage peculiarly appropriate for this day. In treating the subject here presented, I shall,

I. SHOW WHAT IS INTENDED BY CHRIST'S BEING "MADE SIN FOR US."

II. SHOW FOR WHOM HE IS MADE SIN.

III. WHY HE WAS MADE SIN FOR US.

IV. WHAT IS INTENDED BY "BEING MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM."

You will see at once that the subject relates to Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith, and of course that it presents Him in his most interesting attitudes and relations to mankind.

I. We are first to inquire What is meant by Christ's being made sin for us?

It is plain that the language cannot be understood literally. It cannot mean that God made Jesus Christ actually a sinner, or made Him real sin--for the latter is physically, and the former morally impossible. But the meaning is that Christ was made to stand as the representative of sin and of sinners. The apostle uses very extraordinary language, and it would seem from it that he conceived of Christ as standing before God in a sense as the embodiment or impersonation of sin. God looked upon Him in the scenes of his atoning death, as if all the sins of our race were in Him, and He were Himself the sum total of them all. Against this sin, thus embodied, or better, represented, in Christ, God revealed his high and awful displeasure, so as to show the universe how He regards sin.

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The language of the apostle here is very striking. God hath made Him sin, not "to be sin," as in our translation, but better according to the original, "made Him sin for us, who knew no sin." The obvious meaning is that Christ was treated as a sinner. This was for governmental purposes, and as a governmental transaction. He stood in the place of sinners, and God dealt with Him accordingly. He consented freely to take this position, and of course was treated as if He were Himself the embodiment of all the sins of our world.

II. We next inquire--For whom was Christ made sin?

The Bible gives us the only and the true answer. "He tasted death for every man." "And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." It is clear therefore that Christ stood governmentally as the representative before God of the whole race. No further governmental provision would have been needed in order to save the whole race.

Again, it should be considered that Christ was made sin in the sense explained, for man alone, and for no other beings but man. The Bible teaches that the work of Christ as a system of salvation, is restricted to our race in its application. "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Between God and men, you observe; not between God and angels. So in Hebrews 2, Paul says--"For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels--or better as in the margin--He did not take hold of angels--&c., to save them, but He did take hold of the seed of Abraham." Christ made no attempt to save lost angels, but lost men He did seize hold of, to save. You observe that the apostle says--"He took hold of the seed of Abraham. From this passage itself we might naturally infer that Christ saves only the lineal descendants of Abraham, but other passages make it certain that this restricted sense cannot be the true one. The phrase must here be used of all real Christians; for "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

III. Our next inquiry is--Why was Christ made sin for us?

Why was there need of any atonement? Is God so inexorable and implacable that somebody must die to appease his wrath? Would you represent God as being infinitely cruel?

Now these questions would be asked with great force, if the atonement, rightly understood, did represent God as being implacable in the sense assumed. If it were true that God's indignation against sin must be quenched in some victim's blood before He can be pacified, and this for his own sake too, because of his vengeful nature, then would the objections I have mentioned indeed lie with great force

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against both the atonement and God Himself. But it should be well considered that an atonement for sin by suffering was not necessary on God's account, but on account of his moral government. It was demanded of God out of regard to the intelligent minds of his universe. He must not set aside the penalty of the law against sin without an atonement, lest a false inference should be drawn, lest it should be supposed that God is reckless of sin, and can permit its commission in his kingdom with impunity. Hence divine wisdom and divine love also must provide against so ruinous an inference. Hence this awful demonstration of God's abhorrence of sin, and of his holy purpose to punish it, which was exhibited when He caused his own beloved Son to be made sin for us, and to bear our sins in His body on the tree. We see therefore that Christ's being made sin for us was a naturally necessary condition of our acceptance with God. And this results not from any want of mercy in God Himself, but wholly from his relations to the intelligent beings who are under his moral government. God well knew that He should certainly be misunderstood if He should pardon sin without an atonement. It is in the nature of the case impossible that He should not have been. If therefore, He would forgive sin--if He would arrest the onward march of law and justice towards their dreadful execution;--if He longed to throw wide open his great heart of mercy, He must first make some terrible demonstration of his utter hostility to sin--must show that He abhorred and would surely punish it. And this was done to perfection in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ.

Now who can not see this necessity for an atonement? Suppose some one of these United States should rebel. Would it not be a vastly dangerous thing to offer universal amnesty with no atonement? Who does not see that it would be the imperative duty of the President and the General Government to make some terrible demonstration of justice that should make every man throughout the Union quail in dread of the penalty of rebellion? Surely every one can see that that clemency would be by no means wise which should show a general and indiscriminate mercy towards the guilty. Before any mercy could be wisely shown, such a demonstration must be made, as would make all the people of the nation feel that rebellion can not be tolerated. And if this be true in the government of the United States, and every child can see that it is; then how much more must it be true in the great universe of God? Who can count the worlds of intelligent minds under his sway? Who can tell how far away in the realms of space they lie scattered, or how immense are the hosts that people them?

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But God's moral government extends over them all, and every eye of all their hosts is on Him. What infinite folly then, for God to set aside the execution of the penalty of his law in such a manner as would virtually annihilate it altogether! To do this would be to doom the intelligent universe to ruin. Who then could trust, or love, or revere their God? Alas, they have lost the evidence that He cares for the good of his creatures. They can not trust Him to maintain his own law; there is no longer any God in the universe to be trusted, loved, and obeyed!! How frightful a result is this!

But we need not fear it. God is too wise and too good to let it occur. When He would prevent it, and yet would pardon sinful men, He made (as was indispensable,) a strong and solemn demonstration of his heart towards sin.

And who must be selected as an atoning victim for this purpose? Shall it be some mighty angel? Oh no; for what could an angel do? How could he endure the wrath of God, standing in the place of all the sin of our race? And still more, I ask, how could any angel's sufferings make such an impression upon the universe, as would sustain God's throne in proclaiming an amnesty on such grounds? No angel, then, however great or exalted could avail, and God must pass them all by, and select his own co-equal Son! No being less glorious and less exalted than God's Eternal Son can stand forth as the representative of sin, to receive in his own person such inflictions of divine displeasure as would avail to show the universe most impressively how God regards sin. Now it shall be known throughout all worlds, as far as God Himself is known, that it is in his heart to pardon when He can, and punish when He must.

And mark, how perfectly fitted for his work, in character and relations is our great atoning sacrifice. He is a "lamb without blemish and without spot." He "knew no sin." Hence it could not be said or thought that He suffered on his own account. It would be known at once that a just God did not hide his own face from his beloved Son, for any wrong He had done. All the more impressive therefore must this scene have been for this reason. The great enquiry must run through all the ranks and orders of created intelligences--Wherefore does the spotless Lamb of God suffer? Why does He descend so low, and assume a nature into union with his own, which ranked so infinitely beneath his? What mean these strange things? O, what impressions must have been made throughout all heaven when it was made known that the Son of God came down from the throne of the universe to a mean manger in Bethlehem, to toil and weep in the land

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of his chosen people, and to die an accursed death on Calvary, that He might stand before divine justice as the embodiment of all earth's sin, and pave the way thus for all earth's sinners to be forgiven! The second person of the Trinity--Himself God, assumes in union with his own, the entire nature of the sinning race, that He may thus save them and raise them to a higher rank than that from which they had fallen. What a work is this!

IV. What is intended by our "being made the righteousness of God in Him."

This also cannot be taken in its most strictly literal sense. It cannot be conceived that we should be converted into the intrinsic, essential righteousness of God. The idea of representation obtains in both clauses of our text. As Christ stood before God to represent the sins of our race, so his pardoned children stand forth to represent the righteousness of God. He stood disowned and forsaken of God, as if He were Himself our sin; we stand forgiven and accepted through Him, as if we were God's righteousness. He is treated as a sinner; we for his sake are treated as righteous. Just think of this. What an exchange! Christ was infinitely righteous, but laid aside the relations of a righteous one, and appeared for us as a sinner and was treated accordingly. We were altogether lost in sin, yet we are transferred governmentally from that position before God, and for Christ's sake are treated as if we were righteous. What a wonderful transaction is this! It were easy to show that this were the perfection of philosophy in government to make such a substitution as will save an indefinite amount of suffering, and yet secure most perfectly, regard for the law, obedience to its precepts, and confidence in the great Lawgiver.

REMARKS

1. We see that Christ was not literally punished instead of the sinner, while yet it is true that He suffered in the sinner's stead. It is one thing to suffer for another, and quite a different thing to be punished for him. Punishment under a righteous government implies guilt, and it is precisely the execution of the penalty of law. Of course it assumes the fact of actual and criminal transgression. It is often objected to the gospel system that it is unjust, because it punishes the innocent for the sake of screening the guilty. This is a mistaken view of the subject. What Christ suffered was not in any proper sense the punishment of sin.

2. Christ suffered for us and was made sin for us by his own consent. What! It is sometimes said--does God arbitrarily inflict suffering on the innocent and let the guilty go free? No, not

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arbitrarily. Jesus Christ was not forced--he consented--most cheerfully consented to bear what need be borne for the sinner's ransom. The principle is the same as when a missionary sacrifices his home, his friends, and his life to do good to the lost heathen. In both cases the sacrifice is voluntary--in both it is made for others' good. Perhaps some of these dear children who are to-day to unite with the church may yet go to foreign lands, and sacrifice all that man holds most dear to carry the gospel to the heathen. And then shall one rise up and complain that an innocent one suffers for the guilty--that God compels his innocent people to suffer, that the guilty may be spared and blessed? The truth is, God compels no one to do this. But He does approve the spirit of self-sacrifice for others' good, and has given us a most glorious example of it in giving up his own beloved Son. Jesus has given us a divine example in giving up Himself for suffering and death for our lost race. God knows how to reward such self-sacrifice. We shall ultimately see that whoever shall for Christ's sake lose his own life shall save it eternally.

3. Christ's sufferings were not in kind altogether like those of sinners. Not being Himself a sinner, He could not suffer what may be called the natural penalty of sin. He could not experience that state of mind which accompanies sin, the remorse, the shame, the self-condemnation, and the indescribable anguish of self-torture. These natural penalties He could not experience, nor was it at all necessary that He should. The atonement was purely a governmental expedient, demanded only for governmental purposes, and of course should be adapted only to meet those purposes. Viewed in this light it is easy to see that the specific thing needed was to reveal the heart of the great Moral Governor of the universe towards sin, and that this must be done by inflicting in some degree the governmental penalty, that is the penalty which the government had threatened and must inflict for sin.

Now it is plain from the Bible that some of the chief elements of inflicted penalty upon lost sinners are--being driven from God's presence--a consciousness that God hides his face, and expresses his withering disapprobation--a deep conviction that God has withdrawn from them and has left them to the horrors of being abandoned of God. And precisely such, so far as we can ascertain, seems to have been the character of the most awful sufferings of Jesus Christ. When on the cross, He did not cry, O, the agony of such a death--but--"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And in the dreadful agony of the garden it is plain that physical sufferings bore no part.

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His chief sufferings therefore throughout were mental, and so far as we can infer from his language and his circumstances, they must have resulted from the withdrawal of his Father's face, from the awful horror of that conviction, My God has forsaken me, and from the impression of God's dread and withering frown. For Christ now stood before God as sin, and from sin God must avert his smile, and against it He must reveal his awful frown. How the Son of God, spotless in innocence, conscious of perfect rectitude, could have this awful sense of being forsaken, perhaps we may never know, unless perchance we may in the lapse of eternal ages learn it from his own lips. The fact we have no ground to call in question. Christ Himself we may suppose, understood the reason and design of his being thus forsaken of the Father, and if so, we must interpret his expression--"My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" not as an inquiry for the reason, but as an outburst of intense agony, as if his soul could scarcely endure the anguish of that strange, and dreadful frown of the Infinite God.

It seems probable that the Father intended to treat the Son when He stood governmentally as the embodiment of sin, in such a way that sinners might infer from it what their own doom must be--without mercy. There is nothing impossible or even improbable in the idea that the sufferings of Christ were substantially of the same nature as the governmental penalty due the sinner. If we suppose a being to be perfectly holy, and hence, of course, abstract the idea of his suffering the natural penalty of sin, such as remorse, shame, self-condemnation; what we have called the governmental penalty only will remain, namely; those inflictions which fall upon the sinner directly from the Lawgiver as expressions of his intense displeasure. Precisely this seems to have been the state of the suffering Son of God, when He said--"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

4. We are not to suppose that in degree and amount Christ suffered the same as all the saved would else have suffered in hell. This has sometimes been asserted, but always without proof. Such a substitution of equal sufferings is by no means necessary to the value and efficacy of the atonement; there is no good reason for assuming it, and the assumption certainly detracts from the honor conferred by the atonement upon the wisdom and the love of God.

5. It is a strong objection to the idea of equal substitution of sufferings that in such a case, the atonement is no gain at all to the universe. The sinners of our race might just as well have borne the sufferings themselves, as to have Jesus Christ bear them, if the

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amount is in either case the same; not to urge also that it is in itself considered a relief to the mind to have the guilty suffer what they deserve, instead of having the innocent suffer it for them, provided nothing is gained on the score of amount.

But while we hold that the sufferings of Christ are not to be considered equal in amount to the suffering saved thereby from being endured, yet let it not be supposed that the sufferings of Jesus Christ were of small amount. Doubtless we are apt to estimate their amount too low. We shall estimate it higher and in all respects more correctly when we come to hear the description from Christ Himself. Who has not often thought that in heaven we shall want to hear the story from the very lips of Him who was slain? O, what a scene, to gather round the Lamb of Calvary, and hear Him describe the agonies of Gethsemane--the awful horrors--the darkness, and the being forsaken of God, which extorted those agonizing cries on Calvary!

No doubt those sufferings were exceedingly great--great beyond the comprehension of any finite mind. We shall readily see the reason why they should be, if we consider that it was the design of God in this transaction to make a deep and solemn public impression that should pervade the universe of minds and endure forever! Sin must be rebuked--terribly rebuked--rebuked in a manner worthy of God, and so rebuked, that its awful impression should continue unabated, down, along through all the cycles of eternal ages. This must be done, or God's government will be dishonored. Hence the necessity for so terrible a demonstration of God's justice.

6. We see in what sense the saints are saved by the righteousness of Christ. Much has always been said by Old School divines about imputation. I do not mean now just what they do by this term, but there is a sense in which the righteousness of Christ may be said to be imputed to us. I have already explained what this sense is. Jesus Christ was treated as if He were a sinner, that we for his sake might be treated as if we were righteous. He deserved no sufferings--we deserved them all. They were not endured for his sake, but for ours. He stood before God to be treated as sinful; we as a result, stand before God and are treated as righteous. As He represented the sins of a lost race, so we represent the righteousness of a spotless Savior.

7. Our own personal obedience has no part in the matter of our justification, not even any obedience rendered after conversion. After conversion we are pious and to some extent holy; but this is not taken into account as a ground of our justification.

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(1.) Because when once condemned, no subsequent obedience can procure our acceptance on legal grounds. It is perfectly obvious that no obedience performed after sin and condemnation, can in any way atone for the previous sin.

(2.) Our obedience is not our own in such a sense that we can be justified by it according to law. It should be considered that our obedience after conversion is not under law--that is, not a system of mere law, but is under grace--it being all performed in consequence of Christ's gracious work within us, and not wrought out under purely legal influences. We are therefore not to suppose that we do not need Christ after once being converted and pardoned. No idea can be more false and ruinous than this. For the holiness of Christians after conversion is the result of Christ's Spirit working in them and is in this sense a gracious righteousness, and hence can never come into the account as if it were a legal righteousness, so as to justify men on merely legal grounds. We owe to the grace of Christ our entire salvation, and are to be rewarded, not for our own righteousness, but on the ground that we represent the righteousness of God.

8. We see how much we are indebted to Christ for our salvation. He has been set forth as a propitiation for sin, and in him an atonement was made. He stood in our stead where we must else have stood as condemned and quailing rebels; he suffered in his own person that awful manifestation of divine displeasure which would else have been made in our destruction in order to render it possible for God to be just to his government and good to all his subjects and yet pardon sinners. Christ has done all this for us, and now does it well become us to say--in the inmost soul--

"Had I ten thousand hearts to give,
Lord, they should all be Thine."

9. We can see how great the future glory of the saints must be. We have been looking at the great agony and grief endured by Jesus Christ. Look now in the other direction at the great glory resulting from our being made the righteousness of God in him. In the days of his flesh God made Him sin for us, laying on Him the iniquity of us all, and in those scenes of anguish making known his own utter abhorrence of sin. It now remains for God to make known to all the universe his own high sense of the value of Christ's righteousness. It remains for Him to show how perfectly pleased He is with the atonement--how delighted He is with the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ, and how fully He appreciates Christ's benevolence in sacrificing Himself for others' good. And all this is to be shown by his

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treatment of the saints. You will observe that the proximate end of Christ's being made sin for us, as taught in our text, is that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. In us, therefore, that is, in the redeemed from our race, must be revealed before the eyes of the universe the glorious righteousness of God as manifested in and through his Son. O what miracles of glory will be revealed there! Mark, that the saints are not merely to be brought into heaven and suffered to live there, but they are to be used there for displaying the righteousness of God and his infinite glory in the sufferings of his Son. When God saw it necessary to show forth his abhorrence of sin, then Jesus Christ stood out before the universe as if in the place of all the sin of our race, and in this position the Infinite Father withdrew the light of his face, and gave expression to his fearful wrath against sin. Then the suffering One groaned and agonized--the earth quaked--the sun forbore to shine, and nature herself by her throes of agony seemed to sympathize with the unwonted anguish of her Lord.

Thus closed the first chapter of this wondrous development. The scene of the next is laid in heaven. There must be revealed the righteousness of God. There must be unfolded his infinite goodness and love as embodied in this scheme of substitution and atonement. It now remains to show what results of unutterable glory to God in the highest accrue from this plan of redemption. And these can not be revealed in the myriad worlds of Jehovah's universe except by means of exalting redeemed sinners most gloriously before their eyes. We need not wonder therefore that it should be said--"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." "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." Most truly said, for it can only be in a low and groveling sense that we can be said to conceive of those glorious things prepared by God for his people. O, if some of our departed friends should appear to us in all their present glory, we might perhaps mistake them for God Himself, and be ready to fall down and worship them. You are aware that this very mistake has sometimes been made, nor is it very strange that it should be. The Bible represents the saints as then "shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." It need not surprise us that they should appear in the palaces of heaven adorned with robes of glory such as no eye of man hath seen or heart conceived. For they are gloriously exalted not to represent their own righteousness, but the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus their Lord. The glory of God and the blessedness of the universe demand that Jesus should be honored and

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exalted for what He has done and suffered; but the relations of his people to Himself in this work are such that He can not be exalted and honored except in connection with their exaltation. If Christ is an heir of God, they are "joint heirs with Him." If He is to be rewarded with a glorious triumph, they must join in the triumphal procession--the rescued ones--the trophies of his victory--the purchase of His blood. Behold He says, "Here am I and the children whom God hath given me." O, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Hence the exalted honor to which they must be raised.

10. This inheritance is received by simple faith. Whoever simply believes and with the heart embraces, shall receive and enjoy it for ever.

11. It is proffered to all, and proffered now. Whoever will believe in Christ, let him come--come now, and receive the earnest of this inheritance in the present gift of the Spirit. The Spirit is given to believers now as the earnest and pledge of that glorious inheritance.

But you say--How can it be that simple faith is the only requisite to secure this inheritance? I am but too well aware that the simplicity of the way of salvation is a great stumbling-block to the world. The mass of men who hear the gospel are stumbled on this very rock, and turn aside and go about to work out some form of self-righteousness. It is too simple a thing in their esteem to have salvation for merely believing on Jesus Christ--not to say also that it is too humiliating. They do not so well like to come into such a possession without having it to say that they have paid well for it. Hence they pass over the simplicity of the gospel, and miss of heaven. Slow indeed are most men to see that it is by simple faith that we commit the soul to God, renounce self in all its forms, and cast ourselves upon the righteousness of God alone.

12. Unbelievers reject this way of salvation, and of course the unmitigated penalty of the law must fall on them. Although Christ has died for them, yet if they will not believe, they must be damned. So the Bible declares--"he that believeth not is condemned already"--"he that believeth not shall be damned." Be it so that they have been bought with blood;--yet if they deny the Lord that bought them, they are not redeemed unto salvation, but on the contrary, bring upon themselves swift and more awful destruction. In the nature of the case this must be so. A pardon proposed to the consent of the prisoner, and by him rejected, becomes no pardon at all. The prisoner's rejection of it nullifies it utterly as to its reference to himself.

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It deserves special notice that the apostle represents this mode of salvation by faith in Christ as something to be submitted to by the sinner. He says that certain men "going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Now this submission to the righteousness of God implies a full and cordial assent to God's justice in punishing, and to his grace in providing a substitute. The sinner admits most fully that he is just as hopelessly lost as God represents him to be, as hell-deserving, as guilty--as mean, as unworthy--and consents to take his place before God and man accordingly. He takes this system of salvation as God proposes it; submits himself to it;--gets down in the dust;--brings down his high crest, and makes no words about the hardship of taking his own place as a guilty sinner saved by grace. Sinner, can you hope to be saved in any other way than this? You can not but know that this is God's way. Your own reason affirms that it is in harmony with right and with the truth in the case.

13. You may see the impressiveness and force of the question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!" Do impenitent sinners imagine that after all God has done in the gospel scheme--He will trifle with it and set it all aside? Do you dream that the great God will treat your objections and your refusal with marked deference, and contrive for your special benefit some more acceptable plan, or will save you in particular without any Savior or any faith on your part in Him? Remember that it is said and written as with a point of a diamond--"He that believeth not shall be damned." And do you hope by your objections to disannul these awful words?

Sinner, what will you do--make up your mind and answer--what? Do you say--"Well, if Christ has suffered for all my sins--it is enough; what more can I ask? If Christ's righteousness may become mine, it is enough. Why should I forfeit it and go down to hell? The gospel is good enough for me;--farewell sin--farewell vain world; I take the Bible--I take Jesus Christ--I take all his blessed gospel to my very heart!" Will you say and do this, sinner, and do it at once--do it now, in this accepted time? Then, 'tis well.

PRIDE OF HEART DECEIVES

December 20, 1848

"The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee." Obadiah 3.

The connection in which these words are found, not being important to my present purpose, I shall pass it without remark, and proceed at once to the subject it presents. It will be my aim,

I. TO NOTICE BRIEFLY WHAT CONSTITUTES PRIDE OF HEART.

II. TO SHOW HOW IT DECEIVES MEN.

III. TO SPECIFY SOME OF THE FORMS OF DELUSION TO WHICH IT LEADS.

I. Pride of heart may be defined to be a disposition of mind to exalt ourselves. It is a spirit of self-exaltation--a disposition to get out of our own place, and get above those who of right, even in our own estimation, ought to hold a place above ourselves.

II. How does pride of heart deceive men?

1. It renders men in a great measure blind to their own faults. The man of a proud heart will not see his own faults. He has no desire to see them. He would sooner see anything else in the world than see the bad side of his own character, and of course he takes every precaution to avoid the honest view of himself. He has no intention or even desire to find his own proper level in society, but tries to deceive both himself and others. He would fain imagine that he is vastly better than he really is, and make everybody else believe it if he can. Hence he will overlook his own faults either wholly, or at least as far as he can, and would be glad to make others do the same. This is one of the workings of a proud heart.

2. It leads men to excuse, or at least palliate their own faults. If a proud man can no longer cover his own faults, this will be his next resort. When he can not deny that many things in his conduct are palpably wrong objectively considered, he will yet maintain that under his very peculiar circumstance, they are nearly or quite right. They will at least admit of much palliation; so he sets himself most

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diligently to this labor. He will be that last man to come down to a candid and through examination of his own faults. Ah, he does not relish this honest-hearted work.

3. It leads men to imagine that they have virtues which they have not. This is often manifest in their egotistical manner of speaking. In their common conversation they assume that they possess virtues which nobody ever saw them exhibit, or ever dreamed of attributing to them. Whatever in their own conduct has the remotest appearance of virtue, they are sure to drag into their service to prove themselves the best of men.

4. It leads men to overrate the apparent virtues which they really possess. I say apparent virtues, for while a man is proud of heart, he can have no real virtue. Semblances of virtue he may have, and these his pride of heart will lead him to exaggerate as much as possible. He will be sure to give himself more credit for even these than he deserves.

5. It leads to an uncandid estimation of ourselves. The proud man becomes of course partial in his views of his own merits--committed to self, and incapable of taking sober views of his own real character.

6. Pride of heart is always prone to make self-flattering comparisons. The proud man is never slow to institute comparisons between himself and others, but will be always sure to give himself the advantage. He is always better than his neighbors. Although he may be an impenitent sinner, he is better than most professed Christians. "The pride of his heart hath deceived him."

7. The proud man avoids making humiliating comparisons between himself and others. If there are those with whom he cannot compare himself favorably, he turns away from them and avoids if he can, the painful self-mortification of contemplating superior excellence; or perhaps more often he will set himself to traduce their character, and will create or at least retail and aggravate slander against them until he can flatter himself that they are below him; then and then only can he feel happy to let them alone. The sight of superior excellence is annoying, not to say agonizing; so he goes about to level it down and make himself and others believe that the reputed best man is not as good as himself. It is pride of heart that begets envy, that fills society with slander and makes it so grateful to the feelings of some men to pick at the character of their more excellent neighbors. This is the reason why so many of the best men are slandered, and why so few escape its shafts.

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8. Pride of heart induces an entirely dishonest application of truth. If the proud man sits under preaching and if what he hears applies to himself ever so fitly, he is sure not to notice at all its application to himself, but will be very prompt and active in applying it to his neighbor. See him stretch up his neck to look over the heads of the congregation; he wants to see if Mr. B. is not there--this touch in the sermon hits him so nicely. O, thinks he, how completely that point hits such an one, and such an one--so the poor fool (for none are such fools as the proud) cheats himself out of all the truth that fits his own case, and with a strange, self-deceptive politeness, serves out all the food to others and gladly starves himself. Has not his pride of heart deceived him?

9. Pride leads men to evade self-knowledge. How often in conversing with men have I been struck with this! You cannot make them see their own faults. They will dodge and shuffle--change the subject if they can, and look in every other direction rather than within. In courts of justice you may sometimes see a man pushed to admit a fact that incriminates himself, and you may mark his shuffling and evasion, and his skill in denying or concealing the fact that he is badly crowded; but the same thing occurs often enough out of court when the pride of a man's heart makes him hate the light and stubbornly, though often awkwardly, shut his eyes against it. You may hold up the light close to his face--he can't see. Try to open his eyes--he doesn't see anything. You may draw his character to the life--he does not recognize the likeness--because he does not wish to! What is the reason? Pride of heart. It often seems as if a proud man would sooner go to hell than open his eyes to see candidly his own faults. So terribly does pride deceive those who love to indulge it!

III. I am next to sketch some of its forms of delusion.

1. It makes men imagine that they believe the Bible when they do not. Nothing in my own experience has ever more surprised me than the deep and strong delusion under which I labored during my early life on this point. I honestly supposed that I believed the Bible to be God's word. For a long time it had been impossible for me to evade the arguments in its favor. Indeed so thoroughly was I convinced on this point, that the first thing I did after my conversion was to make out a skeleton of an argument to prove on legal grounds the truth of the Bible--which I deemed to be unanswerable. If any body had told me then that I did not believe the Bible, I should have felt that they slandered me most ungenerously and shamefully. But yet mine was then only a mere historical belief, and no act of the

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heart at all. My will did not bow to the supremacy of Bible truth. Indeed I gave it no place at all in my heart; I did not allow it to have the influence of admitted truth upon my heart or my life. Hence my notion that I believed the Bible to be true was a mere delusion.

That this sort of merely historical faith is a delusion is manifest in various ways. (1.) Whoever really believes the Bible will be strongly exercised in view of its truths. In the nature of mind it is impossible that such truths--believed, can fail to influence the mind powerfully. It is intrinsically essential to the nature of mind to be moved by the truth. Hence there never was and never can be a mind of man or angel that will be unmoved by the belief of such truth as the Bible reveals. It is indeed true that the will many resist the demands of this truth; but even so, if thoroughly believed, it would arouse the sensibility and lash it up into mountain waves of excitement. Yet who does not know that thousands read the Bible and profess to believe it, but are not half so much interested or affected by it as they are in reading Tom Thumb. It is a fact. Many say they believe the Bible, and yet are more interested in reading the silliest story-book ever got up to amuse mere children. Do these people really believe the Bible? Oh, "the pride of their heart hath deceived them."

This delusion is also manifest (2) in the fact that, professing to believe the Bible, they yet take no pains to understand what it teaches.

Suppose Br. M. comes to me saying, I have something very important indeed to communicate--something you never heard of before; do you believe it to be true, Br. F.? O yes, beyond all doubt, I reply. But stop; how can I quite say this without first knowing what it is. Let me know what it is and then I can better--more rationally,--tell you whether I believe it.

Suppose an angel from heaven should present you a book, sealed with seven seals, saying--This is a revelation from God to you; and you believe that it really is so;--would you let it lie unopened and unread? Would you let it rest a moment till you should have understood its contents! You would search after the means to understand it--would traverse this whole nation if need be, and if all this sufficed not, you would explore all Europe and even to the ends of the earth. No labor would seem to you to be labor at all in an enterprise like this.

Yet here is the Bible, with its resistless and admitted claims of being direct from God. How many tens of thousands believe it to be the word of God, yet never take pains to read it--are never upon their

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knees before God pleading for light to shine upon that blessed page. O this is, as Dr. Young says, one of "guilt's blunders, and the loudest laugh of hell," that men should delude themselves about their belief of the Bible. Do you believe that this Bible is a revelation from God to your deathless soul! and then do you treat this book as if it were a silly tale? You never need ask for stronger proof of your being grossly and fatally deluded.

2. Men are deluded by their pride when they think they love God, yet do not love to please Him. Who does not know that it is a law of our being that we delight to please those whom we love, and always shape our conduct accordingly? Love will have a kind of omnipotent influence upon us affecting everything we do. Love has this influence in every relation of life--between husbands and wives--parents and children. Who does not know it? Who does not know that if the husband love his wife or the wife love her husband, every word and every act will show it; every word and every act will come under the influence of a desire to please, a desire to promote the real interest of the party loved? It can not be otherwise. It is in the very nature of love to study to please, and to seek the happiness of its object. Withdraw this element from love and what is there left?

Hence it is impossible that true love to God can exist, and yet with it no desire to please Him and do his will. The heart of love will be continually raising the question--"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "Lord, how shall I most fully please Thee?"

What then shall we think of those thousands of nominal Christians who profess to love God, and yet do nothing to please God, and everything to please themselves? Every day and hour they are doing things and indulging states of mind which they know God must abhor, and yet they flatter themselves that they love God! What delusion!

3. Men think they are willing to be Christians, yet do not consider what is implied in it. They satisfy themselves with the loosest notions of this subject; else how could they fail to see that they are not Christians, and really have no intention to be? For consider, what is implied in being a Christian? Nothing less than a total renunciation of all self-seeking--a hearty confession of sin--in one's inmost soul renouncing it, once for all, and forever; and a perfect consecration of ourselves to the service and pleasure of God. Of course this implies a breaking up of all our selfish associations and habits--a real change--so that it may most truly be said--"If any man

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be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

Now it is a fact that multitudes say they are very willing to become Christians; but they never take pains to know what this means, nor would they be willing to be such Christians as Christ was.

4. Men, deceived by pride of heart, think they are really Christians and truly reconciled to God, while in fact they do not obey God. Are they reconciled to God? No, for if they were, they would be reconciled to his government, and would obey his laws. What does a man mean by saying that he is reconciled to God, while he is at war with his government, and trampling every hour on his laws? What does he mean when he says he is pleased with God's government and laws? He answers that he means nothing more than that he knows those laws and that government to be intrinsically right and good. He knows this, he says, and therefore thinks himself a Christian. So does the Devil know this, and the Devil might just as well on this ground pretend and profess to be a Christian as any man might, who does not obey God's law with all his heart. Yes, unless a man obeys the divine law with all his heart, he has no ground whatever to think himself a friend of God. No matter as to this point how much he knows about this law--the more he knows the greater and blacker will be his guilt, if he does not obey. No matter how much his reason and conscience approve the law as very good--all the worse for his Christian hope--all the worse for the doom of his soul from a just God--if he refuse to obey a law known and acknowledged to be holy and just and good.

Yet how many there are who claim to be Christians, but nevertheless live in sin, and plead for Christians living in sin, and would be very indignant if anyone should urge them to cease from all sin! They would perhaps think it an insult to their orthodoxy, or that at least there is some plot to ensnare them into a fatal heresy. What do I hear you say about your Christian experience? "O, I don't profess to be perfect--I sin and repent all the time." Oh, there is your mistake utterly. You don't repent. Indeed you don't repent if you sin all the time. The first part of what you say is probably true--but if so, the last part is of course false--utterly false. Consider for a moment. What is repentance? Many who say this don't know, or at least don't consider at all what it is. If they did, they certainly would not utter such an absurdity as to say that they sin and repent all the time. What is repentance? It is turning heartily and wholly away from sin. And how does this coincide with sinning all the time? What would you think of a man who claims to be all the time sober, and yet all the time drunk;

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or more precisely thus--all the time drinking, and yet all the time abstaining most sincerely and heartily from drinking--always drinking, and always reformed? All the time murder and love together in his heart--obeying God and yet disobeying, all the time, and simultaneously! Any man must be badly deluded who can believe this.

5. Unregenerate men deceive themselves in supposing that they are as good as Christians. They say--We give as much to support the gospel, we are just as kind to the poor, as ready and active in every good work, and as strong in all the reforms of the age as the best of them; why then are we not as good of Christians as they, and sometimes even better?

Laboring many years since in Rome, I found there a man living in the practice of great external morality. Nothing was more common than for impenitent sinners to make comparisons between him and professed Christians, and to maintain that he was a better Christian than most of them. How did they judge? They said--Mr. B. gives as much as any of them--attends meetings as much--is as regular in all good things, and Mr. B. is the man for us. No man sets a better example than he; he is our model and pattern. If he is not good enough to go to heaven, who is? and who can be? But he makes no profession of religion; so we think we shall get along as well without religion as with it.

The revival went on, but long before it closed, Mr. B. found that he was far enough from being as good as any Christian in the place. He came to see that his heart was full of all uncleanness--that he was proud of his reputation, and utterly far away from God in every possible respect.

But let us sift this subject more thoroughly. Take the case of the moral man. He is externally a well-behaved man, perhaps in this respect, even faultless. Well, what of this? Is it therefore certain that he is intrinsically a good man? Can you infer from his external conduct that his heart is right before God? It is indeed true in general that we are to judge men by their fruits; yet who does not know that we can not always judge correctly of the heart from the mere outside of a man? We can judge of his heart no farther than we can understand his motives and intentions.

Now in these respects, the best moralist, being unregenerate, is precisely opposite in character to the lowest Christian. See them walk to the house of God in company; take together the attitude of worshippers; alike each pays his proportion of the expenses, and each

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sustains all gospel institutions by his example. And yet if you could look into their hearts you would see that one does all this to be seen of men--the other to be seen of God; the one really worships at the shrine of fashion and respectability--the other at the shrine of his Maker. Can there be a wider contrast than this?

Again, suppose two men--the best impenitent moralist and the lowest Christian, meet on mutual business. The points involved are exceedingly perplexing, intricate, trying; both become very excited and both speak very unadvisedly. Both sin against God and against each other. Consequently, up to this point, you see no difference in their development of character. But now they part, and the Christian threads his solitary way towards his home. His mind is ill at ease. He thinks no longer of the great abuse he has received, but only of his own great sin. O, how this burns on his conscience and his heart! How can I live, he cries, for I have sinned against God and I have scandalized his name before the wicked. He seeks some solitude, that if possible he may find God. If you could follow him with velvet step you might hear him pouring out before God his confessions and imploring forgiveness. You might see his bitter tears--you might hear his groans of sorrow. He pours out the anguish of his heart as if it were an ocean of grief. Alas! he has sinned against God and brought disgrace on the loved and honored name of Jesus!

But in all this, you hear not a word about the abuse he has received--not one word. If however you track the other man away from this scene of common, mutual wrong, what will you see? He turns aside into the next shop--draws around himself a cluster of associates--proclaims with trumpet-tongue how he has seen a Christian falling into ill-temper, and seeks to hide his own wrong in the clamor he gets up over his erring friend. Not a word has he to say before either God or man, of his own wrong. Not a word has the Christian neighbor to say of the wrong of the moralist. The one confesses; the other has no confession to make. Can there be a broader distinction than this?

You may recollect a case, sketched in some of the Sabbath School books, of a Dr. Hopkins who was a very pious man, but who had a very wicked brother-in-law --a man who had long cherished a malign spirit towards Dr. H., for he could not bear his piety, and therefore wanted to ensnare him into sin. A case of very difficult business occurred between them. The brother-in-law abused Dr. H. most shamefully in his own house, and ultimately got him angry. They parted, each to their homes--the wicked man to glory over the

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Dr.'s sin, and taunt his pious wife, saying--"There is the man you glory in as being a good Christian. He got angry with me to day. I've got him down and got my foot on him, and I'll hold him there. He will not hear the last of this for many a day."

But where is the Doctor? Gone home, but not to rest. All night he walks the room in agony--his only meat is tears--his heart is bursting with sorrow and grief. With morning light he hastens to that brother-in-law, and pours out his confessions before him--his heart smitten and broken as a bruised reed. It is said that the wicked man was first confounded, then melted. "Now, said he, I know there is truth in religion. I never believed it before; now I see it and know it." Oh, those confessions were like arrows dipped in blood to the heart of that wicked brother-in-law, and through the blessing of God they resulted in his hopeful repentance.

Another precious fact is recorded, namely, that thirty years after this event, Dr. H. said to a friend--"I have never known the emotion of anger since that night of agony." So thoroughly did he renounce that sin--so intense were his convictions then--so earnestly and effectually did he bathe his soul in the blood of sprinkling, that the sin was slain, to live no more.

Here now were two men who quarreled and seemed alike in it; but say--Were they really alike in character? Who does not see that they were as unlike as heaven and hell?

When sinners have the conceit that they are really as good as Christians, because their conduct is as fair externally, they overlook the fact that moral character belongs to the intention. They differ entirely from Christians, as appears from their opposite motives, and from the fact that one is impenitent and the other penitent. They also differ fundamentally in their dependence for salvation. The Christian trusts in Christ alone; the sinner not in Christ but in some form of self-righteousness. It always is and must be essential to the state of an unbelieving sinner, that he does not submit himself to the righteousness of Christ, but goes about to establish some form of righteousness of his own. Go, visit and compare the death-bed experience of the impenitent moralist, and of the Christian. Their lives may have been externally not greatly unlike, for both have sinned, and both have done many things externally proper and right. But try them on their death-beds. Visit the sinner. "You seem to be very sick." "Yes, I am." "Do you expect to recover?" "O, I don't know. I am very sick." "Are you willing to die?" "I can hardly say I am; yet if God thinks it best I suppose I must submit. I believe God is

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just; He will do me no injustice." "What do you think of your past life?" "O, I have always meant to be an honest man. I have not been as bad a man as many have supposed. I can't bear to think that God will send me to hell, for He knows that I have done about as well as I could."

You see, my hearer, that this man has been pretty good, pretty good in everything, and he looks to God's justice, not to his mercy, as his ground of hope. His own righteousness is his ultimate ground of reliance.

But let us go into another sick-chamber. Here lies a Christian, near his end. "How do you do, brother? You seem to be very low; do you expect to recover?" "No, not at all." "Well, you have been a very good man." (Mark, he turns his face away ashamed and troubled.) "I have no goodness at all to speak of before God or man. There is no ground for me to hope in that direction. If God were to lay righteousness to the line, I could not stand a moment before Him. If however I may be made the representative of Christ's righteousness, I may be saved. All my hope is in Christ. I never look elsewhere than to Him alone. I am a great sinner and deserve the deepest hell." "What, sir, have you been a hypocrite?" "O, no sir, but before I was converted, and often since, I have greatly dishonored God, and have utterly forfeited all claim to salvation on the ground of my own merits." "Well, brother, are you afraid to die?" "No, not in the least; I see no reason to fear. I believe that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, and I have cast my naked soul on Him alone."

Now you can not but notice the great contrast between these two men whose dying experience we have just been contemplating. The moralist passes into an atmosphere of clouds and darkness. Despite of all his delusions and of all the false quiet they can give him, his soul is full of trouble and can find no rest.

But mark the Christian--his soul is in peace. It rests not on his own righteousness--he makes no account of his good works. My hope, he says, is in Christ alone. But his countenance is placid as a summer's sunset. His heart rests on the everlasting promises. It is enough for him that God is faithful and that Jesus is near--inexpressibly near to his soul.

Another development of self-deception occurs in the case of professors of religion. They deceive themselves by comparing themselves with other professors, and assuming that it is right for themselves to do whatever they see other professors do. Now as to this, it is in the first place an utter mistake to set up any other standard

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of Christian duty than the life and example of Jesus Christ. This, and only this, is the Christian's model. If the spirit of religion reign in his heart, he will naturally enquire--not whether some other professor of religion does so, but whether Jesus Christ, in these circumstances, would do so. For his object is not to please this deacon, or that minister, but his own blessed Lord and Savior. Of course he can not make so great a mistake as to pattern after some deacon or some professed Christian of his own choice, and not after Christ.

In the second place, this practice of making some other professor of religion your model, is delusive and untrustworthy, because what may be admissible for him, may be utterly wrong for you. He may have so much less light than you that God may wink at his ignorance, but condemn you for sinning against actual knowledge of your duty. A few days since I said to a young man who was about leaving this place--"You will find different habits abroad from what you have been accustomed to here. You will doubtless find many Christian people using tea, coffee, tobacco and perhaps wine; and if you allow yourself to argue that you may rightly use these articles because other Christians do, you will be grievously ensnared, and may ruin your soul. They may have so little light on the subject that possibly it may not be wrong for them to use these articles; but you know better than to use them, and you can not hope that God will excuse your sin in the case on the ground that you had not light enough to create moral obligation. And surely it were of no avail for you to flatter yourself that with all the light you have, you can be allowed to do wrong because others do the same things under circumstances which make their sin much less than yours, or even as the case may be, which remove all guilt from their conduct."

6. Some persons deceive themselves by mistaking the excitement and play upon their sensibilities for real religion. Some persons, for example, are so constituted physiologically, that under the stimulus of ardent spirits they become exceedingly pious, and can sing and talk religiously, so that you might be tempted to think them the greatest saints.

In my early life I boarded with a family in which the father would sometimes come home at night half drunk, and then be so good-natured, and read his Bible, and weep and pray, as full of religious feeling apparently as any man could be. I looked on and marvelled; but I could not be long in solving the mystery. But suppose I had argued from this that it is good for a man to get half drunk, because it makes him so beautifully pious. Suppose I were to

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argue in maintaining it that I had seen its fruits with my own eyes. Fortunately the common sense of mankind has taught them that the spirit from above and the spirit from below are not at all akin to each other. Yet one might just as well plead for an alcohol religion--one which manifests itself in soft and tender developments of the sensibility--as for any other type of mere sentimentalism--as for any religion which lives only in an excited sensibility. Good music may sometimes answer the same purposes of excitement as alcohol, and may be equally deceptive. If it acts only upon the sensibility, leaving the heart untouched, its results can be in the end no more converting, and are no better proof of real piety than the similar results of ardent spirits.

Let me say further that this type of apparent piety is exceedingly deceitful, for the reason that often it seems to carry not the sensibility only, but even the will. The whole heart seems to be melted--the whole man changed and everything borne along so sweetly in the spring-tide of religious emotions. If you were to see this man of alcohol in some of his pious moods, you would be astonished at such developments. If you only keep a little distance from him so as not to smell his breath, you would think him very spiritual--as indeed, (in a peculiar sense,) he is.

Now let it be remembered, this man's religion is just as good before God as any other type of pseudo-religious excitement which only plays upon the sensibilities, but touches not the heart.

7. Over against this is another form of delusion in which men have no other religious impulses except the hard driving and goading of their conscience. No love, no faith, no sweet drawing towards God, no cordial trust in a divine Father and a sympathizing Savior; nothing but compunction, goading, coercion, under the lash of conscience. They live in a strait jacket--grind like the blind Sampson in the mill, and wear out life in agony. A minister once said to me--"I think I must have mistaken my calling. It seems as if I had preached all I ever had to preach, and emptied it all out. You can not think how much hard labor it costs me to work out my two sermons a week. I don't see as I have any heart for the work, and you may judge that I don't have a very pleasant life of it."

For myself I thought so indeed. If a man has no more gospel in him than this, and finds it such enormous labor to grind out enough for a sermon in four or five days' labor, he has probably mistaken his calling. Above all, if he has no heart for the work, or in it either, he might better try some other business.

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Emphatically and characteristically is it true of these self-deceived men, that religion is not their theme. This is not the subject upon which they love to converse. They can talk freely and abundantly on other subjects, but on this one subject of religion their hearts are not interested, and of course their words cannot flow out from the fullness of their hearts. If they should get to heaven, unchanged, how could they live there unless they might have up there their favorite topics? How could they endure to stay where "Holiness to the Lord," is blazing in light and fire all around?

But they expect to go to heaven! Let us see. Suppose they get in. What do they say? Hear them talk: What's the price of wheat? Now for great bargains. What news from the polls? How goes the election? --But these men would think you had lost all your Christian charity, if you should intimate that they are not on the way to heaven.

Now let it be known forever, all real Christians have the spirit of religion in their hearts--their souls are full of it. Worldly men are full of the world, and no wonder that it boils over and flows out incessantly. Christ says--"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks;" and who does not know that this is profoundly philosophical? Of course this principle will be developed in the Christian. The Spirit of Christ has taken possession of his soul, and now, how can it help gushing out in rich overflowings of love, meekness, faith and humility? Mark me now--as God is true--if this is not your character--if love does not reign in your heart, and fill your soul, so that religion must be your theme--nearer and dearer to your heart than all things else--if this be not the case with you, you are a hypocrite, and when your death-knell tolls, you are damned! mark what I say!

8. Many think themselves Christians, although conscious that they have no peace of mind. What but a desperately wicked and deceitful heart can cherish such a hope? For what is religion? "Not meat and drink" surely;--"but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." What says the Bible? That "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness and all her paths peace." "Come unto me all ye that labor, and ye shall find rest for your souls." "His commandments are not grievous."

Now look around you and mark those professed Christians whose religion involves no peace of mind. You see them all afloat--drifted and driven by all those impulses which agitate other minds. Where is their religion? Do they know anything about peace with God and joy in the Holy Ghost? Do they withdraw from the agitations

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of worldliness and selfishness, and find repose as on the bosom of their Savior? Have they such faith that they can glory in tribulation, and does their tribulation work for them experience, and experience hope; and is their hope one that does not make ashamed? Is this their experience? If so, then 'tis well; but how can men who go on year after year without peace of mind and without trust in God, flatter themselves that they are real Christians?

9. Many think they are accepted of God although aware that they are indulging in sin. This delusion is more common than any other I have mentioned, and becomes so for the reason that even the church have lost sight of the fact that Christians can and do live without sin. Strange to tell, multitudes of professed Christians--with ample access to the Bible--do hold that all men are to be expected to live in sin, notwithstanding all the gospel can do in this world to deliver them from its power.

Under this view, it is no wonder such results should follow. They expect, they say, to be saved through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and they hold that this will avail for them without any righteousness of their own. But let us reason a moment about this. I admit most fully that men are to be justified by Christ alone, and on the condition of personal faith in him; but mark, not without personal holiness. Here lies the fundamental error of those who think to get to heaven without being free from sin;--they assume that saving faith in Christ does not involve personal holiness. No mistake can be greater than this. The Bible says, "faith works by love." It declares "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Of course there can be no such faith as this while the soul is in the bondage of sin.

A certain Doctor of Divinity not long since, in opposing the doctrine of sanctification, insisted that holiness is in no sense and in no degree a condition of salvation, and that the condition is nothing but faith. Faith, he holds, can exist, pure and acceptable to God, ensuring the salvation of the believer, and all without holiness. Monstrous absurdity! What! teach that a man can have saving faith without being turned from sin, without forsaking all or even any of his iniquities! Horrible! HORRIBLE! There never was a worse error taught by men or devils! I would as soon rebuke a man for this as for downright atheism. There is not a truth in the moral universe more palpable and certain than that saving faith must imply holiness. The faith that justifies must also sanctify. If not, it were easy to show that God has made a grievous and fatal mistake in the conditions of

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salvation! What! has God contrived a system for justifying sinners IN THEIR SINS?

10. Multitudes suppose themselves converted who have never been even convicted. I have often fallen in with a certain man who has been instrumental in convicting many sinners, and probably of converting some, but who could give no account whatever of the spirituality of God's law and of what sin is. Not less than a dozen times in a single week has he asked me what benevolence is. He could not retain the idea of what constituted true religion. "What is it," he would say, "how did you define disinterested benevolence?"

Now it is no wonder that he could not develop the true idea of sin and impress it on the minds of others. He did not seem to have himself the very first idea of what sin is. It is therefore natural that under his instructions many should suppose themselves converted who were not even convicted. They had not felt deep and pungent conviction for sin, and therefore it was not naturally possible that they should repent and put it away. Nothing can be more philosophical than this--that men must know the truth, and the truth must make them free.

11. Many fall into the error of mistaking conviction for conversion. The great distress of conviction passes away;--the ease and peace that follow give birth to the hope that they are converted. There is indeed a change, and they flatter themselves it is from sin to grace. They have been alarmed and the alarm has subsided, but they have not received Christ at all.

Now I want you to apprehend this. Many get a hope, but do not get Christ. They get a different state of mind, but not a Christian state. They have no other faith than they had before. They are not conscious of having cast off their own righteousness and put on Christ's. They have not renounced sin and self and gone over to the new covenant.

How is it with you? Do you know how you came by your hope? And what it is to go over from the law as a ground of salvation, to the gospel--to abandon the old way of self-righteousness, and trust in the righteousness of Christ alone? Have you begun really to drink of Christ's fullness--to know the depths of that fountain of living waters--to have it in your very soul, a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life, bubbling up and pouring forth as if really an exhaustless fountain were in your very soul? You know we read of such things in the Bible. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "And this

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Christ said of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive."

Have you received it? If not, then there must be a mistake about your having believed with saving faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Rely upon it, if a man has this faith in Christ, the living waters from his full soul will flow out, and there will be a green spot around him, however barren the region round about may be. Religion will be his theme. He can not live without manifesting forth that Christ who lives and reigns within him.

How is it with you in this respect? Do your spirit and life bear witness that you have this faith in Jesus Christ, and this indwelling Spirit of Christ in your soul?

12. Many confound resolutions to do what they think right, with real religion. Now it should be considered that mere resolutions are purely legal, and differ fundamentally from the religion of love. Suppose, for illustration, that the wife should say, "I must do just right towards my husband--precisely right in every thing;"--and she screws herself up by dint of resolutions to do every thing that is right--and this is all. Would you suppose this to be love--the whole of the love which befits the relation of a wife to her husband?

I saw a lady in Boston who manifested the greatest anxiety lest some word or thought should be wrong. Indeed she seemed to be in agony lest she should infringe upon some principles of duty towards God or man. I noticed her great legality. I said to her, "Sister, I see you seem to be in great distress lest you should not please your Savior--you seem to be in agony about it all the time;--now tell me--Have you the same sort of distress and agony lest you should not please your husband?" "O no," said she. "Why not?" "Because," said she, "It is natural for me to please my husband, and I know that I do. I love to please him and it does not seem to cost me any effort." "Why then," said I, "should it not be so towards Christ? Why not make his service a sweet labor of love? Why act as if nothing but the pricks of conscience can keep you in the path of obedience? Why not yield up your soul to all the impulses of pure love, and let it reign, strong, sweet, attractive, all-controlling? This would make your religious duties a paradise."

13. Many have made up their minds to serve God, as they suppose, and this is the form of their religion and the whole of it. Now it is plain that if they have not formed the right conception of what this service is, it may be the case and probably is, that they have no religion at all.

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Let us illustrate this in reference to one vital point. Suppose a wife should make up her mind to serve her husband. By this she understands that she shall do all the things externally which he requires. She is going to be his real servant and evermore do all his bidding. But unfortunately in her estimate of duties, the element of love has entirely dropped out, and she takes no notice of this whatever. She means to be faithful in all her domestic duties--she will keep his house and his clothes in first rate order and will leave no external duty neglected--but all may be as heartless as if it were done by a steam engine. Now although such duty, so performed, might be endurable in an employed domestic, yet who could endure it in a wife? What husband would not say--"You are the chosen companion of my life--the chosen object of my love, and when I vowed my conjugal affections to you, I flattered myself the vow was really reciprocated. I do not want your tasks--I want your heart."

And is it strange that God also should ask for the heart? Has He not given us his, in such forms as most impressively demand the reciprocal devotion of ours?

But let us see what this man proposes to do who has made up his mind to serve God. First, he is going to pray--pray to be forgiven. Wonderful service this, if rendered as some profitable work for the Lord--with no brokenness, or affection of heart in it! Just as if I should go to a man fifty times a day or twice a day and ask him to cancel my debt to him; and should enter my charge in account for each prayer, paying off my debt--in praying!

What else? Well, he will go to church. O, what service is this, of mocking insult to God, if no heart is in it! In truth no matter what the outside service may be, it is an odious abomination to God, unless the deep outgoings of the heart are with it. You might circumnavigate the globe with your zeal, or give your flesh to a martyr's flame, yet all would be less in Gods' esteem, no heart being in it--than the little tear of penitence and affection which quivers in the dying eye of a saint who can not raise his finger in any act of outward service for God. Aye, it is the love lying deep in the heart, which catches the eye of the great God. And for you to talk about serving Him without love is supreme nonsense.

14. Many deceive themselves by supposing that selfish regrets and sorrow are real repentance. That sorrow and regret are always selfish, which leave sin still in existence--which can be felt and sin still be indulged. Nothing can be plainer than this. You would all judge thus in the case of your child who should regret and sorrow

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bitterly about his crime and its consequences, if he still kept up the practice of the crime. You could not have any confidence in his tears, if you knew they only covered the purpose to steal or lie as soon as your back is turned. You would know what account to make of such tears.

Let those professors who can weep and pray about their sin, yet never give it up, but hold on in sinning, look into this mirror and behold their own hearts.

15. Many deceive themselves by a faith which abolishes instead of establishing the law. Obviously such faith never can answer under the government of a righteous God.

16. Many suppose that God justifies and accepts them while they really condemn themselves. They seem to think that God approves of them and of their moral state while deep in their minds there is self-condemnation. Now the Bible says that if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, and of course condemns us. No delusion can be greater than this. Strange notions must he have of the purity of God and the strictness of his law, if he supposes that his own conscience is more strict than God is. He sees that he himself must condemn such a state as his own; but he flatters himself that God is not so particular about little sins as his own conscience is! O, what a delusion!

REMARKS

1. These delusions are all voluntary. Men need not be deceived by their pride of heart, and would not be if they were not quite willing to have it so.

2. God will by and by tear the mask away and reveal our real character to all the universe. He is now employing various means in his providence and through his grace to undeceive men; but if all these means fail, ere long He will send His hail to sweep away all refuges of lies forever. Then and thenceforward, "he that is filthy shall be filthy still," forever hopeless of moral cleansing.

3. All these delusions are based upon dishonesty of mind. Where there is real honesty, carried out in faithful performance of known duty, and humble trust in divine guidance, there is no danger of being deluded.

4. We see the great folly of those who imagine that if they are only sincere, they shall be saved. What do they mean by sincerity? This; namely, that they really believe what they profess. But may not men really believe a lie? Is it not said of some that because they "do not love the truth, God shall send them strong delusion that they

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should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness?" The fatal mistake made by those who think that all sincere men will be saved, is this: they overlook the fact that men may be sincerely wicked, and, becoming sincerely wicked, they may bring themselves to believe a lie sincerely, and God may judicially leave them to the natural influence of a wicked heart upon the mind's apprehension of truth.

5. Many cry "peace, peace, when there is no peace." I often wonder how it happens that when they go alone and fall down before God to pray, it does not strike them at once that they are shut out, and have no communion with God at all. Why do they not see that they have made a fatal mistake in supposing that they have any spiritual access to God, and real communion of soul with Him?

6. Many love to have their hurt healed slightly. They cannot bear to have their wound thoroughly probed. Hence instead of throwing their naked bosom open to the probe of truth, and crying--God of mercy, let this search me, and let it go to the bottom of all the hidden evils of my heart--they wrap themselves all about with mufflers of self-righteousness, and then they will sit and writhe and dodge through fear that some word of truth will make unwelcome revelations of self to their own view. O, what will they say when God shall come down in the cool of the day, and talk with them face to face about this!

7. Some seem determined never to know themselves. They will evade self-knowledge, press it upon their attention as you may. You may try to seize them to hold the mirror before their eyes; they will shut their eyes or turn their heads round--you can not make them look into any moral self-revealer. I have known cases in which a man's friends have tried to seize him, and hold him still long enough to get the truth before his eyes, but they might as well have tried to grasp the North wind.

8. Pride of heart is one of the most disgusting as well as most dangerous of all forms of sin. A proud man is perpetually exposed to deceive himself in every thing. There he stands on top of a precipice; sheets of lightning blaze around his head, and dark waves of damnation roll beneath his feet. What is he doing there? Ah, me! dancing! dancing giddily as if he never had the first idea of danger in his mind.

"I heard the wretch profanely boast,
Till at thy frown he fell;
His honors in a dream were lost,

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And he awoke in hell."

O, let us put all these delusions away. Go to your closet. Search your inmost heart; tear away every delusion--cry out, O, my God, bring in a light! Let me see myself! O for a light--A LIGHT; let me know my own heart to the bottom. O, search and find out where you are, before an arrow smite you!

Hark? has it struck him? Is he dead? Yes, dead; and from my knowledge of him, I fear he has gone down to hell! Religion never was his theme. He did not love God's most searching truth. He never loved to examine his own heart. I think without a doubt, he is afar down in the depths of hell.

LAST SICKNESS AND DEATH OF MRS. FINNEY

January 5, 1848

To the Editor of the Oberlin Evangelist,
Dear Brother:

I am aware that it is not customary, on account of the size of your paper, to publish any thing more of obituary notices than the mere fact of the death of individuals. But I am inclined to write a short article for your paper respecting the departure of my dear wife for the following reasons. If you think the reasons and the character of the article justify the publication, you will oblige me by giving it a place in your columns. My principal reasons for this course are the following.

1. My dear wife, as you know, formerly accompanied me in my labors as an evangelist. She participated in my labors, and trials, my rejoicings and sorrows through many of the most searching and powerful revivals of religion that I have ever seen, or of which I have read or heard. In these wanderings and labors she formed many endearing acquaintances and friendships and these friends of hers will, when they hear of her death, desire to know something of her religious history subsequent to their having seen her, and especially during her last illness. It is due to them, due to the grace of God, and due to my departed wife, to satisfy this reasonable desire of her numerous and valued friends. It would cost me more time and labor to write to them individually than I can bestow. I therefore wish to give them the information they desire through the columns of your paper; since I presume it is taken more or less extensively in nearly all places where my dear wife has accompanied me in my labors.

2. Since she has been here you are aware that she has been considerably engaged in lecturing to the classes of young ladies as they have passed through this Institution. Those ladies will, when they hear of her departure, desire to be informed of her state of mind since they have seen her--and this reasonable desire I wish to gratify for their sakes and in honor of the grace of God. But neither can I do

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this by writing letters. If these reasons appear to have sufficient weight will you peruse what follows and insert or reject it at your discretion? I shall only notice a few facts of her religious history. She was hopefully converted to God when eleven years old under the pastoral labors of the late Rev. John Frost, of Whitesborough, Oneida Co., N.Y.

I became slightly acquainted with her when in the 18th year of her age. As it subsequently appeared, this acquaintance served to interest her in me and especially in the salvation of my soul. I was then unconverted. After some months had elapsed from the time of my having seen her, I began to be aware that the Spirit of God was striving with me, and I was soon after, as I trust, converted to God. Soon after my conversion, I providentially became acquainted with the fact that she who was afterwards my wife had had for a considerable time previous to my conversion a great struggle in prayer for the salvation of my soul. The knowledge of this fact led to a still further acquaintance which resulted in our marriage.

Her religion was always of a mild, unobtrusive and calm type. As she passed through those great and searching revivals to which I have alluded she was often deeply searched, insomuch that the foundations of her heart were broken up. During those seasons she frequently trembled for her own soul, and several times well nigh relinquished all hope. When the Holy Spirit would enable me, in preaching, to lay open the secrets of the human heart, I would often find on going home that the sword of the Spirit had cut my dear wife all to pieces. Thus the Holy Spirit continued to probe and search her heart from time to time, at every successive step laying her lower and lower in the depths of self-abasement. This, so far as I could see, prevented any risings of spiritual pride in her in view of the great success God was pleased to give us in our labors. Upon this point, I at first entertained some fears lest her piety should suffer from the amount of success attending our efforts. But I soon saw that God would take care of that, and the great searchings of heart through which she was frequently passing were doing a great work for her. She did not appear to be steadily at rest about her hope in Christ until after we came here.

Soon after our eyes were opened here more distinctly to the way and life of faith, and we began to preach Christ as a present sanctification to believers, there were great revivals and most profound searchings of heart among all classes of persons here. At this time my dear wife was more deeply searched than ever before.

LAST SICKNESS AND DEATH OF MRS. FINNEY

She for a time seemed to be almost without hope. She was naturally taciturn and reserved, and even to me had not hitherto disclosed her deepest exercises of mind. But at the time just mentioned, she wrote me a long communication and left it on my table, in which she laid her heart open to me as thoroughly, I presume, as she could. This led to her receiving such light and grace that she ever after, so far as I know, held fast her confidence without wavering. Since then I have seen her hope thoroughly tested, but never saw it tremble. Two years ago this last fall she was suddenly seized with a violent and copious bleeding at the lungs and seemed threatened with almost instant death. At this awful crisis I was struck with her entire calmness and resignation. Although so suddenly arrested, she seemed to feel herself prepared to go and was not at all afraid to die. From the last great searching of which I have spoken she seemed to have come into a new and steady light and seemed to live by faith in such a sense as to be constantly prepared to die.

She kept about, although suffering much from weakness, since her bleeding at the lungs, until her last sickness. During the last summer however there were more decided developments of a pulmonary consumption than before, insomuch that I repeatedly told her that she could not long survive. This, never in the least degree, as I could see, alarmed or excited her. She would speak of dying as calmly as she would talk of going to church.

The cough had become very severe before commencement. A week before commencement, our son-in-law, Prof. Cochran, suddenly died, and the first intelligence we had of his death was the return of our dear, stricken daughter Helen with the corpse of her departed husband for internment. In the weak state of my wife, this was a severe shock to her as well as to myself. This was followed by the exhausting cares connected with commencement. On the evening of commencement, I was seized with a typhoid fever. Soon after, my two sons and a young lady in our family were also attached with fever. Dear wife kept about for about three weeks and then took her bed to rise no more. She had a run of the fever after which her pulmonary difficulty increased until she departed. With the fever she did not expect to die. She repeatedly said that she did not think that she should die at that time. When, however, the consumptive tendency came to take on an aggravated development, she then became satisfied that she was soon to leave this world. Some weeks before her death she remarked to me that she had had a struggle to give up her husband and her children and make up her mind to leave

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us. Soon after, she remarked that she had not thought it possible for her so fully and perfectly to give up every thing to God as to have such perfect peace of mind and such perfect and joyful composure in view of leaving us all and going herself into eternity.

She often said, "My soul enjoys perfect peace." She said her confidence in Christ was so perfect that death, in every aspect of it, was pleasant to her.

Knowing as I did her former doubts and fears, I was much edified and refreshed to see the triumph of grace in her case. She seemed at no time to fear or shudder in view of approaching death, but on the contrary to look and wait for her change with joyfulness. She had always been in the habit of holding frequent prayer meetings with her children. She held her last meeting with them about three weeks before her death and when confined to her bed. After this, she said her work was done and she had strength to talk but little with them. She remarked to me a day or two before her death that I might think it strange that she said so little to the children when they stood around her of late. She added that she had no strength to converse with them and besides her work was done with and for them. She had had her last prayer meeting with them and had said all she had to say. She had given them her last advice. The great peace and calmness of her mind were very apparent in her countenance till the close of life. She at no time appeared to be otherwise than in the perfect possession and exercise of her reason. She could speak until within a few moments of her last breath. Up to this point all was peace. When a few hours before her ceasing to breathe I called her attention to the fact that the blood was settled under her nails and that there were other evident tokens of immediate death, she calmly replied, "well that is all right." So far as she was able to make known her state of mind, all was perfect peace, as she used emphatically to express it to the last. She left us at fifteen minutes before 11 o'clock, on the 18th inst. And now my dear brother, will you not suffer me to add a word about myself and my family. Hitherto, on account of my public labors, the immediate care of the children has devolved in a great measure on my dear wife. She has gone and left this responsibility upon me. I am conscious of the need of great grace in my circumstances. I feel deeply the loss of my precious help-meet. My sensibility bleeds at every pore. I am ashamed to dwell upon my loss or upon the loss my children have sustained. I know it is more suitable and more just to the grace of God to dwell upon her unspeakable gain and upon the abounding grace that spared her so

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long and made her the instrument of so much good to us. She was not ours but Christ's. He bought her with his blood and he espoused her to himself, and surely I ought not to object or to grieve that he should call her home and give her a discharge from further trials and sufferings.

If I know my heart, my only prayer in respect to her life or death has been "Thy will be done." It seems as if this was and is all that I could or can say in reference to it.

My dear wife used to look up to me as her spiritual guide and teacher under God, but in justice to her I would say that she taught me many most valuable lessons. She showed me in many things how to live, and now she has shown me how to die. O, I ask myself, can I die like that? Certainly not without the abounding and sovereign grace of God. Will not you, my brother, and those of your readers especially who knew my dear wife, and all who can pray, pray for me and my motherless family, that great and sufficient grace may be upon us all.

Your brother in the afflictions and hopes of the glorious gospel of the blessed God,

C.G. FINNEY

Oberlin, Dec. 25, 1847.

**DIFFICULTIES CONNECTED WITH
THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION
STATED AND REMOVED**

May 24, 1848

BRO. MAHAN: The following letter is from an esteemed brother, the object of which you will see at once. As many minds feel the same difficulties, I have thought it might be useful to reply in few words through the Evangelist. How long shall our brother neglect to examine our views so as to understand us? Will you give the following letter, interspersed with remarks of my own, a place in your paper?

Yours, C.G. FINNEY

DEAR BROTHER:

"I have read with deep interest some of your many publications, and I am exceedingly gratified with your system of theology in the main. Your views of moral obligation, human ability &c., I have advocated for years. But then there are certain features of your system, which I either do not understand, or can not as yet approve. They seem newer than the New Theology which I advocate, and which I regard as both new and old, and immensely important. I can not preach the gospel without it, and although I have read the writings of my Oberlin brethren on this subject, with some care, I have as yet obtained no satisfaction from them. Indeed they do not reach my difficulties at all. I have often thought of writing to you respecting them; but I have delayed doing it until now, thinking your time was too fully occupied to admit of your giving heed to such communications. At the suggestion of brother ---- however, I have concluded to write, with assurance that I shall consider it no offence if, in the midst of your numerous engagements you can find no time to make me reply either by private letter, or in the Oberlin Evangelist. My difficulties relate to the Simplicity of Moral Action. If I understand you at Oberlin, you teach that all such action is simple--either right or wrong, and either just right or just wrong. Hence come

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your views of Entire Sanctification--your interpretation of the 7th chapter of Romans, and your efforts to reform and improve us of the Presbyterian Church. Now I do not know how to present the views which I wish you to correct, if wrong, better than by giving you the skeletons or heads of two discourses I have prepared on this subject. In many respect you will perceive, I suppose, a perfect agreement between our views, and in other respects a total, and important disagreement."

The text is Matt. 5:48--"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven, is perfect."

Upon the above paragraphs I would remark,

That this esteemed brother errs in supposing that our views of Entire Sanctification in this life follow from, or are founded in, our theory of the Simplicity of Moral Action. We believe, as Professor Upham once said, that "that doctrine is true upon any philosophy." That is, the doctrine of Entire Sanctification in this life is plainly revealed in the Bible, and is therefore a true doctrine, whatever the philosophy of it may be. We at Oberlin, it is true, give a different philosophical account of the doctrine from that which Prof. Upham gives. But we alike hold the doctrine as a truth plainly revealed in the Bible, though we differ in the philosophical explanation of it. We hold the doctrine in accordance with New School Theology. That is, we hold that all moral action is voluntary, and that, strictly speaking, moral action consists in the ultimate intention, or in the devotion or consecration of the soul to an end of life. Our brother holds that the involuntary states of mind have moral character, and therefore that sanctification properly speaking must extend to them. We hold that strictly speaking holiness or sanctification belongs only to acts of will and consequently that entire consecration is synonymous with present entire sanctification. We hold to the necessity of the same purifying baptism of which he speaks and writes as indispensable to the rectification of the intellect and the sensibility, or in other words the rectification of the involuntary powers and states of mind. But we hold that this work in the involuntary powers, states and susceptibilities is rather a consequence of sanctification than a part of it. We hold that natural ability extends strictly speaking only to voluntary states of mind, and that consequently sanctification in so far as it is an immediate duty can extend only to voluntary action or choice. We hold that the moral or spiritual heart is a voluntary state, and that it consists in the ruling preference or ultimate intention of the soul. Hence we confine sanctification proper to the heart in our sense

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of the term. We hold as I have said that the involuntary powers and susceptibilities need rectifying by a divine influence, and hence we recognize all of which that brother speaks as being really genuine Christian experience, and rejoice greatly in what he says. He regards the heart as lying back of a voluntary state, or as we should express it as belonging to the sensibility. Consequently and consistently with his philosophy he regards sanctification proper as including both voluntary and involuntary acts and states of mind. We receive all that he inculcates as really belonging to Christian experience. The difference between us consists in this, that we regard some things rather as a result of sanctification, when this term is used strictly, and as synonymous with holiness, which he regards as included in it. We have no controversy therefore with Prof. Upham, but most cordially receive his works with all joy, notwithstanding the above discrepancy in our philosophical explanations of the doctrine of entire sanctification. The author of this letter is mistaken therefore in supposing that our confidence in the truthfulness of entire sanctification in this life is founded in, or necessarily connected with our views of the simplicity of moral action.

The following is the abstract of the sermons of this brother upon the text above cited.

"Christianity is a gorgeous climax. Its precepts, virtues and joys all ascending.

I. What exactly does the text require?

II. Can we attain unto its perfection?

III. Do we ever attain unto it on earth?

IV. Should we make the attempt, under the rational expectation of success?

V. If not, are we not discouraged from exertion?

I. What, then, is the perfection required?

1. Not a mental one.

2. Nor a physical one.

3. Nor one of animal propensities. A man is a compound being, namely; he has a soul, and an animal nature. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit, that is, soul--not animal nature. But that which is born of flesh is flesh, namely, animal nature. This animal, or carnal nature is not regenerated. It may be controlled by the regenerated soul, but it remains after regeneration, with its appetites, propensities &c. Hence Paul says, I am carnal, not carnally-minded, but carnal, that is, I have these animal appetites--these motions of the flesh. These animal appetites are called by Old School men, sinful nature--original sin.

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But they have no sinfulness about them, only when improperly indulged by the soul. Their depraved or vitiated condition may be the result of sin; and when thus vitiated, they may occasion sin. But animal nature is not, in itself, a sin, that is, a transgression of God's law, whether found in men, or tigers, or snakes.

The text does not, then, require perfection of animal nature, for this is often beyond our reach.

4. Nor does it require an imperfectly moral one, granting some indulgence to human infirmities--for human infirmities are provided for in the atonement of Christ, but not in the law, or commandments of God.

5. Nor does the perfection consist in a perfect deliverance from our obligations to obey either the law or the gospel, saying to the regenerated soul, eat, drink, and be merry, for you now are under no restraint or condemnation.

a. Christianity delivers us from the bondage of the law--that is, from the terrific hardship of struggling through its deeds into heaven, with all those load of sins upon our shoulders.

b. But christianity delivers us not from our obligation to obey its holy precepts.

c. It rather confirms these obligation, and puts on our necks another yoke--that is, Christ.

In coming out from the bondage of the law, we come not into the liberty of a regenerated licentiousness. As it is with the Irish emigrant, on his way to our shores, so it is with us--we leave not one government for the sake of no government at all.

5. [6.] The perfection indeed required is a sinless one, namely; It is one in which we are to feel, and to act, just right at all times and under all circumstances, and in our spheres, and up to the full measure of our capacities just as God feels and acts in his sphere, and with his capacities--so much superior to his own.

This is our definition of the perfection required, and we refer here only to moral feeling and action."

This brother professes to be New School; but here, as elsewhere, he speaks of moral feelings. In several parts of these sermons he regards holiness as belonging to the feelings and actions. Is this New School? I had supposed that New School men held that the feelings were involuntary, and that strictly speaking, moral character does not belong to involuntary states of mind. We shall by and by see that this brother is sometimes New School in this respect, while here and elsewhere he is or seems to be Old School. Much of his difficulty

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with our views seems to be traceable to this discrepancy in his own. But he proceeds:

"That such is the required perfection is evident from the following considerations.

1. Infinite perfection can require no less.
2. We require as much from our children when we do right.
3. The Bible says expressly, sin not.

II. Now, can we attain this perfection here? Yes, for,

1. God requires it.
2. If we could not attain it, then we would be sinful of necessity.
3. But our very definition shows, that we can, that is, have ability to attain it; for it is a perfection only up to the measure of our abilities, and no more.

III. Do we ever on earth become thus perfect--perfect as God is?

This exactly, and no other, either more or less, or different is the question now.

1. In answering it some have referred us to the epistle of John, where we are told, "Whosoever is born of God doth not sin."

But if these passages teach sinless perfection,

1. They do it in behalf of all the regenerated, for the language is whosoever.

2. They also teach that all the regenerated are always perfect, for God's seed remainth in them, and they cannot sin.

3. They teach too, that with the regenerated, sin is an impossibility. They cannot sin.

4. Nor can they fall from grace.

5. Nor backslide.

6. Nor was Peter, Paul, Daniel, David or Moses born again, for they all sinned.

But these passages teach only, that the truly regenerated are not the every day, habitual doers, or practicers of iniquity, like other men.

II. But you ask, if all moral feeling and action is not sinful or holy--right or wrong--and just right, or just wrong--entirely sinful or entirely holy.

You ask, moreover, whether if this be true, all Christians must not be perfect in what holy emotions and virtuous deeds they actually put forth, however common, or unfrequent, or transient, or protracted they may be."

Here again this writer regards the feelings and emotions as holy or sinful, and speaks as if all holiness belonged to the feelings, emotions, and outward actions. Is this New Schoolism? Does this

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brother think that he understands our views, or that he is a consistent New School man? This letter shows that neither is true. How can this esteemed brother say that he understands, approves, and has long preached the same views that I hold upon the foundation of moral obligation and yet preach as he has in these sermons? Surely this looks like any thing rather than preaching what I inculcate upon the subject of the foundation of moral obligation. The fact is, this dear brother must sit down to a more thorough investigation of this subject, and first take himself to task and more thoroughly understand himself and be more thoroughly self-consistent before he will understand us. He proceeds:

1. "We answer, If such be the fact then those who adopt the theory should no longer deny, that they teach the doctrine of sinless perfection, AS A LIVING reality of frequent occurrence.

2. Nor should they object, if when they proclaim themselves less perfect than God is--we charge them on the ground of their own theory with being as bad as the devil is; for surely, if they are not entirely holy, they must be according to their own views, entirely unholy, and Satan is no worse only in capacity.

3. It also may be said, if all moral feeling and action is just right or just wrong, then all christians are,

(1.) As perfect all the time in their spheres, and with their capacities, as God is, in his sphere, and with his capacities; or

(2.) They are as bad as Satan is some of the time;

(3.) Or they shift about from holiness to sin, and from sin to holiness--from regeneration to apostacy, and from apostacy to regeneration as their days pass along.

[1.] But who believes that all Christians are as perfect as God is all the time?

[2.] Or who believes in regenerated apostles, bad as the devil is?

[3.] Our only alternative then, is in the supposition that these ever shifting affairs are Christians now of the first class, and now no Christians at all--now regenerated, and now not born again--now in the kingdom of God most beloved, and now fallen from grace, in the kingdom of Satan, most abhorred.

But where is the safety in trusting such ever shifting affairs in the kingdom of God, with its schools, colleges, theological seminaries and all important missions. As well might the man that is afflicted with epileptic fits be trusted with the steam engine of the Isaac Newton.

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The only safety, then, is in having God's kingdom placed, under God, in the hands of those, who are kept by his mighty power, all the time, from becoming entirely sinful."

Was David partly holy at the time of his seduction of Bathsheba and murder of Uriah? A man may be safely entrusted in the most responsible stations although he may commit adultery and murder, because he is partly holy all the time. Of what avail is such a holiness? He can not be trusted in responsible stations unless he is partly holy all the time. But this partial holiness it seems is consistent with the deliberate commission of adultery and murder. How much better is this partial holiness all the time than total depravity some of the time and entire obedience the most of the time? Will the brother inform us? Why not "make the tree good and its fruit good, or the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt? Can a fountain at the same time and place send forth sweet water and bitter?" He proceeds:

"We then are driven back upon the ground, (if we adopt the theory in question) of supposing the born again are perfect all the time. But this, we learn, both from their deeds, and acknowledgments, is not the fact.

The theory then is a mistake. We are not sure but that the Christian has a mixed moral character--feeling and acting under the joint influence of various motives--some coming from God, and some from the world, the flesh, and the devil."

Here again, as all along, thus far, this brother seems to regard the moral character as belonging to the feelings and outward actions, in neither of which strictly speaking is there any moral character at all. Moral character can not be with strict propriety predicated either of muscular action or involuntary feelings. This he elsewhere admits as we shall see. I enquire again how this writer can claim to be New School? He proceeds:

"By motive we mean any thing that moves to action; an animal appetite, or passion, or propensity is a motive; physical power is a motive. The idea of glorifying God, or injuring men, of pleasing our friends, or displeasing our enemies all are motives.

We make a distinction between them and intentions. A motive, in itself, may have no moral character, such as an animal propensity. But there is moral character to an intention. The motive may be an idea, and thought, and consideration before the mind, to be cherished or resisted as the mind pleases--like the motives Satan presented to Christ. An intention is an act of the will. The motive occasions the intention. But the intention occasions not the motive. It precedes and

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occasions the after overt act. For we can not pray, nor steal, nor act any how, in a moral way, without intention.

Now why may there not be many motives combined, in the production of a single intention, or purpose or act of the will? The act may be simple and single--a perfect unit. But can not a unit be the result or effect of several causes--may not many streams make one river?

Now motives are the fountains of all moral character, (not intention, for their fountain springs are in the motive.)

Destroy human life as an officer of Justice, at the command of the Judge, and from the motive of promoting public good, and you are no murderer. Do it, however, from motives of maliciousness and you are a murderer.

The Bible makes this distinction--pray, fast, give under the idea of being seen by men, and you have one character. Do it from holy motives and you have another character.

If then the moral character both of our intention and overt acts depends on our motives, and if various motives may unite in the production of a single act of the will, our moral character on the whole, will be of a mixed complexion, like the Mississippi at New Orleans."

Here we get at the first glimpse of light in the mind of this brother upon the subject of moral action; and there is error here--such a commingling of light and darkness, of truth and error, that several remarks are called for to straighten out the kinks in this writer's mind. Here he acknowledge that all morality belongs properly to the intention. I suppose he means the ultimate intention or choice of an end. This is what I hold. I also hold that the executive volitions or those efforts of the will which are put forth to secure the intended end have no moral character in them, except in so far forth as they partake of the character of the intention that necessitates them. Upon the above paragraph of this letter I remark,

1. That motives may be objective or subjective. The objective motive is the consideration that induces or occasions intention, be it what it may. The subjective motive is identical with the intention. This brother here speaks of objective motive. We often mean by motive the intention or subjective motive. Thus we say that we are to judge a man by his motives, that is, his intentions.

2. This brother is greatly inconsistent with himself. He holds that moral character does not belong to the objective motive, and yet that it does. At one breath, he affirms, and correctly too, that moral

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character does not belong to the motive that occasions intention, and in the next breath he maintains that it does. Here is his error. If he will but be self-consistent his difficulty will disappear. He admits that his intention "may be simple and single, a perfect unit," and yet that this simple act of will or this simple intention may proceed from divers motives, and consequently have a mixed moral character, corresponding with the good or bad motives that occasioned it. What is this but holding that character belongs to the objective motive, or to that consideration, whatever it may be, in view of which the mind chooses or forms the intention. Moral character belongs solely to the intention itself, as distinguished from the objective motive. If the right thing or end be intended, the intention is right. If the wrong thing or end is intended, the intention is wrong. In other words, if the mind chooses or intends that which it ought to intend, the intention is right. If it intend that which it ought not to intend, the intention is wrong. To be partly right and partly wrong, that is, to be of a mixed character, the intention must embrace opposite ends at the same time; the mind must choose at the same time opposite ends. But this I have abundantly shown in my theology to be naturally impossible. This brother admits that the intention "may be simple and single, a perfect unit," and yet contends that it may have a mixed moral character. But what does he mean by "simple, single, a perfect unit"? Does he mean that the intention terminates on a single end? If so, it cannot have a mixed character. If by "simple," &c., he means that one intention may terminate on or embrace diverse and opposite ends, I reply, first: That such an intention could not be simple, or a unit. If opposite ends are intended, there must be as many intentions as there are conflicting ends. One and the same will cannot form and maintain these opposite intentions at the same time. But if there is but one end intended, and that end be that which God requires to be intended, the intention is simple, and wholly right, whatever considerations might have been employed in preparing the way for it. It is a contradiction to affirm that the intention can terminate on a single end, and yet the moral character of the intention be partly holy and partly sinful, in consequence of the diverse considerations that were concerned in inducing it. The question is, What does the mind intend? I care not what objective motives may present themselves, the question is, Does the mind intend to realize them? Suppose the mind intends to glorify God, and to promote the highest good of being. This is its end. This is what it intends or aims to realize. Now, if this is its simple intention, it matters not at all what considerations may have prepared the way

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and led to this intention. Were it not impossible and absurd in itself, we might suppose that the vilest and most selfish consideration might have led to the formation of this intention. Yet the thing intended is just that which God requires to be intended, and is, therefore, just right. Observe, character does not belong to the objective motive, but to the intention. It is indeed an absurdity and a contradiction to say that there can be a selfish reason for a benevolent intention; but if there could be such a thing, the intention would be right if it were truly benevolent, whatever motives might have occasioned it--for, by this brother's admission, moral character belong not to the objective motive, but to the intention. It is really nonsense to talk of a single or simple intention being occasioned by opposing objective motives. It is a contradiction. If there be opposing ends, there must be opposing intentions. This can not be at the same time. If there be but one end, and this end be benevolent, it is and must be right, and it is absurd to say that it is occasioned by opposing objective motives.

If it were really occasioned by opposing considerations it must follow that the mind has yielded to those opposing consideration and intends in accordance with them. But this is to admit that the mind has diverse and conflicting ends in view, that is, that it intends or aims to realize these opposing ends at the same time which is impossible and a contradiction.

There is, as I said, great confusion in this brother's mind upon this subject. When he admits that the intention may be "simple, single, a perfect unit," and still contends that the intention may have a mixed character, because of the diverse considerations or objective motives that may have occasioned it, he wholly forgets his admission that moral character does not at all attach to the objective motives, but wholly to the intention. The reasons, objective motives, or considerations that occasion choice are the real objects or ends chosen. These can not be opposed to each other, and the intention be occasioned by them without involving the absurdity of choosing opposing ends at the same time. If this brother will consider this subject attentively, and read what I have said upon it in my second volume of theology, and understand it, I think his difficulties will vanish. Professor Cochran has, I think forever settled the question of the simplicity of moral action in his pieces in the Oberlin Quarterly Review. Will not the brother read them all, from May, 1846 to February, 1848.

2. But since the brother admits that moral character belongs to the intention and yet holds that Christians are partly holy all the time,

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I should like to know what holy intention David could have had in seduction, and murder. Had he at that time a holy intention or one that was partly holy? He must have had if he was partly holy all the time. The same might be said of all sin. Has the sinner at the time he sins an intention partly holy? It can not be.

He proceeds:

"The theory, then, that all moral feeling and action is just right or just wrong remains to be proved.

But we have still other objections to the doctrine of sinless perfection.

1. There is, we think, an approximation towards the blasphemous in the theory, for if it be true, there is an equality in moral worth, between man and his Maker.

In sphere and capacity or altitude of position there may be a difference.

But does extent of capacity, or altitude of position increase the quality of the perfect?

Can you add to the quality of the perfect, by increasing the amount?

Is not one grain of perfect wheat as good, in quality, as a million bushels, in large measures.

Perfection, then, in you, such as the text requires, renders it proper for us to say of you, that you are as perfect as God is. Your moral perfection, in quality, is equal to his. But what is a claiming of equality with God in this respect, but a bordering on the blasphemous? Who would endure such boasting on the part of his pastor?"

Indeed! The brother holds that God requires this perfection. That this perfection is possible to us, but, should we do, and profess to do as we are required, it would be blasphemous.

Surely such teaching as this in these sermons must sound strangely to an audience.

He takes for his text "be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." He shows,

1. What this perfection is not.
 2. What it is.
 3. That it is attainable or possible.
 4. That it is a solemn duty.
 5. That we ought to aim at it, and to intend to be thus perfect,
- and,

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6. That should we be thus perfect, and profess to obey God it were blasphemous!

Does God require what would be so wicked? Alas, for such a requirement. And alas, for such preaching! He proceeds:

"2. But again, if we are perfect, we should look upon ourselves with perfect complacency.

3. More--with perfect admiration.

4. We should confess no sin.

5. Ask no pardon.

6. Aim at no higher moral worth. We should look only for greater capabilities--a higher position.

7. But what prophet, apostle or broken-hearted man ever took such positions in the church of God?

(1.) Moses entered not in because of unbelief.

(2.) Job abhorred himself.

(3.) David was a gross offender.

(4.) Daniel was a man of unclean lips.

(5.) Peter denied Christ.

(6.) Paul had not attained.

(7.) All came short.

(8.) All were to pronounce themselves unprofitable.

(9.) All were bent on backsliding.

(10.) All made confession--asked forgiveness, and were deceived if they said they had no sin.

It remains for modern reformers to excel them all.

IV. But may we not strive for perfection under the rational expectation of success? We answer--

Things may be possible, which it is not rational to expect, namely,

(1.) It is possible for devils to repent. But it is not rational to expect it.

(2.) God has ability to do many things which we can not rationally expect of Him.

(3.) It is possible for impenitent men to reform after death. But is it rational to expect it?

(4.) It is possible for the drunkard to cease from the use of strong drink, even while tending the worst groggery in New York.

(5.) It is possible for your once profligate, but now reclaimed son, with all his former animal propensities about him, clamoring for indulgence--to withstand temptation, and grow in grace, although you place him among wine, cards, gamblers, prostitutes, and all that is

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unfavorable to his religious improvement. But is it rational for you to expect it of him?

We think it is not rational to expect success where all others have failed--no matter what may be the ability or the obligation.

We think, moreover, that the infirmities, propensities, and temptations of the Christian, on earth, are so unfavorable to his religious welfare, that he never yet, in one instance, has become as perfect as is his Father in heaven.

We also think that the very best specimen of a human being, next to Christ, that was ever created--the model-man of earth--Adam--placed in the very best circumstances, with no vitiated animal propensities about him, did not, when exposed to the temptations with which we are beset--retain the perfection which he previously enjoyed.

Now is it rational to expect that we, whose condition, in all respect is so much more unfavorable than his, will succeed in attaining what he lost?"

Indeed! Because Adam did not abide in holiness under a legal covenant, it is irrational for us to expect to do so under a covenant of grace. Because the church and the world have been no better, it is irrational for them to expect ever to be. This is a non-sequiter. The logic of this Brother needs to be bathed in the light of revelation. Will the Brother read Sys. Theol. pp. 314-371.

"And yet we teach both the ability and the obligation of attaining the utmost.

V. But how can we strive with zeal and energy after an object we cannot rationally expect to secure? We reply--

This is a common occurrence.

1. The Third Party strove hard to elect J.G. Birney as President of the United States. But did they expect to succeed?

2. Every artist, mechanic, farmer,--if he acts as he should--strives for perfection. But do they expect success?"

This is a mistake. The third party did not intend to elect J.G. Birney. They knew they could not and should not; they only intended to get for him as large a vote as they could, looking forward, as a party, to ultimate success in electing a candidate, but they neither expected nor intended to elect him at that time.

This is also true of every artist. They never intend to be perfect, but to do as well as they can, knowing and expecting to fall short of perfection in their various arts.

It can never be said with truth that they intend to be perfect.

THE OBERLIN EVANGELIST 1848

In no case whatever, does or can any one intend to do what he believes to be impossible. He proceeds:

"So should the Christian strive for perfection. For it is one of his peculiarities to walk by faith and principle, and not by sight.

He inquires not--

How do others act? What have they done? How do they succeed? What will they think? Will I succeed if I try?--But

Is it right? Is it desirable? Does God demand it?--and if so, he arises at once and does his utmost amid the greatest discouragements. So christianity ever conducts.

Now, we say--

Walk by faith--by principle--not by sight or impulse or expectation of success.

Ask--is my perfection desirable--Is it right--Does God demand it--Have I all the needful powers--Can I attain?

If so, be up and doing--aim at the highest and never faint.

You will perceive from these brief notes, wherein my difficulties consist. Do they not all arise from your views about the simplicity of moral action--about the entire sinfulness or holiness of every moral action? Can you enlighten or correct me?"

The fact is, that the doctrine of the simplicity of moral action follows by the sternest necessity from the new school doctrine of the nature of sin and holiness. If all morality belongs, strictly speaking, to actions of will, it must follow that it belongs strictly to ultimate intention. All intelligent acts of will consist in the choice of an end or of the means or conditions of an end. It can not consist in mere executive volitions but must consist in the ultimate or choice of an end. Opposite ends can not be chosen at the same time. If moral character belongs to voluntary action, then it must be simple, and the only question as to its being wholly right or wholly wrong, must respect, not, as this writer supposes, the objective motives by which the intention is occasioned, not caused, but it must respect the strength or intensity of the intention. This is the only question that can be raised on new school principles, with a shadow of consistency. This question I will not now argue, because this writer does not urge it, and because Prof. Cochran has so fully discussed and settled it in the pieces above referred to, and because I have so fully argued it in my Theology. So far as this brother's objection is concerned, it involves not only an absurdity in itself, but also, an entire contradiction of the fundamental position of new schoolism.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

I must not pursue this subject further. I might notice several other things, but have neither time or room. I doubt not that this will be received as fraternally as it is intended.

Your brother,
C.G. FINNEY

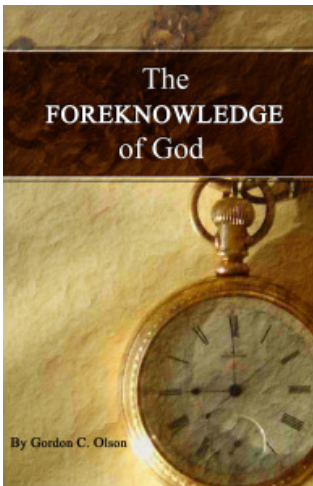
N.B. Will not this Brother feel it his duty to correct the impression that these sermons made.

C.G.F.

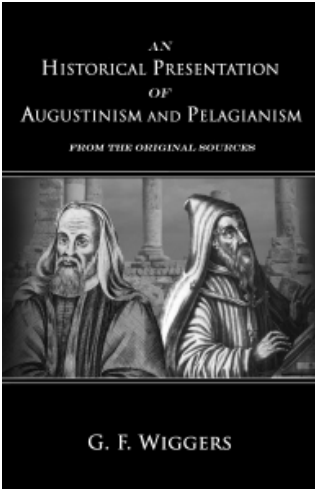


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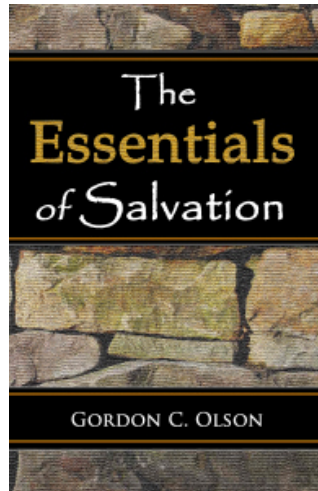


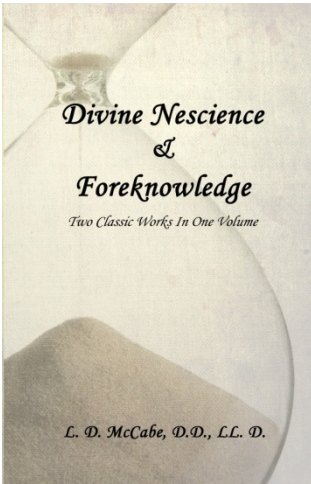
The Foreknowledge of God by Gordon C. Olson is a classic work on the open view of God which was first published in 1941. The reader will find the arguments presented in this book as challenging and thought provoking. Olson's love for God and for the Scriptures enriches his writings in such a way that the even deep theological issues which he addresses are a pleasure and a joy to read.



An Historical Presentation of Augustinism and Pelagianism by **G. F. Wiggers** is a classic and impartial work on the Augustine/Pelagius debate. By appealing to the original sources that are available, Dr. Wiggers compares and contrasts these two opposing theologies, defining and explaining the various doctrines within each system of thought.

The Essentials of Salvation contains **Gordon C. Olson's** booklets, "The Moral Government of God," "Holiness and Sin," "The Entrance of Sin Into The World," and "The Kindness of God our Savior" all in one volume. These classic theological writings deal with doctrines such as original sin, free will, total depravity, regeneration, holiness, repentance, faith, atonement, etc. These writings have been cherished by many believers because they shine a bright light of truth upon many dark issues and clear away any theological fogs upon the mind.

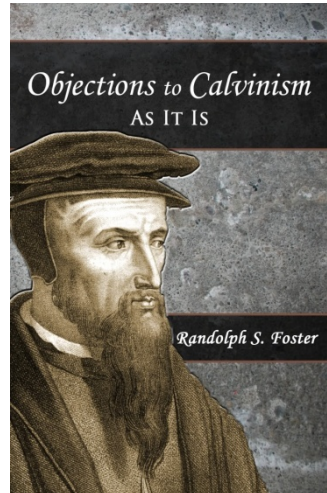


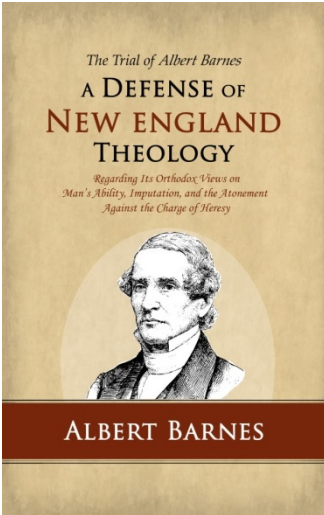


Divine Nescience & Foreknowledge contains two classic works in one volume. They are “Divine Nescience of Future Contingencies A Necessity” and “The Foreknowledge of God, and Cognate Themes in Theology and Philosophy” by **L. D. McCabe**. Because these books were out of print, these books have been very hard to find and very expensive to purchase, until now. These two profound books were written in the 1800’s and brilliantly expound upon the open view of God.

They are two of the most important theological writings of the 19th Century and arguably two of the best writings on the topic of open theism. This book is a must read for any Christian who wants to understand the scriptural and logical arguments for the open view of the future.

Objections to Calvinism As It Is by Randolph S. Foster is a classic rebuttal to the doctrines of “Reformed Theology” from the 1800’s. The false theology of Calvinism is refuted by the authors scriptural and rational arguments, plainly exposing the so-called “Doctrines of Grace” for what they really are. Some Christians have called this work the best book on Calvinism out there. The authors use of logic, scripture, and sarcasm makes this book a blessing to read!

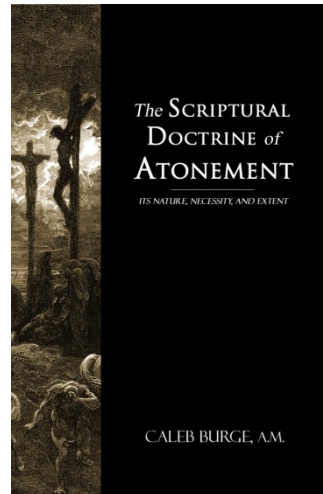


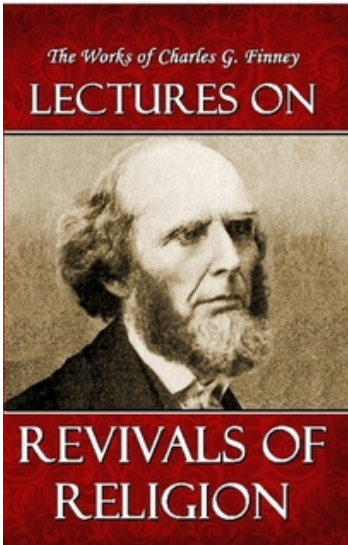


A Defense of New England Theology by Albert Barnes is a very rare book, originally published in 1829. It contains Barnes sermon, “The Way of Salvation” for which he was accused of heresy by Rev. Dr. George Junkin. The doctrines in question were human ability, imputation, and atonement. Barne’s response and defense to the charge of heresy is also contained in this volume, for which Barnes was acquitted by the Synod of Philadelphia. “New England Theology” was a theological

movement with notable men like Moses Stuart, Albert Barnes, Charles Finney, Asa Mahan, and others. The modern movement of “Moral Government Theology” has its roots in what was “New England Theology.”

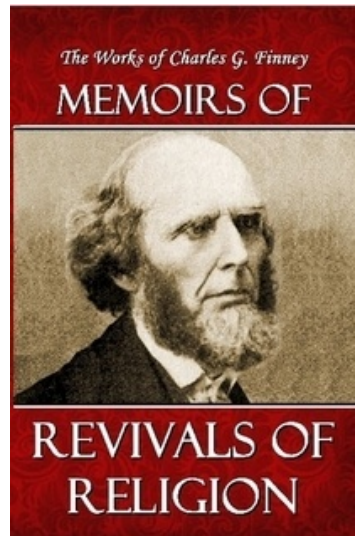
The Scriptural Doctrine of Atonement by Caleb Burge has been said to be the best book on the Governmental Atonement theory. Burge expounds upon very profound concepts and presents them in a very intelligent and understandable way. This book was originally published in 1822. It contains pure theological gold on one of the most important doctrines of Christianity. It will be an absolute treasure in your library.

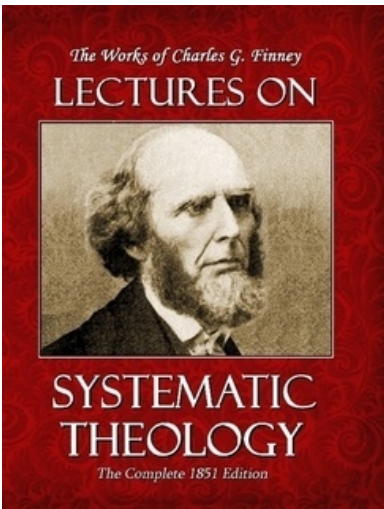




Lectures on Revivals of Religion by **Charles G. Finney** is a classic volume on revivals. Finney was America's greatest revivalist. Over half a million souls were soundly saved under his ministry. After Finney published his lectures on revival, revivals started breaking out all over the place. This book is a must read for any believer who wants to win souls to Christ!

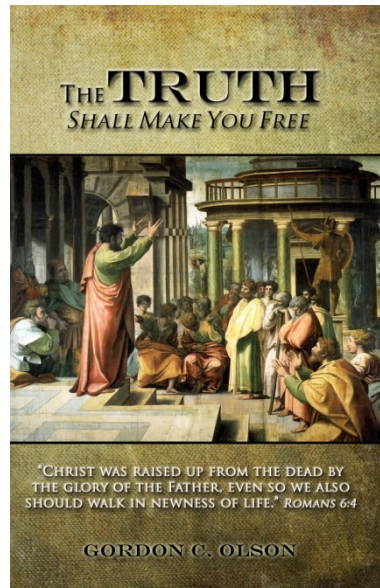
Memoirs of Revivals of Religion contains the unedited autobiography of **Charles G. Finney**. The text comes from the 1878 edition. This volume describes the amazing details of the extraordinary revivals which God used his servant Finney in. A Christian will find it hard to be able to read this book without getting on his knees to pray for revival!

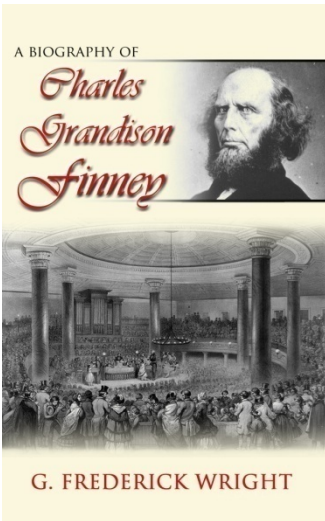




This is the complete 1851 edition of **Lectures on Systematic Theology** by **Charles G. Finney**. This is also a “Note Takers Edition” as the bottom of each page has a large empty area for the reader to write their own personal notes as they study this wonderful piece of Christian theology.

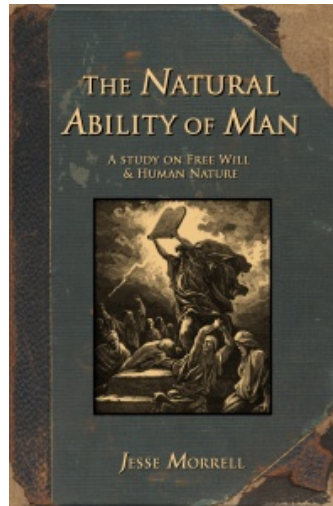
The Truth Shall Make You Free by **Gordon C. Olson** is an absolute essential for any Christian library. It has been said that Gordon C. Olson was the greatest theologian of the 20th Century, and “The Truth Shall Make You Free” was his masterpiece. This is a monumental work of theological literature. To reprint this very important volume is one of the reasons that we even started reprinting books at all. We would like to see this book in the hands of every believer. It is our opinion that “The Truth Shall Make You Free” is one of the greatest theological works of Christian history

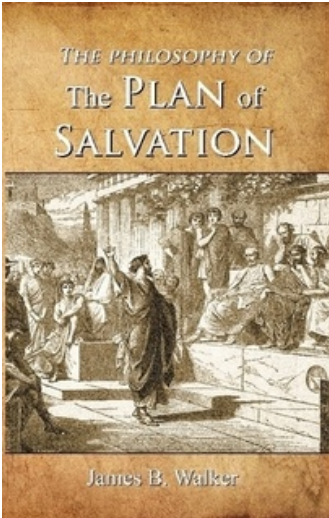




Charles Grandison Finney by **G. Frederick Wright** is one of the best biographies on this hero of the Christian faith. This book details the life, ministry, and theology of the greatest revivalists America has ever seen. While Finney's modern critics always try to downplay his success as an evangelist, this book was written by someone who was actually there in the 19th Century, who knew and worked with Finney for 30 years.

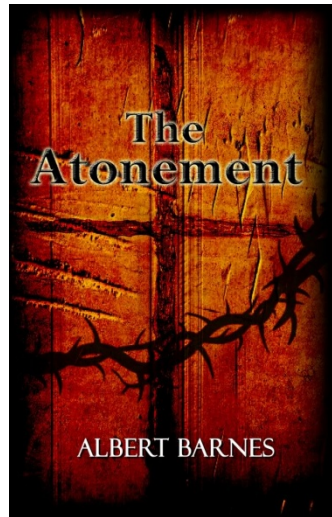
The Natural Ability of Man: A Study On Free Will & Human Nature by **Jesse Morrell** is an exhaustive theological volume that defends the Christian doctrine of man's free will against the false Gnostic/Calvinist doctrine of man's natural inability. This volume explains the truth of man's freedom in light of Church history and other doctrines like total depravity, regeneration, atonement, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, predestination, repentance, faith, the believer's security, original sin, etc. One Bible teacher called this book "the most comprehensive exposition on man's natural ability in print."

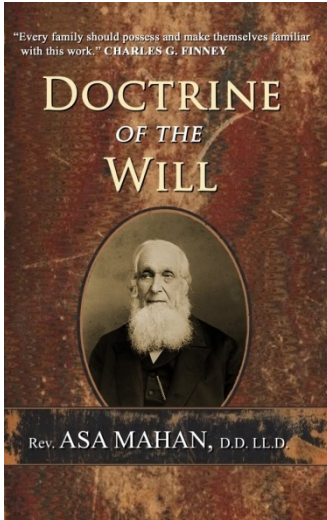




The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation by **James B. Walker** is a discussion on the fundamental facts about God's dealing with the human race throughout history, to convince the rational reader that the religion of the Bible is from God and is uniquely adapted to produce the greatest good for mankind. Some readers have called this book the best apologetic of the Christian faith that they have read.

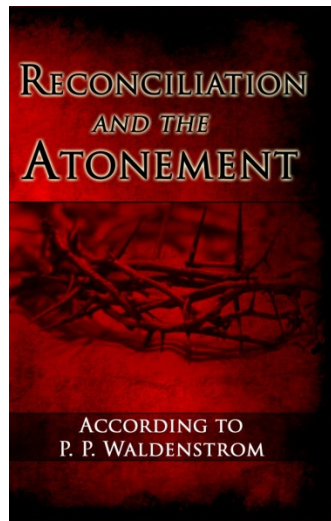
The Atonement by **Albert Barnes** is a classic book on the governmental theory of the atonement from a very prominent pastor and world renowned Bible commentator from the 1800's. Barnes work on the Atonement was Leonard Ravenhill's number one recommended book out of forty listed. It is very insightful, thought provoking, and spiritually rich.



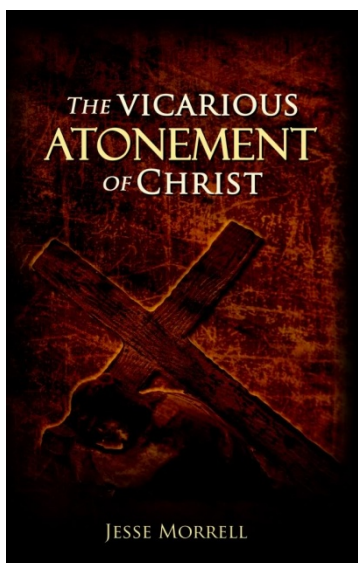
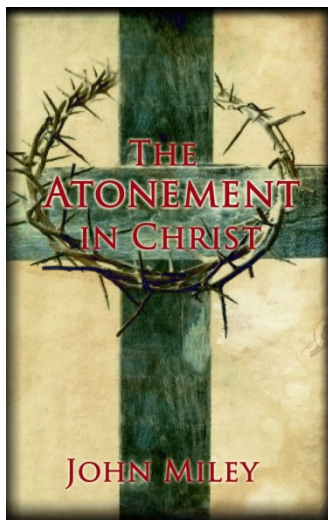


The Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan is possibly Mahan's best book. It is a satisfactory rebuttal to the doctrine of the Necessitarians, specifically the Edwardian kind, who taught that the will operated under the law of necessity rather than liberty. Revivalist and theologian Charles Finney said that this classic was "a highly important work" that "every family should possess and make themselves familiar with."

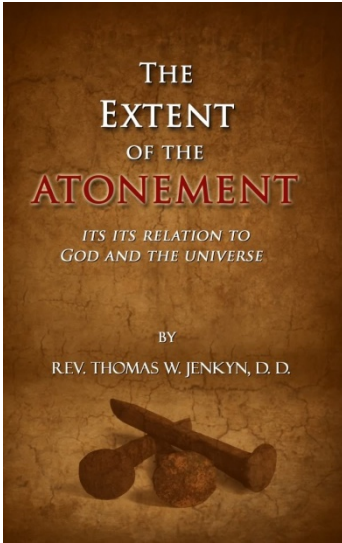
Reconciliation and the Atonement according to P. P. Waldenstrom is actually two writings compiled into one. The first writing is, "Be Ye Reconciled to God: A Look at the Atonement" by P. P. Waldenstrom and the second is, "The Christian Doctrine of the Atonement According to P. P. Waldenstrom" by Axel Andersson. This book answers the question, "Was the atonement designed to change God or to change man? Is God reconciled to man or is man reconciled to God?" This is a must read for every Christian believer!



The Atonement in Christ by **John Miley** is one of the most exhaustive and important writings on the various atonement theories that have existed throughout Christian history. This classic writing advances the Governmental theory of the atonement as true and scriptural and critiques the opposing perspectives like that of the Penal Substitution theory of atonement.



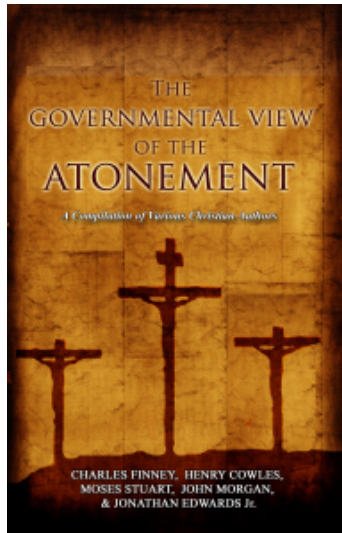
The Vicarious Atonement of Christ by **Jesse Morrell** is a systematic presentation of the governmental atonement view. This book answers questions like, “What is the purpose of moral law?” “What is the purpose of penalty?” “What is the nature of forgiveness?” “What are the problems in the way of forgiveness?” “What is the atonement?” “What is imputed righteousness?” This book is full of logical and scriptural arguments as well as quotes from great Christian leaders throughout history.

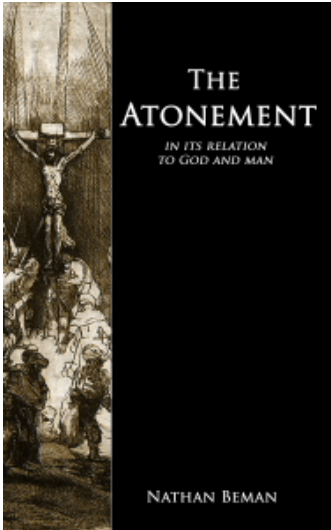


The Extent of the Atonement: *In Its Relation to God and the Universe* by Rev. Thomas W. Jenkyn is a classic work expounding upon the Governmental View of the atonement. It is a thorough explanation of the atonement in reference to its nature, the character of God, the purposes of God, the works of God, the moral government of God, the providence of God, divine truth, the rebellion of man, the salvation of mankind, the work of the Holy Spirit, the Christian church, etc. This book

presents the truth of the Scriptures in clarity and is an absolute joy to read.

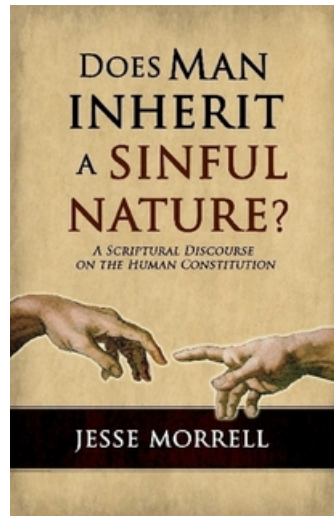
The Governmental View of the Atonement is a compilation book with writings from some of the best theologians on this topic. The authors include Charles Finney, Henry Cowles, John Morgan, Moses Stuart, and Jonathon Edwards Jr. These authors present the truth of the atonement of Christ in a very clear Scriptural and reasonable light. Their writings show the necessity, nature, and extent of Christ's atoning sacrifice. The benevolence and brilliance of God in providing a way to sustain His moral government while pardoning transgressors will be clearly seen as you read this wonderful piece of literature.





The Atonement as it Relates to God and Man by **Nathan Beman** is a wonderful exposition on the Governmental View of the atonement of Christ. With precision and excellence the author explains why it was necessary for God's moral government that the atonement of Christ be made if God is going to pardon sinners, the nature of Christ's atoning death, and the extent of who this loving sacrifice has been made for. The reader of this book will be left with a crystal clear understanding of the doctrine of atonement.

Does Man Inherit A Sinful Nature by **Jesse Morrell** is a thorough examination and refutation to one of the oldest theological excuses for sin – a sinful nature. With an abundance of scripture, keen logic, and an appeal to Christian teachers throughout history, this book not only shows that men are not born with a sinful nature but that sin is actually contrary to the nature God gave us.



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