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Startling questions

Carric. Lo. W. French.  
from her dear friend  
Miss H. B. Haines..

March 1853.

# STARTLING QUESTIONS.

BY THE

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REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.,

AUTHOR OF "LIVING OR DEAD?" "WHEAT OR CHAFF?" ETC.

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1853.

STARKING WELLS

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T. B. SMITH, STEREOTYPED,  
216 WILLIAM STREET, N. Y.

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Reader, —

The question before your eyes is the first which God asked of man after the fall. It is the question He put to Adam in the day that he ate the forbidden fruit, and became a sinner.

In vain did Adam and his wife hide themselves among the trees of the garden of Eden. In vain did they try to escape the eye of the all-seeing God. They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day. " And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou ?" (Gen. iii. 9.) Think for a moment how awful those words must have sounded! Think what the feelings of Adam and Eve must have been!

Reader, 6,000 years have well-nigh passed away since this question was first asked. Millions

"where art thou?"

Millions of Adam's children have lived and died, and gone to their own place. Millions are yet upon earth, and every one of them has a soul to be lost or saved. But no question ever has been, or ever can be asked more solemn than that which is before you:—Where art thou? Where art thou in the sight of God? —Come now, and give me your attention, while I tell you a few things which may throw light upon this question.

I know not who you are,—whether you are a Churchman or a Dissenter;—whether you are learned or unlearned;—whether you are rich or poor ;—whether you are old or young: about all this I know nothing. But I do know that you have got an immortal soul, and I want that soul to be saved. I do know that you have got to stand before the judgment-seat of God, and I want you to be prepared for it. I do know that you will be forever in heaven or in hell, and I want you to escape hell, and reach heaven. I do know that the Bible contains most solemn things about the inhabitants of the earth, and I want every

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man, woman, and child in the world to hear them. I believe every word in the Bible; and because I believe it, I ask every reader of this paper, " Where art thou in the sight of God?"

I. In the first place, there are many people about whom the Bible shows me I ought to be exceedingly afraid. Reader, art thou one of them?

There are those, who, if Bible words mean anything, have not yet been converted and born again. They are not justified. They are not sanctified. They have not the Spirit. They have no faith. They have no grace. Their sins are not forgiven. Their hearts are not changed. They are not ready to die. \* They are not meet for heaven. They are neither godly, nor righteous, nor saints. If they are, Bible words mean nothing at all.

Some of these persons, to all appearance, think no more about their souls than the beasts that perish. There is nothing to show that they think of the life to come any more than the horse and ox, which have no understanding. Their treasure is evidently all on

earth. Their good things are plainly all on this side of the grave. Their attention is swallowed up by the perishable things of time. Meat, drink, and clothing,—money, houses, and land,—business, pleasure, or politics,—marrying, reading, or company;—these are the kind of things which fill their hearts. They live as if there were no such book as the Bible. They go on as if resurrection and eternal judgment were not true, but a lie. As to grace, and conversion, and justification, and holiness,—they are



things which, like Gallio, they care not for ;—they are words and names they are either ignorant of, or despise. They ' are all going to die. They are all going to be judged. And yet they seem to be even mor§ hardened than the devil, for they appear nei-ther to believe nor tremble. Alas ! what a state this is for an immortal soul to be in I But oh ! how common !

Some of the persons I speak of have got a form of religion, but after all it is nothing but a form. They profess and call themselves Christians. They go to a place of worship on

Sunday. But when you have said that, you have said all. Where is the religion of the New Testament to be seen in their lives ? Nowhere at all! Sin is plainly not considered their worst enemy, nor the Lord Jesus their best friend,—nor the will of Grod their rule of life,—nor salvation the great end of their existence. The spirit of slumber keeps possession of their hearts, and they are at ease, self-satisfied, and content. They are in a Laodicean frame of mind, and fancy they have enough religion.

God speaks to them continually, by mercies, —by afflictions,—by Sabbaths,—by sermons ; but they will not hear. Jesus knocks at the door of their hearts, but they will not open. They are told of death and eternity, and remain unconcerned. They are warned against the love of the world, and plunge into it week after week without shame. They hear of Christ coming upon earth to die for sinners, and go away unmoved. There seems a place in their hearts for everything but God;—room for business,—room for pleasures,—room for

trifling,—room for sin,—room for the devil,— room for the world: but, like the inn at Bethlehem, no room for Him who made them,—no admission for Jesus, the Spirit, and the Word. Alas ! what a condition of things this is! But alas! how common I

Keader, I put it solemnly to your conscience, as in the sight of God, are you one of those persons whom I have just described ? There are thousjjnds of such people in our land,—thousands in Great Britain,—thousands in Ireland,—thousands in our country parishes,— thousands in our towns,—thousands among Churchmen,—thousands among Dissenters,— thousands among rich, — thousands among poor. Now, are you one of them ? If you are, I fear for you,—I tremble for you,—I am alarmed for you,—I am exceeding!}'- afraid.

What is it that I fear for you ? I fear everything. I fear lest you should persist in rejecting Christ till you have sinned away your own soul. I fear lest you be given over to a reprobate mind, and awake no more. I fear lest you come to such deadness and hardness of

heart, that nothing but the voice of the archangel and the trump of God will break your sleep. I fear lest you cling to this vain world so closely, that nothing but death will part it and you. I fear lest you should live without Christ, die without pardon, rise again without hope, receive judgment without mercy, and sink into hell without remedy.

Eader, I must warn you, though I may seem, like Lot, as one that mocks. I do solemnly warn you to flee from the wrath to come. I entreat you to remember that the Bible is all true, and must be fulfilled,—that the end of your present ways is misery and sorrow/,—that without holiness no man shall see the Lord,—that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God, —that God shall one day take account of all your doings, and that Christless sinners like yourself can never stand in His sight, for he is holy, and a consuming fire. Oh ! that you would consider these things! Where is the man that can hold his finger for a minute in

the flame of a candle ? Who shall dwell with, everlasting burnings ?

I know well the thoughts that Satan will j)ut into your heart, as you read these words. I know well the excuses that you are going to make. You will tell me, "religion is all very well, but a man must live." I answer, "it is quite true a man must live^ but it is no less true that he must also die^ You may tell me, "a man cannot starve." I answer, " that I do not want any one to starve, but neither also do I want any one to burn in hell." You may tell me, "a man must mind his business first in this world." I answer, "yes! and the first business a man should mind is his eternal business,—the business of his soul."

Eader, I beseech you in all affection to break off your sins,—to repent and be converted. I beseech you to change your course, —to alter your ways about religion,—to turn from your present carelessness about your soul, and become a new man. I offer to you through Jesus Christ the forgiveness of all past sins,—free and complete forgiveness,—

ready, present, everlasting forgiveness. I tell you in my Master's name, that if you will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, this forgiveness shall at once be your own. Oh! do not refuse so gracious an invitation. Do not hear of Christ dying for you,—Christ shedding His own blood for you,—Christ stretching out His hands to you, and yet remain unmoved. Do not love this poor perishing world better than eternal life. Dare to be bold and decided. Eesolve to come out from the broad way which leads to destruction. Arise and escape for your life, while it is called to-day. Ee-pent, believe, pray, and be saved.

Eader, I fear for you in your present state. My heart's desire and prayer is that God may make you fear for yourself

11. In the second place there are many people about whom the Bible shows me I ought to stand in doubt. Eader, art thou one of these ?

There are many whom I must call almost Christians, for I know no other expression in the Bible which so exactly describes their state. They have many things about them

which are right, and good, and praiseworthy in the sight of God. They are regular and moral in their lives. They are free from glaring outward sins. They keep up many decent and proper habits. They are usually diligent in their attendance on means of grace. They appear to love the preaching of the Gospel. They are not offended at the truth as it is in Jesus, however plainly it may be spoken. They have no objection to religious company, religious books, and religious talk. They agree to all you say when you speak to them about their soul. And all this is well.

But still there is no movement in the hearts of these people that even a microscope can detect. They are like those who stand still. Weeks after weeks, years after years roll over their heads, and they are just where they were. They sit under our pulpits. They approve of our sermons. And yet, like Pharaoh's lean kine, they are nothing the better apparently for all they receive. There is always the same regularity about them,—the same constant attendance on means of grace,

—the same wishing and hoping,—the same way of talking about rehigion; but there is nothing more. There is no going forward in their Christianity. There is no life, and heat, and reality in it. Their souls seem to be at a dead lock. And all this is sadly wrong.

Header, are you one of these people ? There are thousands of them in this day,—thousands in our churches, and thousands in our chapels. I ask you to give an honest answer to the ' question: Is this the state of your soul in the sight of God ? If it is, I can only say your condition is most unsatisfactory. As the apostle said to the Galatians, so I say to you, "I stand in doubt of you."

How can I feel otherwise about you? There are but two sides in the world,—the side of Christ and the side of the devil; and yet you make it doubtful on which side you ought to be placed. I dare not say you are altogether careless about religion, but I cannot call you decided. I shrink from numbering you among the ungodly, but I may not place you among the Lord's children. You have

some light; but is it saving knowledge? You have some feeling; but is it grace? You are not profane; but are you a man of God? You may possibly be one of the Lord's people; but you dwell so near the borders, that I cannot discern to what nation you belong. You may not perhaps be spiritually dead; but like a sickly tree in winter, I hardly know whether you are alive. And thus you live on without satisfactory evidences. I cannot help doubting about you. Surely there is a cause.

I cannot read the secrets of your hearts. Perhaps there is some pet bosom sin, which you are holding fast, and will not give up. This is a disease which checks the growth of many a professing Christian. Perhaps you are kept back by the fear of man: you are afraid of the blame or laughter of your fellow creatures. This is an iron chain that fetters many a soul. Perhaps you are careless about private prayer and communion with God. This is one reason why multitudes are weak and sickly in spirit. But whatever your reason be, I warn you in all affection to take care

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what you are doing. Your state is neither satisfactory nor safe. Like the Gibeonites, you are found in the train of Israel, but like them you have no title to Israel's portion, Israel's consolations, and Israel's rewards. Oh! awake to a sense of your danger I Strive to enter in.

Header, you must give up this halting between two opinions, if ever you mean to enjoy good evidences of your salvation. There must be an alteration in you. There must be a move. There is no real standing still in true Christianity. If God's work is not going forward in a man's heart, the devil's is; and if a man is always at the same point in religion, the probability is that he has got no real religion at all. It is not enough to wear Christ's livery; we must also fight Christ's battle. It is not enough to cease to do evil; we must also learn to do well. It will not suffice to do no harm; we must also labor to do good. Oh! tremble, lest you should prove an unprofitable receiver of God's talents,—a barren cumberer of the ground, and your end be to be burned.

Remember, lie that is not with Christ, is against Him.

Reader, I charge you strongly never to rest till you have found whether you have grace in your heart or not. Wishes and desires, and good feelings, and convictions, are all excellent things in their way, but they alone will never save you. I like to see buds and blossoms on a tree, but I like better to see ripe fruit. The way-side hearers in the parable listened, but the word took no root in them;—they were not saved. The stony ground hearers listened with joy, but the word had no depth in them;—they were not saved. The thorny ground hearers brought forth something like fruit, but the word was choked by the world;—they were not saved. Do you tremble at the word? So also did Felix, but he was not saved. Do you like to hear good sermons and many things which are right? So also did Herod, but he was not saved. Do you wish to die the death of the righteous? So did Balaam, but he was not saved. Have you knowledge? So had Judas Iscariot, but he was not saved. And shall you be saved as you are? I doubt it. Remember Lot's wife.

Reader, once more I call upon you to take care what you are doing. If you will not stir up yourself to go forward, how should I feel anything but doubt about your soul.

But there are others about whom I stand in doubt, who are in worse case even than the almost Christians. These are those who once made a high profession of religion, but have now given it up. They were once reckoned to be true believers, but they have turned back again to the world and fallen away. They have gone back from the point in religion they once seemed to have reached. They walk no more in the ways they once seemed to choose. In short, they are backsliders.

Reader, is this the state of your soul? If it is, know for a certainty that your condition is most unsatisfactory. It matters little what your past experience was. It proves little that you were counted among true Christians? It may have been all a mistake and a delusion.

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It is your present condition of soul that I look at, and as I do so, I stand in doubt.

I believe there was a time when all the saints of God who saw you rejoiced at the sight. You seemed then to love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and to be willing to give up the broad way forever, and forsake all for the Gospel's sake. The Word of God appeared sweet and precious to you; the voice of Christ's ministers a most pleasant sound; the assembly of the Lord's people the place you loved best; the company of true believers your chief delight. You were never missing at the weekly meeting. Your place was never empty at Church. Your Bible was never long out of your hands. There were no days in your life without prayer. Your zeal was indeed fervent. Your religious affections were truly warm. You did run well for a season. But, oh I reader, where, where are you now?

You have gone back to the world. You lingered; you looked back; you returned; I fear you had left your heart behind you. You have taken up the old man's deeds once more\*

You have left your first love. Your goodness has proved like the morning clouds, and as the early dew it has gone away. Your serious impressions are fast dying off; they are getting weaker and fainter every day. Your convictions are fast withering up; they are changing color like leaves in autumn—they will soon drop off and disappear. The gray hairs, which tell of decline, are coming here and there upon you. The preaching you once hung upon, now wearies you. The books you delighted in give pleasure no more. The progress of Christ's Gospel is no longer interesting. The company of God's children is no longer sought. They or you must be changed. —You are becoming shy of holy people, impatient of rebuke and advice, uncertain in your tempers, careless about little sins, not afraid of mixing with the world. Once it was not so. —You may keep up some form of religion perhaps, but as to vital godliness you are fast cooling down. Already you are lukewarm; by-and-by you will be cold; and before long you will be icy, religion-frozen, and more dead than you were before.

You are grieving the Spirit, and He will soon leave you. You are tempting the devil, and he will soon come to you; your heart is ready for him; your last state will be worse than your first. Oh I reader, strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. How can I possibly help feeling doubt about your soul?^

But I cannot let you go without trying to

\* I find that many people object to the expression, "You are grieving the Spirit, and He

will soon leave you." On calm reflection I am not disposed to alter it. I think it dangerous to attempt to be more systematic than the Bible in our theology. I think there is Scriptural warrant for saying that an unconverted man who possesses great light and knowledge in the things of religion, and yet refuses to give up sin and the world, does, in a certain sense, grieve the Holy Spirit. I would refer to Isai. Ixiii. 10; Acts, vii. 51; Heb. X. 29. In taking this ground, I believe I am in entire harmony with one of the most Scriptural divines that ever lived; I mean John Bunyan. In "Pilgrim's Progress" he represents the man in the iron cage at the Interpreter's house, saying to Christian, "I sinned against the light of the word, and the goodness of God. I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone. Tempted the devil, and he has come to me. I have provoked God to anger, and He has left me."

The length to which people may go in a profession of religion, and yet remain unconverted in heart and be lost at last, is one of the most awful and soul-searching points in theology.

do you good. I do pity you indeed, because you are so unhappy. I know it; I am sure of it; it is useless to deny it. You have been unhappy ever since you fell away. You are unhappy at home, and unhappy abroad; unhappy in company, and unhappy alone; unhappy when you lie down, and unhappy when you rise up. You may have got riches, honor, love, obedience, friends; but yet the sting remains. There is a famine of consolation about you; there is an utter dearth of inward peace. You are sick at heart; you are ill at ease; you are discontented with every body, because you are discontented with yourself. You are like a bird that has wandered from her nest— you never feel in your right place. You have too much religion to enjoy the world, and too little religion to enjoy God. You are weary of life, and yet afraid to die. Truly the words of Solomon are made good in your case, "You are filled with your own ways."

Reader, notwithstanding all your backslidings, there is hope even for you. There is no disease of soul that the glorious Gospel cannot

cure. There is a remedy even for your case,— humbling, pride-lowering, I know,—but a sure remedy ; and I earnestly beseech you to take it. That remedy is the fountain opened for all sins,—the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Go and wash in that fountain without delay, and Jesus Christ shall make thee whole. Take down your neglected Bible, and see how David fell and lay in foul sin a whole year, and yet when he repented and turned to God, there was mercy for him. Turn to the history of the apostle Peter, and see how he denied his Master three times with an oath, and yet when he wept and humbled himself, there was mercy for him. Hear what comfortable words our Lord and Saviour sends to you this day, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." \*'Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet, return again to me.'" "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Eeturn, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your back-

slidings." Oh! that you may take up the words of Israel this day, and reply, "Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God." (Matt. xi. 28; Jer. iii. 1; Isai. i. 18 ; Jer. iii. 22.)

Reader, I pray God these words may not be brought before you in vain. But remember, until you turn from your backslidings, I must stand in doubt about your soul.

III. In the third place there are some people about whom the Bible tells me / ov^ht to ftd a good hope. Reader, art thou one of these ?

The people I speak of have found out that they are guilty sinners, and have fled to Christ

by faith for salvation. They have found out that sin is a miserable and unhappy thing, and they hate it, and long to be free from its presence altogether. In themselves they see nothing but weakness and corruption, but in the Lord Jesus they see the very things their souls require;—pardon, peace, light, comfort, and strength. Christ's blood, Christ's cross, Christ's righteousness, Christ's intercession,—these are the things on which their minds love to dwell.

Their affections are now set on things above. They care for nothing so much as pleasing God. While they live, their chief desire is to live to the Lord. When they die, their only desire is to die in the Lord. After death, their hope is that they shall be with the Lord.

Reader, is this the state of your soul? Do you know anything of the faith and hope, and affections and experience, which I have just described? Do you find anything in your heart which answers to the account I have just given?—If you do, I thank God for it,—I congratulate you in your condition,—I feel a good hope about your soul.

I know well that you live in a world full of trials. You are yet in the wilderness; you are not at home. I know well that pride, and unbelief, and sloth are continually struggling for the mastery within you. You have fightings without and fears within. I doubt not your heart is so treacherous and deceitful that you are often sick of yourself and say, "Never was heart like mine." But notwithstanding all this. I must hope well for your soul.

I hope, because I believe that God has begun a work in you which He will never allow to be overthrown. Who taught you to hate sin and love Christ? Who made you come out from the world and delight in God's service? These things do not come from your own heart. Nature bears no such fruit. These things are the work of God, who where He begins, always finishes; who where He gives grace, will also give glory. Surely, here is ground for hope.

I hope, because I believe you have an interest in an everlasting covenant, a covenant ordered in all things and sure. The stamp of heaven is upon you. The marks of the Lord Jesus are on your soul. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have all engaged to carry out your soul's salvation. There is a threefold cord around you which never yet was broken. Surely, here is ground for hope.

I hope because you have a Saviour, whose blood can cleanse from all sin,—a Saviour who invites all, and casts out none that come to Him,—a Saviour who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax,— a Saviour who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and is not ashamed to call you brethren,—a Saviour who never alters, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, always able to save to the uttermost, always mighty to save. Surely here is ground for hope.

I hope, because the love of Christ is a love that passeth knowledge. So free and undeserved! So costly, even unto death! So powerful and all-conquering! So unchanging and enduring! So patient and forbearing! So tender and sympathizing! Truly our sins pass knowledge, and this is the very love our souls need. Surely here is ground for hope.

I hope because God has given to you exceeding great and precious promises,—promises of being kept unto the end,—promises of grace for every time of need, and strength according to your day,—promises that never yet were broken, all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Surely here is ground for hope.

Oh! reader, if you are a believer, these

things are a strong foundation. If God be for you, who shall be against you ? There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Nothing shall ever separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Come now, and let me tell you what I want you and every true Christian to aim at. I want you to seek more hope. I want you not to rest satisfied with that little mite of confidence which forms the whole stock of many of God's children. I want you to seek the full assurance of hope,—that lively hope which makes a man never ashamed.

I speak as a fellow traveller in the narrow way. I speak as one who desires that his own hope may grow and increase every year that he lives, and wishes the hope of all his brethren, to grow too. I know and am persuaded that I write things which are for your peace. As ever you would have a few days of darkness, —as ever you would feel God's face smiling on your soul,—as ever you would have joy and peace in believing,—by all your recollections of past shortcomings,—by all your de-

sires of comfort in time to come,—I charge you, I exhort you, I beseech you, to seek the full assurance of hope.

Ah I reader, if you are a true believer, you know well that we need these mutual exhortations. You and I are but children in the Lord's service at our very best. Our souls are ever ready to cleave to the dust. There is room for improvement in us every day. Listen then while I tell you a few things which we must never forget, if we would enjoy more hope,—which we must never lose sight of, if we would keep it when we have got it.

If we want to grow in grace, and have more hope, we must seek more knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. How little do we know of Him ! Our cold affections towards Him are a witness against ourselves. Our eyes can never be open to what He is and does for us, or we should love Him more. There are some Christians whose minds seem ever running on the doctrine of sanctification, to the exclusion of everything else. They can argue warmly about little points of practice; yet they are

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cold about Christ. They live by rule, they walk strictly, they do many things, they fancy in a short time they shall be very strong. But all this time they lose sight of this grand truth,—that nothing is so sanctifying as knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and communion with Him. " Abide in me," He says Himself, " and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Christ must be the spring of our holiness, as well as the rock of our faith. Christ must be all in all. I doubt not He is precious to you that believe. Precious He ought to be, because of His offices, and precious because of His work. Precious He ought to be, for what He has done already ; —He has called us, quickened us, washed us, justified us. Precious He ought to be for what He is doing even now ; —strengthening us, interceding for us, sympathizing with us. Precious He ought to be for what He will do yet; —He will keep us to the end, raise us, gather us at His coming, present us faultless before God's throne, give us rest with Him in His

kingdom. But oh ! reader, Christ ought to be far more precious to us than He ever has been yet. I take you to record, if it were the last word of my life, I believe that nothing but the knowledge of Christ will ever feed a man's spirit. All our darkness arises from not keeping close to Him. The forms of religion are valuable as helps,—and public ordinances are profitable to strengthen us;—but it must be Christ crucified for sinners,—Christ seen with the eye of faith,—Christ present in the heart, —Christ as the bread of life, and Christ as the water of life,—this must be the doctrine we must ever cling to. Nothing else will either save, satisfy, or sanctify a sinful soul. We all need more knowledge of Christ. If we would grow in grace and hope, let us begin here.

If we want to grow in grace, and have more hope, we must seek more knowledge of our own hearts. We fancy we are acquainted with them, and we are not. The half of the sin that is in them has hitherto been hidden from our eyes. We have not the slightest idea how much they might deceive us if tried, and into

what depths of Satan the very best of us might fall. But we all know by bitter experience, that by trusting our hearts we have often made sad mistakes. We have sometimes committed such errors that we have lost sight of our hope, and been ready to believe we had no grace at all. Oh! if we would be happy Christians, let us cease to put confidence in our hearts. Let us learn to expect nothing from them but weakness and feebleness. Let us cease to look to frames and feelings for our comforts. Hope built on anything within us must always be wavering and unstable.

If we want to grow in grace, and have more hope, we must seek more holiness in life and conversation. This is a humbling lesson to dwell upon, but one that cannot be dwelt upon too much. There is an inseparable connection between—a close walk with God and comfort in our religion. Let this never be forgotten. Truly the vessels in the Lord's house are many of them very dull and dingy. When I look around I see many things missing

amongst us, which Jesus loves. I miss the meekness and gentleness of our Master: many of us are harsh, rough-tempered, and censorious, and we flatter ourselves that we are faithful.—I miss real boldness in confessing Christ before men: we often think much more of the time to be silent than the time to speak. —I miss real humility: not many of us like to take the lowest place, and esteem every one better than ourselves, and our own strength perfect weakness.—I miss real charity: few of us have that unselfish spirit which seeketh not its own: there are few who are not more taken up with their own feelings and their ov/n happiness than that of others.—I miss real thankfulness of spirit: we complain, and murmur, and fret, and brood over the things we have not, and forget the things we have. We are seldom content; there is generally a Mordecai at our gate.—I miss decided separation from the world: the line of distinction is often rubbed out. Many of us, like the chameleon, are always taking the color of our company ; we become so like the ungodly that

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it strains a man's eyes to see the difference. Reader, these things ought not so to be. If we want more hope, let us be more zealous of good works.

If we want to grow in grace, and have a more lively hope, we must seek more watchfulness in seasons of prosperity. I know no time in a believer's life when his soul is in such real danger as it is when all things go well with him. I know no time when a believer is so likely to contract spiritual diseases and lay the foundation of many days of darkness and doubt in his inward man. You and I like the course of our life to run smoothly, and it is



natural to flesh and blood to do so. But you and I have little idea how perilous this smooth course is to our religion. The seeds of sickness are generally sown in health. It is the holiday time when lessons are forgotten. It is the sweet things which do harm to the children and not the bitter. It is the world's favor which injures believers far more than the world's frown. David committed no adultery while fleeing before the face of Saul:—it was

when Saul was dead and he was king in his stead, and there was peace in Israel. Christian in "Pilgrim's Progress" did not lose his evidence while he was fighting with Apolljon :—it was when he was sleeping in a pleasant arbor, and no enemy seemed near. Oh! if we would have a lively hope, let us watch in the days of prosperity, and be sober.

If we want to grow in grace, and have a lively hope, we must seek more faith and contentment in time of trial. Trial often makes a righteous man speak unadvisedly with his lips, and say and do things which rise like mist between his soul and Christ. Trial is a fire which often brings much dross to the surface of a believer's heart, and makes him say, "God has forgotten me, there is no hope for my soul; I am cast out of the Lord's sight; I do well to complain." Yet trial is the hand of a Father chastening us for our profit, however slow we may be to believe it. The rod is often sent in answer to a prayer for sanctification:—it is one of God's ways of carrying on that work of sanctification which we pro-

fess to desire. Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and David, all found this. Blessed are they who take patiently the Lord's medicines—who bear the cross in silence, and say, "It is well." Afflictions well borne are spiritual promotions. Patience having a perfect work in the time of affliction, will sooner or later yield a precious harvest of inward hope.

If we would grow in grace, and have a more lively hope, we must seek more preparedness for Christ's second coming. I know no doctrine more sanctifying and quickening than the doctrine of Christ's second advent. I know none more calculated to draw us from the world, and make us single-eyed, whole-hearted, and joyful Christian. But alas ! how few believers live like men who wait for their Master's return! Who that narrowly observes the ways of many believers would ever think that they loved and longed for their Lord's appearing? Is it not true that there are many hearts among God's children which are not quite ready to receive Jesus? He would find the window barred,—the door shut,—the fires al-

most out;—it would be a cold and comfortless reception. Oh! believing reader, it ought not so to be. We want more of a pilgrim's spirit: —we ought to be ever looking for and hastening to our home. The day of the Lord's advent is the day of rest, the day of complete redemption, the day when the family of God shall at last be all gathered together. It is the day when we shall no longer walk by faith, but by sight:—we shall see the land that is far off,—we shall behold the King in His beauty. Surely we ought to be saying daily, "Come, Lord Jesus, let thy kingdom come." Oh! let us set Christ's advent continually before our eyes. Let us say to ourselves every morning, "The Lord will soon return," and it will be good for our souls.

Lastly, if we want to grow in grace and have more hope, we must seek more diligence about means of grace. It is vain to suppose that our hope is not dependent in any sense on the pains we take in the use of God's appointed ordinances. It is dependent, and that to a very great extent. God has wisely or-

dered it so that lazy Christians seldom enjoy any assurance of their own acceptance. He tells us that we must labor, and strive, and work, to make our calling and election sure. Oh ! that believers would remember this, and lay it to heart. I suspect that many of

God's people are very lazy in their manner of using means. They know little of David's spirit when he said, "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the house of my God." I doubt whether there is much private prayer before and after sermons. Yet, remember, hearing alone is not everything: when all is said in the pulpit, only half the work is done. I doubt whether the Bible is as much read as it should be. Nothing in my own short experience has surprised me so much as the contented ignorance of Scripture which prevails among believers. I doubt whether private prayer is as often made a business of as it should be. We are often satisfied to get up from our knees without having really seen or heard anything of God and His Christ. And

, all this is wrong.—It is the diligent soul that enjoys lively hope.

Reader, let us lay to heart the things that I have mentioned. Let us resolve, by God's help, to set them before us continually, to pray for them, strive after them, and endeavor to attain them.

This is the way to be useful Christians. The world knows little of Christ beyond what it sees of Him in His people. Oh! what plain, clearly-written epistles they ought to be! A hopeful growing believer is a walking sermon. He preaches far more than I do, for he preaches all the week round, shaming the unconverted, sharpening the converted, showing to all what grace can do. Such an one does good indeed by his life, and after death what great broad evidences he leaves behind him! We carry him to the grave without one unpleasant doubt! Oh! the value and the power of a growing Christian! The Lord make you and me such.

This is the way to be happy Christians. Happiness is the gift of God, but that there

is the closest connection between full following of God and full happiness, let no man for an instant doubt. A hopeful, growing believer has the witness within himself. He walks in the full light of the sun, and therefore he generally feels bright and warm. He does not quench the Spirit by continual inconsistencies, and so the fire within him seldom burns low. He has great peace because he really loves God's law, and all that see him are obliged to allow that it is a privilege and not a bondage to be a Christian. Oh! the comfort of a tender conscience, a godly jealousy, a close walk with God, a heavenly frame of mind! The Lord make us all of such a spirit. And now, dear readers of every class to whom I have spoken, I heartily pray God to bless these pages to your souls. Whether you are of those for whom I fear,—whether you are of those about whom I doubt—whether you are of those whom I look at with hope—my heart's desire and prayer is, that you may lay down this tract a wiser and better man than when you took it up.

"We live in strange times. The world seems getting old and shaking. The shadows are long drawn. The evening appears to be coming on. The night will soon be upon us, when no man can work. Oh! that every reader of this tract would turn in upon himself while it is called to-day, and consider his own ways. Oh! that each would ask himself the question, Where am I? What am I? Where am I going? What will be the end of my present course? What is the hope of my soul?"

Reader, once more I ask you not to despise my question. Think of it: consider it: pray over it. Oh! that it may take firm hold of your heart, and never leave you! Oh! that it may be to your soul as life from the dead! Time is fast ebbing away. Life is a vast uncertainty. Death is drawing nearer and nearer. Judgment is sure to come. Reader, where art thou? Where art thou in the sight of God?

I remain.

Your affectionate Friend, J. C. Ryle.

"As many as are led "by the Spirit of God, they are the  
sons of God. " For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again  
to fear ; hut ye have received the spirit of adoption,  
whereby "we cry Abba, Father. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that  
we are the children of God: " And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint  
heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with him,  
that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. viii.

14—17.

Reader,

As soon as you have read the verses of Scripture before your eyes, I invite you to  
consider a very solemn question,— Are you an heir of glory ?

Mark well what I am asking. I am not speaking of matters which only concern the rich,  
the great, and the noble. I do not ask whether you are an heir to money or lands. I only  
want to ask, whether you are an heir of glory ?

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance really worth having. All others are  
□unsatisfying and disappointing. They bring with them many cares. They cannot cure  
an aching heart. They cannot lighten a heavy conscience. They cannot keep off family  
troubles. They cannot prevent sicknesses, bereavements, separations, and deaths. But  
there is no disappointment among the heirs of glory.

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance which can be held forever. All others  
must be left in the hour of death, if they have not been taken away before. The owners of  
millions of pounds can carry nothing with them beyond the grave. But it is not so with  
the heirs of glory. Their inheritance is eternal.

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance which is within every man's reach.  
Most men can never obtain riches and greatness, though they labor hard for them all  
their lives. But glory, honor, and eternal life, are offered to every man freely, who is  
willing to

accept them on God's terms. " Whosoever will," may be an heir of glory.

Reader, if you wish to have a portion of this inheritance, you must be a member of that  
one family on earth to which it belongs, and that is the family of all true Christians. You  
must become one of God's children on earth, if you desire to have glory in heaven. I  
write to persuade you to become a child of God this day, if you are not one already. I  
write to persuade you to make it sure work that you are one, if at present you have only a  
vague hope, and nothing more. None but true Christians are the children of God. INone  
but the children of God are heirs of glory. Give me your attention, while I try to unfold to  
you these things, and to show you the lessons which the verses you have already read  
contain.

I. Let me show you the relation of all true Christians to God. They are ^' sons of God J"

II. Let me show you the special evidences of this relation. True Christians are "Zee? hy

the Spirit^ They have " the Spirit of adoption^

They have the " witness of the Spirit:" They "suffer luith Chesty

III. Let me show you the privileges of this relation. True Christians are "heirs of God^ joint heirs with Christ^

I. First let me show you the true relation of all true Christians to God. They are God's " Sons."

I know no higher and more comfortable word that could have been chosen. To be servants of God,—to be subjects, soldiers, disciples, friends,—all these are excellent titles. But to be the sons of God, is a step higher still. What says the Scripture? " The servant abideth not in the house forever, but the Son abideth ever." (John, viii. 85.)

To be son of the rich and noble in this world,—to be son of the princes and kings of the earth,—this is reckoned a privilege. But to be a son of the King of kings, and Lord of lords,—to be a son of the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity,—this is something higher still. And yet this is the portion of every true Christian.

The son of an earthly parent looks naturally to his father for affection, maintenance, provision, and education. There is a home always open to him. There is a love which no bad conduct can completely extinguish. All these are things belonging even to the sonship of this world. Think then how great is the privilege of that poor sinner of mankind, who can say of God, "He is my Father."

But HOW can sinful men like you and me become sons of God? When do they enter into this glorious relationship? We are not the sons of God by nature. We are not born so when we come into the world. No man has a natural right to look to God as his Father. It is a vile heresy to say that he has. Men are said to be born poets and painters,— but men are never born sons of God. The epistle to the Ephesians tells us, " ye luere hy nature children of wrath even as others." (Ephes. ii. 3.) The Epistle of St. John says, "the children of God are manifest^ and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteoutsness is not of God." (1 John, iii. 10.) The Catechism of

the Church of England wisely follows the doctrine of the Bible, and teaches us to say, " By nature born in sin, and children of wrath." Yes! we are all rather children of the devil, than children of God. Sin is indeed hereditary, and runs in the family of Adam. Grace is anything but hereditary, and holy men have not, as a matter of course, holy sins. How then and when does this mighty change and translation come upon men? When and in what manner do sinners become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?

Men become sons of God in the day that the Spirit leads them to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation, and not before.\* What says the epistle to the Galatians? " Ye are all the children of God hy faith in Christ Jesusy (Gal. iii. 36.) What says the epistle to the Corinthians? " Of him are ye in Jesiis Christ^ (1 Cor. i. 30.) What says the Gospel of John? " As many as received Christy to them gave lie

\* The reader will of course understand that I am not speaking now of children that die in infancy, or of persons who live and die idiots.

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power (or privilege) to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name!" (John, i. 12). Faith unites the sinner to the Son of God, and makes him one of his members. Faith makes him one of those in whom the Father sees no spot, and is well-

pleased. Faith marries him to the beloved Son of God, and entitles him to be reckoned among the sons. Faith gives him fellowship with the Father and the Son. Faith grafts him into the Father's family, and opens up to him a room in the Father's house. Faith gives him life instead of death, and makes him instead of being a servant a son. Show me a man that has this faith, and whatever be his church, or denomination, I say that he is a son of God.

Reader, this is one of those points you should never forget. You and I know nothing of a man's sonship until he believes. No doubt the sons of God are foreknown and chosen from all eternity, and predestined to adoption. But, remember, it is not till they are called in due time, and believe,—it is not

till then that you and I can be certain they

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are sons. It is not till they repent and believe, that the angels of God rejoice over them. The angels cannot read the book of God's election. They know not who are His hidden ones in the earth. They rejoice over no man till he believes. But when they see some poor sinner repenting and believing, then there is joy among them,—joy that one more brand is plucked from the burning, and one more son and heir born again to the Father in heaven. But once more I say, you and I know nothing certain about a man's sonship to God until he believes on Christ

Reader, I warn you to beware of the delusive notion, that all men and women are alike children of God, whether they have faith in Christ or not. It is a wild theory which many are clinging to in these days, but one which cannot be proved out of the word of God. It is a perilous dream, with which many are trying to soothe themselves, but one from which there will be a fearful waking up at the last day.

That God in a certain sense is the universal

Father of all mankind, I do not pretend to deny. He is the Great First Cause of all things. He is the Creator of all mankind, and in Him alone, all men, whether Christians or heathens, live and move and have their being. All this is unquestionably true. In this sense Paul told the Athenians, a poet of their own had truly said, 'We are his offspring' (Acts, xvii. 28.) But this sonship gives no man a title to heaven. The sonship which we have by creation, is one which belongs to stones, trees, beasts, or even to the devils, as much as to us.

That God loves all mankind with a love of pity and compassion, I do not deny. His tender mercies are over all His works. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. All this I admit to the full. In this sense our Lord Jesus tells us, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John, iii. 16.)

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But that God is a reconciled and pardoning Father to any but the members of His Son Jesus Christ, and that any are members of Jesus Christ who do not believe on Him for salvation,—this is a doctrine which I utterly deny. The holiness and justice of God are both against the doctrine. They make it impossible for sinful men to approach God, excepting through a mediator. They tell us that God out of Christ is a consuming fire.

The whole system of the New Testament is against the doctrine. That system teaches that no man can claim interest in Christ, unless he will receive Him as his Mediator, and believe on Him as his Saviour. Where there is no faith in Christ, it is drivelling folly to say that a man may take comfort in God as his Father. God is a reconciled Father to none but the members of Christ.

It is nonsense to talk of the view I am now upholding as narrow-minded and harsh. The Gospel sets an open door before every man. Its promises are wide and full. Its invitations are earnest and tender. Its requirements are

simple and clear. " Only believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and, whosoever thou art, thou shalt be saved." But to say that proud men, | who will not bow their necks to the easy yoke j of Christ, and worldly men who are deter- j mined to have their own way and their sins,—to j say that such men have a right to claim an in- j terest in Christ, and a right to call themselves | sons of God, is absurdity indeed. God offers | to be their Father; but He does it on certain distinct terms:—they must draw near to Him j through Christ. Christ offers to be their Saviour ; but in doing it He make one simple j requirement:—they must commit their souls | to Him, and give Him their hearts. They re- j fuse the terms, and yet dare to call God their j Father I They scorn the requirement, and yet I dare to hope that Christ will save them ! God is to be their Father,—but on their own terms! | Christ is to be their Saviour,—but on their own conditions ! What can be more unreasonable ? What can be more proud ? What can be more unholy, than such a doctrine as this? Beware of it, reader, for it is a common doc-

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I trine in these latter days. Beware of it, for it j is often speciously put forward, and sounds j beautiful and charitable in the mouth of poets, j novelists, sentimentalists, and tender-hearted I women. Beware of it, unless you mean to j throw aside your Bible altogether, and set up i yourself to be wiser than God. Stand fast on the old Scriptural ground.— No sonship to Ood j without Christ / No interest in Christ withoutfaith ! I I would to God there was not so much cause I for giving warnings of this kind. I have reason to think they need to be given clearly and unmistakeably. There is a school of theology rising up in this day, which appears to me most eminently calculated to promote infidelity, to help the devil, and to ruin souls. It comes to us like Joab to Amasa, with the highest professions of charity, liberality, and love. God is all mercy and love, according to this theology:—His holiness and justice are completely left out of sight! Hell is never spoken of in this theology:—its talk is all of heaven ! Damnation is never mentioned : '—^it is treated as an impossible thing:—all

men and women are to be saved! Faith, and the work of the Spirit, are refined away into nothing at all! Everybody who believes anything has faith I Everybody who thinks anything has the Spirit! Everybody is right! Kobody is wrong I Kobody is to blame for any action he may commit I It is the result of his position! It is the effect of circumstances I He is not accountable for his opinions, any more than for the color of his skin ! He must be what he is! The Bible of course is a very imperfect book ! It is old-fashioned ! It is obsolete ! We may believe just as much of it as we please, and no more ! Keader, of all this theology, I warn you solemnly to beware. In spite of big swelling words about " liberality," and ^'charity," and "broad views," and "new lights," and "freedom from bigotry," and so forth, I do believe it to be a theology that leads to hell.

Facts are directly against the teachers of this theology. Let them climb to the tops of mountains, and mark the traces of Noah's flood. Let them go to the shores of the Dead

Sea,

and look down into its mysterious bitter waters. Let them observe the wandering Jews, scattered over the face of the world. And then let them tell us, if they dare, that God is so entirely a God of mercy and love, that he never does and never will punish sin.

The conscience of man is directly against these teachers. Let them go the bedside of some dying child of the world, and try to comfort him with their doctrines. Let them see if their vaunted theories will calm his gnawing, restless anxiety about the future, and enable him to depart in peace. Let them show us, if they can, a few well-authenticated cases of joy and happiness in death without Bible promises,—without conversion,—and without that faith in the blood of Christ, which old-fashioned theology enjoins. Alas I when men are leaving the world, conscience makes sad work of these new systems. Conscience is not easily satisfied in a dying hour that there is no such thing as hell.

Every reasonable conception that we can form of a future state is directly against these teach-

ers. Fancy a heaven which should contain all mankind! Fancy a heaven in which holy and unholy, pure and impure, good and bad, would be all gathered together in one confused mass! What point of union would there be in such a company? What common bond of harmony and brotherhood? What common delight in a common service? What concord, what harmony, what peace, what oneness of spirit could exist? Surely the mind revolts from the idea of a heaven in which there would be no distinction between the righteous and the wicked,—between Pharaoh and Moses, between Abraham and the Sodomites, between Paul and ISTero, between Peter and Judas Is-cariot, between the man who dies in the act of murder or drunkenness and men like Baxter, Wilberforce, and M'Cheyne! Surely an eternity in such a miserably confused crowd would be worse than annihilation itself! Surely such a heaven would be no better than hell!

The interests of all holiness and morality are directly against these teachers. If all men and

women alike are God's children, whatever is the difference between them in their lives,— and all alike going to heaven, however different they may be from one another here in the world,—where is the use of laboring after holiness at all? What motive remains for living soberly, righteously, and godly? What does it matter how men conduct themselves, if all go to heaven, and nobody goes to hell? Surely the very heathen of Greece and Rome could tell us something better and wiser than this! Surely a doctrine which is subversive of holiness and morality, and takes away all motives to exertion, carries on the face of it the stamp of its origin. It is of earth, and not of heaven. It is of the devil, and not of God.

The Bible is against these teachers all through. Hundreds and thousands of texts might be quoted which are diametrically opposed to their theories. These texts must be rejected summarily, if the Bible is to square with their views. There may be no reason why they should be rejected,—^but to suit the theology

I speak, of they must be thrown away. At this rate, the authority of the whole Bible is soon at an end. And what do they give us in its place? Nothing,—nothing at all! They rob us of the bread of life, and do not give us in its stead so much as a stone.

Reader, once more I warn you to beware of this theology. I charge you to hold fast the doctrine which I have been endeavoring to uphold in this tract. Remember what I have said, and never let it go. No inheritance of glory without sonship to God! ISTo sonship to

God without an interest in Christ! No interest in Christ without your own personal faith! This is God's truth. Never forsake it.

Who now among the readers of this tract, desires to know whether he is a son of God? Ask yourself this day, and ask it as in God's sight, whether you have repented and believed. Ask yourself whether you are experimentally acquainted with Christ, and united to Him in heart. If not, you may be very sure you are no son of God. You are not yet born again. You are yet in your sins. Your Father in

creation God may be, but your reconciled and pardoning Father God is not. Yes! though church and world may agree to tell you to the contrary,—though clergy and laity unite in flattering you,—your sonship is worth little or nothing in the sight of God. Let God be true and every man a liar. Without faith in Christ you are no son of God,—you are not born again.

Who is there among the readers of this tract who desires to become a son of God? Let that person see his sin, and flee to Christ for salvation, and this day he shall be placed among the children. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, and lay hold on the hand that Jesus holds out to thee this day, and sonship, with all its privileges, is thine own. Only confess thy sins, and bring them unto Christ, and God is faithful and just to forgive thee thy sins, and cleanse thee from all unrighteousness. This very day, old things shall pass away and all things become new. This very day, thou shalt be forgiven, pardoned, accepted in the beloved. This very day, thou shalt have a

new name given to thee in heaven. Thou didst take up this tract a child of wrath. Thou shalt lie down to-night a child of God. Mark this, if thy professed desire after sonship is sincere,—if thou art truly weary of thy sins, and hast really something more than a lazy wish to be free,—there is real comfort for thee. It is all true. It is all written in Scripture, even as I have put it down. I dare not raise barriers between thee and God. This day, I say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be a son, and be saved.

Who is there among the readers of this tract that is a son of God indeed? Eejoice, I say, and be exceeding glad of your privileges. Eejoice, for you have good cause to be thankful. Remember the words of the beloved apostle: Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God (1 John, iii. 1.) How wonderful that heaven should look down on earth,—that the holy God should set His affections on sinful man, and admit him into His family! What though the world does not understand

G2 "are you an heir?"

you! What though the men of this world laugh at you, and cast out your name as evil! Let them laugh, if they will. God is your Father. You have no need to be ashamed. The Queen can create a nobleman. The bishops can ordain clergymen. But Queen, Lords, and Commons,—bishops, priests, and deacons,—all together, cannot, of their own power, make one son of God, or one of greater dignity than a son of God. The man that can call God his Father, and Christ his elder Brother,—that man may be poor and lowly, yet he never need be ashamed.

IL Let me show you, in the second place, the special evidences of the true Christian's relation to God.

How shall a man make sure work of his own sonship? How shall he find out whether he is one that has come to Christ by faith and been born again? What are the marks, and signs, and tokens, by which the sons of God may be known? This is a question which all



who love eternal life ought to ask. This is a question to which the verses of Scripture I am

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asking you to consider, like many others, supply an answer.

1. The sons of God, for one thing, are all led by His Spirit. What says the Scripture? "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.)

They are all under the leading and teaching of a power which is almighty, though unseen, —even the power of the Holy Ghost. They no longer turn every man his own way, and walk every man in the light of his own eyes, and follow every man his own natural heart's desire. The Spirit leads them. The Spirit guides them. There is a movement in their hearts, lives, and affections, which they feel, though they may not be able to explain, and a movement which is always more or less in the same direction.

They are led away from sin,—away from self-righteousness, — away from the world. This is the road by which the Spirit leads God's children. Those whom God adopts He teaches and trains. He shows to them their own hearts. He makes them weary of their own ways. He makes them long for inward peace.

They are led to Christ. They are led to the Bible. They are led to prayer. They are led to holiness. This is the beaten path along which the Spirit makes them to travel. Those whom God adopts He always sanctifies. He makes sin very bitter to them. He makes holiness very sweet.

It is the Spirit who leads them to Sinai, and first shows them the law, that their hearts may be broken. It is He who leads them to Calvary, and shows them the cross, that their hearts may be bound up and healed. It is He who leads them to Pisgah, and gives them distant views of the promised land, that their hearts may be cheered. When they are taken into the wilderness, and taught to see their own emptiness, it is the leading of the Spirit. When they are carried up to Tabor, and lifted up with glimpses of the glory to come, it is the leading of the Spirit. Each and all of God's sons is the subject of these leadings. Each and all yields himself willingly to them.

And each and all is led by the right way, to bring him to a city of habitation.

Reader, settle this down in your heart, and do not let it go. The sons of God are a people led by the Spirit of God, and always led more or less in the same way. Their experience will tally wonderfully when they compare notes in heaven. This is one mark of sonship.

2. Furthermore, all the sons of God have the feelings of adopted children towards their Father in heaven. What says the Scripture? "Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." (Eom. viii. 15.)

The sons of God are delivered from that slavish fear of God, which sin begets in the natural heart. They are redeemed from that feeling of guilt, which made Adam hide himself in the trees of the garden, and Cain go out from the presence of the Lord. They are no longer afraid of God's holiness, and justice, and majesty. They no longer feel as if there

was a great gulf and barrier between themselves and God,—and as if God was angry with them, and must be angry with them, because of their sins. From these chains and fetters

of soul the sons of God are delivered.

Their feelings towards God are now those of peace and confidence. They see Him as a Father reconciled in Christ Jesus. They look on Him as a God whose attributes are all satisfied by their great Mediator and peacemaker, the Lord Jesus,—as a God who is just, and yet the justifier of every one that believeth on Jesus. As a Father, they draw near to Him with boldness. As a Father, they can speak to Him with freedom. They have exchanged the spirit of bondage for that of liberty, and the spirit of fear for that of love. They know that God is holy, but they are not afraid. They know that they are sinners, but they are not afraid. Though holy, they believe that God is completely reconciled. Though sinners, they believe they are clothed all over with Jesus Christ. Such is the feeling of the sons of God.

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•'are you an heir?' 67 i

I allow that some of them have this feeling more vividly than others. Some of them carry about scraps and remnants of the old spirit of bondage to their dying day. Many of them have fits and paroxysms of the old man's complaint of fear returning upon them at intervals. But very few of the sons of God could be found who would not say, if cross-examined, that since they knew Christ they have had very different feelings towards God, from what they ever had before. They feel as if something like the old Roman form of adoption had taken place between themselves and their Father in heaven. They feel as if He had said to each one of them, "Wilt thou be my son?" and as if their hearts had replied, "I will."

Reader, try to grasp this also, and hold it fast. The sons of God are a people who feel towards God in a way that the children of the world do not. They feel no more slavish fear towards Him. They feel towards Him as a reconciled parent. This then is another mark of sonship.

68 "are you an heir?"

8. But again, the sons of God have the witness of the Spirit in their consciences. What says the Scripture? "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. viii. 16.)

They have all got something within their hearts, which tells them there is a relationship between themselves and God. They feel something which tells them that old things are passed away, and all things become new,—that guilt is gone,—that peace is restored, that heaven's door is open, and hell's door is shut. They have, in short, what the children of the world have not,—a felt, positive, reasonable hope. They have what Paul calls the "seal" and "earnest" of the Spirit. (2 Cor. i. 22. Ephes. i. 13.)

Reader, I do not for a moment deny that this witness of the Spirit is exceedingly various in the extent to which the sons of God possess it. With some it is a loud, clear, ringing, distinct testimony of conscience :—" I am Christ's, and Christ is mine." With others it is a little, feeble, stammering whisper, which

the devil and the flesh often prevent being heard. Some of the children of God speed on their course towards heaven under the full sails of assurance. Others are tossed to and fro all their voyage, and will scarce believe they have got faith. But take the least and lowest of the sons of God. Ask him if he will give up the little bit of religious hope which

he has attained? Ask him if he will exchange his heart, with all its doubts and conflicts, its fightings and fears,—ask him if he will exchange that heart for the heart of the downright worldly and careless man? Ask him if he would be content to turn round and throw down the things he has got hold of, and go back to the world? Who can doubt what the answer would be? "I cannot do that," he would reply, "I do not know whether I have faith: I do not feel sure I have got grace: but I have got something within me I would not like to part with." And what is that "something" I will tell you. It is the witness of the Spirit. Eader, try to understand this also. The

sons of God have the witness of the Spirit in their consciences. This is another mark of sonship.

4. One thing more let me add. All the sons of God take 'part in suffering with Christ. What says the Scripture? "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him." (Rom. viii. 17.)

All the children of God have a cross to carry. They have trials, troubles, and afflictions to go through for the Gospel's sake. They have trials from the world,—trials from the flesh,—and trials from the devil. They have trials of feeling from relations and friends,—hard words, hard conduct, and hard judgment. They have trials in the matter of character;—slander, misrepresentation, mockery, insinuation of false motives,—all these often join thick upon them. They have trials in the matter of worldly interest. They have often to choose whether they will please man, and lose glory, or gain glory, and offend man. They have trials from their own hearts. They

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have each generally their own thorn in the flesh,—their own home-devil, who is their worst foe. This is the experience of the sons of God.

Some of them suffer more, and some less. Some of them suffer in one way, and some in another. God measures out their portions like a wise physician, and cannot err. But never, I believe, was there one child of God who reached paradise without a cross.

Suffering is the diet of the Lord's family. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "If ye be without chastisement, then are ye bastards, and not sons." "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." When Bishop Latimer was told by his landlord that he had never had a trouble, "Then," said he, "God cannot be here."

Suffering is a part of the process by which the sons of God are sanctified. They are chastened to wean them from the world, and make them partakers of God's holiness. The Captain of their salvation was made perfect through sufferings, and so are they. There

never yet was a great saint who had not either great afflictions or great corruptions. Well said Philip Melancthon, "Where there are no cares there will generally be no prayers."

Eader, try to settle this down into your heart also. The sons of God have all to hear a cross. A suffering Saviour generally has suffering disciples. The Bridegroom was a man of sorrows. The bride must not be a woman of pleasures, and unacquainted with grief. Blessed are they that mourn. Let us not murmur at the cross. This also is a sign of sonship.

Eader, I warn you never to suppose that you are a son of God except you have the

scriptural marks of sonship. Beware of a sonship without evidences. Again I say beware. When a man has no leading of the Spirit to show me,—no spirit of adoption to tell of,—no witness of the Spirit in his conscience,—no cross in his experience,—is this man a son of God ? God forbid that I should say so! His spot is not the spot of God's children. He is no heir of Glory.

Tell me not that you have been baptized and taught the catechism of the Church of England, and therefore must be a child of God. I tell you that the parish register is not the book of life. I tell you that to be styled a child of God, and called regenerate in infancy by the faith and charity of the Prayer-book, is one thing;—but to be a child of God in deed another thing altogether. Go and read that catechism again. It is the "death unto sin and the new birth unto righteousness" which makes men children of grace. Except you know these by experience, you are no son of God.

Tell me not that you are a member of Christ's Church, and so must be a son. I answer that the sons of the church are not necessarily the sons of God. Such sonship is not the sonship of the eighth of Romans. That is the sonship you must have, if you are to be saved.

And now, I doubt not some reader of this tract will want to know if he may not be saved without the witness of the Spirit.

I answer, if you mean by the witness of the Spirit, the full assurance of, hope, you may be so saved without question. But if you want to know whether a man can be saved without any inward sense, or knowledge, or hope of salvation, I answer that ordinarily he cannot. I warn you plainly to cast away all indecision as to your state before God, and to make your calling sure. Clear up your position and relationship. Do not think there is anything praiseworthy in always doubting. Leave that to the Papist. Do not fancy it wise to be ever living like the borderers of old time, on the "debatable ground." "Assurance," said old Dod, the puritan, " may be attained, and what have we been doing all our lives since we became Christians if we have not attained it ?"

I doubt not some true Christians who read this tract will think their evidence of sonship is too small to be good, and will write bitter things against themselves. Let me try to cheer them. Who gave you the feelings you possess ? Who made you hate sin ? Who made you love Christ ? Who made you long and

labor to be holy ? Whence did these feelings come ? Did they come from nature ? There are no such products in a natural man's heart. Did they come from the devil ? He would fain stifle such feelings altogether. Cheer up, and take courage. Fear not, neither be cast down. Press forward, and go on. There is hope for you after all. Strive. Labor. Seek. Ask. Knock. Follow on. You shall yet see that you are sons of God.

III. Let me show you, in the last place, the ^privileges of the true Christians relation to God.

Nothing can be conceived more glorious than the prospects of the sons of God. The words of Scripture which head this tract contain a rich mine of good and comfortable things. " If we are children," says Paul, " we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,—to be glorified together with Him." (Kom. viii. 17.)

True Christians then are "heirs."—Something is prepared for them all which is yet to be revealed.

They are "heirs pf God."--To be heirs of

the rich on earth is something. How much more then is it to be son and heir of the King of kings!

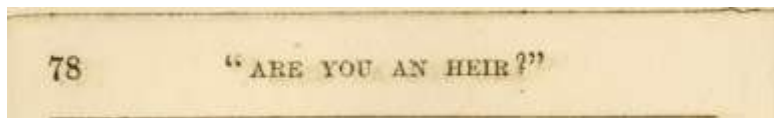
They are "joint heirs with Christ." They shall share in His majesty, and take part in His glory. They shall be glorified together with Him.

And this, remember, is for all the children. Abraham took care to provide for all his children, and God takes care to provide for His. None of them are disinherited. None will be cast out. None will be cut off. Each shall stand in his lot, and have a portion, in the day when the Lord brings many sons to glory.

Reader, who can tell the full nature of the inheritance of the saints in light? Who can describe the glory which is yet to be revealed and given to the children of God? Words fail us. Language falls short. Mind cannot conceive fully, and tongue cannot express perfectly, the things which are comprised in the glory yet to come upon the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Oh! it is indeed a true saying of the apostle John, "It doth

not yet appear what we shall be." (1 John, iii. 2.)

The very Bible itself only lifts the veil a little which hangs over this subject. How could it do more? We could not thoroughly understand more if more had been told us. Our constitution is as yet too earthly,—our understanding is as yet too carnal to appreciate more, if we had it. The Bible generally deals with the subject in negative terms, and not in positive assertions. It describes what there will not be in the glorious inheritance, that thus we may get some faint idea of what there will be. It paints the absence of certain things, in order that we may drink in a little the blessedness of the things 'present. It tells us that the inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. It tells us that the crown of glory fadeth not away. It tells us that the devil is to be bound, that there shall be no more night and no more curse, that death shall be cast into the lake of fire, that all tears shall be wiped away, and that the inhabitant shall no more say, \*' I am sick." And



these are glorious things indeed! No corruption!—No fading!—No withering!—No devil  
1 —No curse of sin!—No sorrow!—No tears!—No sickness!—No death! Surely the cup of the children of God will indeed run over 1

But, reader, there are positive things told us about the glory yet to come upon the heirs of God, which ought not to be kept back. There are many sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comforts in their future inheritance, Avhich all true Christians would do well to consider. There are cordials for fainting pilgrims in many words and expressions of Scripture, which you and I ought to lay up against time of need.

Is knowledge pleasant to us now? Is the little that we know of God and Christ, and the Bible precious to our souls, and do we long for more? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "Then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) Blessed be God, there will be no more disagreements among believers! Episcopalians and Presbyterians,—Calvinists and Armenians,

—Millennarians and Anti-Millennarians, — friends of Establishments and friends of the voluntary system,—advocates of infant baptism and advocates of adult baptism,—all will

at length see eye to eye. The former ignorance will have passed away. We shall marvel to find how childish and blind we have been.

Is holiness pleasant to us now ? Is sin the burden and bitterness of our lives ? Do we long for entire conformity to the image of God ? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture ? " Christ gave himself for the church that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Ephes. v. 27.) Oh! the blessedness of an eternal good bye to sin ! Oh I how little the best of us do at present ! Oh ! what unutterable corruption sticks, like bird-lime, to all our motives, all our thoughts, all our words, all our actions ! Oh! how many of us, like Naphtali, are goodly in our words, but like Eeuben, unstable in our works ! Thank God, all this shall be changed!

Is rest pleasant to us now ? Do we often feel faint though pursuing ? Do we long for a world in which we need not be always watching and warring? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What saith the Scripture ? \*' There remaineth a rest for the people of God." (Heb. iv. 9.) The daily, hourly conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil, shall at length be at an end. The enemy shall be bound. The warfare shall be over. The wicked shall at last cease from troubling. The weary shall at length be at rest. There shall be a great calm.

Is service pleasant to us now ? Do we find it sweet to work for Christ, and yet groan, being burdened by a feeble body ? Is our spirit often willing, but hampered and clogged by the poor weak flesh ? Have our hearts burned within us, when we have been allowed to give a cup of cold water for Christ's sake, and have we sighed to think what unprofitable servants we are ? Let us take comfort. We shall be able to serve perfectly in glory, and without weariness. What saith the Scripture ?

" They serve him day and night in his temple." (Rev. vii. 15.)

Is satisfaction pleasant to us now? Do we find the world empty ? Do we long for the filling up of every void place and gap in our hearts ? We shall have it perfectly in glory.\* We shall no longer have to mourn over cracks in all our earthen vessels, and thorns in all our roses, and bitter dregs in all our sweet cups. We shall no longer lament with Jonah over withered gourds. We shall no longer say with Solomon, " all is vanity and vexation of spirit." We shall no longer cry with aged David, "I have seen an end of all perfection." What saith the Scripture ? "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." (Psalm, xvii. 15.)

Is communion with the saints pleasant to us now ? Do we feel that we are never so happy as when we are with the excellent of the earth ? Are we never so much at home as in their company ? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What saith the Scripture ? " The Son of man shall send his angels, and they

82 "are you an heir?"

shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which work iniquity." " He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds." (Matt. xiii. 41., xxiv. 81.) Praised be God! we shall see all the saints of whom we have read in the Bible, and in whose steps we have tried to walk. We shall see apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, reformers, missionaries, and ministers, of whom the world was not worthy. We shall see the faces of those we have known and loved in Christ on earth, and over whose departure we shed bitter tears. We shall see them more bright and glorious than they ever were before. And best of all, we shall see them without hurry and anxiety, and without feeling that we only meet to part

again. In glory there is no death, no parting, no farewell!

Is Communion with Christ pleasant to us now ? Do we find His name precious to us ? Do we feel our hearts burn within us at the thought of His dying love ? We shall have

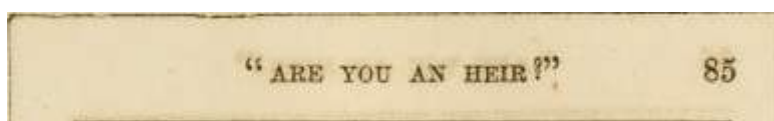
perfect communion with Him in glory. " We shall ever be with the Lord." (1 Thes. iv. 17.) We shall be with him in Paradise. We shall see His face in the kingdom. These eyes of ours will behold those hands and feet which were pierced with nails, and that head which was crowned with thorns. Where He is, there will the sons of God be. When He comes, they will come with Him. When He sits down in His glory, they shall sit down by His side. Blessed prospect indeed! I am a dying man in a dying world ! All before me is dark! The world to come is a harbor unknown ! But Christ is there, and that is enough. Surely if there is rest and peace in following Him by faith on earth, there will be far more rest and peace when we see Him face to face. If we have found it good to follow the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, we shall find it a thousand times better to sit down in our eternal inheritance with our Joshua in the promised land.

Ah! reader, if you are not yet among the sons and heirs, I do pity you with all my

heart. How much you are missing! How-little true comfort you are enjoying! There you are, struggling on, and toiling in the fire, and wearying yourself for mere earthly ends, —seeking rest, and finding none,—chasing shadows and never catching them,—wondering why you are not happy, and yet refusing to see the cause,—hungry, and thirsty, and empty, and yet blind to the plenty within your reach. Oh! that you were wise! Oh ! that you would hear the voice of Jesus, and learn of Him!

Reader, if you are one of those who are sons and heirs, you may well rejoice and be happy. You may well wait like the boy Patience in Pilgrim's Progress. Your best things are yet to come.—You may well bear crosses without murmuring. Your light affliction is but for a moment. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which is to be revealed. When Christ our life appears, then you also shall appear with Him in glory.—You may well not envy the transgressor and his prosperity. You

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are the truly rich. Well said a dying believer in my own parish, "I am more rich than I ever was in my life." You may say as Mephi-bosheth said to David, "Let the world take all, my king is coming again in peace." You may say as Alexander said, when he gave all his riches away, and was asked what he kept for himself, " I have hope."—You may well not be cast down by sickness. The eternal part of you is safe and provided for, whatever happens to your body.—You may well look calmly on death. It opens a door between you and your inheritance.—You may well not sorrow excessively over the things of the world,—over partings and bereavements,— over losses and crosses. The day of gathering is before you. Your treasure is beyond reach of harm. Heaven is becoming every year more full of those you love, and earth more empty. Glory in your inheritance. It is all yours if you are a son of God. " If we are children, then we are heirs."

And now, reader, in concluding this tract, let me ask you,, Whose child are you f Are you the child of nature or the child of grace ? Are you the child of the devil or the child of God ? You cannot be both at once. Which are you ?

Settle the question, reader, for you must die at last either one or the other. Settle it, reader, for it can be settled, and it is folly to leave it doubtful. Settle it, for time is short, the world is getting old, and you are fast drawing near to the judgment-seat of Christ. Settle it, for death is nigh, the Lord is at hand, and who can tell what a day might bring forth? Oh! that you would never rest till the question is settled! Oh! that you may never feel satisfied till you can say, "I have been born again, —I am a son of God."

Reader, if you are not a son and heir of God, let me entreat you to become one without delay. Would you be rich? There are unsearchable riches in Christ. Would you be noble? You shall be a king. Would you be happy? You shall have a peace which passeth understanding, and which the world can never give, and never take away. Oh! come out, and take up the cross, and follow Christ! Come out

j "are you an heir?" 87

! from among the thoughtless and worldly, and hear the word of the Lord, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 18.) Reader, if you are a son of God, I beseech you

to walk worthy of your Father's house. I charge you solemnly to honor Him in your life; and I above all to honor Him by implicit obedience to all His commands, and hearty love to all His children. Labor to travel through the world like a child of God and heir of glory. Let men be able to trace a family likeness between you and Him that begat you. Live a heavenly life. Seek things that are above. Do not seem to be building your nest below. Behave like a man who seeks a city out of sight, whose citizenship is in heaven, and who would be content with many hardships till he gets home.

Labor to feel like a son of God in every condition in which you are placed. Never forget you are on your Father's ground so long as you are here on earth. Never forget that

a Father's hand sends all your mercies and crosses. Cast every care on Him. Be happy and cheerful in Him. "Why indeed art thou ever sad if thou art the King's son? Why should men ever doubt, when they look at you, whether it is a pleasant thing to be one of God's children?"

Labor to behave towards others like a son of God. Be blameless and harmless in your day and generation. Be a peacemaker among all you know. Seek for your children's sonship to God above everything else. Seek for them an inheritance in heaven, whatever else you do for them. No man leaves his children so well provided for, as he who leaves them sons and heirs of God.

Persevere in your Christian calling, if you are a son of God, and press forward more and more. Be careful to lay aside every weight, and the sin which most easily besets you. Keep your eyes steadily fixed on Jesus. Abide in Him. Remember that without Him you can do nothing, and with Him you can do all things. Watch and pray daily. Be steadfast,

unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. Settle it down in your heart, that not a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, shall lose its reward, and that every year you are so much nearer home. Yet a little time and He that shall come

will come, and will not tarry. Then shall be the glorious liberty, and the full manifestation of the sons of God. Then shall the world acknowledge that they were the truly wise. Then shall the sons of God at length come of age. Then shall they no longer be heirs in expectancy, but heirs in possession. And then shall they hear with exceeding joy those comfortable words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. xxv. 34.) Surely



that day will make amends for all I That all who read this tract may see the value of the inheritance of glory, and be found at length in possession of it, is my heart's desire and prayer.

I remain, your affectionate friend,

J. C. Rtle.

B\nn im ht ^atti?"

" Are there few that "be saved?"— Luce xiii. 23.

Reader,

I do not know into whose hands this tract may fall. But I know there is no living soul who ought not to feel an interest in its subject. Young men or maidens, old men or children, married or single, gentle or simple, listen to a Christmas question;— jShall you be saved f

What does Christmas mean ? Is it not the time of year when men are reminded of Christ the Saviour's birth? Are you not told to remember how Jesus came into the world to save sinners ? All this is true. There is no denying it. The birth of Christ the Saviour, —the manhood of Christ the Saviour,—the salvation provided by Christ the Saviour,— all these are mighty facts. But after all will

they profit you anything ? Will they do you any good ? In one word,— shall you he saved ?

It may be you are hoping to have a merry Christmas. You are going to assemble your family, and gather all the beloved ones within your reach round your fire-side. You are about to eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and forget cares for a season. It is all well. I am no enemy to mirth in moderation. But this I say,—your family circle cannot always be unbroken. Yet a little while, and your fire-side will know you no more. You will be lying in a narrow, silent home. And then, consider,— shall you he saved ?

It may be you are rich and prosperous in this world. You have money, and all that money can command. You have honor, love, obedience, troops of friends. But remember, riches are not forever. You cannot keep them longer than a few years. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment. And then, consider,— shall you he savedj

It may be you are poor and needy. You

have scarcely enoughli to provide food and raiment for yourself and family. You are often distressed for want of comforts, wliich you have no power to get. Like Lazarus, you seem to have evil things only, and not good. But you take comfort in the thought that there is an end of all this. There is a world to come, where poverty and want shall be unknown. But, consider a moment,— shall you he saved f

It may be you have a weak and sickly body. You hardly know what it is to be free from pain. You have so long parted company with health that you have almost forgotten what it is like. You have often said in the morning, " would God it were evening,"—and in the evening, " would God it were morning." There are days when you are tempted by very weariness to cry out with Jonah, " it is better to die than to live." But, remember, death is not all. There is something else beyond the grave. And then, consider,— shall you he saved f

Reader, I entreat you in all affection, to

examine the question I put before you. I address you as a dying creature,—an immortal creature,—a creature going to be judged before the bar of God. As ever you would die in peace, rise again with hope, be acquitted in the day of judgment, and live for ever in glory,—give me a hearing this day. Shall you be saved ?

If it were an easy thing to be saved, I would not address you as I do. But is it so ? Let us see.

If the common opinion of the world, as to the number of the saved, was correct, I would not trouble you. But is it so ? Let us see.

If God had never spoken plainly in the Bible about the number of the saved, I might well be silent. But is it so ? Let us see.

If experience and facts left it doubtful whether many or few would be saved, I might hold my peace. But is it so ? Let us see.

Come now, and let me set before you in order the four following points,

I. Let me explain what it is to be saved.

II. Let me point out the mistakes which are common in the world about the number of the saved.

III. Let me show what the Bible says about the number of the saved.

IV. Let me bring forward some plain facts, as to the number of the saved.

Reader, if you go along with me in these four points, you will be better able to understand the importance of the question,—“Shall you be saved ?”

I. First of all let me explain what it is to be saved.

This is a matter that must be cleared up. Till you know this, you cannot answer my question. By being saved I may mean one thing, and you may mean another. Let me tell you what I find the Bible says it is to be saved, and then there will be no misunderstanding.

To be saved, is not merely to profess and call yourself a Christian. You may have all the outward parts of Christianity, and yet be

lost after all. You may be baptized into Christ's Church,—go to Christ's table,—have Christian knowledge,—be reckoned a Christian man,—and yet be a dead soul all your days;—and at last be found on Christ's left hand, among the goats. No ! reader, this is not salvation. Salvation is something far higher and deeper than this.

To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from the guilt of sin by faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour. It is to be pardoned, justified, and freed from every charge of sin, by faith in Christ's blood and mediation. Whosoever with his heart believes on the Lord Jesus, is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall have eternal life. This is the first part of salvation, and the root of all the rest. But this is not all.

To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from the power of sin by being born again, and sanctified by Christ's Spirit. It is to be freed from the hateful dominion of sin, the world, and the devil, by having a new nature put in us by the Holy Ghost.

"Whosoever is thus renewed in the spirit of his mind, and converted, is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall enter into the kingdom of God. This is the second part of salvation. But this is not all.

To be saved, is to be delivered in the day of judgment, from all the awful consequences of sin. It is to be declared blameless, spotless, faultless, and complete in Christ, while others are found guilty, and condemned for ever. It is to hear those comfortable words,—"Come, ye blessed," while others are hearing those fearful words,— "Depart, ye cursed." It is to be owned and confessed by Christ, as one of his dear children and servants, while others are disowned and cast off for ever. It is to be pronounced free from the portion of the wicked,—the worm that never dies,—the fire that is not quenched,—the weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, that never ends. It is to receive the reward prepared for the righteous,—the glorious body, —the kingdom that is incorruptible,—the crown that fadeth not away,—and the joy

that is forevermore. This is complete salvation. This is the redemption, for which true Christians are bid to look and long. This is the heritage of all men and women, who believe and are born again. By faith they are saved already. In the eye of God, their final salvation is an absolutely certain thing. Their names are in the book of life. Their mansions in heaven are prepared already. But still there is a fulness of redemption and salvation, which they do not attain to, while they are in the body. They are saved from the guilt and power of sin,—but not from the necessity of watching and praying against it. They are saved from the fear and love of the world,—but not from the necessity of daily fighting with it. They are saved from the service of the devil,—but they are not saved from being vexed by his temptations. But when Christ comes, the salvation of believers shall be complete. They possess it already in the bud. They shall see it then in the flower.

Such is salvation. It is to be saved from 7

the guilt, power, and consequences of sin. It is to believe and be sanctified now, and to be delivered from the wrath of God in the last day. He that has the first part in the life that now is, shall undoubtedly have the second part in the life to come. Both parts of it hang together. What God has joined together, let no man dare to put asunder. Let none dream he shall ever be saved at last, if he is not born again first. Let none doubt if he is born again here, that he shall assuredly be saved hereafter.

Header, take notice, the chief object of a minister of the Gospel, is to set forward the salvation of souls. I lay it down as a certain fact, that he is no true minister, who does not feel this. Talk not of a man's orders! All may have been done correctly, and according to rule. He may wear a black coat, and be called a "reverend" man. But if the saving of souls is not the grand interest,— the ruling passion,—the absorbing thought of his heart, —he is no true minister of the Gospel. He is a hireling, and not a shepherd.

Congregations  
may have called him,—but he is not called by the Holy Ghost. Bishops may have ordained him,—but not Christ.

For what purpose do you suppose we ministers are sent forth? Is it merely to wear a surplice,—and read the services,—and preach a certain number of sermons? Is it merely to get a comfortable living, and be in a respectable profession? No! indeed! we are sent forth for other ends than these. We are sent to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We are sent to persuade men to flee from the wrath to come. We are sent to draw men from the service of the world to the service of God,—to awaken the sleeping,—to arouse the careless,—and by all means to save some.

Think not that all is done, when we have set up regular services, and persuaded people to attend them. Think not that all is done, when full congregations are gathered, and the Lord's table is crowded, and the parish school is filled. We want to see manifest work of the Spirit among people,—an evident sense of

sin,—a lively faith in Christ,—a decided change of heart,—a distinct separation from the world,—a holy walk with God. In one Avord, we ivant to see souls saved, and we are fools and impostors,—blind leaders of the blind,—if we rest satisfied with anything less.

Reader, take notice, that the grand object of having a religion, is to be saved. This is the great question that you have to settle with your conscience, and to which I want you to attend. The matter is not, whether you go to church or chapel,—whether you go through certain forms and ceremonies,—whether you observe certain days, and perform a certain number of religious duties. The matter is, whether, after all, 3^ou will be saved. Without this, all your religious doings are weariness, and labor in vain.

Never, never be content with anything short of a saving religion. Surely to have a religion, which neither gives peace in life, nor hope in death, nor glory in the world to come, is childish folly.

And now, reader, you have heard what sal-

vation is. Consider calmly my question,— "SHALL YOU BE SAVED?"

11. Let me, in the second place, point out the mistoJces which are common in the luorld, about the number of the saved,

I need not go far for evidence on this subject. I will speak of things, which every man may see with his own eyes, and hear with his own ears.

I will try to show you, that there is a widespread delusion abroad about this matter, and that this very delusion is one of the greatest dangers to which your soul is exposed.

What then do men generally think about the spiritual state of others, while they are alive f What do they think of the souls of their relations, and friends^ and neighbors, and acquaintances ? Let us just see how that question can be answered.

They know that all around them are going to die, and to be judged. They know that they have all souls to be lost or saved. And what, to all appearance, do they consider their end is likely to be ?

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Do they think those around them are in danger of hell ? There is nothing whatever to show they think so. They eat and drink together. They laugh, and talk, and walk, and work together. They seldom, or never, speak to one another of God and eternit}^,—of heaven and of hell. I ask any one, who knows the world, as in the sight of God, is it not so ?

Will they allow that anybody is wicked or ungodly? Never, hardly, whatever may be his way of life. He may be a breaker of the Sabbath. He may be a neglecter of the Bible. He may be utterly Avithout evidences of true religion. No matter ! His friends will often tell you, that he may not make so much profession as some, but that he has a "good heart" at the bottom, and is not a wicked man. I ask any one, who knows the world, as in God's sight, is it not so ?

And what does all this prove ? It proves, that men flatter themselves, there is no great

difficult in getting to heaven. It proves plainly, that men are of opinion, that most persons will be saved.

But what do men generally think about the spiritual state of others, after they are dead? Let us just see how this question can be answered.

Men allow, if they are not infidels, that all who die have gone to a state of happiness, or of misery. And to which of these two states do they seem to think the greater part of persons go, when they leave this world?

I say, without fear of contradiction, that there is an unhappily common fashion of speaking well of the condition of those who have departed. It matters little, apparently, how a man has lived. He may have given no signs of repentance, or faith in Christ. He may have been ignorant of the plan of salvation, set forth in the gospel. He may have shown no evidence whatever of conversion or sanctification. He may have lived and died, like a creature without a soul. And yet, as soon as this man is dead, people will dare to say, that he is "probably happier than ever he was in this life." They will tell you complacently, they "hope he is gone to a better

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world." They will shake their heads gravely, and say, they "hope he is in heaven." They will follow him to the grave without fear and trembling, and speak of his death afterwards, as "a blessed change for him." I have no wish to hurt any one's feelings. I only ask any one, who knows the world,—is it not all true?

And what does it all prove? It just supplies one more awful proof, that men are determined to believe it is an easy business to get to heaven. Men will have it, that most persons are saved.

But again, what do men generally think of ministers who preach fully the doctrines of the New Testament? Let us just see how this question can be answered.

Send a man into a parish who shall declare all the counsel of God, and keep back nothing that is profitable. Let him be one, who shall clearly proclaim justification by faith,—regeneration by the Spirit,—and holiness of life. Let him be one, who shall draw the line distinctly between the converted and the uncon-

verted, and give both to sinners and to saints their portion. Let him produce out of the New Testament a plain, unanswerable, unmistakable description of the true Christian's character. Let him show that no man who does not possess that character, can have any reasonable hope of being saved. Let him press that description closely on the consciences of his hearers, and urge upon them repeatedly, that every soul who dies without that character will be lost. Let him do this, ably and affectionately, and, after all, what will the result be?

The result will be that, while some repent and are saved, the great majority of his hearers will not receive and believe his doctrine. They may not oppose him publicly. They may even esteem him, and respect him as an earnest, sincere, kind-hearted man. But they will go no further. He may show them the express words of Christ and his apostles. He may quote text upon text, and passage upon passage. It will be to no purpose. The great majority of his hearers will think him "too

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strict," and "too close," and "too particular." They will say among themselves, that the

world is not so bad as the minister seems to think,—and that the people cannot be so good as the minister v/ants them to be,—and that after all they hope they shall be all right at the last. I appeal to any minister of the Gospel, who has been any length of time in the ministry, whether I am not stating the truth. Are not these things so ?

And what does it all prove ? It just makes one more proof that men, generally, are resolved to think that salvation is not a very hard business, and that, after all, most people will be saved.

But what solid reason can men show us for these common opinions ? Upon what Scripture do they build this notion, that salvation is an easy business, and that most people will be saved? What revelation of God can they show us, to satisfy us that these opinions are sound and true ?

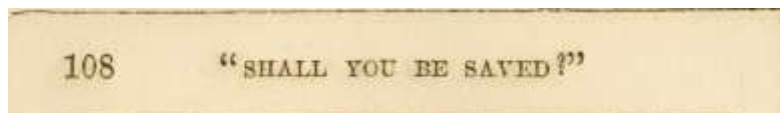
They have none, — literally none at all. They have not a text of Scripture, which

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fairly interpreted, supports their views. They have not a reason which will bear examination. They speak smooth things about one another's spiritual state, just because they do not like to allow there is danger. They cry peace, peace, over one another's graves, because they want it to be so, and would fain persuade themselves that so it is. Surely against such hollow, foundationless opinions as these, a minister of the Gospel may well protest.

Take notice, reader, that the world's opinion is worth nothing in matters of religion. About the price of an ox or a horse, or the value of labor,—about wages, and work,—about money and corn,—about all such things, the men of the world may give a correct opinion. But beware, if you love life, of being guided by man's judgment, in the things that concern salvation. " The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

Take notice, above all, that it never will do to think as others do, if you want to get to



heaven. No doubt it is easy work to go with the crowd in religious matters. It will save you much trouble to swim with the tide. You will be spared much ridicule. You will be freed from much unpleasantness. But, remember, once for all, that the world's mistakes about salvation are many, and dangerous. Be ver}^ sure, that unless you are on your guard against them, you will never be saved.

And now, reader, I press my question once more on your attention,—SHALL YOU BE SAVED ?

III Let me show you, in the third place, luhat the Bible says about the number of the saved.

There is only one standard of truth and error, to which you and I ought to appeal. That standard is the Holy Scripture. Whatsoever is there written, vou and I must receive and believe. Whatsoever cannot be proved by Scripture, joxi. and I ought to refuse.

Reader, can you subscribe to this ? If you cannot, there is little chance of your being

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moved by any tract of mine. If you can, give me your attention for a few moments, and I will tell you some solemn things.

Look, then, for one thing, at one single text of Scripture, and examine it well. You will find it in Matthew, vii. 13, 14:—" Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Now these are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are the words of Him, who was very God, and whose words shall never pass away. They are the words of Him, who knew what was in man,—who knew things to come, and things past,—who knew that He should judge all men at the last day. And what do those words mean ? Are they words which no man can understand, without a knowledge of Hebrew or Greek? No! they are not. Are they a dark, unfulfill-ed prophecy ? No ! they are not. Are they a deep, mysterious saying, which no human

intellect can fathom ? No! they are not. The words are clear, plain, and unmistakable. Ask any laboring man, who can read, and he will tell you so. There is only one meaning which can be attached to them. Their meaning is, that many people will be lost, and few will be found saved.

Look, in the next place, at the whole history of mankind as respects religion, as you have it given in the Bible. Go through the whole four thousand years, over which the history of the Bible reaches. Show me, if you can, one single period of time, at which godly people were many, and ungodly people were few.

How was it in the days of ISToah ? The earth, we are told expressly was "filled with violence." The imagination of man's heart was only " evil continually." All flesh had " corrupted his way." The loss of paradise was forgotten. The warnings of God, by Noah's mouth, were despised. And, at length, when the flood came on the world, and drowned every living thing, there were but eight people who had had faith enough to flee for refuge

to the ark. And were there many saved in those days ? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it in the days of Abraham, and Isaac, and Lot? It is evident, that in the matter of religion, they stood very much alone. The family from which they were taken, was a family of idolaters. The nations among whom they lived, were sunk in gross darkness and sin. When Sodom and Gomorrah were burned, there were not five righteous people to be found in the four cities of the plain. When Abraham and Isaac desired to find wives for their sons, there was not a woman in the land where they sojourned, to whom they could wish to see them married. And were there many saved in those days ? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel, in the days of tbe Judges ? No one can read the book of Judges and not be struck with the sad examples of

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man's corruption wliich it affords. Time after time we are told of the people forsaking God, and following idols. In spite of the plainest warnings, they joined af&ernity with the

Canaan-ites, and learned their works. Time after time we read of their being oppressed by foreign kings, because of their sin, and then miraculously delivered. Time after time we read of the deliverance being forgotten, and of the people returning to their former sins, like the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel in the days of the kings? From Saul, the first king, down to Zedekiah, the last king, their history is a melancholy account of backsliding, and declension, and idolatry,—with a few bright exceptional periods. Even under the best kings, there seems to have been a vast amount of unbelief and ungodliness, which only lay hid for a season, and burst out at the first favora-

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ble opportunity. Over and over again, we find, that under the most zealous kings, " the high places were not taken away." Mark how even David speaks of the state of things around him : " Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." (Psalm xii. 1.) Mark how Isaiah describes the condition of Judah and Jerusalem :—" The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it." "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and should have been like unto Gomorrah." (Isa. i. 5—9.) Mark how Jeremiah describes his times:— " Kun ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and learn, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it." (Jer. V. 1.) Mark how Ezekiel speaks of the men of his times :—" The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Is-

rael is to me become dross : all they are brass and tin and lead in the midst of the furnace : they are even the dross of silver." (Ezek. xxii. 17, 18). Mark what he says in the sixteenth and twenty-third chapters of his prophecy, about the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. And were there many saved in those days ? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the Jews, when our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth? The words of Saint John are the best account of their spiritual state :—" He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John, i. 11.) He lived as no one born of woman had ever lived before,—a blameless, harmless, holy life. He went about doing good. He preached as no one ever preached before. Even the officers of his enemies confessed, " never man spake like this man." He did miracles to confirm His ministry; which, at first sight, we might have fancied would have convinced the most hardened. But notwithstanding all this, the

vast majority of the Jews refused to believe Him. Follow our Lord in all his travels over Palestine, and you will always find the same story. Follow Him into the city, and follow Him into the wilderness. Follow Him to Capernaum, and Nazareth, and follow Him to Jerusalem. Follow Him among Scribes and Pharisees, and follow Him among Sadducees and Herodians.—Everywhere, you will arrive at the same result. They were amazed—they were silenced—they were astonished—they wondered—but very few became disciples. The immense proportion of the nation would have none of His doctrine, and crowned all their wickedness by putting Him to death. And were there



many saved in those days ? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the world in the days of the apostles ? If ever there was a period when true religion flourished, it was then. Never did the Holy Ghost call into the fold of Christ so many souls in the same space of time.

Never were there so many conversions, under the preaching of the Gospel, as when Paul and his fellow-laborers were the preachers. But still, it is plain from the Acts of the Apostles, that true Christianity was "a way everywhere spoken against." It is evident that in every city, even in Jerusalem itself, true Christians were a small minority. We read of perils of all kinds which the apostles had to go through, —not only perils from without, but perils from within,—not only perils from the heathen, but perils from false brethren. We hardly read of a single city visited by Paul, where he was not in danger from open violence and persecution. We see plainly, by some of his epistles, that the professing churches were mixed bodies, in which there were many rotten members. We find him telling the Philippians a painful part of his experience ;—"Many walk, of whom I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things." And were there many saved

in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what that answer must be.

And now, reader, I entreat you to weigh well the lessons of the Bible which I have just brought forward. Believe me, they are weighty and solemn, and deserve serious attention.

Think not to evade their force, by saying that the Bible only tells the story of the Jews. Think not to comfort yourself, by saying that, perhaps the Jews were more wicked than other nations, and that many people were probably saved among other nations, though few were saved among the Jews. You forget that this argument tells against you. You forget that the Jews had light and privileges which the Gentiles had not, and, with all their sins and faults, were probably the holiest and most moral nation upon earth. As to the state of people among the Assyrians, and Egyptians, and Greeks, and Romans, it is awful to think what it must have been. But this we may be sure of, that if many were ungodly among the

Jews, the number was far greater among the Gentiles. If few were saved in the green tree, alas ! how much fewer must have been saved in the dry.

Take notice, once for all, that the Bible and the men of the world speak very differently about the number of the saved. According to the Bible, few will be saved. According to the men of the world, many. According to the men of the world, few are going to hell. According to the Bible, few are going to heaven. According to the men of the world, salvation is an easy business. According to the Bible, the way is narrow, and the gate is strait. According to the men of the world, few will be found at last seeking admission into heaven when too late. According to the Bible, many will be in that sad condition, and will cry in vain, Lord, Lord, open to us. Header, the Bible was never wrong yet. The most unlikely and improbable prophecies about Tyre, Egypt, Babylon, and Nineveh, have all come true to the letter. And as in other matters, so it will be about the number of the

saved. The Bible will prove quite right, and the men of the world quite wrong.

And now, Reader, consider once more my question;—SHALL YOU BE SAVED?

TV. Let me show you in the last place some plain facts about the number of the saved.

I ask the reader's particular attention to this part of the subject. I know well that people flatter themselves, that the world is far better and wiser than it was 1800 years ago. We have churches, and schools, and books. We have civilization, and liberty, and good laws. We have a far higher standard of morality in society, than that which once prevailed. We have the power of obtaining comforts and enjoyments, which our forefathers knew nothing of. Steam, and gas, and electricity, and chemistry, have effected wonders for us. All this is perfectly true. I see it and am thankful. But all this does not diminish the importance of the question are there few or many of us likely to be saved

I am thoroughly satisfied, that the import-

ances, and found wanting. Let us apply this sifting process to any parish in this land, and see what the result would be.

Let us set aside first of all those persons in a parish who are living in any kind of open sin. By these I mean such as fornicators, and adulterers, and liars, and thieves; and drunkards, and cheats, and revilers, and extortioners. About these I think there can be no difference of opinion. The Bible says plainly, that "they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Now, will these persons be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside, in the next place, those persons who are Sabbath-breakers. I mean by this expression, those who seldom or never go to a place of worship, though they have the power,—those who do not give the Sabbath to God, but to themselves,—those who think of nothing but doing their own ways and finding their own pleasure upon Sundays. They show plainly, that they are not meet

for heaven. The inhabitants of heaven would not be company they could not like. The employment of heaven would be a weariness to them, and not a joy. Now will these persons be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside, in the next place, all those persons who are careless and thoughtless Christians. I mean by this expression, those who attend many of the outward ordinances of religion, but show no signs of taking any real interest in its doctrine and substance. They care little whether the minister preaches the Gospel or not. They care little whether they hear a good sermon or not. They would care little if all the Bibles in the world were burned. They would care little if an Act of Parliament were passed forbidding any one to pray. In short, religion is not the "one thing needful" with them. Their treasure is on earth. They are just like Gallio, to whom it mattered little whether people were Jews or Christians:—he "cared for none of these

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things." Now will these persons be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who are formalists and self-righteous. I mean by this expression, those who value themselves on their own regularity in the use of the forms of Christianity, and depend either directly or indirectly on their own doings for their acceptance with God. I mean all who rest their souls on any work but the work of Christ,—or any righteousness but the righteousness of Christ. Of such the Apostle Paul has expressly testified, "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And dare we say, in the face of such texts, that such as these will be saved? The answer is plain to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who know the Gospel with their heads, but do not obey it with their hearts. These are those

unhappy persons who have eyes to see the way of life, but have not will or courage to walk in it. They approve sound doctrine. They will not listen to preaching which does not contain it. But the fear of man, or the cares of the world, or the love of money, or the dread of offending relations, perpetually holds them back. They will not come out boldly, and take up the cross, and confess Christ before men. Of these also the Bible speaks expressly; "Faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone." "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "If any man is ashamed of me in this generation, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels." Shall we say that such as these will be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside, in the last place, all those who are hypocritical professors. I mean by that expression, all those whose religion consists in talk and high profession, and in

nothing besides. These are they of whom the prophet Ezekiel speaks, saying, "with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him. They have a form of godliness, but they have not the power of it. They are saints at church, and saints to talk to in

public. But they are not saints in private, and worst of all, they are not saints in heart. There can be no dispute about such persons. Shall we say that they will be saved ? There can only be one answer,—in their present condition they will not.

And now, reader, after setting aside these classes which I have described, I ask you, how many persons in any parish in England will there be left behind ? How many after sifting a parish thoroughly and honestly,—how many men and women will remain who are in the way to be saved ? How many true penitents, —how many real believers in Christ,—how many truly holy people will there be found ? I put it to your conscience to give an honest

answer, as in the sight of God. I ask you whether after sifting a parish with the Bible in the fashion described, you can come to any conclusion but this,—that few persons,—  
□sadly few persons,—are in a way to be saved.

It is a painful conclusion to arrive at, but I know not how it can be avoided. It is a fearful and tremendous thought, that there should be so many churchmen in England, and so many dissenters.—so many seat-holders and so many pew renters,—so many hearers and so many communicants,—and yet, after all, so few in a way to be saved. But the only question is, is it not true ? It is vain to shut our eyes against facts. It is useless to pretend not to see what is going on around us. The statement of the Bible, and the facts in the world we live in, will lead us to the same conclusion,—many are being lost, and few being saved.

I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because they think there is an immense quantity of death-bed repentances. They flatter themselves that multitudes, who

do not live religious lives, will yet die religious deaths. They take comfort in the thought, that vast numbers of persons turn to God in their last illness, and are saved at the eleventh hour. I will only remind such persons, that all the experience of ministers is utterly against the theory. People generally die just as they have lived. True repentance is never too late ;—^but repentance deferred to the last hours of life is seldom true. A man's life is the surest evidence of his spiritual state, and if lives are to be witnesses, then few are likely to be saved.

I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because they fancy it contradicts the tnercy of God. They dwell on the love to sinners, which the Gospel reveals. They point to the offers of pardon and forgiveness, which abound in the Bible. They ask us if we maintain, in the face of all this, that only few people will be saved. I answer, I will go as far as any one in exalting God's mercy in Christ, but I cannot shut my eyes against the fact, that this mercy profits no man, so long

as it is wilfully refused. I see nothing wanting, on God's part, for man's salvation. I see room in heaven for the chief of sinners. I see willingness in Christ to receive the most ungodly. I see power in the Holy Ghost to renew the most ungodly. But I see, on the other hand, deperate unbelief in man : he will not believe what God tells him in the Bible. I see desperate pride in man:—he will not bow his heart to receive the Gospel as a little child. I see desperate sloth in man :—he will not take the trouble to arise and call upon God. I see desperate worldliness in man:— he will not loose his hold on the poor perishable things of time, and consider eternity. In short, see the words of our Lord continually verified :—" Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life," and therefore I am driven to the sorrowful conclusion, that few are likely to be saved.

I know well that many will not believe what I am saying, because they refuse to observe

the evil there is in the world. They live in the midst of a little circle of good peo-

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pie. They know little of anything that goes on in the world outside that circle. They tell us the world is a world which is rapidly improving and going on to perfection. They count upon their fingers the number of good ministers whom they have heard and seen in the last year. They call our attention to the number of religious societies, and religious meetings, to the money which is subscribed, to the Bibles and tracts which are being constantly distributed. They ask us, if we really dare to say, in the face of all this, that few are in the way to be saved. In reply, I will only remind these amiable people, that there are other people in the world besides their own little circle, and other men and women, besides the chosen few whom they know in their own congregation. I entreat them to open their eyes, and see things as they really are. I assure them, there are things in this country of ours of which they are at present in happy ignorance. I ask them to sift any parish or congregation in England, with the Bible, before they condemn me hastily. I tell them, if

they will do this honestly, they will soon find that I am not far wrong, when I say, that few are likely to be saved.

I know well that many will not believe me, because they think such a doctrine very narrow-minded and exclusive. I utterly deny the charge. I disclaim any sympathy with those Christians, who condemn everybody outside their communion, and appear to shut the door of heaven against everybody who does not see everything with their eyes. Whether Roman Catholic, or Episcopalians, or Free-churchmen, or Baptists, whosoever does anything of this kind, I reckon him an exclusive man. I have no desire to shut up the kingdom of heaven against any one. All I say is, that none will enter that kingdom, except converted, believing, and holy souls,—and all I take on me to assert is, that both the Bible and facts combine to prove that such persons are few.

I know well that many will not believe what I am saying, because they think it a gloomy, uncharitable doctrine. It is easy to

make vague general assertions of this kind. It is not so easy to show that any doctrine deserves to be called gloomy and uncharitable which is scriptural and true. There is a spurious charity, I am aware, which dislikes all strong statements in religion,—a charity which would have no one interfered with,—a charity which would have every one let alone in his sins,—a charity which, without evidence, takes for granted that everybody is in a way to be saved,—a charity which never doubts that all people are going to heaven, and seems to deny the existence of such a place as hell. But such charity is not the charity of the New Testament, and does not deserve the name. Give me the charity which tries everything by the light of the Bible, and believes nothing, and hopes nothing, that is not sanctioned by the Word. Give me the charity which is not blind, and deaf, and stupid, but has eyes to see, and senses to discern, between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not. Such charity will rejoice in nothing but the truth, and will confess with sorrow, that I tell

nothing but the truth, when I say that few are likely to be saved.

I know well that many will not believe me, because they think it presumptuous to have any opinion at all about the number of the saved. But will these people dare to tell us that the Bible has not spoken plainly as to the character of saved souls? And will they dare to say that there is any standard of truth except the Bible? Surely there can be no presumption in asserting that which is agreeable to the Bible. I tell them plainly, that the

charge of presumption does not lie at my door. I say that he is the truly presumptuous man who, when the Bible has said a thing clearly and unmistakeably, refuses to receive it.

I know well that many will not believe me, because they think my statement extravagant, and unwarrantable. They regard it as a piece of fanaticism, unworthy of the attention of a rational man. They look on ministers who make such assertions, as weak-minded persons, and wanting in common sense. I can bear such imputations unmoved. I only ask those

who make them, to show me some plain proof that they are right, and I am wrong. Let them show me, if they can, that anybody is likely to get to heaven, whose heart is not renewed,—who is not a believer in Jesus Christ, —who is not a spiritual-minded and holy man. Let them show me, if they can, that people of this description are many, compared with those who are not. Let them, in one word, point us to any place on earth, where the great majority of the people are not ungodly, and the truly godly are not a little flock. Let them do this, and I will grant they have done right to disbelieve what I have said. Till they do this, I must maintain the sorrowful conclusion, that few persons are likely to be saved.

And now, reader, it only remains to make some practical application of the subject of this tract. I have set before you the character of saved people. I have shown you the painful delusion of the world, as to the number of the saved. I have placed before you the evidence of the Bible on the subject. I have drawn from the world around you, plain facts

in confirmation of the statements I have made. May the Lord grant, that all these solemn truths may not have been brought forward in vain!

I am quite aware that I have said many things in this tract, which are likely to give offence. I know it. It must be so. The subject is far too searching to be otherwise than offensive to some. But I have long had a deep conviction, that the subject has been painfully neglected, and that few things are so little realized as the comparative number of the lost and saved. All that I have written, I have written because I firmly believe it to be God's truth. All that I have said, I have said, not as an enemy, but a lover of your soul. You do not count him an enemy, who gives you a little medicine to save your life. You do not count him an enemy, who shakes you roughly from your sleep, when your house is on fire. Surely you will not count me an enemy, because I tell you strong truths for the benefit of your soul. Bear with me then, for a few moments, while I say a few last words

"shall you be saved?"

to impress the whole subject on your conscience.

Are there few saved ? Then, reader, shall you be one of the few? Oh! that you would see that salvation is the one thing needful! Health, and riches, and titles, are not needful things. A man may gain heaven without them. But what shall the man do, who dies not saved ? Oh! that you would see that you must have salvation now, in this present life, and lay hold upon it for your own soul! Oh! that you would see that, saved or not saved, is the grand question in religion! High church or low church,—churchman or dissenter,—all these are trifling questions in comparison. What a man needs to get to heaven is an actual personal interest in Christ's salvation. Surely if you are not saved, it will be better at last never to have been born.

Are there few saved ? Then, reader, if you are not one of the few already^ strive to be

one without delay. I know not who and what you are, but I say boldly, come to Christ and you shall be saved. The gate that leads to life may be

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strait,—but it was wide enough to admit Man-asseh, and Saul of Tarsus,—and why not you? The way that leads to life may be narrow, but it is marked by the footsteps of thousands of sinners like yourself. All have found it a good way. All have persevered, and got safe home at last. Jesus Christ invites you. The promises of the gospel encourage you! Oh! Reader, strive to enter in without delay.

Are there few saved? Then, reader, if you are doubtful whether you are one of the few, make sure work at once, and be doubtful no more. Leave no stone unturned, in order to ascertain your own spiritual state. Be not content with vague hopes and trusts. Rest not on warm feelings and temporary desires after God. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Oh! give me leave to say, that if you are content to live on uncertain about salvation, you live the maddest life in the world. The fires of hell are before you, and you are uncertain whether your soul is insured. This world below must soon be left, and you are uncertain whether you have a mansion pre-

pared to receive you in the world to come. The judgment will soon be set, and you are uncertain whether you have an advocate to plead your cause. Eternity will soon begin, and you are uncertain whether you are prepared to meet God ! Oh ! sit down this day, and study the subject of salvation. Give God no rest till uncertainty has disappeared, and you have got hold of a reasonable hope that you are saved.

Are there few that be saved ? Then, reader, if you are one he a ihanful man. Chosen and called of God, while thousands around you are sunk in unbelief,—seeing the kingdom of God, while multitudes around you are utterly blind, —delivered from this present evil world, while crowds are overcome by its love and fear,— taught to know sin, and God, and Christ, while numbers, to all appearance as good as you, live in ignorance and darkness,—Oh ! Reader, you have reason every day to bless and praise God. AVhence came this sense of sin, which you now experience ? Whence came this love of Christ,—this desire after holiness,—this

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hungering after righteousness,—this delight in the Word ? Has not free grace done it, while many a companion of your youth still knows nothing about it, or has been cut off in his sins ? Oh ! reader, you ought indeed to bless God ! Surely Whitefield might well say, that one anthem among the saints in heaven would be, " Why me Lord ?—Why didst thou choose me?"

Are there few that be saved? Then, Header, if you are one, do not wonder that you often find yourself standing alone. I dare believe you are sometimes almost brought to a standstill, by the corruption and wickedness that you see in the world around you. You see false doctrine abounding. You see unbelief and ungodliness of every description. You are sometimes tempted to say, " can I really be in the right in my religion ? Can it really be that all these people are in the wrong?" Beware, reader, of giving way to thoughts like these. Remember, you are only having practical proof of the truth of your Master's sayings. Think not that His purposes are being

defeated. Think not that His work is not going forward in the world. He is still taking out a people to His praise.—He is still raising up witnesses to himself, here and there, all over the world. The saved will yet be found to be a multitude that no man can number, when all are gathered together at last. The earth will yet be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. All nations shall serve Him. All kings shall yet delight to do Him honor. But the night is not yet spent. The day of the Lord's power is yet to come. In the meantime, all is going on as He foretold 1800 years ago. Many are being lost and few saved.

Are there few saved? Then, reader, if you are one^ do not be afraid of having too much religion. Settle it down in your mind, that you will aim at the highest degree of holiness, and spiritual-mindedness,—that you will not be content with any low degree of sanctification. Resolve that, by the grace of God, you will make Christianity beautiful in the eyes of the world. Remember, that the children of the world have but few patterns of true religion before them.

Endeavor, as far as in you lies, to make those few patterns recommend the service of your Master. Oh ! that every true Christian would recollect that he is set as a light-house in the midst of a dark world, and labor that every part of him may reflect light, and no side be dim!

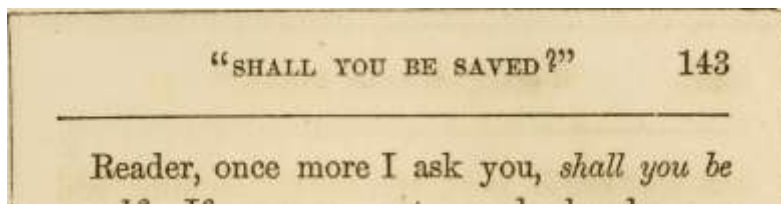
Are there few saved ? then, reader, if you are one^ use every opportunity of trying to do



good to souls. Settle it down in your mind, that the vast majority of people around you are in awful danger of being lost forever. Work every engine for bringing the Gospel to bear upon them. Help every Christian machinery for plucking brands from the burning. Give liberally to every Society, that has for its object to spread the everlasting Gospel. Throw all your influence heartily and unreservedly into the cause of doing good to souls. Live like a man who thoroughly believes that time is short, and eternity near,—the devil strong, and sin abounding,—the darkness very great, and the light very small,—the ungodly very many, and the godly very few,—the things

of the world mere transitory shadows, and heaven and hell the great substantial realities, —Alas! indeed for the lives that many believers live! How cold are many, and how frozen,—how slow to do decided things in religion, and how afraid of going too far,—how backward to attempt anything new, —how ready to discourage a good movement, how ingenious in discovering reasons why it is best to sit still,—how unwilling ever to allow that the time for active exertion is come,—how wise in finding fault,—how shiftless in devising plans to meet growing evils! Truly, a man might sometimes fancy, when he looks at the ways of many who are counted believers, that all the world was going to heaven, and hell were nothing but a lie.

Oh! reader, beware of this state of mind. Whether you like to believe it or not, hell is filling fast,—Christ is daily holding out His hand to a disobedient people,—many, many are in the way to destruction,—few, few are in the way to life. Many, many are likely to be lost. Few, few are likely to be saved.



Header, once more I ask you, shall you be saved? If you are not saved already, my heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may seek salvation without delay. If you are saved, my desire is, that you may live like a saved soul,—and like one who knows that saved souls are few.

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend, J. C. Kyle.

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" What is "written in the law ? Hew readest thou ?" Luke x. 26.

Keader,

The question before your eyes is 1800 years old. It was asked by our Lord Jesus Christ. It was asked concerning the Bible.

I invite you to consider this question. I warn you, it is just as mighty and important now as it was on the day when it came from our Lord's lips. I want to apply it to the conscience of every one who reads this tract, and to knock at the door of his heart. I would fain sound a trumpet in the ear of every one who speaks English, and cry aloud, " How readest thou ? Dost thou read the Bible ?'^

Why do I hold this question to be of such mighty importance? Why do I press it on the notice of every man, as a matter of life

and death? Give me your attention for a few minutes, and you shall see. Follow me through the pages of this tract, and you shall hear why I ask, "HOW KEADEST THOU? ~DOST THOU BEAD THE BIBLE?"

I. I ask, first of all, because there is no knowl-edge absolutely needful to a raavUs salvation, except a knowledge of the things which are to be found in the Bible.

We live in days when the words of Daniel are fulfilled before our eyes :—" Many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased." Schools are multiplying on every side. New colleges are set up. Old universities are reformed and improved. New books are continually coming forth. More is being taught,—more is being learned,—more is being read, than there ever was since the world began. It is all well. I rejoice at it. An ignorant population is a perilous and expensive burden to any nation. It is a ready prey to the first Absalom, or Cat-aline, or Wat Tyler, or Jack Cade, who may arise to entice it to do evil. But this I say,—• 10

we must never forget, that all the education a man's head can receive, will not save his soul from hell, unless he knows the truths of the Bible.

A man may have prodigious learning^ and yet never be saved. He may be master of half the languages spoken round the globe. He may be acquainted with the highest and deepest things in heaven and earth. He may have read books till he is like a walking cyclopa3-dia. He may be familiar with the stars of heaven,—the birds of the air,—the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea. He may be able to speak of plants, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows on the wall. He may be able to discourse of all the secrets of fire, air, earth, and water. And yet, if he dies ignorant of Bible truths, he dies a miserable man. Chemistry never silenced a guilty conscience. Mathematics never healed a broken heart. All the sciences in the world never smoothed down a dying pillow. No earthly philosophy ever supplied hope in death. No natural theology ever gave peace in the pros-

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pect of meeting a holy God. All these things are of the earth, earthy, and can never raise a man above the earth's level. They may enable a man to strut and fret his little season here below with a more dignified gait than his fellow-mortals, but they can never give him wings, and enable him to soar towards heaven. He that has the largest share of them, will find at length that without Bible knowledge he has got no lasting possession. Death will make an end of all his attainments, and after death they will do him no good at all.

A man may be a very ignorant man, and yet be saved. He may be unable to read a word, or write a letter. He may know nothing of geography b\*eyond the bounds of his own parish, and be utterly unable to say which is nearest, Paris or New York. He may know nothing of arithmetic, and not see any difference between a million and a thousand. He may know nothing of history, not even of his own land, and be quite ignorant whether his country owes most to Semiramis, Boadicea, or

Queen Elizabeth. He may know nothing of the affairs of his own times, and be incapable of telling you whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or the Commander-in-Chief, or the Archbishop of Canterbury is managing the national finances. He may know nothing of science, and its discoveries,—and whether Julius Caesar won his victories with

gunpowder, or the apostles had a printing press, or the sun goes round the earth, may be matters about which he has not an idea. And yet if that very man has heard Bible truth with his ears, and believed it with his heart, he knows enough to save his soul. He will be found at last with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, while his scientific fellow-creature, who has died unconverted, is lost forever.

Knowledge of the Bible, in short, is the one knowledge that is needful. A man may get to heaven without money, learning, health, or friends,—but without Bible knowledge he will never get there at all. A man may have the mightiest of minds, and a memory stored with all that a mighty mind can grasp,—and yet, if

he does not know the things of the Bible, he will make shipwreck of his soul forever. Woe! woe ! woe to the man who dies in ignorance of the Bible !

Header, this is the book about which I am addressing you to-day. It is no light matter what you do with such a book. It concerns the life of your soul. I summon you, I charge you to give an honest answer to my question. A^at are you doing with the Bible?—Do you read it ?—HOW KEADEST THOU ?

II. I ask, in the second place, because there is no hook in existence written in such a manner as the Bible.

The Bible is " written by inspiration of God." In this respect it is utterly unlike all other writings. God taught the writers of it what to say. God put into their mind thoughts and ideas. God guided their pens in setting down those thoughts and ideas. When you read it, you are not reading the self-taught compositions of poor imperfect men like yourself, but the words of the eternal God. When you

hear it, you are not listening to the erring opinions of short-lived mortals, but to the unchanging mind of the King of kings. The men who were employed to indite the Bible, spoke not of themselves. They " spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. i. 21).

I shall not waste time by attempting any long and labored proof of this. I say boldly, that the book itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. It is utterly inexplicable and unaccountable in any other point of view. It is the greatest standing miracle in the world. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired, let him give a reasonable account of it, if he can. Let him explain the history and character of the book in a way that will satisfy any man of common sense. The burden of proof seems to my mind, to lie on him.

Here is a book, written by not less than fifty different persons. The writers were men of every rank and class in society. One was a lawgiver. One was a warlike king. One was a peaceful king. One was a herdsman.

One had been brought up as a publican,—another as a physician,—another as a learned Pharisee,—two as fishermen,—several as priests. They lived at different intervals, over a space of 1500 years; and the greater part of them never saw each other face to face. And yet there is a perfect harmony among all these writers. They all write as if they were under one dictation. The handwriting may vary, but the mind that runs through their work is always one and the same. They all tell the same story. They all give one account of man,— one account of God,—one account of the way of salvation,—one account of the heart. You see truth unfolding under their hands, as you go through the volume of their writings,— but you never detect any real contradiction, or contrariety of view. Tell us not that all this might be the result of chance. The man who can believe that^ must indeed be a credulous person. There is only one satisfactory account of the book. It was written

under the direct inspiration of God.

Here is a book that has been finished and be-

fore the world for nearly 1800 years. These 1800 years have been the busiest and most changeable period the world has ever seen. During this period the greatest discoveries have been made in science,—the greatest alterations in the ways and customs of society,—the greatest improvements in the habits and usages of life. Hundreds of things might be named which satisfied and pleased our forefathers, which we have laid aside long ago as obsolete, useless, and old-fashioned. The laws, the books, the houses, the furniture, the clothes, the carriages of each succeeding century, have been a continual improvement on those of the century that went before. There is hardly a thing in which faults and weak points have not been discovered. There is hardly an institution which has not gone through a process of sifting, purifying, refining, simplifying, reforming, amending, and changing. But all this time men have never discovered a weak point or defect in the Bible. Infidels have assailed it in vain. There it stands,—perfect, and fresh, and complete, as it did eighteen

centuries ago. The march of intellect never overtakes it. The wisdom of wise men never gets beyond it. The science of philosophers never proves it wrong. The discoveries of travellers never convict it of mistakes. Are the distant islands of the Pacific laid open?—Nothing is found that in the slightest degree contradicts the Bible account of man's heart. Are the ruins of Nineveh and Egypt ransacked and explored?—Nothing is found that overturns one jot or tittle of the Bible's historical statements. Are the heathen in the remotest parts of the earth induced to give up their idols?—The Bible is found to meet the wants of their consciences, as thoroughly as it did those of Greeks and Romans in the days when it was first completed. It suits all ages, ranks, climates, minds, conditions. It is the one book which suits the world. How shall we account for this? What satisfactory explanation can we give? There is only one account and one explanation. The Bible was written by inspiration. It is the book of the world, because He inspired it who formed the

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world,—who made all nations of one blood,— and knows man's common nature. It is the book for every heart, because He dictated it, who alone knows all hearts and what all hearts require. It is the book of "God.

Here is a book, which for sublimity, wisdom, and purity, is utterly unrivalled. No other book in existence comes near it. There is a style and tone of thought about it, which separates it from all other writings. There are no weak points, and notes, and flaws, and blemishes. There is no mixture of infirmity and feebleness, such as you will find in the works of even the best Christians. "Holy, holy, holy," seems written on every page. To talk of comparing the Bible with the Koran, the Shasters, or the book of Mormon, is positively absurd. You might as well compare the sun with a rushlight,—or Mount Blanc with a mole hill,—or St. Paul's with an Irish hovel,—or the Portland vase with a garden pot,—or the Koh-i-noor diamond with a bit of glass. God seems to have allowed the existence of these pretended revelations,

in order to prove the immeasurable superiority of His own word. To talk of the inspiration of the Bible, as only differing in degree from that of such writings as the works of Emerson, Gibbon, and Voltaire, is simply a piece of blasphemous folly. Every honest and unprejudiced reader must see that there is a gulf between the Bible, and any other book, which no man can fathom. You feel at turning from the Scriptures to other works, that you have got into a new atmosphere. You feel like one who has exchanged

gold for base metal, and heaven for earth. And how can this mighty difference be accounted for? The men who wrote the Bible had no special advantages. They had, most of them, little leisure, few books, and no learning,—such as learning is reckoned in this world. Yet the book they compose is one which is unrivalled ! There is but one way of accounting for this. They wrote under the direct inspiration of God.

It proves nothing, against inspiratio'n, as some have asserted, that the writers of the Bible have each a different style. Isaiah does not write like Jeremiah, and Paul does not write like John. This is perfectly true—and yet the works of these men are not a whit less equally inspired. The waters of the sea have many different shades. In one place they look blue, and in another green. And yet the difference is owing to the depth or shallowness of the part we see, or to the nature of the bottom. The water in every case is the same salt sea. The breath of a man may produce different sounds, according to the character of the instrument on which lie plays. The flute, the pipe, and the trumpet, have each their peculiar note. And yet the breath that calls forth the notes, is in each case one and the same. The light of the planets we seen in heaven, is very various. Mars, and Saturn, and Jupiter, have each a peculiar color. And yet we know that the light of the sun, which each planet reflects, is in each case one and the same. Just in the same way, the books of the Old and New Testaments are all inspired truth, and yet

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the aspect of that truth varies according to the mind through which the Holy Ghost makes it flow. The hand-writing and style of the writers differ enough to prove that each had a distinct individual being; but the Divine Guide who dictates and directs the whole is always one. All is alike inspired. Every chapter, and verse, and word, is from God.

Oh ! that men who are troubled with doubts, and questionings, and sceptical thoughts about inspiration, would calmly examine the Bible for themselves ! Oh! that they would act on the advice "which was the first step to Augustine's conversion,—" Take it up and read it!—take it up and read it." How many Gordian knots this course of action would cut! How many difficulties and objections would vanish away at once like mist before the rising sun ! How many would soon confess, " The finger of God is here I God is in this book, and I knew it not."

Reader, this is the book about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with this book. It

is no light thing that God should have caused this book to be " written for your learning," and that you should have before you "the oracles of God." I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my question. What art thou doing with the Bible ? Dost thou read it at all?—HOW EEADEST THOU?

III. I ask, in the third place, because no hook in existence contains such important matter as the Bible.

The Bible handles subjects which are utterly beyond the reach of man, when left to himself It treats of things that are invisible,— the soul,—the world to come,—and eternity; —subjects which man has no line to fathom. All who have tried to write on

these subjects, without Bible light, have done little but show their own ignorance. They grope like the blind. They speculate. They conjecture. They generally make the darkness more visible, and land us in a region of uncertainty and doubt. How little did the wisest of the

heathen know! How dim were the views of Solon, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and Seneca ! A well-taught Sunday-school child, in the present day, knows more eternal truth than all these sages put together.

The Bible alone describes the beginning and end of the globe on which we live. It starts from the birth-day of the sun, moon, stars, and earth, and shows us creation in its cradle. It foretells minutely the dissolution of all things,—when the stars shall fall from their places, and the earth, and all its works, shall be burned up,—and shows us creation in its grave. It tells us the story of the world's youth, and it tells us the story of its old age. It gives us the picture of its first days, and it gives us the picture of its last. How vast and important is this knowledge !

The Bible alone gives a true and faithful account of man. It does not flatter him as novels and romances do. It does not conceal his faults and exaggerate his goodness. It paints him just as he is. It describes him as a fallen creature, very far gone from original

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righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil,—a creature needing not only a pardon, but a new heart, to make him fit for heaven. It shows him to be a corrupt being, under every possible circumstance, when left to himself;—corrupt after the loss of paradise, — corrupt after the flood,— corrupt when fenced in by laws and commandments,—corrupt when the Son of God visited him as manifest in the flesh,—corrupt in the face of warnings,—corrupt in the face of miracles,— corrupt in the face of judgments,—corrupt in the face of mercies. In one word,—it shows man to be by nature always a sinner. How important is this knowledge !

The Bible alone gives us true views of God. By nature man knows nothing of Him. All his conceptions and ideas of Him are low, grovelling, and debased. What can be more degraded than the gods of the Canaan-ites, and Egyptians,—of Babylon, of Greece, and of Rome ? What can be more vile than the gods of the Hindoos, and other heathens, in our own times ? By the Bible we know

that God hates sin. The destruction of the world by the flood,—the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah,—the drowning of Pharaoh, and the Egyptians in the Red Sea,—the cutting off of the nations of Canaan,—the overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple,—the scattering of the Jews;—all these are unmistakable witnesses. By the Bible we know that God loves sinners. His gracious promise in the day of Adam's fall,—His long-suffering in the times of Noah,—His deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt,—His gift of the law at Mount Sinai,—His bringing the tribes into the promised land,—His forbearance in the days of the judges and kings,—His repeated warnings by the mouth of His prophets,— His restoration of Israel, after the Babylonian captivity,—His sending His Son into the world, in due time, to be crucified,—His commanding the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles;—all these are speaking facts. By the Bible we learn that God knows all things. We see Him foretelling things hundreds and thousands of years before they take place, and

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as he foretells so it comes to pass. He foretold that the family of Ham should be a servant of servants,—that Tyre should become a rock for drying nets,—that Nineveh should become a desolation,—that Babylon should be made a desert,—that Egypt should be the basest of kingdoms,—and that the Jews should not be reckoned among the nations. All these things were utterly unlikely. Yet all have been fulfilled. Reader, once more I say, how important is this knowledge 1

The Bible alone teaches us that God has made a full^ perfect^ and complete provision for the salvation of fallen man. It tells us of an atonement made for the sin of the world, by the sacrifice and death of God's own Son upon the cross. It tells us that by His death for sinners. He obtained eternal redemption for all that believe on Him. The claims of God's broken law have now been satisfied. Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust. God can now be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It tells us that there is now a complete remedy for the guilt of sin,

—even the precious blood of Christ. Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. It tells us that there is a complete remedy for the power of sin,—even the almighty grace of the Spirit of Christ. It shows us the Holy Ghost quickening believers, and making them new creatures. It promises a new heart and a new nature to all who will hear Christ's voice, and follow him. Reader, once more I say, how important is this knowledge !

The Bible alone explains the state of things that we see in the world around us. There are many things on earth which a natural man cannot explain. The amazing inequality of conditions,—the poverty and distress,—the oppression and persecution,—the shakings and tumults,—the failures of statesmen and legislators,—the constant existence of uncured evils and abuses,—all these things are often puzzling to him. He sees, but does not understand. But the Bible makes it all clear. The Bible can tell him that the whole world lieth in wickedness,—that the prince of the

world, the devil, is everywhere, and that it is vain to look for perfection in the present order of things. The Bible will tell him that neither laws nor education can ever change men's hearts,—and that just as no man will ever make a machine work well, unless he allows for friction,—so also no man will do much good in the world, unless he always remembers that the world he works in is full of sin. The Bible will tell him that there is " a good time " certainly coming,—and coming perhaps sooner than people expect it,—a time of perfect knowledge, perfect justice, perfect happiness, and perfect peace. But the Bible will tell him this time shall not be brought in by any power but that of Christ coming to earth again. And for that second coming of Christ the Bible will tell him to prepare. Oh ! reader, how important is all this knowledge !

But time would fail me, if I were to enter fully into all the great things which the Bible reveals. It is not by any sketch or outline that the treasures of the Bible can be displayed. It would be easy to point out many other

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things, besides those I have mentioned, and yet the half of its riches would be left untold.

How comforting is the account it gives us of the great mediator of the New Testament,—the man Christ Jesus! Four times over His picture is graciously drawn before our eyes.

Four separate witnesses tell us of His miracles and His ministry,—His sayings and His doings,—His life and His death,—His power and His love,—His kindness and His patience,— His ways, His words, His works, His thoughts, His heart. Blessed be God, there is one thing in the Bible, the most prejudiced reader can hardly fail to understand, and that is the character of Jesus Christ!

How encouraging are the examples the Bible gives us of good people! It tells us of many who were of like passions with ourselves,—men and women who had cares, crosses, families, temptations^ afflictions, diseases, like ourselves,—and yet by faith and patience inherited the promises, and got safe home. It keeps back nothing in the history of these people. Their mistakes, their infirm-

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ities, their conflicts, their experience, their prayers, their praises, their useful lives, their happy deaths,—all are fully recorded. And it tells us the God and Saviour of these men and women still waits to be gracious, and is altogether unchanged.

How instructive are the examples the Bible gives us of bad people! It tells us of men and women who had light, and knowledge, and opportunities, like ourselves, and yet hardened their hearts, loved the world, clung to their sins, would have their own way, despised reproof, and ruined their own souls forever. And it warns us that the God who punished Pharaoh, and Saul, and Ahab, and Jezebel, and Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira, is a God who never alters, and that there is a hell.

How precious are the promises which the Bible contains for the use of those who love God! There is hardly any possible emergency or condition for which it has not some word in season. And it tells men that God loves to be put in remembrance of these promises, and

that if He has said He will do a thing, His promise shall certainly be performed.

How blessed are the hopes which the Bible holds out to the believer in Christ Jesus! Peace in the hour of death,—rest and happiness on the other side of the grave,—a glorious body in the morning of the resurrection, —a full and triumphant acquittal in the day of judgment,—an everlasting reward in the kingdom of Christ,—a joyful meeting with the Lord's people in the day of gathering together ;—these, these are the future prospects of every true Christian. They are all written in the book,—in the book which is all true.

How striking is the light which the Bible throws on the character of man ! It teaches us what men may be expected to be, and do, in every position and station of life. It gives us the deepest insight into the secret springs and motives of human actions, and the ordinary course of events under the control of human agents. It is the true discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. How deep is the

wisdom contained in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes! I can well understand an old divine saying, " Give me a candle and a Bible, and shut me up in a dark dungeon, and I will tell you all that the whole world is doing."

Header, all these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Bible. We have probably not the least idea how little we should know about these things if we had not the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the



value of the treasures this one volume contains. Well might old John Newton say that some books were copper books in his estimation, some were silver^ and some few were gold ; —but the Bible alone was like a book all made up of hank notes.

HOW EEADEST THOU

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Think not for a moment that any part of this precious book is not profitable. Think not that such portions as catalogues and pedigrees,—as Leviticus, and the description of Ezekiel's temple,—are useless and without value. Believe me it is childish folly to question the usefulness of any word in the Bible merely because our eyes at present do not see its use.

Come with me and look for a moment at the book of nature, and I will soon show you things of which you do not see the use.

Place yourself in imagination by the side of an Australian gold-digging, and observe the earth that is drawn up from its bottom. It is likely that your unpractised eye will see nothing in that heap but rubbish, and dirt, and stones. And yet that very heap of earth may prove on washing to be full of particles of the purest gold. It is just the same with the Bible. We see but a little of it now. We shall find hereafter that every word of it contained gold.

Place yourself in imagination on the top of

some Highland mountain. Look at the minute moss or lichen which clings to the side of that mass of rock. Tell me if j^ou can what use and purpose that lichen serves. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the very insects leave it alone. The grouse, and ptarmigan, and red deer draw no sustenance from it. The rock does not require its covering. And yet that minute lichen is as truly a part of God's creation as the cedars of Lebanon, or the Victoria Kegia of the South American rivers. Place it under a microscope, and you will soon see that like all other works of God it is " very good," and full of beautiful design. Settle it down in your mind, that as it is with, the book of nature, so it is with the book of Eevelation, the written Word of God. There is not a chapter or verse from first to last, which is not in some way profitable. If you and I do not see its use, it is because we have not eyes to see it yet. But all, we may rest assured, is precious. All is very good. Well said Bishop Jewell, " There is no sentence, no clause, no word, no syllable, no letter, but it

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is written for tliy instruction. There is not one jot, but it is signed and sealed with the blood of the Lamb."

Eeader, this is the book about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with it. It is no light matter in what way you are using this treasure. I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my question,—What art thou doing with the Bible ?—Dost thou read it?—HOAV EEADEST THOU?

TV. I ask in the fourth place, because no book in existence has produced such wonderful effects on manlcind at large as the Bible.

This is the book whose doctrines turned the world upside down in the days of the

apostles.

Eighteen centuries have now passed away since God sent forth a few Jews from a remote corner of the earth to do a work which according to man's judgment must have seemed impossible. He sent them forth at a time when the whole world was full of superstition, cruelty, lust, and sin. He sent them forth to

proclaim that the established religions of the earth were false and useless, and must be forsaken. He sent them forth to persuade men to give up old habits and customs, and to live different lives. He sent them forth to do battle with vested interests, with old associations, with a bigoted priesthood, with sneering philosophers, with an ignorant population, with bloody-minded emperors, with the whole influence of Rome. Never was there an enterprise to all appearance more Quixotic, and less likely to succeed 1

And how did He arm them for this battle? He gave them no carnal weapons. He gave them no worldly power to compel assent, and no worldly riches to bribe belief. He simply put the Holy Ghost into their hearts, and the Scriptures into their hands. He simply bade them to expound and explain, to enforce and to publish the doctrines of the Bible. The preacher of Christianity in the first century was not a man with a sword and an army, to frighten people, like Mahomet,—or a man with a license to be sensual, to allure people,

like the priests of the shameful idols of Hindostan. No 1 he was nothing more than one holy man with one holy book.

And how did these men of one book prosper? In a few generations they entirely changed the face of society by the doctrines of the Bible. They emptied the temples of the heathen gods. They banished idolatry, or left it high and dry like a stranded ship. They brought into the world a higher tone of morality between man and man. They raised the character and position of woman. They altered the standard of purity and decency. They put an end to many cruel and bloody customs, such as the gladiatorial fights. There was no stopping the change. Persecution and opposition were useless. One victory after another was won. One bad thing after another melted away. Whether men liked it or not, they were insensibly affected by the movement of the new religion, and drawn within the whirlpool of its power. The earth shook, and their rotten refuges fell to the ground. The flood rose, and they found themselves ob-

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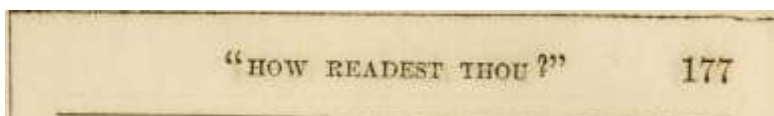
liged to rise with it. The tree of Christianity swelled and grew, and the chains they had cast round it to arrest its growth, snapped like tow. And all this was done by the doctrines of the Bible! Talk of victories indeed! What are the victories of Alexander, and Csesar, and Marlborough, and Napoleon, and Wellington, compared with those I have just mentioned? For extent, for completeness, for results, for permanence, there are no victories like the victories of the Bible.

This is the book which turned Europe upside down in the days of the Protestant Reformation. No man can read the history of Christendom as it was five hundred years ago, and not see that darkness covered the whole professing church of Christ, even a darkness that might be felt. So great was the change that had come over Christianity, that if an apostle had risen from the dead he would not have recognized it, and would have thought that heathenism had revived again. The doctrines of the Gospel lay buried under a dense mass of human traditions. Penances, and pilgrimages, and in-

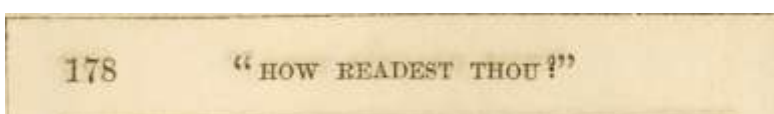
dulgences, relic-worship, and image-worship, and saint-worship, and worship of the Virgin Mary, formed the sum and substance of most people's religion. The church was made an idol. The priests and ministers of the church □usurped the place of Christ. And by what means was all this miserable darkness cleared away ? By none so much as by bringing forth once more the Bible.

It was not merely the preaching of Luther and his friends, which established Protestantism in Germany. The grand lever which overthrew the Pope's power in that country, was Luther's translation of the Bible into the German tongue. It was not merely the writings of Cranmer and the English Reformers which cast down popery in England. The seeds of the work thus carried forward were first sown by Wycliffe's translation of the Bible many years before. It was not merely the quarrel of Henry VIII. and the Pope of Rome, which loosened the Pope's hold on English minds. It was the royal permission to have the Bible translated and set up in churches, so that every

one who liked might read it. Yes! it was the reading and circulation of Scripture which mainly established the cause of Protestantism in England, in Germany, and Switzerland. Without it the people would probably have returned to their former bondage when the first reformers died. But by reading of the Bible the public mind became gradually leavened with the principles of true religion. Men's eyes became thoroughly open. Their spiritual understandings became thoroughly enlarged. The abominations of popery became distinctly visible. The excellence of the pure Gospel became a rooted idea in their hearts. It was then in vain for Popes to thunder forth excommunications. It was useless for kings and queens to attempt to stop the course of Protestantism by fire and sword. It was all too late. The people knew too much. They had seen the light. They had heard the joyful sound. They had tasted the truth. The sun had risen on their minds. The scales had fallen from their eyes. The Bible had done its appointed work within them, and that



work was not to be overthrown. The people would not return to Egypt. The clock could not be put back again. A mental and moral revolution had been effected, and mainly effected by God's Word. Oh! reader, those are the true revolutions which the Bible effects. What are all the revolutions recorded by Yer-tot; what are all the revolutions which France and England have gone through, compared to these ? No revolutions are so bloodless, none so satisfactory, none so rich in lasting results, as the revolutions accomplished by the Bible! This is the book on which the well-being of nations has always hinged, and with which the interests of every nation in Christendom at this moment are inseparably bound up. Just in proportion as the Bible is honored or not, light or darkness, morality or immorality, true religion or superstition, liberty or despotism, good laws or bad, will be found in a land. Come with me and open the pages of history, and you will read the proofs in time past. Bead it in the history of Israel under the kings. How great was the wickedness that



then prevailed ! But who can wonder ? The law of the Lord had been completely lost sight of, and was found in the days of Josiah in a corner of the templ«.—Eead it in the history of the Jews in our Lord Jesus Christ's time. How awful the picture of Scribes and

Pharisees, and their religion ! But who can wonder ? The Scripture was made void by man's traditions.—Read it in the history of the church of Christ in the middle ages. What can be worse than the accounts we have of ignorance and superstition? But who can wonder? The times might well be dark, when men had not the light of the Bible.

Come with me next and look at the map of the world, and see what a tale it tells ! Which are the countries where the greatest amount of ignorance, superstition, immorality, and tyranny is to be found at this very moment ? The countries in which the Bible is a forbidden or neglected book,—such countries as Italy, and Spain, and the South American States. Which are the countries where liberty, and public and private morality have attained the highest

pitch ? The countries where the Bible is free to all, like England, Scotland, and the United States. Yes ! when you know how a nation deals with the Bible, you may generally know what a nation is. Oh! that the rulers of some nations did but know that a free Bible is the grand secret of national prosperity, and that the surest way to make subjects orderly and obedient, is to allow a free passage to the living waters of God's Word! Oh ! that the people of some countries did but see that a free Bible is the beginning of all real freedom, and that the first liberty they should seek after, is liberty for the apostles and prophets, —liberty to have a Bible in every house, and a Bible in every hand! Well said Bishop Hooper, " God in heaven and the king on earth have no greater friend than the Bible." It is a striking fact, that when British Sovereigns are crowned, they are publicly presented with the Bible, and told, "This book is the  most valuable thing this world affords."

This is the book which at this moment is producing the mightiest moral and spiritual effects throughliout the world. This is the secret of the wonderful success which attends the London City Mission, and the Irish Church Missions. This is the true account of that amazing move toward Protestantism which has lately taken place in several departments of France. Which are the cities of the earth where the fewest soldiers and police are required to keep order ?—London, Manchester, Liverpool, New York,—cities which are deluged with Bibles. Which are the churches on earth which are producing the greatest effect on mankind ? The churches in which the Bible is exalted. Which are the parishes in England and Scotland where religion and morality have the strongest hold ? The parishes in which the Bible is most circulated and read. Who are the ministers in England who have the most real influence over the minds of the people ? Not those who are ever crying " Church ! Church !" but those who are faithfully preaching the Word. Ah! reader, a church which does not honor the Bible, is as useless as a body without life, or a steam en-

gine witlaout fire. A minister who does not honor the Bible, is as useless as a soldier without arms, a builder without tools, a pilot without compass, or a messenger without tidings. It is cheap and easy work for Eoman Catholics, Neologians, and friends of secular education, to sneer at those who love the Bible. But the Eomanist, the Neologian, and the friends of mere secular education, have never yet shown us one New Zealand, one Tinne-velly, one Sierra Leone as the fruit of their principles. We only can do that who honor the Bible, and we say these are the works of the Word, and the proofs of its power.

This is the book to which the civilized world is indebted for many of its best and most praise-worthy institutions. Few probably are aware how many are the good things that men have adopted for the public benefit, of which the origin may be clearly traced up to the Bible. It has left lasting marks wherever it has been received. From the Bible are drawn many of the best laws by which society is kept in order. From the Bible has been

obtained

the standard of morality about truth, honesty, and the relations of man and wife, which prevails among Christian nations, and which,— however feebly respected in many cases,— makes so great a difference between Christians and heathens. To the Bible we are indebted for that most merciful provision for the poor man, the Sabbath day. To the influence of the Bible we owe nearly every humane and charitable institution in existence. The sick, the poor, the aged, the orphan, the lunatic, the idiot, the blind, were seldom or never thought of before the Bible leavened the world. You may search in vain for any record of institutions for their aid in the histories of Athens or of Rome. Ah ! reader, many sneer at the Bible, and say the world would get on well enough without it, who little think how great are their own obligations to the Bible. Little does the infidel think as he lies sick in some of our great hospitals, that he owes all his present comforts to the very book he affects to despise. Had it not been for the Bible, he might have died in misery, uncared for, un-

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noticed, and alone. Yerily the world we live in is fearfully unconscious of its debts. The last day alone, I believe, will tell the full amount of benefit conferred upon it by the Bible.

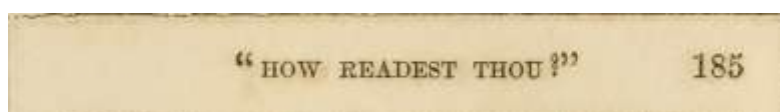
Reader, this wonderful book is the subject about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. The swords of conquering generals,—the ship in which Nelson led the fleets of England to victory,—the hydraulic press which raised the tubular bridge at the Menai;—each and all of these are objects of interest as instruments of mighty power. The book I speak of this day is an instrument a thousand-fold mightier still. Surely it is no light matter whether you are paying it the attention it deserves. I charge you, I summon you to give me an honest answer this day,—What art thou doing with the Bible ?—Dost thou read it ? HOW READEST THOU?

V. I ask in the fifth place, because no book in existence can do so much for every one who reads it rightly as the Bible.

The Bible does not profess to teach the wisdom of this world. It was not written to explain geology or astronomy. It will neither instruct you in mathematics, nor in natural philosophy. It will not make you a doctor, or a lawyer, or an engineer.

But there is another world to be thought of, beside that world in which man now lives. There are other ends for which man was created, beside making money and working. There are other interests which he is meant to attend to, beside those of his body ; and those interests are the interests of his soul. It is the interests of the immortal soul which the Bible is especially able to promote. If you would know law, you may study Blackstone or Sugden. If you would know astronomy or geology, you may study Herschel and Buckland. But if you would know how to have your soul saved, you must study the written Word of God.

Header, the Bible is " able to make a man wise unto salvation " through faith which is in Christ Jesus. It can show you the way



which leads to heaven. It can teach you everything you need to know, point out everything you need to believe, and explain everything you need to do. It can show you

what you are,— a sinner. It can show you what God is,—<sup>^</sup>perfectly holy. It can show you the great giver of pardon, peace, and grace,— Jesus Christ I have read of an Englishman who visited Scotland in the days of Blair, Eutherford, and Dickson, three famous preachers,—and heard all three in succession. He said that the first showed him the majesty of God,—the second showed him the beauty of Christ,—and the third showed him all his heart It is the glory and beauty of the Bible, that it is always teaching these three things more or less, from the first chapter of it to the last. The Bible, applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost, is the grand instrument by which souls are first converted to God, That mighty change is generally begun by some text or doctrine of the Word, brought home to a man's conscience. In this way the Bible has worked moral miracles by thousands. It has made

drunkards become sober,—uncbaste people become pure,—thieves become honest,—and violent-tempered people become meek. It has wholly altered the course of men's lives. It has caused their old things to pass away, and made all their ways new. It has taught worldly people to seek first the kingdom of God. It has taught lovers of pleasure to become lovers of God. It has taught the stream of men's affections to run upwards instead of running downwards. It has made men think of heaven, instead of always thinking of earth, and life by faith, instead of living by sight. All this it has done in every part of the world. All this it is doing still. What are the Eomish miracles which weak men believe, compared to all this, even if they were true? Those are the truly great miracles which are yearly worked by the Word.

The Bible, applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost, is the chief means by which men are built up and established in the faith, after their conversion. It is able to cleanse them, to sanctify them, to instruct them in righteous-

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ness, and to furnish them thoroughly for all good works. The Spirit ordinarily does these things by the written Word ; sometimes by the Word read, and sometimes by the Word preached, but seldom, if ever, without the Word. The Bible can show a believer how to walk in this world so as to please God. It can teach him how to glorify Christ in all the relations of life, and can make him a good master, servant, subject, husband, father, or son. It can enable him to bear afflictions and privations without murmuring, and say, " It is well." It can enable him to look down into the grave, and say, " I fear no evil." It can enable him to think on judgment and eternity, and not feel afraid. It can enable him to bear persecution without flinching, and to give up liberty and life rather than deny Christ's truth. Is he drowsy in soul?—□ It can awaken him. Is he mourning?—It can comfort him. Is he erring?—It can restore him. Is he weak ?—It can make him strong. Is he in company ?—It can keep him from evil. Is he alone?—It can talk with

him. All this the Bible can do for all believers,—for the least as well as the greatest, —for the richest as well as the poorest. It has done it for thousands already, and is doing it for thousands every day.

Eader, the man who has the Bible, has everything which is absolutely needful to make him spiritually wise. He needs no priest to break the bread of life for him. He needs no ancient traditions, no writing of the fathers, no voice of the church, to guide him into all truth. He has the well of truth open before him, and what can he want more? Yes I though he be shut up alone in a prison, or cast on a desert island,—though he never see a church, or minister, or sacrament again,—if he has but the Bible, he has got the infallible guide, and wants no other. If he has but the will to read that Bible rightly, it shall

certainly teach him the road that leads to heaven. It is here alone that infallibility resides. It is not in the church. It is not in the councils. It is not in ministers. It is only in the written Word.

I know well that many say that they have found no saving power in the Bible. They tell us they have tried to read it, and have learned nothing from it. They can see in it nothing but hard and deep things. They ask us what we mean by talking of its power.

I answer that the Bible no doubt contains hard things, or else it would not be the book of God. It contains things hard to comprehend, but only hard because we have not grasp of mind to comprehend them. It contains things above our reasoning powers, but nothing that might not be explained, if the eyes of our understanding were not feeble and dim. But is not an acknowledgment of our own ignorance the very corner-stone and foundation of all knowledge? Must not many things be taken for granted in the beginning of every science, before we can proceed one step towards acquaintance with it? Do we not require our children to learn many things of which they cannot see the meaning at first? And ought we not then to expect to find deep things when we begin

studying the Word of God, and yet to believe that if we persevere in reading it, the meaning of many of them will one day be made clear? No doubt we ought so to expect, and so to believe. We must read with humility. We must take much on trust. We must believe that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter, some part in this world, and all in the world to come.

But I ask that man who has given up reading the Bible, because it contains hard things, whether he did not find many things in it easy and plain? I put it to his conscience, whether he did not see great landmarks and principles in it all the way through? I ask him whether the things needful to salvation did not stand out boldly before his eyes, like the light-houses on English headlands from the Land's-end to the mouth of the Thames. What should we think of the captain of a steamer, who brought up at night in the entrance of the Channel, on the plea that he did not know every parish, and village, and creek, along the British coast? Should we not think

him a lazy coward, when the lights on the Lizard, the Eddystone, and the Stark, and Portland, and St. Catherine's, and Beachy Head, and Dungeness, and the Forelands, were shining forth like so many lamps, to guide him up to the river? Should we not say, why did you not steer by the great leading lights? And what ought we to say to the man who gives up reading the Bible, because it contains hard things, when his own state, and the path to heaven, and the way to serve God, are all written down clearly and unmistakably, as with a sunbeam? Surely we ought to tell that man, that his objections are no better than lazy excuses, and do not deserve to be heard.

I know well that many raise the objection, that thousands read the Bible, and are not a whit the better for their reading. And they ask us, when this is the case, what becomes of the Bible's boasted power?

I answer, that the reason why so many read the Bible without benefit is plain and simple, —they do not read it in the right way. There

is generally a right way and a wrong way of doing everything in the world; and just as it is with other things, so it is in the matter of reading the Bible. The Bible is not so entirely different from all other Books, as to make it of no importance in what spirit and manner you read it. It does not do good, as a matter of course, by merely running our eyes over the print, any more than the sacraments do good by mere virtue of our receiving them. It does not ordinarily do good, unless it is read with humility and earnest prayer. The

best steam-engine that was ever built, is useless if a man does not know how to work it. The best sun-dial that was ever constructed, will not tell its owner the time of day, if he is so ignorant as to put it up in the shade. Just as it is with that steam-engine, and that sun-dial, so it is with the Bible. When men read it without profit, the fault is not in the book, but in themselves.

I tell the man who doubts the power of the Bible, because many read it, and are no better for the reading, that the abuse of a

thing is no argument against the use of it. I tell him boldly, that never did man or woman read that book in a child-like persevering spirit,—like the Ethiopian eunuch, and the Bereans,—and miss the way to heaven. Yes ! many a broken cistern will be exposed to shame in the day of judgment, but there will not rise up one soul who will be able to say, that he went thirsting to the Bible, and found in it no living water,—he searched for truth in the Scriptures, and searching did not find it. The words which are spoken of Wisdom in the Proverbs, are strictly true of the Bible: " If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice, for understanding ; If thou seek-est her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. ii; 8, 4, 5.)

Reader, this wonderful book is the subject about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. What should you think of the man, who in time of cholera despised a sure

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receipt for preserving the health of his body ? What must be thought of you, if you despise the only sure receipt for the everlasting health of your soul ? I charge you, I entreat you, to give an honest answer to my question. What dost thou do with the Bible?—Dost thou read it?—HOW READEST THOU?

VI. I ask in the sixth place, because no gift of God to man is so awfully neglected and misused as the Bible,

Man has an unhappy skill in abusing God's gifts. His privileges, and power, and faculties, are all ingeniously perverted to other ends than those for which they were bestowed. His speech, his imagination, his intellect, his strength, his time, his influence, his money,— instead of being used as instruments for glorifying his Maker,—are generally employed for his own selfish ends. And just as man naturally makes a bad use of his other mercies, so he does of the written Word. One sweeping charge may be brought against the

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whole of Christendom, and that charge is neglect and abuse of the Bible.

Reader, I know that this charge sounds awful. Listen to me, and I will give you proofs to substantiate it. Awful as it is, it is sadly true.

It is true of the Roman Catholic Church, from one end of the world to the other. For six hundred years that unhappy church has waged open war with the Bible, and has labored incessantly to prevent people reading it. By a rule deliberately passed in the great council of Trent,—by the bulls of Popes,—by the encyclical letters of Romanish bishops,—by the repeated open hostility of Romanish priests, —the views of the Church of



Eome on this subject have been made fully manifest. Of all the numerous and soul-ruining errors of which the Church of Eome is guilty, none is more mischievous and productive of evil than its treatment of the Bible.

It is truly fearful to consider how thoroughly at variance God and the Church of Eome are about the Bible. The Lord God has de-

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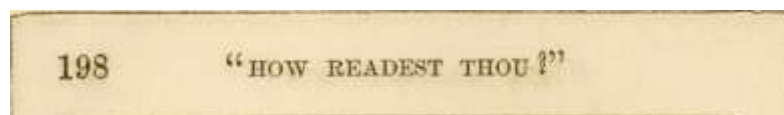
clared positively, that Holy Scripture is "profitable,"—that it is "given for our learning,"—that it is "able to make men wise unto salvation,"—that it is "the sword" which a soldier of Christ should be armed with,—that it is "a light for our feet,"—and that all errors arise from ignorance of it. The Church of Eome, on the other hand, has declared positively, in the council of Trent, that "If the Holy Scripture be everywhere allowed indiscriminately in the vulgar tongue, more harm than good will arise from it,"—and that "If any one shall presume to read, or possess, a Bible, without a license, he shall not receive absolution, except he first deliver it up!" A license to read the Bible! What a blasphemous insult is this! It would sound as well to talk of a license to breathe God's air, or look at God's sun. Well may the Church of Eome be in gross darkness, when it pours such contempt on the written word.

It is useless to assert, as some do, that statements such as these are not correct. It is useless to tell us that Bibles are openly paraded

for sale in Eoman Catholic shop ^vindows, in English towns. The Church of Eome dares not show itself yet in its true colors in England. It winks at practices contrary to its avowed principles, because it suits its purpose to do so. It throws dust in the eyes of simple people, by the appearance of toleration; and so blinds them to its real character. But the Church of Kome at heart is always the same.

Ask any one who has lived in countries on the Continent, where the power of the Pope is unrestrained, and see what he will tell you. Ask any one, especially, who has lived in Italy, and been at Eome, and seen Eoman Catholic religion in fall bloom, and mark what kind of account he will give you. If a man would know what real, pure Presbyterianism is, he must go to Scotland, If he would know what real, pure Church-of-Englandism is, he must visit England. If he would know what real, pure, genuine Eomanism is, he should go to Italy and Eome.

Is it not a fact^ that to have or read an Ital-



ian Bible is one of the highest crimes an Italian can commit? He may commit adultery and fornication,—he may stab, or lie, or rob, or swear, or cheat,—and get absolution from his priest without much difficulty. But woe be to the Italian who dares to have or read God's holy word! That fact speaks volumes. Let that fact be thoroughly known all over the world.

Is it not a fact, that the Bible itself cannot be bought at Rome, unless with immense difficulty, and at an immense price? You may buy books of many other kinds and descriptions, —• worthless French novels, — frivolous Italian poetry,—miserable lying accounts of pretended miracles, done by pretended saints, —prayers to the Virgin Mary, and all manner of literary rubbish. You may buy poisons, daggers, or intoxicating drinks. You may buy relics, and rosaries, and scapulars, and crucifixes. You may buy

masses and services, and redeem your father's soul from purgatory. But one thing it is almost impossible to buy, and that is the one thing needful,—the writ-

ten word of God. You may easily buy all means and appliances for doing the works of darkness. You cannot buy the grand help for doing the works of light, except at an enormous cost. That fact alone speaks volumes. Oh! that the world would awake, and know it! THE BIBLE IS PRACTICALLY A FORBIDDEN BOOK AT ROME.

Ah! reader, it is an awful thought, that all these insults to the Bible are perpetrated in the name of Christianity! It is an awful thought, that a day of reckoning is yet to come, and that God the Judge of all is just as jealous about His word, as about His name and day! It is an awful thought, that even the Emperor of China will rise up in judgment with the Pope, and condemn him; for he has lately decreed that the New Testament is a profitable book, and may be read! It is an awful thought, that this Bible - proscribing Church of Rome contains more members than any Church in the world! Surely I have a right to say, no gift of God is so neglected and misused as the Bible.

But the Church of Rome, unhappily, is not the only professedly Christian Church whose members are guilty in this matter. The charge of neglecting the Bible is one which may be brought home to the members of Protestant churches also, and among others to the Protestants of England and Scotland in the present day.

I write this statement down with sorrow. I dare say it will be received by some with surprise, if not with incredulity. But I write it down calmly and deliberately, and I am certain it is true.

I am well aware that there are more Bibles in Great Britain at this moment than there ever were since the world began. There is more Bible buying and Bible selling,—more Bible printing and Bible distributing,—than ever was since England was a nation. We see Bibles in every bookseller's shop,—Bibles of every size, price, and style,—Bibles great, and Bibles small, — Bibles for the rich, and Bibles for the poor. But all this time I fear we are in danger of forgetting, that to have

the Bible is one thing, and to read it is quite another.

I am firmly persuaded that the Bible of many a man and woman in Great Britain is never read at all. In one house it lies in a corner, stiff, cold, glossy, and fresh as it was when it came from the bookseller's shop. In another it lies on a table, with its owner's name written in it,—a silent witness against him day after day. In another it lies on some high shelf, neglected and dusty, to be brought down only on grand occasions,—such as a birth in the family,—like a heathen idol at its yearly festival. In another it lies deep down at the bottom of some box or drawer,—among the things not wanted,—and is never "dragged forth into the light of day, until the arrival of sickness, the doctor, and death. Ah! these things are sad and solemn. But they are true.

I am firmly persuaded that many in Great Britain who read the Bible, do not read it aright. One man looks over a chapter on Sunday evening,—but that is all. Another reads a chapter

every day to his servants at family prayers, —but that is all. A third goes a step further, and hastily reads a verse or two in private every morning, before he goes out of his house. A fourth goes further still, and reads as much as a chapter or two every day, though he does it in a great hurry, and omits it on the smallest pretext. But each and every one of these men does what he does in a heartless, scrambling, formal kind of way. He does it coldly as a duty. He does not do it with appetite and pleasure. He is glad

when the task is over. He forgets it all when the book is shut. Oh! what a sad picture is this! But in multitudes of cases, oh! how true !

But how do I know all this ? What makes me speak so confidently? Listen to me a few moments, and I will lay before you some evidence. Neglect of the Bible is like disease of the body. It shows itself in the face of a man's conduct. It tells its own tale. It cannot be hid.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, he-cause of the enormous ignorance of true religion

which everywhere 'prevails. There are thousands of professing Christians in this Protestant country who know literally nothing about the Gospel. They could not give you the slightest account of its distinctive doctrines. They have no more idea of the meaning of conversion, grace, faith, justification, and sanc-tification, than of so many words and names in Arabic. If you were to ask them whether regeneration, and the new creature, were a beast, a man, or a doctrine, they could not tell. And can I suppose such persons read the Scriptures ? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, he-cause of the utter indifference with which they regard false doctrine. They will talk with perfect coolness of others having become Eoman Catholics, or Socinians, or Mormonites, as if it were all the same thing in the long run. And can I suppose such persons search the Scriptures? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

i am sure that many neglect the Bible, he-

cause of the readiness with which they receive false doctrines. They are led astray by the first preacher of lies they meet with, who has a pleasant voice, a nice manner, and a gift of eloquent speech. They swallow all he says without enquiry, and believe him as implicitly as the Papists do the Pope. And can I suppose such persons search the Scriptures ? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, he-cause of the bitterness with which they contend for some little secondary unimportant point in religion. They make a "Shibboleth" of their own little cherished point, and are ready to set down every one as no Christian, if he does not see it with their eyes. And can I suppose such persons really search the whole Scriptures ? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, he-cause of the very scanty knowledge they have of its contents. They know a certain set of doctrines. They can repeat a certain string of hackneyed texts. Bat they never seem to get beyond this little string. Let a man talk to them

about some text out of their beaten path, and he is at once out of their depth. They listen, but have nothing to say. Let a minister preach to them anything but the merest elements of Christianity, and they appear shocked at him as a rash and unsound teacher. In short, they seem content to remain in the condition described by St. Paul to the Hebrews, always unskilful in the word of righteousness,—always in a state of religious babyhood. And can I suppose such persons really search the Scriptures ? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, he-cause of the lives they live. They do the very things that God plainly forbids. They neglect the very things that God plainly commands. They break God's laws week after week without shame. And can I suppose such persons search the Scriptures ? I allow that much knowledge of the Bible and much

wickedness of heart may sometimes be found together. But when I see a wicked life, I generally believe there is a neglected Bible.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, because of the deaths they die. They send for a minister in their last moments, and ask for the consolations of religion. And in what state are they found? They know nothing whatever of the way of salvation. They have to be told which are the first principles of the Gospel of Christ. And can I suppose such persons have searched the Scriptures? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they have.

I bring forward all this evidence with sorrow. I know well it will be offensive to some. But I believe I have stated nothing but glaring facts, which every true Christian and true minister of Christ's Gospel will readily confirm. And I say that these facts prove the existence of a sore evil in Great Britain.—I mean a neglected Bible. These things would never be, if the Bible was thoroughly read by many, as well as possessed.

Ah! reader, it is a painful thought, that there should be so much profession of love to the Bible among us; and so little proof that the Bible is read. Here we are, as a nation.

pluming ourselves on our Protestantism, and yet neglecting the foundation on which Protestantism is built! Here we are, thanking God with our lips, like the Pharisee, that we are not Papists, as some are, and yet dishonoring God's word! It is an awful thought, that the people of this country will be judged according to their light, and that so many of them should be keeping that light under a bushel! Truly I have cause for saying, no gift of God is so neglected as the Bible.

Reader, this neglected book is the subject about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely when the plague is abroad, you should search and see whether the plague-spot is on you. I charge you, I entreat you, to give an honest answer to my question.— "What art thou doing with the Bible? Dost thou read it? HOW READEST THOU?"

Why I ask in the seventh place, because the Bible is the only rule by which all questions of doctrine or of duty can be tried.

The Lord God knows the weakness and infirmity of our poor fallen understandings. He knows that, even after conversion, our perceptions of right and wrong are exceedingly indistinct. He knows how artfully Satan can gild error with an appearance of truth, and can dress up wrong with plausible arguments, till it looks like right. Knowing all this. He has mercifully provided us with an unerring standard of truth and error, right and wrong, and has taken care to make that standard a written book,—even the Scripture.

No one can look round the world, and not see the wisdom of such a provision. 'No one can live long, and not find out that he is constantly in need of a counsellor and adviser,—of a rule of faith and practice, on which he can depend. Unless he lives like a beast, without a soul and conscience, he will find himself constantly assailed by difficult and puzzling questions. He will be often asking himself. What must I believe? and what must I do?'

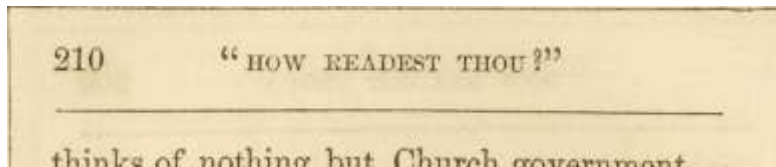
The world is full of difficulties about points

of doctrine. The house of error lies close alongside the house of truth. The door of one is so like the door of the other, that there is continual risk of mistakes.

Does a man read or travel much? He will soon find the most opposite opinions prevailing among those who are called Christians. He will discover that different persons give the most different answers to the important question, What shall I do to be

saved? The Roman Catholic and the Protestant,—the Neologian and the Tractarian,—The Mormon-ite and the Swedenborgian,—each and all will assert that he alone has the truth. Each and all will tell him that safety is to be found in his party. Each and all say, "Come with us." All this is puzzling. What shall a man do?

Does he settle down quietly in some English or Scotch parish? He will soon find that even in our own land the most conflicting views are held. He will soon discover that there are serious differences among Christians, as to the comparative importance of the various parts and articles of the faith. One man



thinks of nothing but Church government,—another of nothing but sacraments, services, and forms,—a third of nothing but preaching the Gospel. Does he apply to ministers for a solution? He will perhaps find one minister teaching one doctrine, and another another. Does he go to the Bishops for help? He will find what one Bishop says is right, another says is wrong. All this is puzzling. What shall a man do?

There is only one answer to this question. A man must make the Bible alone his rule. He must receive nothing, and believe nothing, which is not according to the word. He must try all religious teaching by one simple test,—Does it square with the Bible?—What saith the Scripture?

I would to God the eyes of the laity of this country were more open on this subject. I would to God they would learn to weigh sermons, books, opinions, and ministers, in the scales of the Bible, and to value all according to their conformity to the word. I would to God they would see that it matters little who

says a thing,—whether he be Father or Reformer,—Bishop or Archbishop,—Priest or Deacon,—Archdeacon or Dean. The only question is,—Is the thing said Scriptural? If it is, it ought to be received and believed. If it is not, it ought to be refused and cast aside. I fear the consequences of that servile acceptance of everything which the parson says, which is so common among many English laymen. I fear lest they be led they know not whither, like the blinded Syrians, and awake some day to find themselves in the power of Rome. Oh! that men in England would only remember for what the Bible was given them!

I tell English laymen that it is nonsense to say, as some do, that it is presumptuous to judge a minister's teaching by the word. When one doctrine is proclaimed in one parish, and another in another, people must read and judge for themselves. Both doctrines cannot be right, and both ought to be tried by the word. I charge them above all things, never to suppose that any true minister of the Gos-

pel will dislike his people measuring all he teaches by the Bible. On the contrary, the more they read the Bible, and prove all he says by the Bible, the better he will be pleased. A false minister may say, "You have no right to use your private judgment: leave the Bible to us who are ordained." A true minister will say, "Search the Scriptures, and if I do not teach you what is Scriptural, do not believe me." A false minister may say, "Hear the Church," and "Hear me." A true minister will say, "Hear the word of God."

But the world is not only full of difficulties about points of doctrine. It is equally full of difficulties about points of practice. Every professing Christian, who wishes to act

conscientiously, must know that it is so. The most puzzling questions are continually arising. He is tried on every side by doubts as to the line of duty, and can often hardly see what is the right thing to do.

He is tried by questions connected with the management of his worldly calling, if he is in business or in trade. He sometimes sees

things going on of a very doubtful character, —things that can hardly be called fair, straightforward, truthful, and doing as you would be done by. But then everybody in the trade does these things. They have always been done in the most respectable houses. There would be no carrying on a profitable business if they were not done. They are not things distinctly named and prohibited by God. All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions of a political kind, if he occupies a high position in life. He finds that men do things in their public capacity, which they would not think of doing in their private one. He finds that men are expected to sacrifice their own judgment, private opinion, and conscience, to the interests of their own party, and to believe that the acts of their own political friends are always right, and the acts of their political opponents always wrong. All this is puzzling. What is a man to do ?

He is tried by questions in the matter of speaking truth. He hears things said continually which he knows are not correct. He hears a false coloring put on stories, which he knows ought to wear a different aspect. He sees additions to, and subtractions from the whole truth. He sees evasions, and equivocations, and concealments of facts in every class of society, when self interests are at stake. He hears false compliments paid, and false excuses alleged, and false characters given. But then it is the way of the world. Everybody does so. Nobody means any harm by it. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do?

He is tried by questions about Sabbath observance. Can there really be any harm in travelling, or writing letters, or keeping accounts, or reading newspapers on Sunday ? Is it wrong to take a situation on a railway, merely because the Sunday traffic would almost entirely keep him away from public worship ? Would it be wrong to open the Crystal Palace at Sydenham on Sundays? Is not Christianity a religion of liberty ? Do not many learned, and respectable, and titled people think that Sunday should be a day for re-

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creation ? All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do ?

He is tried by questions about worldly amusements. Races, and balls, and operas, and theatres, and card parties, are all very doubtful methods of spending time. But then he sees numbers of great people taking part in them. Are all these people wrong ? Can there really be such mighty harm in these things ? All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do ?

He is tried by questions about the education of his children. He wishes to train them up morally and religiously, and to remember their souls. But he is told by many sensible people that young persons will be young,—that it does not do to check and restrain them too much, and that he ought to attend pantomimes and children's parties, and give children's balls himself. He is informed that this nobleman or that lady of rank, always does so, and yet they are reckoned religious people. Surely it cannot be wrong. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do ?

He is tried by questions about reading. He does not wish to read what is really bad, and has not time for much reading beside the Bible. Ought he, or ought he not, to read such things as sceptical writings, or French novels, or semi-popish poetry? Can there really be much harm in it? Do not many persons, as good as himself, read these things? And after all, the Bible has not expressly forbidden Emerson or Eugene Sue. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do?

There is only one answer to all these questions. A man must make the Bible his rule of conduct. He must make its leading principles the compass by which he steers his course through life. By the letter or spirit of the Bible he must test every difficult point and question. To the law and to the testimony! What saith the Scripture? He ought to care nothing for what other people may think right. He ought not to set his watch by the clock of his neighbor, but by the sun-dial of the word.

Reader, I charge you solemnly to act on the

maxim I have just laid down, and to adhere to it rigidly all the days of your life. You will never repent of it. Make it a leading principle never to act contrary to the word. Care not for the charge of over-strictness, and needless precision. Remember, you serve a strict and holy God. Listen not to the common objection, that the rule you have laid down is impossible, and cannot be observed in such a world as this. Let those who make such an objection speak out plainly, and tell us for what the Bible was given to man. Let them remember that by the Bible we shall all be judged at the last day, and let them learn to judge themselves by it here, lest they be judged and condemned by it hereafter.

Reader, this mighty rule of faith and practice is the book about which I am addressing you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely when danger is abroad on the right hand and on the left, you should consider what you are doing with the safe-guard which God has pro-

vided. I charge you, I beseech you, to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible?—Do you read it? HOW KEADEST THOU?

Will. I ask in the next place, because the Bible is the book which all true servants of God have always lived on and loved.

Every living thing which God creates requires food. The life that God imparts needs sustaining and nourishing. It is so with animal and vegetable life,—with birds, beasts, fishes, reptiles, insects, and plants. It is equally so with spiritual life. When the Holy Ghost raises a man from the death of sin, and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, the new principle in that man's heart requires food, and the only food which will sustain it is the word of God.

There never was a man or woman converted, from one end of the world to the other, who did not love the revealed will of God. . Just as a child born into the world desires naturally the milk provided for its nourishment, so does a soul born again desire the sincere milk of

the word. This is a common mark of all the children of God,—they delight in the law of the Lord.

Show me a person who despises Bible reading, or thinks little of Bible preaching, and I hold it to be a certain fact that he is not yet born again. He may be zealous about forms and ceremonies. He may be diligent in attending sacraments and daily services. But if these things are more precious to him than the Bible, I cannot think he is a converted man. Tell me what the Bible is to a man, and I will generally tell you what he is. This is

the pulse to try,—this is the barometer to look at,—if we would know the state of the heart. I have no notion of the Spirit dwelling in a man, and not giving clear evidence of His presence. And I believe it to be a signal evidence of the Spirit's presence, when the word is really precious to a man's soul.

Love to the word is one of the characteristics we see in Job. Little as we know of this Patriarch and his age, this at least stands out

clearly. He says, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." (Job, xxiii. 12.)

Love to the word is a shining feature in the character of David. Mark how it appears all through that wonderful part of Scripture, the cxixth Psalm. He might well say, " Oh ! how I love thy law."

Love to the word is a striking point in the character of St. Paul. What were he and his companions but men mighty in the Scriptures? What were his sermons but expositions and applications of the word ?

Love to the word appears pre-eminently in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, He read it publicly. He quoted it continually. He expounded it frequently. He advised the Jews to search it. He used it as His weapon to resist the devil. He said repeatedly " The Scripture must be fulfilled."—Almost the last thing He did was to open the understanding of His disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures. Ah! reader, that man can be no true servant of Christ, who has not

something of his Master's mind and feeling toward the Bible.

Love to the word has been a prominent feature in the history of all the saints, of whom we know anything, since the days of the apostles. This is the lamp which Athanasius, and Chrysostom, and Ananias followed. This is the compass which kept the Vallenses and Albigenses from making shipwreck of the faith. This is the well which was re-opened by Wycliffe and Luther, after it had been long stopped up. This is the sword with which Latimer, and Jewell, and Knox won their victories. This is the manna which fed Baxter, and Owen, and the noble host of the Puritans, and made them strong to battle. This is the armory from which Whitefield and Wesley drew their powerful weapons. This is the mine from which Bickersteth and M'Cheyne brought forth rich gold. Differing as these holy men did in some matters, on one point they were all agreed,—they all delighted in the word.

Love to the word is one of the first things that appears in the converted heathen, at the various Missionary stations throughout the world. In hot climates and in cold,—among savage people and among civilized,—in New Zealand, in the South Sea Islands, in Africa, in Hindostan,—it is always the same. They enjoy hearing it read. They long to be able to read it themselves. They wonder why Christians did not send it to them before. How striking is the picture which Moffat draws of Africaner, the fierce South African chieftain, when first brought under the power of the Gospel! " Often have I seen him," he says, " under the shadow of a great rock nearly the live-long day, eagerly perusing the pages of the Bible." How touching is the expression of a poor converted negro, speaking of the Bible ! He said, "It is never old and never cold." How affecting was the language of another old Negro, when some would have dissuaded him from learning to read, because of his great age. "No!" he said, "I will never give it up till I die. It is worth all the labor to be able to read that one verse, ' God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.'"



Love to the Bible is one of the grand points of agreement among all converted men and women in our own land. Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Independents, Methodists and Plymouth Brethren,—all unite in honoring the Bible, as soon as they are real Christians. This is the manna which all the tribes of our Israel feed upon, and find satisfying food. This is the fountain round which all the various portions of Christ's flock meet together, and from which no sheep goes thirsty away. Oh! that believers in this country would learn to cleave more closely to the written word I Oh ! that they would see that the more the Bible, and the Bible only, is the substance of men's religion, the more they agree! It is probable there never was an uninspired book more universally admired than Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. It is a book which all denominations of Christians delight to honor. It has won praise from all parties. Now what a striking fact it is, that

the author was pre-eminently a man of one book I He had read hardly anything but the Bible.

Away with the foolish idea, that making the Bible alone the rule of faith hinders unity, and that those who profess to glory in the Bible, and nothing but the Bible, are hopelessly divided! It is a weak invention of the enemy. It is a base calumny. No doubt there is much dissension and party spirit among mere outward professors ; but among the great bulk of believing Protestants there is a wonderful amount of unity,—real, thorough, and deep, far deeper than the boasted unity of Rome. Their differences are merely about the outward trappings of Christianity. About the body of the faith they are all agreed. Their differences are studiously exaggerated by the enemies of true religion. Their points of agreement,—such as the " Harmony of Protestant Confessions" exhibits, are studiously kept out of sight. Their differences are differences which in times of common danger are soon forgotten. Their unity is an unity which in

front of sin, heathenism, and persecution, stands boldly out. Evidley and Hooper forgot their old disagreements when they found themselves in Queen Mary's prisons. Churchmen and Nonconformists laid aside their quarrels when James II. tried to bring back Popery to England. Protestant missionaries, of different denominations, find they can work and pray together, when they are in the midst of idolaters. Protestant believers in London have proved to the world that they can agree to labor together for the conversion of souls, by maintaining that glorious Institution, the London City Mission. And what is the secret of all this deep-seated unity ? It comes from this,—that all believers on earth are not only born of one Spirit, but also read one holy book, and feed on the bread of one Bible.

Ah! reader, it is a blessed thought that there will be " much people" in heaven at last. Few as the Lord's people undoubtedly are at any one given time or place, yet all gathered together at last, they will be " a multitude that no man can number." They will be of one

heart and mind. They will have passed through like experience. They will all have repented, believed, lived holy, prayerful, and humble. They will all have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But one thing beside all this they will have in common. They will all love the texts and doctrines of the Bible. The Bible will have been their food and delight, in the days of their pilgrimage on earth. And the Bible will be a common subject of joyful meditation and retrospect, when they are gathered together in heaven.

Reader, this book, which all true Christians live upon and love, is the subject about which I am addressing you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely it is a matter for serious inquiry, whether you know anything of this love to the word, and have this mark of walking in the footsteps of the flock. I charge you, I entreat you to give me an honest answer. What are you doing with the Bible ?—

Do you read it ? HOW READEST THOU ?

IX. I ask, in the last place, because the Bible is the only hook which can comfort a man in the last hours of his life.

Death is an event which in all probability is before us all. There is no avoiding it. It is the river which each of us must cross. I who write, and you who read, have each one day to die. It is good to remember this. We are all sadly apt to put away the subject from us. "Each man thinks each man mortal but himself." I want every one to do his duty in life, but I also want every one to think of death. I want every one to know how to live, but I also want every one to know how to die.

Death is a solemn event to all. It is the winding up of all earthly plans and expectations. It is a separation from all we have loved and lived with. It is often accompanied by much bodily pain and distress. It brings us to the grave, the worm, and corruption. It opens the door to judgment and eternity,—to heaven or to hell. It is an event after which there is no change, or space for repentance.

Other mistakes may be corrected or retrieved, but not a mistake on our death-beds. As the tree falls, there it must lie. No conversion in the coffin! !N"o new birth after we have ceased to breathe ! And death is before us all. It may be close at hand. The time of our departure is quite uncertain. But sooner or later we must each lie down alone and die. All these are serious considerations.

Death is a solemn event, even to the believer in Christ. For him no doubt the sting of death is taken away. Death has become one of his privileges, for he is Christ's. Living or dying, he is the Lord's. If he lives, Christ lives in him, and if he dies, he goes to live with Christ. To him to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Death frees him from many trials,—from a weak body, a corrupt heart, a tempting devil, and an ensnaring or persecuting world. Death admits him to the enjoyment of many blessings. He rests from his labors:—The hope of a joyful resurrection is changed into a certainty :—He has the company of holy redeemed spirits:—He is

with Christ. All this is true,—and yet, even to a believer, death is a solemn thing. Flesh and blood naturally shrinks from it. To part from all we love is a wrench and trial to the feelings. The world we go to is a world unknown, even though it is our home. Friendly and harmless as death is to a believer, it is not an event to be treated lightly. It always must be a very solemn thing.

Reader, it becomes every one to consider calmly how he is going to meet death. Gird up your loins, like a man, and look the subject in the face. Listen to me, while I tell you a few things about the end we are coming to.

The good things of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. All the gold of California and Australia will not provide light for the dark valley. Money can buy the best medical advice and attendance for a man's body. But money cannot buy peace for his conscience, heart, and soul.

Relatives, loved friends, and servants cannot comfort a man when he draws near death.

They may minister affectionately to his bodily wants. They may watch by his bed-side tenderly, and anticipate his every wish. They may smooth down his dying pillow, and support his sinking frame in their arms. But they cannot " minister to a mind diseased." They cannot stop the aching of a troubled heart. They cannot screen an uneasy conscience from the eye of God.

The pleasures of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The brilliant ball-room,—the merry dance,—the midnight revel,—the party to Epsom races,—the card table,—the box at the opera,—the voices of singing men and singing women,—all these are at length distasteful things. To hear of hunting and shooting engagements gives him no pleasure. To be invited to feasts, and regattas, and fancy-fairs, gives him no ease. He cannot hide from himself that these are hollow, empty, powerless things. They jar upon the ear of his conscience. They are out of harmony with his condition. They cannot stop one gap in his heart, when the last enemy

is coming in like a flood. They cannot make him calm in the prospect of meeting a holy God.

Books and newspapers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The most brilliant writings of Macaulay or Dickens will pall upon his ear. The most splendid article in the Times will fail to interest them. The Edinburgh and Quarterly Eeviews will give him no pleasure. Punch and the Illustrated News, and the last new novel, will lie unopened and unheeded. Their time will be past. Their vocation will be gone. Whatever they may be in health, they are useless in the hoar of death.

There is but one fountain of comfort for a man drawing near to his end, and that is the Bible. Chapters out of the Bible,—texts out of the Bible,—statements of truth taken out of the Bible,—books containing matter drawn from the Bible,—these are a man's only chance of comfort, when he comes to die. I do not at all say that the Bible will do good, as a matter of course, to a dying man, if he

has not valued it before. I know, unhappily, too much of death-beds to say that. I do not say whether it is probable that he who has been unbelieving and neglectful of the Bible in life, will at once believe and get comfort from it in death. But I do say, positively, that no dying man will ever get real comfort, except from the contents of the word of God. All comfort from any other source is a house built upon sand.

I lay this down as a rule of universal application. I make no exception in favor of any class on earth. Kings and poor men, learned and unlearned,—all are on a level in this matter. There is not a jot of real consolation for any dying man, unless he gets it from the Bible. Chapters, passages, texts, promises, and doctrines of Scripture,—heard, received, believed, and rested on,—these are the only comforters I dare promise to any one, when he leaves the world. Taking the sacrament\* will do a man no more good than the Popish extreme unction, so long as the word is not received and believed. Priestly abso-

lution will no more ease the conscience than the incantations of a heathen magician, if the poor dying sinner does not receive and believe Bible truth. I tell every one who reads this tract, that although men may seem to get on comfortably without the Bible while they live, they may be sure that without the Bible they cannot comfortably die. It was a true confession of the learned Selden, " There is no book upon which we can rest in a dying moment but the Bible."

I might easily confirm all I have just said by examples and illustrations. I might show you the death-beds of men who have affected to despise the Bible. I might tell you how Voltaire and Paine, the famous infidels, died in misery, bitterness, rage, fear, and despair. I might show you the happy death-beds of those who have loved the Bible and believed it, and the blessed effect the sight of their death-beds had on others. Cecil, a minister whose praise ought to be in all churches, says, " I shall never forget standing by the bed-side of my dying mother. ' Are you

afraid to die ?' I asked. ' No!' she replied. ' But why does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern ?' ' Because God has said, \* Fear not; when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.' " I might easily multiply illustrations of this kind. But I think it better to conclude this part of my subject, by giving the result of my own observation as a minister.

I have seen not a few dying persons in my time. I have seen great varieties of manner and deportment among them. I have seen some die sullen, silent, and comfortless. I have seen others die ignorant, unconcerned, and apparently without much fear. I have seen some die so wearied out with long illness, that they were quite willing to depart, and yet they did not seem to me at all in a fit state to go before God. I have seen others die with professions of hope and trust in God, without leaving satisfactory evidences that they were on the rock. I, have seen others die, who I believe were in Christ, and safe, and yet they

never seemed to enjoy much sensible comfort. I have seen some few dying in the full assurance of hope, and like Bunyan's " Standfast," giving glorious testimony to Christ's faithfulness, even in the river. But one thing I have never seen. I never saw any one enjoy what I should call real, solid, calm, reasonable peace on his death-bed, who did not draw his peace from the Bible. And this I am bold to say, that the man who thinks to go to his death-bed without having the Bible for his comforter, his companion, and his friend, is one of the greatest madmen in the world. There are no comforts for the soul but Bible comforts, and he who has not got hold of these, has got hold of nothing at all, unless it be a broken reed.

Reader, the only comforter for a death-bed is the book about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter whether you read that book or not. Surely a dying man, in a dying world, should seriously consider whether he has got anything to comfort him, when his turn comes to die. I charge

you, I entreat you, for the last time, to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible ?—Do you read it ? HOW KEADEST THOU?

Eader, I have now given you the reason why I ask you a question about the Bible. I have shown you that knowledge of the Bible is absolutely necessary to salvation,—that no book is written in such a manner as the Bible, that no book contains such matter,—that no book has done so much for the world generally,—that no book can do so much for every one who reads it aright,—that no book is so awfully neglected,—that this book is the only rule of faith and practice,—that it is, and always has been, the food of all true servants of God,—and that it is the only book, which can comfort men when they die. All these are ancient things. I do not pretend to tell you anything new. I have only gathered together old truths, and tried to mould them into a new shape. Let me finish all, by addressing a few plain words to the conscience of every class of readers :

1. This tract may fall into the hands of some who can read, but never do read the Bible at all. Eader, are you one of them ? If you are, I have something to say to you.

I cannot comfort you in your present state of mind. It; would be mockery and deceit to do so. I cannot speak to you of peace and heaven, while you treat the Bible as you do. You are in danger of losing your soul.

You are in danger, because your neglected Bible is a 'plain evidence that you do not love God. The health of a man's body may generally be known by his appetite. The health of a man's soul may be known by his treatment of the Bible. Now you are manifestly laboring under a sore disease. Eader, will you not repent ?

You are in danger, because God will reckon with you for your neglect of the Bible in the day of judgment. You will have to give account of your use of time, strength, and money; and you will also have to give account of your use of the word. You will not stand at that bar side by side with the Patagonian, who ne-

ver beard of the Bible. To whom much is given, of them much will be required. Of all men's buried talents, none will weigh them down so heavily as a neglected Bible. As you deal with the Bible, so God will deal with your soul. Reader, I say again, will you not repent.

You are in danger, because there is no degree of error in religion into which you may not fall. You are at the mercy of the first clever Jesuit, Mormonite, Socinian, Turk, or Jew, who may happen to meet you. A land of unwall'd villages is not more defenceless against an enemy, than a man who neglects his Bible. You may go on tumbling from one step of delusion to another, till at length you are landed in the pit of hell. Reader, I say once more, will you not repent ?

You are in danger, because there is not a single reasonable excuse you can allege for neglecting the Bible. You have no time to read it forsooth ! But you can make time for eating, drinking, sleeping, and perhaps for newspaper reading and smoking. You might easily make

time to read the word. Alas ! it is not want of time, but waste of time that ruins souls. You find it too troublesome to read forsooth! You had better say at once it is too much trouble to go to heaven, and you are content to go to hell. Truly these excuses are like the rubbish round the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's days. They would all soon disappear if, like the Jews, you had " a mind to work." Reader, I say for the last time, will you not repent ?

I know I cannot reach your heart. I cannot make you see and feel these things. I can only enter my solemn protest against your present treatment of the Bible, and lay that protest before your conscience. I do so with all my soul. Oh ! beware lest you repent too late! Beware lest you put off seeking for the Bible till you send for the doctor in your last illness, and then find the Bible a sealed book, and dark as the cloud between the hosts of Israel and Egypt, to your anxious soul! Beware lest you go on saying all your life, " Men do very well without all this Bible-

reading," and find at length, to your cost, that men do very ill, and end in hell! Beware lest the day come, when you will feel, " Had I but honored the Bible as much as I have honored the newspaper, I should not have been left without comfort in my last hours!" Bible-neglecting reader, I give you a plain warning. The plague-cross is at present on your door. The Lord have mercy upon your soul!

2. This tract may fall into the hands of some one who is willing to begin reading the Bible, but wants advice on the subject. Reader, are you that man? Listen to me, and I will give you a few short hints.

For one thing, begin reading your Bible this very day. The way to do a thing is to do it, and the way to read the Bible is actually to read it. It is not meaning, or wishing, or resolving, or intending, or thinking about it, which will advance you one step. You must positively read. There is no royal road in this matter, any more than in the matter of prayer. If you cannot read yourself, you

must persuade somebody else to read to you. But one way or another, through eyes or ears, the words of Scriptures must actually pass before your mind.

For another thing, read the Bible with an earnest desire to understand it. Think not for a moment that the great object is to turn over a certain quantity of printed paper, and that it matters nothing whether you understand it or not. Some ignorant people seem to fancy that all is done, if they clear off so many chapters every day, though they may not have a notion what they are all about, and only know that they have pushed on their mark so many leaves. This is turning Bible reading into a mere form. It is almost as bad as the Popish habit of buying indulgences, by saying a fabulous number of ave-marias and paternosters. It reminds one of the poor Hottentot, who ate up a Dutch hymn-book, because he saw it comforted his neighbors' hearts. Settle it down in your mind, as a general principle, that a Bible not understood is a Bible that does no good. Say to yourself often as you

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read, "What is all this about?" Dig for the meaning, like a man digging for Australian gold. Work hard, and do not give up the work in a hurry.

For another thing, read the Bible with deep reverence. Say to your soul, whenever you open the Bible, "O my soul, thou art going to read a message from God." The sentences of judges, and the speeches of kings, are received with awe and respect. How much more reverence is due to the words of the Judge of judges, and King of kings! Avoid, as you would cursing and swearing, that irreverent habit of mind, which some German divines have unhappily taken up about the Bible. They handle the contents of the holy book as carelessly and disrespectfully, as if the writers were such men as themselves. They make one think of a child composing a book to expose the fancied ignorance of his own father, —or of a pardoned murderer criticising the hand-writing and style of his own reprieve. Enter rather into the spirit of Moses on Mount Horeb: "Put thy shoes from off thy feet; the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

For another thing, read the Bible with earnest prayer for the teaching and help of the Holy Spirit. Here is the rock on which many make shipwreck at the very outset. They do not ask for wisdom and instruction, and so they find the Bible dark, and carry nothing away from it. You should pray for the Spirit to guide you into all truth. You should beg the Lord Jesus Christ to open your understanding, as He did that of His disciples. The Lord God, by whose inspiration the book was written, keeps the keys of the book, and alone can enable you to understand it profitably. Nine times over in one Psalm does David cry, "Teach me." Five times over, in the same Psalm, does he say, "Give me understanding." Well says Owen, "There is a sacred light in the word: but there is a covering and veil on the eyes of men, so that they cannot behold it aright. Now the removal of this veil is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit." Humble prayer will throw more light on your Bible,

than Poole's Synopsis, or all the commentaries that ever were written. Remember this, and say always, "O God, for Christ's sake, give me the teaching of the Spirit."

For another thing, read the Bible with childlike faith and humanity. Open your heart as you open your book, and say, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." Resolve to believe implicitly whatever you find there, however much it may run counter to your own prejudices. Resolve to receive heartily every statement of truth, whether you like it or not. Beware of that miserable habit of mind into which some readers of the Bible fall. They receive some doctrines, because they like them. They reject others, because they are condemning to themselves, or to some lover, or relation, or friend. At this rate the Bible is useless. Are we to be judges of what ought to be in the word? Do we know better than God? Settle it down in your mind that you will receive all, and believe all, and that

what you cannot understand you will take on trust. Remember, when you pray, you are speaking

to God, and God hears you. But, remember, when you read, God is speaking to you, and you are not to answer again, but to listen.

For another thing, read the Bible in a spirit of obedience and self-application. Sit down to the study of it with a daily determination that you will live by its rules, rest on its statements, and act on its commands. Consider, as you travel through every chapter, "How does this affect my position and course of conduct? What does this teach me?"^ It is poor work to read the Bible for mere curiosity and speculative purposes, in order to fill your head and store your mind with opinions, while you do not allow the book to influence your heart and life. That Bible is read best which is practised most.

For another thing, read the Bible daily. Make it a part of every day's business to read and meditate on some portion of God's work. Private means of grace are just as needful every day for our souls, as food and clothing for our bodies. Yesterday's bread will not feed the laborer to-day, and to-day's bread

will not feed the laborer to-morrow. Do as the Israelites did in the wilderness. Gather your manna fresh every morning. Choose your own seasons and hours. Do not scramble over and hurry your reading. Give your Bible the best, and not the worst part of your time. But whatever plan you pursue, let it be a rule of your life to visit the throne of grace and the Bible every day.

For another thing, read all the Bible, and read it in an orderly way. I fear there are many parts of the word which some people never read at all. This is, to say the least, a very presumptuous habit. All Scripture is profitable. To this habit may be traced the want of broad, well-proportioned views of truth, which is so common. Some people's Bible-reading is a system of perpetual dipping and picking. They do not seem to have an idea of regularly going through the whole book. This also is a great mistake. No doubt in time of sickness and affliction it is allowable to search out seasonable portions. But with this exception, I believe it is by

far the best plan to begin the Old and New Testaments at the same time,—read each straight through to the end, and then begin again. This is a matter in which every one must be persuaded in his own mind. I can only say it has been my own plan for fifteen years, and I have never seen cause to alter it.

For another thing, read the Bible fairly and honestly. Determine to take everything in its plain, obvious meaning, and regard all forced interpretations with great suspicion. As a general rule, whatever a verse of the Bible seems to mean, it does mean. Cecil's rule is a very valuable one:—"The right way of interpreting Scripture is to take it as we find it, without any attempt to force it into any particular system." Well said Hooker, "I hold it as a most infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that when a literal construction will stand, the furthest from the literal is commonly the worst."

In the last place, read the Bible with Christ continually in view. The grand primary object of all Scripture is to testify of Jesus, Old

Testament ceremonies are shadows of Christ. Old Testament judges and deliverers are types of Christ. Old Testament history shows the world's need of Christ. Old Testament prophecies are full of Christ's sufferings, and of Christ's glory yet to come. The first advent and the second,—the Lord's humiliation and the Lord's kingdom,—the cross and the crown, shine forth everywhere in the Bible. Keep fast hold on this clue, if you would

read the Bible aright.

Reader, I might easily add to these hints, if time permitted. Few and short as they are, you will find them worth attention. Act upon them, and I firmly believe you will never be allowed to miss the way to heaven. Act upon them, and you will find light continually increasing in your mind. No book of evidence can be compared with that internal evidence which he obtains, who daily uses the word in the right way. Such a man does not need the books of learned men, like Paley, and Wilson, and M'Ilvaine. He has the wit-

ness in himself. The book satisfies and feeds his soul. A poor Christian woman once said to an infidel, "I am no scholar. I cannot argue like you. But I know that honey is honey, because it leaves a sweet taste in my mouth. And I know the Bible to be God's book, because of the taste it leaves in my heart."

8. This tract may fall into the hands of some one who loves and believes the Bible, and yet reads it but little. I fear there are many such in this day. It is a day of bustle and hurry. It is a day of talking, and committee meetings, and public work. These things are all very well in their way, but I fear that sometimes they clip and cut short private reading of the Bible. Reader, does your conscience tell you that you are one of the persons I speak of? Listen to me, and I will say a few things which deserve your serious attention.

You are the man that is likely to get little comfort from the Bible in time of need. Trial is a striking season. Affliction is a searching

wind, which strips the leaves off the trees, and ^ brings to light the birds' nests. Now I fear that your stores of Bible consolations may one day run very low. I fear lest you should find yourself at last on very short allowance, and come into harbor weak, worn, and thin.

You are the man that is likely never to be astonished in the truth I shall not be surprised to hear that you are troubled with doubts and questionings about assurance, grace, faith, perseverance, and the like. The devil is an old and cunning enemy. Like the Benjamites, he can throw stones at a hair-breadth, and not miss. He can quote Scripture readily enough when he pleases. Now you are not sufficiently ready with your weapons to be able to fight a good fight with him. Your armor does not fit you well. Your sword sits loosely in your hand.

You are the man that is likely to make mistakes in life. I shall not wonder if I am told that you have erred about your own marriage, — erred about your children's education,— erred about the conduct of your household,—

erred about the company you keep. The world you steer through is full of rocks, and shoals, and sand-banks. You are not sufficiently familiar either with the lights or charts.

You are the man that is likely to be carried away by some specious false teacher for a season. It will not surprise me, if I hear that some one of those clever, eloquent men, who can " make the worse appear the better cause," is leading you into many follies. You are wanting in ballast. I should wonder if you are tossed to and fro, like a cork on the waves.

Reader, all these are uncomfortable things. I want you to escape them all. Take the advice I offer you this day. Do not merely read your Bible a little, but read it a great deal. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Do not be a mere babe in spiritual knowledge. Seek to become well-instructed in the kingdom of heaven, and to be continually adding new things to old. A religion of feeling is an uncertain thing. It is like the tide,



sometimes high, and sometimes low. It is like the moon, sometimes bright and sometimes dim.

A religion of deep Bible knowledge, is a firm and lasting possession. It enables a man not merely to say, "I feel liope in Christ,"—but, "I know whom I have believed."

4. This tract may fall into the hands of some one who reads the Bible much, and yet fancies he is no better for his reading. This is a crafty temptation of the devil. At one stage he says, "Do not read the Bible at all." At another he says, "Your reading does you no good: give it up." Reader, are you that man? I feel for you from the bottom of my soul. Let me try to do you good.

Do not think you are getting no good from the Bible, merely because you do not see that good day by day. The greatest effects are by no means those which make the most noise, and are most easily observed. The greatest defects are often silent, quiet, and hard to detect at the time they are being produced. Think of the influence of the moon upon the earth, and of the air upon the human lungs. Remember how silently the dew falls, and how

imperceptibly the grass grows. There may be far more doing than you think in your soul by your Bible-reading.

The word may be gradually producing deep impressions on your heart, of which you are not at present aware. Often when the memory is retaining no facts, the character of a man is receiving some everlasting impression. Is sin becoming every year more hateful to you? Is Christ becoming every year more precious? Is holiness becoming every year more lovely and desirable in your eyes? If these things are so, take courage. The Bible is doing you good, though you may not be able to trace it out day by day.

The Bible may be restraining you from some sin or delusion, into which you would otherwise run. It may be daily keeping you back, and hedging you up, and preventing many a false step. Ah! reader, you might soon find this out to your cost, if you were to cease reading the word. The very familiarity of blessings sometimes makes us insensible to their value. Resist the devil. Settle it down

in your mind as an established rule, that whether you feel it at the moment or not, you are inhaling spiritual health by reading the Bible, and insensibly becoming more strong.

5. There may be some into whose hands this tract will fall who really love the Bible, live upon the Bible<sup>^</sup> and read it much. Reader, are you one of these? Give me your attention, and I will mention a few things, which we shall do well to lay to heart.

Let us resolve to read the Bible more and more every year we live. Let us try to get it rooted in our memories, and engrafted into our hearts. Let us be thoroughly well provisioned with it against the voyage of death. Who knows but we may have a very stormy passage? Sight and hearing may fail us, and we may be in deep waters. Oh! to have the word hid in our hearts in such an hour as that!

Let us resolve to be more watchful over our Bible-reading every year that we live. Let us be jealously careful about the time we give to it, and the manner that time is spent. Let us

beware of omitting our daily reading without sufficient cause. Let us not be gaping, and yawning, and dozing over our book, while we read. Let us read like a London merchant studying the city article in the Times,—or like a wife reading a husband's letter from a distant land. Let us be very careful that we never exalt any minister, or sermon, or book,

or tract, or friend, above the word. Cursed be that book, or tract, or human counsel, which creeps in between us and the Bible, and hides the Bible from our eyes! Once more, I say, let us be very watchful. The moment we open the Bible, the devil sits down by our side. Oh ! to read with a hungry spirit, and a simple desire for edification !

Let us resolve to honor the Bible more in our families. Let us read it morning and evening to our children and households, and not be ashamed to let men see that we do so. Let us not be discouraged by seeing no good arise from it. The Bible-reading in a family has kept many a one from the gaol, the workhouse, and the Gazette, if it has not kept him from hell.

Let us resolve to meditate more on the Bible. It is good to take with us two or three texts, when we go out into the world, and to turn them over and over in our minds, whenever we have a little leisure. It keeps out many vain thoughts. It clenches the nail of daily reading. It preserves our souls from stagnating and breeding corrupt things. It sanctifies and quickens our memories, and prevents their becoming like those ponds where the frogs live, but the fish die.

Let us resolve to talk more to believers about the Bible, when we meet them. Alas ! the conversation of Christians, when they do meet, is often sadly unprofitable. How many frivolous, and trifling, and uncharitable things are said! Let us bring out the Bible more, and it will help to drive the devil away, and keep our hearts in tune. Oh ! that we may all strive so to walk together in this world, that Jesus may draw near, and go with us, as he went with the two disciples journeying to Emmaus!

Let us resolve to prize the Bible more. Let us not fear being idolaters of this blessed book.

"how eadest thou?"

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Men may easily make an idol of the clinrch, of ministers, of sacraments, or of intellect. Men cannot make an idol of the word. Let us regard all who would damage the authority of the Bible or impugn its credit, as spiritual robbers. We are travelling through a wilderness : they rob us of our only guide. We are voyaging over a stormy sea: they rob us of our only compass. We are toiling over a weary road: they pluck our staff out of our hands. And what do these spiritual robbers give us in place of the Bible ? What do they offer as a guide and provision for our souls ? Nothing ! absolutely nothing ! Big swelling words! Empty promises of new light! High sounding jargon, but nothing substantial and real! They would fain take from us the bread of life, and they do not give us in its place so much as a stone. Let us turn a deaf ear to them. Let us firmly grasp and prize the Bible more and more, the more it is assaulted.

Let us resolve to remember those who have not got the Bible. Let us labor to raise them from their low estate. None are so poor as

those who have not the Scriptures. Let us think of them with pity and compassion, and not judge them by the standard of people who have the word.

Let us deal gently with our Irish Brother. He may do many things which fill us with horror. But he errs, not knowing the Scriptures. He has no Bible.

Let us judge charitably our Italian brother. He may seem superstitious, and lazy, and indolent, and incapable of anything great or good. But he errs, not knowing the Scriptures. He has no Bible.

Let us think lovingly of all Roman Catholic laymen on the Continent. We may feel disgusted by their adoring the Holy Coat of Treves. We may be shocked at their credulity about the Winking Picture of the Virgin at Rimini. But we must remember that men will eat mice and rats in time of famine, and we must not marvel if souls feed, on trash and garbage, when priests debar them from reading the word. They err, not knowing the Scriptures, They have no Bibles.

Last of all, let us resolve to live by the Bible more and more every year we live. Let us resolutely take account of all our opinions and practices,—of our habits and temperaments,—of our behavior in public and in private,—in the world, and by our own firesides. Let us measure all by the Bible, and resolve, by God's help, to conform to it. Oh that we may learn increasingly to cleanse our ways by the word!

Reader, I commend all these things to your serious and prayerful attention. I want the ministers to be Bible-reading ministers,—the congregations, Bible-reading congregations,— and the nation, a Bible-reading nation. To bring about this desirable end, I cast in my mite into God's treasury. The Lord grant that in your case it may prove not to have been in vain.

I remain

Your affectionate Friend, J. C. Eyle.

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Printed by the Rev. J. C. Eyle

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Gal. vi. 14.

"Christ crucified and Christ glorified is all that we are to study; the one we are to study as long as we are on earth, and the other we shall be admitted to study when we get well to heaven. \* \*

"That faith which is not built on a dying Christ is but a perilous dream: God awakes all from it that are in it!"—Robert Traill, 1690.

Reader,

What do you think and feel about the cross of Christ? You live in a Christian land. You probably attend the worship of a Christian church. You have perhaps been baptized in the name of Christ. You profess and call yourself a Christian. All this is well. It is more than can be said of millions in the world. But all this is no answer to my question, "What do you think and feel about the cross of Christ? I want to tell you what the greatest Chris-

tian that ever lived thought of the cross of Christ. He has written down his opinion. He has given his judgment in words that cannot be mistaken. The man I mean is the Apostle Paul. The place where you will find his opinion, is in the letter which the Holy Ghost inspired him to write to the Galatians. And the words in which his judgment is set down, are these, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now what did Paul mean by saying this? He meant to declare strongly, that he trusted in nothing but Jesus Christ crucified for the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul. Let others, if they would, look elsewhere for salvation. Let others, if they were so disposed, trust in other things for pardon and peace. For his part, the apostle was

determined to rest on nothing, lean on nothing, build his hope on nothing, place confidence in nothing, glory in nothing, except "the cross of Jesus Christ."

Reader, let me talk to you about this sub-

ject. Believe me it is one of the deepest importance. This is no mere question of controversy. This is not one of those points on which men may agree to differ, and feel that differences will not shut them out of heaven. A man must be right on this subject, or he is lost forever. Heaven or hell, happiness or misery, life or death, blessing or cursing in the last day,—all hinges on the answer to this question, "What do you think about the cross of Christ?"

I. Let me show you what the apostle Paul did not glory in.

II. Let me explain to you what he did glory in.

III. Let me show to you why all Christians should think and feel about the cross like Paul.

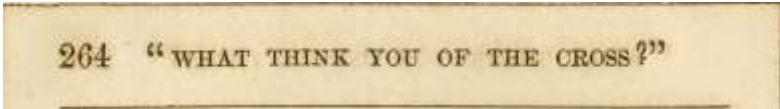
I. What did the apostle Paul not glory in ?

There are many things that Paul might have gloried in, if he had thought as some do in this day. If ever there was one on earth who had something to boast of in himself, that man

was the great apostle of the Gentiles. Now if he did not dare to glory, who shall ?

He never glorified in his national privileges. He was a Jew by birth, and as he tells us himself,— "An Hebrew of the Hebrews." He might have said, like many of his brethren, "I have Abraham for my forefather. I am not a dark unenlightened heathen. I am one of the favored people of God. I have been admitted into covenant with God by circumcision. I am a far better man than the ignorant Gentiles." But he never said so. He never gloried in anything of this kind. Never for one moment!

He never gloried in his own works. None ever worked so hard for God as he did. He was more abundant in labors than any of the apostles. No living man ever preached so much, travelled so much, and endured so many hardships for Christ's cause. None ever converted so many souls, did so much good to the world, and made himself so useful to mankind. No father of the early church, no Reformer, no Puritan, no Missionary, no Min-



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ister, no Layman,—no one man could ever be named, who did so many good works as the Apostle Paul. But did he ever glory in them, as if they were in the least meritorious, and could save his soul ? Never ! never for one moment.

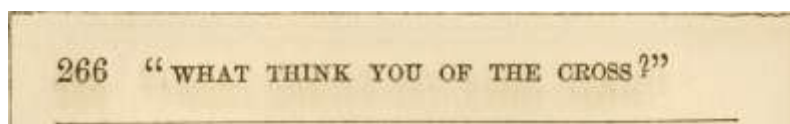
He never gloried in his knowledge. He was a man of great gifts naturally, and after he was converted the Holy Spirit gave him greater gifts still. He was a mighty preacher, and a mighty speaker, and a mighty writer. He was as great with his pen as he was with his tongue. He could reason equally well with Jews and Gentiles. He could argue with infidels at Corinth, or Pharisees at Jerusalem, or self-righteous people in Galatia. He knew many deep things. He had been in the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words. He had received the spirit of prophecy, and could foretell things yet to come. But

did he ever glory in his knowledge, as if it could justify him before God? Never! never ! never for one moment!

He never gloried in his graces. If ever there

was one who abounded in graces, that man was Paul. He was full of love. How tenderly and affectionately he used to write! He could feel for souls like a mother or a nurse feeling for her child. He was a bold man. He cared not whom he opposed when truth was at stake. He cared not what risks he ran when souls were to be won. He was a self-denying man,—in hunger and thirst often, in cold and nakedness, in watchings and fastings. He was a humble man. He thought himself less than the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners. He was a prayerful man. See how it comes out at the beginning of all his Epistles. He was a thankful man. His thanksgivings and his prayers walked side by side. But he never gloried in all this, never valued himself on it,—never rested his soul's hopes on it. Oh! no! never for a moment!

He never gloried in his churchmanship. If ever there was a good churchman, that man was Paul. He was himself a chosen apostle. He was a founder of churches, and an ordainer



of ministers. Timothy and Titus, and many elders, received their first commission from his hands. He was the beginner of services and sacraments in many a dark place. Many an one did he baptize. Many an one did he receive to the Lord's table. Many a meeting for prayer, and praise, and preaching, did he begin, and carry on. He was the setter up of discipline in many a young church. Whatever ordinances and rules and ceremonies were observed in them, were first recommended by him. But did he ever glory in his office and church standing? Does he ever speak as if his churchmanship would save him, justify him, put away his sins, and make him acceptable before God? Oh! no! never! never for a moment!

And now, reader, mark what I say. If the apostle Paul never gloried in any of these things, who in all the world, from one end to the other,—who has any right to glory in them in our day? If Paul said, God forbid that I should glory in anything whatever except the cross, who shall dare to say, "I have

something to glory of,—I am a better man than Paul?"

Who is there among the readers of this tract, that trusts in any goodness of his own? Who is there that is resting on his own amendments,—his own morality,—his own performances of any kind whatever? Who is there that is leaning the weight of his soul on anything whatever of his own, in the smallest possible degree? Learn, I say, that you are very unlike the Apostle Paul. Learn that your religion is not apostolical religion.

Who is there among the readers of this tract that trusts in his churchmanship for salvation? Who is there that is valuing himself on his baptism, or his attendance at the Lord's table, —his church-going on Sundays, or his daily services during the week,—and saying to himself. What lack I yet? Learn, I say, this day, that you are very unlike Paul. Your Christianity is not the Christianity of the New Testament. Paul would not glory in anything but the cross. Neither ought you.

Oh! reader, beware of self-righteousness.

26S "what think yotj of the cross?"

Open sin kills its thousands of souls. Self-righteousness kills its tens of thousands. Go and study humility with the great apostle of the Gentiles. Go and sit with Paul at the foot of the cross. Give up .your secret pride. Cast away your vain ideas of your own goodness. Be thankful if you have grace, but never glory in it for a moment. Work for God and Christ with heart and soul and mind and strength, but never dream for a second of placing confidence in any work of your own.

, Think, you who take comfort in some fancied ideas of your own goodness,—think, you who wrap up yourselves in the notion, " all must be right, if I keep to my church,"—think for a moment what a sandy foundation you are building upon ! Think for a moment how miserably defective your hopes and pleas will look in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment! Whatever men may say of their own goodness while they are strong and healthy, they will find but little to say of it, when they are sick and dying. Whatever

merit they may see in their own works here in this w^orld, they will discover none in them when they stand before the bar of Christ. The light of that great day of assize will make a wonderful difference in the appearance of all their doings. It will strip off the tinsel, shrivel up the complexion, expose the rottenness, of many a deed that is now called good. Their wheat will prove nothing but chaff. Their gold will be found nothing but dross. Millions of so-called Christian actions, will turn out to have been utterly defective and graceless. They passed current, and were valued among men. They will prove light and worthless in the balance of God. They will be found to have been like the whitened sepulchres of old, fair and beautiful without, but full of corruption within. Alas! for the man who can look forward to the day of judgment, and lean his soul in the smallest degree on anything of his own!\*

\* " Howsoever men when they sit at ease, do vainly tickle their own hearts with the wanton conceit of I know not what proportionable correspondence between their merits

Eader, once more I say, beware of self-rigliteousness in every possible shape and form. Some people get as much harm from their fancied virtues as others do from their sins. Take heed, lest you be one. Eest not, rest not till your heart beats in tune with St. Paul's. Best not till you can say with him, " God forbid that I should glory in anything but the cross."

II. Let me explain in the second place, what you are to understand by the cross of Christ,

The cross is an expression that is used in more than one meaning in the Bible. What

and their rewards, which in the trance of their high speculations, they dream that God hath measured and laid up a& it were in bundles for them;—we see, notwithstanding, bj dailj experience, in a number even of them, that when the hour of death approacheth, when they secretly hear themselves summoned to appear and stand at the bar of that Judge, whose brightness causeth the eyes of angels themselves to dazzle, all those idle imaginations do then begin to hide their faces. To name merits then is to lay their souls upon the rack. The memory of their own deeds is loathsome unto them. They forsake all things wherein they have put any trust and confidence. No staff to lean upon, no rest, no ease, no comfort then, but only in Christ Jesus."— Richard Hooker. 1585.

did St. Paul mean when he said, "I glory in the cross of Christ," in the Epistle to the Galatians ? This is the point I now wish to make clear.

The cross sometimes means that wooden cross, on which the Lord Jesus was nailed and put to death on Mount Calvary. This is what St. Paul had in his mind's eye, when he told the Philippians that Christ " became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 8.) This is not the cross in which St. Paul gloried. He would have shrunk with horror from the idea of glorying in a mere piece of wood. I have no doubt he would have denounced the Roman Catholic adoration of the crucifix, as profane, blasphemous, and idolatrous. '

The cross sometimes means the afflictions and trials which believers in Christ have to go through if they follow Christ faithfully, for their religion's sake. This is the sense in which our Lord uses the word when he says, \*' He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, cannot be my disciple." (Matt. x.

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38.) This also is not the sense in which Paul uses the word when he writes to the Galatians. He knew that cross well. He carried it patiently. But he is not speaking of it here.

But the cross also means in some places the doctrine that Christ died for sinners upon the cross,—the atonement that He made for sinners, by His suffering for them on the cross, —the complete and perfect sacrifice for sin which He offered up, when He gave His own body to be crucified. In short, this one word, "the cross," stands for Christ crucified, the only Saviour. This is the meaning in which Paul uses the expression, when he tells the Corinthians, " the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 18). This is the meaning in which he wrote to the Galatians, " God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross." He simply meant, " I glory in nothing but Christ crucified, as the salvation of my soul."\*

\* " By the cross of Christ the apostle understandeth the all-sufficient, expiatory, and satisfactory sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, with the whole work of our redemption : in

Reader, Jesus Christ crucified was the joy and delight, the comfort and the peace, the hope and the confidence, the foundation and the resting place, the ark and the refuge, the food and the medicine of Paul's soul. He did not think of what he had done himself, and suffered himself. He did not meditate on his own goodness, and his own righteousness. He loved to think of what Christ had done, and Christ had suffered,—of the death of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the blood of Christ, the finished work of Christ. In this he did glory. This was the sun of his soul.

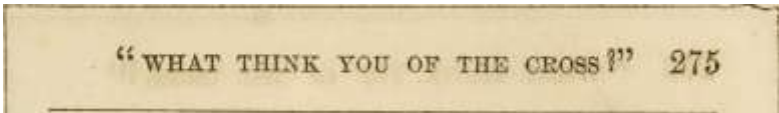
This is the subject he loved to preach about. He was a man who went to and fro on the the saving knowledge of, whereof he professeth he will glory and boast."— Cudworth on Galatians. 1613.

" Touching these words, I do not find that any expositor, either ancient or modern. Popish or Protestant, writing on this place, doth expound the cross here mentioned of the sign of the cross, but of the profession of faith in Him that was hanged on the cross."— Mayer's Commentary. 1631.

"This is rather to be understood of the cross which Christ suffered for us, than of that we suffer for Him."— Leigh's Annotations. 1650.

earth, proclaiming to sinners that the Son of God had shed His own heart's blood to save their souls. He walked up and down the world telling people that Jesus Christ had loved them, and died for their sins upon the cross. Mark how he says to the Corinthians, " I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins." (1 Cor. xv. 8.) "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) He,—a blaspheming, persecuting Pharisee, had been washed in Christ's blood. He could not hold his peace about it. He was never weary of telling the story of the cross.

This is the subject he loved to dwell upon when he wrote to believers. It is wonderful to observe how full his epistles generally are of the sufferings and death of Christ,—how they run over with " thoughts that breathe, and words that burn" about Christ's dying love and power. His heart seems full of the subject. He enlarges on it constantly. He returns to it continually. It is the golden thread



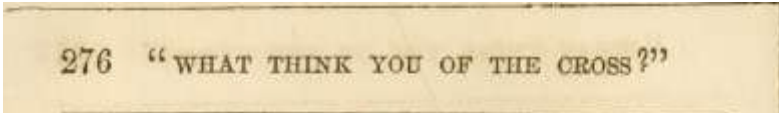
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that runs through: all his doctrinal teaching and practical exhortation. He seems to think that the most advanced Christian can never hear too much of the cross.\*

This is what he lived upon all his life, from the time of his conversion. He tells the Galatians, " The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galat. ii. 20.) What made him so strong to labor? What made him so willing to work ? What made him so unwearied in endeavoring to save some ? What made him so persevering and patient ? I will tell you the secret of it all. He was always feeding by faith on Christ's body and Christ's blood. Jesus crucified was the meat and drink of his soul.

And, reader, you may rest assured that Paul was right. Depend upon it, the cross of Christ, •—the death of Christ on the cross to make

\* " Christ crucified is the sum of the Gospel, and contains all the riches of it. Paul was so much taken with Christ, that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his pen and lips. It is observed that he hath the word " Jesus" five huudi-ed times in his Epistles."— Charnock. 1684.



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atonement for sinners,—is the centre truth in the whole Bible. This is the truth we begin with when we open Genesis. The seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head is nothing else but a prophecy of Christ crucified. This is the truth that shines out, though veiled, all through the law of Moses and the history of the Jews. The daily sacrifice, the passover lamb, the continual shedding of blood in the tabernacle and temple,—all these were emblems of Christ crucified. This is the truth that we see honored in the vision of heaven before we close the book of Eevelation. " In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts," we are told, " and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." (Eev. V. 6.) Even in the midst of heavenly glory we get a view of Christ crucified. Take away the cross of Christ, and the Bible is a dark book. It is like the Egyptian



hieroglyphics, without the key that interprets their meaning,—curious and wonderful, but of no real use.

Header, mark what I say. You may know

a good deal about the Bible. You may know the outlines of the histories it contains, and the dates of the events described, just as a man knows the history of England. You may know the names of the men and women mentioned in it, just as a man knows Caesar, Alexander the Great, or Napoleon. You may know the several precepts of the Bible, and admire them, just as a man admires Plato, Aristotle, or Seneca. But if you have not yet found out that Christ crucified is the foundation of the whole volume, you have read your Bible hitherto to very little profit. Your religion is a heaven without a sun, an arch without a keystone, a compass without a needle, a clock without spring or weights, a lamp without oil. It will not comfort you. It will not deliver your soul from hell. " ~ ^

Header, mark what I say again. You may ~ know a good deal about Christ, by a kind of head knowledge. You may know who He was, and where He was born, and what He did. You may know His miracles, His sayings, His prophecies, and His ordinances. You

may know how- He lived, and how He suffered, and how He died. But unless you know the power of Christ's cross by experience,—unless you know and feel within that the blood shed on that cross has washed away your own particular sins,—unless you are willing to confess that your salvation depends entirely on the work that Christ did upon the cross,—unless this be the case, Christ will profit you nothing. The mere knowing Christ's name will never save you. You must know His cross, and His blood, or else you will die in your sins.\*

Header, as long as you live, beware of a religion in which there is not much of the cross. You live in times when the warning is sadly needful. Beware, I say again, of a religion without the cross.

There are hundreds of places of worship in

\* " If our faith stop in Christ's life, and do not fasten upon his blood, it will not be a justifying faith. His miracles, which prepared the world for his doctrines ; his holiness, which fitted himself for his sufferings, had been insufficient for us without the addition of the cross."— Charnock 1684.

this day, in which there is everything almost except the cross. There is carved oak, and sculptured stone. There is stained glass, and brilliant painting. There are solemn services, and a constant round of ordinances. But the real cross of Christ is not there. Jesus crucified is not proclaimed in the pulpit. The Lamb of God is not lifted up, and salvation by faith in Him is not freely proclaimed. And hence all is wrong. Header, beware of such places of worship. They are not apostolical. They would not have satisfied St. Paul.\*

There are thousands of religious books published in our times, in which there is everything except the cross. They are full of directions about sacraments, and praises of the church. They abound in exhortations about holy living, and rules for the attainment of perfection. They have plenty of fonts and crosses both inside and outside. But the real

" ^ " Paul determined to know nothing else but Jesus Christ and him crucified. But many manage the ministry as if they had taken up a contrary determination, even to know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified."— Traill. 1690.

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cross of Christ is left out. The Saviour and his dying love are either not mentioned, or mentioned in an unscriptural way. And hence they are worse than useless. Eeader, beware of such books. They are not apostolical. They would never have satisfied St. Paul.

Eeader, St. Paul gloried in nothing but the cross. Strive to be like him. Set Jesus crucified fully before the eyes of your soul. Listen not to any teaching which would interpose anything between you and Him. Do not fall into the old Galatian error; Think not that any one in this day is a better guide than the apostles. Do not be ashamed of the old paths, in which men walked who were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Let not the vague talk of men, who speak great swelling words about catholicity, and the church, and the ministry, disturb your peace, and make you loose your hands from the cross. Churches, ministers; and sacraments, are all useful in their way, but they are not Christ crucified. Do not give Christ's honor to another. " He that glo-rieth, let him glory in the Lord."

III. Let me show you why all Christians ought to ghry in the cross of Christ.

I feel that I mnst say something on this point, because of the ignorance that prevails about it. I suspect that many see no peculiar glory and beauty in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, they think it painful, humbling, and degrading. They do not see much profit in the story of His death and sufferings. They rather turn from it as an unpleasant thing.

Now, I believe that such persons are quite wrong. I cannot hold with them. I believe it is an excellent thing for us all to be continually dwelling on the cross of Christ. It is a good thing to be often reminded how Jesus was betrayed into the hands of wicked men,—how they condemned Him with most unjust judgment,—how they spit on Him, scourged Him, beat Him, and crowned Him with thorns, —how they led him forth as a lamb to the slaughter, without His murmuring or resisting,—how they drove the nails through His hands and feet, and set Him up on Calvary

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between two thieves,—^how they pierced His side with a spear, mocked Him in His sufferings, and let Him hang there naked and bleeding till He died. Of all these things, I say, it is good to be reminded. It is not for nothing that the crucifixion is described four times over in the Kew Testament. There are very few things that all the four writers of the Gospel describe. Generally speaking, if Matthew, Mark, and Luke, tell a thing in our Lord's history, John does not tell it. But there is one thing that all the four give us most fully, and that one thing is the story of the cross. This is a telling fact, and not to be overlooked.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings on the cross were fore-ordained. They did not come on Him by chance or accident. They were all planned, counselled, and determined from all eternity. The cross was foreseen in all the provisions of the everlasting Trinity, for the salvation of sinners. In the purposes of God the cross was set up from everlasting. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did

Jesus shed, which had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that redemption should be by the cross. Infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified by the determined counsel and fore-knowledge of Grod.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings on the cross were necessary fof •marHs salvation. He had to bear our sins, if ever they were to be borne at all. With His

stripes alone could we be healed. This was the one payment of our debt that God would accept. This was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depended. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us. There would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed.\*

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings were endured voluntarily and of His

\* " In Christ's humiliation stands our exaltation; in His weakness stands our strength; in His ignominy our glory ; in His death our life."— Cudworth. 1613.

" The eye of faith regards Christ sitting on the summit

of His own free will. He was under no compulsion. Of His own choice He laid down His life. Of His own choice He went to the cross to finish the work He came to do. He might easily have summoned legions of angels with a word, and scattered Pilate and Herod and all their armies, like chaff before the wind. But He was a willing sufferer. His heart was set on the salvation of sinners. He was resolved to open a fountain for all sin and uncleanness, by shedding His own blood.

Reader, when I think of all this, I see nothing painful or disagreeable in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, I see in it wisdom and power, peace and hope, joy and gladness, comfort and consolation. The more I keep the cross in my mind's eye, the more fulness I seem to discern in it. The longer I dwell on the cross in my thoughts, the more I am satisfied that there is more to be learned at the foot of the cross than anywhere else in the world.

of the cross, as in a triumphal chariot; the devil bound to the lowest part of the same cross, and trodden under the feet of Christ."— Bishop Davenant on Colossians. 1627.

Would I know the length and breadth of God the Father's love towards a sinful world ? Where shall I see it most displayed ? Shall I look at His glorious sun shining down daily on the unthankful and evil? Shall I look at seed-time and harvest returning in regular yearly succession ? Oh! no! I can find a stronger proof of love than anything of this sort. I look at the cross of Christ. I see in it not the cause of the Father's love, but the effect. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son,—gave Him to suffer and die, —that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. I know that the Father loves us because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son. Ah! reader, I might sometimes fancy that God the Father is too high and holy to care for such miserable, corrupt creatures as we are. But I cannot, must not, dare not think it, when I look at the cross of Christ.\*

\* " The world we live in had fallen upon our heads, had it not been upheld by the pillar of the cross; had not

Would I know how exceedingly sinful and abominable sin is in the sight of God ? Where shall I see that most fully brought out? Shall I turn to the history of the flood, and read how sin drowned the world ? Shall I go to the shore of the Dead Sea, and mark what sin brought on Sodom and Gomorrah? Shall I turn to the wandering Jews, and observe how sin has scattered them over the face of the earth ? No ! I can find a clearer proof still. I look at the cross of Christ. There I see that sin is so black and damnable, that nothing but the blood of God's own Son can wash it away. There I see that sin has so separated me from my holy Maker, that all the angels in heaven could never have made peace between us. Nothing could reconcile us short of the death of Christ. Ah! if I

listened to the wretched talk of proud men, I might sometimes fancy sin was not so very  
Christ stepped in and promised a satisfaction for the sin of man. By this all things  
consist >, not a blessing we enjoy-but may put us in mind of it; they were all forfeited by  
sin but merited by his blood. If we study it well we shall be sensible how God hateth sin  
and loved a world."— Charnock.

sinful. But I cannot think little of sin, when I look at the cross of Christ."^

Would I know the fulness and completeness' of the salvation God has provided for  
sinners ? Where shall I see it most distinctly ? Shall I go to the general declarations of  
the Bible about God's mercy ? Shall I rest in the general truth that God is a God of love ?  
Oh! no! I will look at the cross of Christ. I find no evidence like that. I find no balm for a  
sore conscience and a troubled heart, like the sight of Jesus dying for me on the  
accursed tree. There I see that a full payment has been made for all my enormous debts.  
The curse of that law which I have broken has come down on One who there suffered in  
my stead. The demands of that law are all satisfied. Payment has been made for me,  
even to the uttermost farthing. It will not be required twice over. Ah! I might

\* "If God hateth sin so much that he would allow neither man nor angel for the  
redemption thereof, but- only the death of his only and well-beloved Son, who will not  
stand in fear thereof?"— Church of England Homily for Good Friday. 1560.

sometimes imagine I was too bad to be forgiven. My own heart sometimes whispers that  
I am too wicked to be saved. But I know in my better moments this is all my foolish  
unbelief. I read an answer to my doubts in the blood shed on Calvary. I feel sure that  
there is a way to heaven for the very vilest of men, when I look at the cross. Would I find  
strong reasons for being a holy man f Whither shall I turn for them ? Shall I listen to the  
ten commandments merely? Shall I study the examples given me in the Bible of what  
grace can do ? Shall I meditate on the rewards of heaven, and the punishments of hell?  
Is there no stronger motive still ? Yes ! I will look at the cross of Christ. There I see the  
love of Christ constraining me to live not unto myself, but unto Him. There I see that I  
am not my own now ;—I am bought with a price. I am bound by the most solemn  
obligations to glorify Jesus with body and spirit, which are His. There I see that Jesus  
gave himself for me, not only to redeem me from all iniquity, but also to

purify me and make me one of a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He bore my sins  
in his own body on the tree, that I being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness.  
Ah! reader, there is nothing so sanctifying as a clear view of the cross of Christ! It  
crucifies the world unto us, and us unto the world. How can we love sin when we  
remember that because of our sins Jesus died? Surely none ought to be so holy as the  
disciples of a crucified Lord.

Would I learn hoiv to be contented and cheerful under all the cares and anxieties of life  
? What school shall I go to ? How shall I attain this state of mind most easily ? Shall I  
look at the sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God, the providence of God, the love of  
God ? It is well to do so. But I have a better argument still. I will look at the cross of  
Christ. I feel that He who spared not His only begotten Son, but delivered Him up to die  
for me, will surely with Him give me all things that I really need. He that endured that  
pain for my soul, will surely not withhold from me

anything that is really good. He that has done the greater things for me, will doubtless do the lesser things also. He that gave His own blood to procure me a home, will unquestionably supply me with all really profitable for me by the way. Ah! reader, there is no school for learning contentment that can be compared with the foot of the cross.

Would I gather arguments for hoping that I shall never be cast away? Where shall I go to find them? Shall I look at my own graces and gifts? Shall I take comfort in my own faith, and love, and penitence, and zeal, and prayer? Shall I turn to my own heart, and say, "this same heart will never be false and cold?" Oh! no! God forbid! I will look at the cross of Christ. This is my grand argument. This is my main stay. I cannot think that He who went through such sufferings to redeem my soul, will let that soul perish after all, when it has once cast itself on Him. Oh! no! what Jesus paid for, Jesus will surely keep. He paid dearly for it. He will not let it easily be lost. He died for me when I was

yet a dark sinner. He will never forsake me after I have believed. All! reader, when Satan tempts you to doubt whether Christ's people will be kept from falling, you should tell Satan to look at the cross.\*

And now, reader, will you marvel that I said all Christians ought to glory in the cross? Will you not rather wonder that any can hear of the cross and remain unmoved? I declare I know no greater proof of man's depravity, than the fact that thousands of so-called Christians see nothing in the cross. Well may our hearts be called stony,—well may the eyes of our mind be called blind,—well may our whole nature be called diseased,—well may we all be called dead, when the cross of Christ is heard of, and yet neglected. Surely we may take up the words of the prophet, and say, "Hear O heavens, and be astonished O earth;

\* "The believer is so freed from eternal wrath, that if Satan and conscience say, "thou art a sinner, and under the curse of the law," he can say, it is true, I am a sinner, but I was hanged on a tree and died, and was made a curse in my Head and Lawgiver Christ, and his payment and suffering is my payment and suffering."—Rutherford's Christ Dying. 1647.

a wonderful and a horrible thing is done,"—Christ was crucified for sinners, and yet many Christians live as if He was never crucified at all!

Header, the cross is the grand peculiarity of the Christian religion. Other religions have laws and moral precepts,—forms and ceremonies,—rewards and punishments. But other religions cannot tell us of a dying Saviour. They cannot show us the cross. This is the crown and glory of the Gospel. This is that special comfort which belongs to it alone. Miserable indeed is that religious teaching which calls itself Christian, and yet contains nothing of the cross. A man who teaches in this way, might as well profess to explain the solar system, and yet tell his hearers nothing about the sun.

The cross is the strength of a minister. I for one would not be without it for all the world. I should feel like a soldier without arms,—like an artist without his pencil,—like a pilot Avith-out his compass,—like a laborer without his tools. Let others, if they will, preach the law

and morality. Let others bold forth the terrors of hell, and the joys of heaven. Let others drench their congregations with teachings about the sacraments and the church. Give

me the cross of Christ. This is the only lever which has ever turned the world upside down hitherto, and made men forsake their sins. And if this will not, nothing will. A man may begin preaching with a perfect knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. But he will do little or no good among his hearers unless he knows something of the cross. Never was there a minister who did much for the conversion of souls who did not dwell much on Christ crucified. Luther, Eutherford, Whitefield, M'Cheyne, were all most eminently preachers of the cross. This is the preaching that the Holy Ghost delights to bless. He loves to honor those who honor the cross.

The cross is the secret of all missionary success. Nothing but this has ever moved the hearts of the heathen. Just according as this has been lifted up missions have prospered. This is the weapon that has won victories over hearts

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of every kind, in every quarter of the globe. Greenlanders, Africans, South-Sea Islanders, Hindoos, Chinese, all have alike felt its power. Just as that huge iron tube which crosses the Menai Straits, is more affected and bent by half an hour's sunshine than by all the dead weight that can be placed in it, so in like manner the hearts of savages have melted before the cross, when every other argument seemed to move them no more than stones. "Brethren," said a North American Indian after his conversion, \*' I have been a heathen. I know how heathens think. Once a preacher came and began to explain to us that there was a God ; but we told him to return to the place from whence he came. Another preacher came and told us not to lie, nor steal, nor drink; but we did not heed him. At last another came into my hut one day and said, ' I am come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He sends to let you know that He will make you happy, and deliver you from misery. For this end He became a man, gave His life a ransom, and shed

His blood for sinners.' I could not forget his words. I told them to the other Indians, and an awakening begun among us." I say therefore, preach the sufferings and death of Christ, our Saviour, if you wish your words to gain entrance among the heathen. Never indeed did the devil triumph so thoroughly, as when he persuaded the Jesuit missionaries in China to keep back the story of the cross I

The cross is the foundation of a church's prosperity. No church will ever be honored in which Christ crucified is not continually lifted up. Nothing whatever can make up for the want of the cross. Without it all things may be done decently and in order. Without it there may be splendid ceremonies, beautiful music, gorgeous churches, learned ministers, crowded communion tables, huge collections for the poor. But without the cross no good will be done. Dark hearts will not be enlightened. Proud hearts will not be humbled. Mourning hearts will not be comforted. Fainting hearts will not be cheered. Sermons about the Catholic Church and an apostolic ministry,—sermons

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about baptism and the Lord's supper,—sermons about unity and schism,—sermons about fasts and communion,—sermons about fathers and saints,—such sermons will never make up for the absence of sermons about the cross of Christ. They may amuse some. They will feed none. A gorgeous banqueting room and splendid gold plate on the table will never make up to a hungry man for the want of food. Christ crucified is God's grand ordinance for doing good to men. Whenever a church keeps back Christ crucified, or puts anything whatever in that foremost place which Christ crucified should always have, from that moment a church ceases to be useful. Without Christ crucified in her pulpits, a church is little better than a cumberer of the ground, a dead carcass, a well

without water, a barren fig tree, a sleeping watchman, a silent trumpet, a dumb witness, an ambassador without terms of peace, a messenger without tidings, a lighthouse without fire, a stumbling-block to weak believers, a comfort to infidels,

a hot-bed for formalism, a joy to the devil, and an offence to God.

The cross is the grand centime of union among true Christians. Our outward differences are many without doubt. One man is an Episcopalian, another is a Presbyterian,—one is an Independent, another a Baptist,—one is a Calvinist, another an Armenian,—one is a Lutheran, another a Plymouth brother,—one is a friend to establishments, another a friend to the voluntary system,—one is a friend to liturgies, another a friend to extempore prayer. But after all, what shall we hear about most of these differences in heaven? Nothing, most probably: nothing at all. Does a man really and sincerely glory in the cross of Christ? That is the grand question. If he does, he is my brother;—we are travelling in the same road. We are journeying towards a home where Christ is all, and everything outward in religion will be forgotten. But if he does not glory in the cross of Christ, I cannot feel comfort about him. Union on outward points only is union only for time.—Union about the cross

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is union for eternity. Error on outward points is only a skin-deep disease. Error about the cross is disease at the heart. Union about outward points is a mere man-made union. Union about the cross of Christ can only be produced by the Holy Ghost.

Reader, I know not what you think of all this. I feel as if I had said nothing compared to what might be said. I feel as if the half of what I desire to tell you about the cross were left untold. But I do hope that I have given you something to think about. I do trust that I have shown you that I have reason for the question with which I began this tract, "What do you think and feel about the cross of Christ?" Listen to me now for a few moments, while I say something to apply the whole subject to your conscience.

Are you living in any kind of sin? Are you following the course of this world, and neglecting your soul? Hear, I beseech you, what I say to you this day: "Behold the cross of Christ." See there how Jesus loved you! See there what Jesus suffered to prepare for

you a way of salvation! Yes! careless men and women, for you that blood was shed! For you those hands and feet were pierced with nails! For you that body hung in agony on the cross! You are those whom Jesus loved, and for whom He died! Surely that love ought to melt you. Surely the thought of the cross should draw you to repentance. Oh! that it might be so this very day. Oh! that you would come at once to that Saviour who died for you, and is willing to save. Come and cry to Him with the prayer of faith, and I know that He will listen. Come and lay your hands upon the cross, and I know that He will not cast you out. Come and believe on Him who died on the cross, and this very day you shall have eternal life. How will you ever escape if you neglect so great salvation? Stone surely will be so deep in hell as those who despise the cross!

Are you inquiring the way toward heaven? Are you seeking salvation, but doubtful whether you can find it? Are you desiring to have an interest in Christ, but doubting whether

Christ will receive you? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Here is encouragement if you really want it. Draw near to the Lord Jesus with boldness, for nothing need keep you back. His arms are open to receive you. His heart is full of love towards you. He has made a way by which you may approach him with confidence.

Think of the cross. Draw near, and fear not.

Are you an unlearned man ? Are you desirous to get to heaven, and yet perplexed and brought to a stand-still by difficulties in the Bible which you cannot explain ? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Eead there the Father's love and the Son's compassion. Surely they are written in great plain letters, which none can well mistake. What though you are now perplexed by the doctrine of election ? What though at present you cannot reconcile your own utter corruption and your own responsibility ? Look, I say, at the cross. Does not that cross tell you that Jesus is a mighty, loving, ready Saviour? Does it not make

one thing plain, and that is that if not saved it is all your own fault? Oh! get hold of that truth, and hold it fast.

Are you a distressed believer f Is your heart pressed down with sickness, tired with disappointments, overburdened with cares ? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Think whose hand it is that chastens you. Think whose hand is measuring to you the cup of bitterness which you are now drinking. It is the hand of Him that was crucified. It is the same hand that in love to your soul was nailed to the accursed tree. Surely that thought should comfort and hearten you. Surely you should say to yourself, " A crucified Saviour will never lay upon me anything that is not good for me. There is a needs be. It must be well."

Are you a heliever that longs to he more holy ? Are you one that finds his heart too ready to love earthly things? To you also I say, "Behold the cross of Christ." Look at the cross. Think of the cross. Meditate on the cross, and then go and set affections on the world if

you can. I believe that holiness is nowhere learned so well as on Calvary. I believe you cannot look much at the cross without feeling your will sanctified, and your tastes made more spiritual. As the sun, gazed upon, makes everything else look dark and dim, so does the cross darken the false splendor of this world. As honey tasted makes all other things seem to have no taste at all, so does the cross seen by faith take all the sweetness out of the pleasures of the world. Keep on every day steadily looking at the cross of Christ, and you will soon say of the world as the poet does,—

" Its pleasures now no longer please, No more content afford; Far from my heart be joys like these, Now I have seen the Lord.

As by the ligit of opening day

The stars are all conceal'd, So earthly pleasures fade away

When Jesus is reveal'd."

Are you a dying believer? Have you gone to that bed from which something within tells you, you will never come down alive ? Are

you drawing near to that solemn hour when soul and body must part for a season, and you must launch into a world unknown ? Oh ! look steadily at the cross of Christ, and you shall be kept in peace. Fix the eyes of your mind firmly on Jesus crucified, and He shall deliver you from all your fears. Though you walk through dark places. He will be with you. He will never leave you,—never forsake you. Sit under the shadow of the cross to the very last, and its fruit shall be sweet to your taste. " Ah !" said a dying missionary, " there is but one thing needful on a deathbed, and that is to feel one's arms round the



cross.

Reader, I lay these thoughts before your mind. What you think now about the cross of Christ, I cannot tell; but I can wish you nothing better than this, that you may be able to say with the apostle Paul, before you die or meet the Lord, " God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

" I am now ready to "be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

" I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith :

" Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, -which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."—2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

In these words you see the Apostle Paul looking three ways,—downward, backward, forward ; — downward to the grave, — backward to his own ministry,—forward to that great day, the day of judgment.

Let us stand by his side a few minutes, and mark the words he uses. Happy is that soul among us who can look where Paul looked, and then speak as Paul spoke.

He looks downward to the grave, and he does it without fear. Hear what he says.

" I am ready to be offered." I am like an

"have you assurance?"

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animal brought to the place of sacrifice, and bound with cords to the very horns of the altar. The wine and oil have been poured on my head, according to the custom. The last ceremonies have been gone through. Every preparation has been made. It only remains to receive the death-blow, and then all is over.

" The time of my departure is at hand." I am like a ship about to unmoor, and put to sea. All on board is ready. I only wait to have the moorings cast off that fasten me to the shore, and I shall then set sail, and begin my voyage.

Brethren, these are glorious words to come from the lips of a child of Adam like ourselves. Death is a solemn thing, and never so much so as when we see it close at hand. The grave is a chilly, heart-sickening place, and it is vain to pretend it has no terrors. Yet here is a mortal man, who can look calmly into the narrow house appointed for all living, and say, while he stands upon the brink, " I see it all, and am not afraid."

Let us listen to him again. He looks backward to his ministerial life, and he does it without shame. Hear what he says :

" I have fought a good fight." There he speaks as a soldier. I have fought that good battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, from which so many shrink and draw back.

" I have finished my course." There he speaks as one who has run for a prize. I have run the race marked out for me. I have gone over the ground appointed for me, however rough and steep. I have not turned aside because of difficulties, nor been discouraged by the length of the way. I am at last in sight of the goal.

" I have kept the faith." There he speaks as a steward. I have held fast that glorious

Gospel, which was committed to my trust. I have not mingled it with man's traditions, nor spoiled its simplicity by adding my own inventions, nor allowed others to adulterate it without withstanding them to the face. "As a soldier,—a runner,—a steward," he seems to say, "I am not ashamed."

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Bretliren, that Christian is happy, who, as he quits this world, can leave such testimony behind him. A good conscience will save no man,—wash away no sin, — nor lift us one hair's breadth toward heaven. Yet, a good conscience will be found a pleasant visitor at our bedside in a dying hour. Do you remember that place in Pilgrim's Progress, which describes Old Honest's passage across the river of death? "The river," says Bunyan, "at that time overflowed its banks in some places; but Mr. Honest in his life-time had spoken to one Good Conscience to meet him there; the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over." Believe me, there is a mine of truth in that passage.

Let us hear the Apostle once more. He looks forward to the great day of reckoning, and he does it without doubt. Mark his words:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that

love his appearing." A glorious reward, he seems to say, is ready and laid up in store for me, even that crown which is only given to the righteous. In the great day of judgment the Lord shall give this crown to me, and to all besides me who have loved Him as an unseen Saviour, and longed to see Him face to face. My work on earth is over. This one thing now remains for me to look forward to, and nothing more.

You see, brethren, he speaks without any hesitation or distrust. He regards the crown as a sure thing, as his own already. He declares with unfaltering confidence his firm persuasion, that the righteous Judge will give it to him. Paul was no stranger to all the circumstances and accompaniments of that solemn day to which he referred. The great white throne,—the assembled world,—the open books,—the revealing of all secrets,—the listening angels,—the awful sentence,—the eternal separation of the lost and saved,—all these were things with which he was well acquainted. But none of these things moved him. His

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strong faith overleaped them all, and only saw Jesus, his all-prevailing Advocate, and the blood of sprinkling, and sin washed away. "A crown," he says, "is laid up for me." "The Lord Himself shall give it to me." He speaks as if he saw it all with his own eyes.

Such are the main things which these verses contain. Of most of them I cannot pretend to speak, for time would not allow me. I shall only try to set before you one point in the passage, and that is, "the assured hope" with which the Apostle looks forward to his own prospects in the day of judgment.

I shall do this the more readily, because of the great importance which I feel attaches to the subject, and the great neglect with which, I humbly conceive, it is often treated in this day.

But I shall do it at the same time with fear and trembling. I feel that I am treading on very difficult ground, and that it is easy to speak rashly and unscripturally in this matter. The road between truth and error is here especially a narrow pass; and if I shall be en-

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abled to do good to some without doing harm, to others, I shall be very thankful.

'Now there are four things I wish to bring before you in speaking of this subject, and it may clear our way perhaps if I name them to you at once.

I.—First, then, I will try to show you an assured hope, such as Paul here expresses, is a true and Scriptural thing.

II.—Secondly, I will make this broad concession, that a man may never arrive at this assured hope and yet he saved.

III.—Thirdly, I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

IV. —Lastly, I will try to point out some causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained.

I.—First, then, I said, an assured hope is a true and Scriptural thing.

Assurance, such as Paul expresses in our text, is not a mere fancy or feeling. It is not the result of high animal spirits, or a sanguine temperament of body. It is a positive gift of the Holy Ghost, bestowed without ref-

er-

erence to men's bodily frames or constitutions, and a gift which every believer in Christ should aim at and seek after.

The word of God appears to me to teach, that a believer may arrive at an assured confidence with regard to his own salvation.

I would lay it down fully and broadly, that a true Christian, a converted man, may reach that comfortable degree of faith in Christ, that in general he shall feel entirely confident as to the pardon and safety of his soul,—shall seldom be troubled with doubts,—seldom be distracted with hesitation,—seldom be distressed by anxious questionings,—and, in short, though vexed by many an inward conflict with sin, shall look forward to death without trembling, and to judgment without dismay.\*

Such is my account of assurance. I will ask you to mark it well. I say neither less nor more than I have here laid down.

\* " Full assurance that Christ hath delivered Paul from condemnation, yea, so full and real, as produceth thanksgiving and triumphing in Christ, may and doth consist with complaints and outcries of a wretched condition for the in-

Now such a statement as this, is often disputed and denied. Many cannot see it at all.

The Church of Rome denounces assurance in the most unmeasured terms. The Council of Trent declare roundly that, a " believer's assurance of the pardon of his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence;" and Cardinal Bellarmine, the well-known champion of Romanism, calls it "a prime error of heretics."

The vast majority of the worldly among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them to hear of it. They do not like others to feel comfortable and sure, because they never feel so themselves. That they cannot receive it, is certainly no marvel.

But there are also some true believers who reject assurance, or shrink from it as a notion fraught with danger. They consider it borders on presumption. They seem to think it a proper humility never to be confident, and to live in a certain degree of doubt. This is to be regretted, and does much harm.

dwelling of the body of sin."— Rutherford's Triumph of Faith. 1645.

I frankly allow there are some presumptuous persons, who profess to feel a confidence, for which they have no Scriptural warrant. There always are some people who think well of themselves when God thinks ill, just as there are some who think ill of themselves when God thinks well. There always will be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuser, imposition, and counterfeits. God's election,—man's impotence,—salvation by grace,—are all alike abused. There will be fan.'scics and enthusiasts as long as the world stands. But, for all this, assurance is a real, sober, and true thing; and God's children must not let themselves be driven from the use of a truth, merely because it is abused.\*

\* " We do not vindicate every vain pretender to ' the witness of the Spirit;' we are aware that there are those in whose professions of religion we can see nothing but their forwardness and confidence to recommend them. But let us not reject any doctrine of revelation through an over-anxious fear of consequences."— Robinson's Christian System.

" True assurance is built upon a Scripture basis:—presumption hath no Scripture to show for its warrant; it is like a will without seal and witnesses, which is null and void

My answer to all who deny the existence of real, well-grounded assurance, is simply this,—What saith the Scripture ? If assurance be not there, I have not another word to say.

But does not Job say, •' I know that my Ee-deemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job, xix. 25, 26.)

Does not David say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm xxiii. 4."^^

in law : presumption wants both the witness of the w^rd, and the seal of the Spirit. Assurance always keeps the heart in a lowly posture; but presumption is bred of pride. Feathers fly up, but gold descends; he who hath this golden assurance, his heart descends in humility."— JWat.s07i's Body of Divinity. 1650.

" Presumption is joined with looseness of life ; persuasion with a tender conscience: that □dies sin because it is sure, this does not for fear of losing assurance. Persuasion will not sin, because it cost her Saviour so dear; presumption will sin, because grace doth abound. Humility is the way to heaven. They that are proudly secure of their going to heaven, do not so often come thither, as they that are afraid of going to hell."— Andrews on ii, Peter. 1633.

Does not Isaiah say, " Thou wilt keep him. in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." (Isaiah, xxvi. 8.)

And again, " The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." (Isaiah, xxxii. 17.)

Does not Paul say to the Romans, " I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 38, 39.)

Does he not say to the Corinthians, " We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1.)

And again, " We are always confident knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." (2 Cor. v. 6.)

Does he not say to Timothy, " I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is

able to keep that which I have committed to him." (2 Tim. i. 12.)

And does he not speak to the Colossians of " the full assurance of understanding" (Coloss. ii. 2); and to the Hebrews of the " full assurance of faith," and the " full assurance of hope." (Heb. vi. 11, and x. 22.)

Does not Peter say expressly, " Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." (2 Peter, i. 10.)

Does not John say, " We know that we have passed from death unto life." (1 John, iii. 14.)

And again, " These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John, v. 13.)

And again, "We know that we are of God." (1 John, V. 19.)

Brethren, what shall we say to these things ? I desire to speak with all humility on any controverted point. I feel that I am only a poor fallible child of Adam myself. But I must say, that in the passages I have just quoted, I see something far higher than the mere " hopes"

and " trusts" with which so many believers appear content in this day. I see the language of persuasion, confidence, knowledge,—nay, I may almost say, of certainty. And I feel, for my own part, if I may take these Scriptures in their plain obvious meaning, assurance is true.

But my answer furthermore to all who dislike the doctrine of assurance, as bordering on presumption, is this:—It can hardly be presumption to tread in the steps of Peter, and Paul, of Job, and of John. They were all eminently humble and lowly-minded men, if ever any were; and yet they all speak of their own state with an assured hope. Surely this should teach us that deep humility and strong assurance are perfectly compatible, and that there is not any necessary connection between spiritual confidence and pride.<sup>^</sup>

My answer furthermore is, that many have attained to such an assured hope as our text

\* " They are quite mistaken that think faith and humility are inconsistent; they not only agree well together, but they cannot be parted."— Trill

expresses, even in modern times. I would not concede for a moment that it was a peculiar privilege confined to the apostolic day. There have been in our own land many believers who have appeared to walk in almost uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son, who have seemed to enjoy an almost unceasing sense of the light of God's reconciled countenance shining down upon them, and have left their experience on record. I could mention well-known names, if time permitted. The thing has been, and is,—and that is enough.

My answer, lastly, is, it cannot be wrong to feel confidently in a matter where God speaks unconditionally,—to believe decidedly when God promises decidedly,—to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace, when we rest on the word and oath of Him that never changes. It is an utter mistake to suppose that the believer who feels assurance is resting on anything he sees in himself. He simply leans on the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the Scripture of truth. He believes the Lord Je-

sus means what He says, and takes Him at His word. Assurance after all is no more than a fall-grown faith,—a masculine faith that grasps Christ's promise with both hands,—a faith that argues like the good centurion, if the Lord "speak the word only," I am healed. Wherefore then should I doubt?\*" (Matt. viii. 8.)

Brethren, depend upon it, Paul was the last man in the world to build his assurance on

\*. "To be assured of our salvation," Augustine saith, "is no arrogant stoutness; it is our faith. It is no pride; it is devotion. It is no presumption; it is God's promise."—Bishop Jewel's Defence of the Apology. 1570.

"If the ground of our assurance rested in and on ourselves, it might justly be called presumption; but the Lord and the power of His might being the ground thereof, they either know not what is the might of His power, or else too lightly esteem it, who account assured confidence thereon presumption."—Gouge's Whole Armor of God. 1647.

"Upon what ground is this certainty built? Surely not upon anything that is in us. Our assurance of perseverance is grounded wholly upon God. If we look upon ourselves, we see cause of fear and doubting; but if we look up to God, we shall find cause enough for assurance."—Hildersani on iy. John. 1632.

"Our hope is not hing upon such an untwisted thread as, 'I imagine so,' or, 'it is likely;' but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him

anything of his own. He, who could write himself down "chief of sinners," (1 Tim. i. 15) had a deep sense of his own guilt and corruption; but then he had a still deeper sense of the length and breadth of Christ's righteousness imputed to him. He, who would cry, "O wretched man that I am," (Rom. vii. 24) had a clear view of the fountain of evil within his heart; but then he had a still clearer view of that other fountain, which can remove all sin and uncleanness. He, who thought himself "less than the least of all saints," (Ephes. iii. 8) had a lively and abiding feeling of his own weakness; but he had a still livelier feeling that Christ's promise, "My sheep shall never perish," (John, x. 28) could not be broken. Paul knew, if ever man did, that he was a poor, frail bark, floating on a stormy ocean. He saw, if any did, the rolling waves and roaring tempest by which he was surround\*

who is eternal verity; our salvation is fastened with God's own hand, and Christ's own strength, to the strong stake of God's unchangeable nature."—Rutherford's Letters. 1637.

(These precious letters are published by R. Carter &, Brothers.)

ed. But then he looked away from self to Jesus, and was not afraid. He remembered that anchor within the veil, which is both sure and steadfast. He remembered the word and work, and constant intercession of Him that loved him and gave Himself for him. And this it was, and nothing else, that enabled him to say so boldly, "A crown is laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it to me," and to conclude so surely, "The Lord will preserve me, I shall never be confounded."\*

I may not dwell longer on this part of the subject. I think you will allow I have shown ground for the assertion I made, that assurance is a true thing.

IL I pass on to the second thing I spoke of: I said, a believer may never arrive at this

\* "None of them did a believer in Jesus Christ die or drown in his voyage to heaven. They will all be found safe and sound with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Christ loseth none of them; yea, nothing of them. (John, vi. 39.) Not a bone of a believer is to be seen in the field of battle. They are all more than conquerors through Him that loved them." (Rom. viii. 37)—Traill.

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assured hope which Paul expresses and yet he saved.

I grant this most freely. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made "sad, or to discourage one fainting child of God, or to leave the impression that you have no part or lot in Christ, except you feel assurance.

A man may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope, like the Apostle Paul. To believe and have a glimmering hope of acceptance is one thing; to have joy and peace in our believing, and abound in hope, is quite another. All God's children have faith: not all have assurance. I think this ought never to be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different opinion. I believe that excellent minister, Hervey, the author of *Theron and Aspasia*, was one that did not allow the distinction I have stated. But I desire to call no man master. I dread as much as any one the idea of healing the wounds of conscience

slightly; but I should think any other view than that I have given, a most uncomfortable Gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep souls back a long time from the gate of life.

I do not shrink from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ,—really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him,—really to be a child of God, □—really to be saved; and yet to his last day be never free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

"A letter," says an old writer, "may be written, which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it."

A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches,—live childish,—die childish, and never know the greatness of his possessions.

And so also a man may be a babe in Christ's family,—think as a babe, speak as a babe; and though saved, never enjoy a lively hope, or know the real privileges of his inheritance.

Do not therefore, my brethren, mistake my

meaning, while you hear me dwell strongly on assurance. Do not do me the injustice to say, I told you none were saved except such as could say with Paul, " I know and am persuaded,—there is a crown laid up for me." I do not say so. I tell you nothing of the kind.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ a man must have, beyond all question, if he is to be saved. I know of no other way of access to the Father. I see no intimation of mercy, excepting through Christ. A man must feel his sins and lost estate,— must come to Jesus for pardon and salvation,— must rest his hope on Him and on Him alone. But if he only have faith to do this, however weak and feeble that faith may be, I will engage, from Scriptural warrants, he shall not miss heaven.

Never, never let us curtail the freeness of the glorious Gospel, or clip its fair proportions. Never let us make the gate more strait and the way more narrow than pride and love of sin have made it already. The Lord Jesus is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

He does not regard the quantity of faith, but the quality,—He does not measure its degree, but its truth. He will not break any bruised reed, nor quench any smoking flax. He will never let it be said that any perished at the foot of the cross. " Him that cometh unto me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out." (John, vi. 87.)-^-

Yes! brethren, though a man's faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard-seed,—if it only brings him to Christ, and enables him to touch the hem of His garment, he shall be saved,—saved as surely as the oldest saint in paradise,—saved as completely and eternally as Peter, or John, or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification. In our justification there are none. What is written, is written, and shall never fail; " Whosoever believeth

\* " He that believeth on Jesus shall never be confounded. iNever was any; neither shall you, if you believe. It was a great word of faith spoken by a dying man, who had been converted in a singular way, betwixt his condemnation and execution: his last words were these, spoken with a mighty shout,—' never man perished with his face towards Jesus Christ; "—Traill

on Him,"—not whosoever has a strong and mighty faith,—" Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." (Rom. x. 11.)

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no full assurance of his pardon and acceptance with God. He may be troubled with fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt. He may have many a question, and many an anxiety,—many a struggle, and many a misgiving,—clouds and darkness,—storm and tempest to the very end.

I will engage, I repeat, that bare simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he may never attain to assurance; but I will not engage it shall bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will engage it shall land him safe in harbor, but I will not engage he shall enter that harbor under full sail, confident and rejoicing. I shall not be surprised if he reaches his desired haven weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely realizing his own safety till he opens his eyes in glory.

"hate yotj assurance?"



Brethren, I believe it is of great importance to keep in view this distinction between faith and assurance. It explains things which an inquirer in religion sometimes finds it hard to understand.

Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root;—but it is no less certain you may have the root and not the flower.

Faith is that poor trembling woman that came behind Jesus in the press, and touched the hem of His garment; (Mark, v. 25)—Assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts, vii. 56.)

Faith is the penitent thief, crying, "Lord, remember me;" (Luke, xxiii. 42.)—Assurance is Job sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." (Job, xix. 25.) "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (Job, xiii. 15.)

Faith is Peter's drowning cry, as he began

to sink, "Lord, save me!" (Matt. xiv. 30.)—Assurance is that same Peter declaring before the council in after-times, "This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts, iv. 11, 12.)

Faith is the anxious, trembling voice, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;" (Mark, ix. 24.)—Assurance is the confident challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth?" (Eom. viii. 33, 34.)

Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone; (Acts, ix. 11.)—Assurance is Paul, the aged prisoner, looking calmly into the grave, and saying, "I know whom I have believed. There is a crown laid up for me." (2 Tim. i. 12; iv. 8.)

Faith is life. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death?

And yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthily, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, smileless to the very end.

Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigor, activity, energy, manliness, beauty.

Brethren, it is not a question of saved or not saved, that lies before us, but of privilege or no privilege; it is not a question of peace or no peace, but of great peace or little peace;—it is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ, it is one that belongs only to the school,—it is between the first form and the last.

He that hath faith does well. Happy should I be if I thought you all had it. Blessed, thrice blessed are they that believe. They are safe. They are washed. They are justified. They are beyond the power of hell. Satan, with all his malice, shall never pluck them out of Christ's hand.

But he that has assurance does far better,—□ sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in

Deuteronomy, even "the days of heaven upon the earth." (Deut. xi. 21.)\*

III.—I pass on to the third thing of which I spoke : I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

I ask your attention to this point especially. I heartily wish that assurance was more sought after than it is. Too many among those who believe begin doubting and go on doubting, live doubting and die doubting, and go to heaven in a kind of mist.

It will ill become me to speak in a slighting way of " hopes" and "trusts," but I fear many of us sit down content with them and go no further. I should like to see fewer " peradventures" in the Lord's family, and more who could say, " I know and am persuaded." Oh!

\* " The greatest thing that we can desire, next to the glory of God, is our own salvation ; and the sweetest thing we can desire is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher, than to be assured of that which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth."— Joseph Caryl. 1653.

J

"have you assurance?" 831

that you would all covet the best gifts, and not be content with less. You miss the full tide of blessedness the Gospel was meant to convey. You keep yourselves in a low and starved condition of soul, while your Lord is saying, "Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved. Ask and receive, that your joy may be full." (Cant. V. 1. John, xvi. 24.)

1. Know, then, for one thing, assurance is to be desired, because of the present comfort and peace it affords.

Doubts and fears have great power to spoil the happiness of a true believer in Christ. Uncertainty and suspense are bad enough in any condition,—in the matter of our health, our property, our families, our affections, our earthly callings,—but never so bad as in the affairs of our souls. And so long as a believer cannot get beyond " I hope and I trust," he manifestly feels a degree of uncertainty about his spiritual state. The very words imply as much. He says, " I hope," because he dares not say, " I know."

Now assurance, my brethren, goes far to set a child of God free from this painful kind of bondage, and so ministers mightily to his comfort. It enables him to feel that the great business of life is a settled business, the great debt a paid debt, the great disease a healed disease, and the great work a finished work; and all other business, diseases, debts, and works, are then by comparison small. In this way assurance makes him patient in tribulation, calm under bereavements, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings, in every condition content, for it gives him a fixedness of heart. It sweetens his bitter cups, it lessens the burden of his crosses, it smooths the rough places over which he travels, it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him always feel that he has something solid beneath his feet, and something firm under his hands; a sure friend by the way, and a sure home at the end."^

\* " It was a saying of Bishop Latimer to Ridley, ' When I live in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, methinks then I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh

Assurance will help a man to bear poverty and loss. It will teach him to say, " I know that I have in heaven a better and more enduring substance. Silver and gold have I none, but grace and glory are mine, and these can never make themselves wings and flee away. " Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, —yet I will rejoice in the Lord." (Habak. iii. 17,

18.)

Assurance will support a child of God under the heaviest bereavements, and assist him to

at all trouble; no affliction daunts me. But when I am eclipsed in my comforts, I am of so fearful a spirit, that I could run into a very mouse-hole."— Quoted by Christopher Love. 1653.

" Assurance will assist us in all duties; it will arm us against all temptations; it will answer all objections; it will sustain us in all conditions in which the saddest of times can bring us. ' If God be for us, who can be against us V " — Bishop Reynolds on xiv. Hosea. 1642.

" We cannot come amiss to him that hath assurance: God is his. Hath he lost a friend ?—His Father lives. Hath he lost an only child?—God hath given him His only Son. Hath he scarcity of bread ?—God hath given him the finest of the wheat, the bread of life. Are his comforts gone?— He hath the Comforter. Doth he meet with storms ?—He knows where to put in for harbor.—God is his portion, and heaven is his haven."— Thomas Watson. 1662.

feel "it is well." An assured soul will say, " though beloved ones are taken from me, yet Jesus is the same, and is alive forevermore. Though my house be not as flesh and blood could wish, yet I have an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." (2 Kings, xxiv. 26; Heb. xiii. 8; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.)

Assurance will enable a man to praise God, and be thankful, even in a prison, like Paul and Silas at Philippi. It can give a believer songs even in the darkest night, and joy when all things seem going against him.\* (Job, XXXi. 10 ; Psalm xlii. 8.)

Assurance will enable a man to sleep with the full prospect of execution on the morrow,

\* These were John Bradford's words in prison, shortly before his execution: " I have no request to make. If Queen Mary gives me my life, I will thank her; if she will banish me, I will thank her ; if she will burn me, I will thank her ; if she will condemn me to perpetual imprisonment, I will thank her."

This was Rutherford's experience, when banished to Aberdeen : " How blind are my adversaries, who sent me to a banqueting house, and not to a prison or a place of exile." " My prison is a palace to me, and Christ's banqueting house."— Letters.

like Peter in Herod's dungeon. It will teach him to say, " I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." (Psalm iv. 8.)

Assurance can make a man rejoice to suffer shame for Christ's sake, as the Apostles did. It will remind him that he may "rejoice and be exceeding glad," (Matt. v. 12,) and that there is in heaven an exceeding weight of glory that shall make amends for all. (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

Assurance will enable a believer to meet a violent and painful death without fear, as Stephen did in the beginning of Christ's Church, and as Cranmer, Eidley, Latimer, and Taylor did in our own land. It will bring to his heart the texts, " Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." (Luke, xii. 4.) "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts, vii. 59.)\*

\* These were the last words of Hugh Mackail on the scaffold at Edinburgh, 1666. " Now I

begin my intercourse with God, which shall never be broken off. Farewell father and mother, friends and relations ; farewell the world and all its delights; farewell, meat and drinks; farewell, sun,

Assurance will support a man in pain and sickness, make all his bed, smooth down his dying pillow. It will enable him to say, " If my earthly house fail, I have a building of God." (2 Cor. V. 1.) " I desire to depart and be with Christ." (Phil. i. 23.) " My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."\* (Psalm lxxiii. 26.)

Ah! brethren, the comfort assurance can give in the hour of death is a great point, depend upon it; and never will you think it so great as when your turn comes to die.

moon, and stars. "Welcome, Grod and Father; welcome, sweet Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; welcome, blessed Spirit of grace and God of all consolation ; welcome, glory; welcome, eternal life; welcome, death. o Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit; for thou hast redeemed my soul, o Lord God of trutli."

\* These were Rutherford's words on his deathbed. " o that all my brethren did know what a master I have served, and what peace I have this day ! I shall sleep in Christ, and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with his likeness." 1661.

These were Baxter's words on liis death-bed. " I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within." Towards the close he was asked how he did ? The answer was, "Almost well" 1691.

In that awful hour, there are few believers who do not find out the value and privilege of an assured hope, whatever they may have thought about it during their lives. General " hopes" and " trusts" are all very well to live upon, while the sun shines, and the body is strong; but when you come to die, you will want to be able to say, " I know and I feel ^

Believe me, Jordan is a cold stream, and we have to cross it alone. N"© earthly friend can help us. The last enemy, even death, is a strong foe. When our souls are departing there is no cordial like the strong wine of assurance.

There is a beautiful expression in the Prayer-book service for the visitation of the sick, " The Almighty Lord, who is the most strong tower to all them that put trust in Him, be now and evermore thy defence, and make thee know and feel that there is none other name under heaven, through whom thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The compilers of that service showed great 22

wisdom there. They saw that when the eyes grow dim, and the heart grows faint, and the spirit is on the eve of departing, there must then be hnoiving and feeling what Christ has done for ns, or else there cannot be perfect peace.\* ^

2. Let me name another thing. Assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian an active worhing Christian.

None, generally speaking, do so much for Christ on earth as those who enjoy the fullest confidence of a free entrance into heaven. That sounds wonderful, I dare say, but it is true.

A believer who lacks an assured hope, will spend much of his time in inward searchings of heart about his own state. Like a nervous, hypochondriacal person, he will be full of

his own ailments,—his own doubtings and ques-

\* "The least degree of faith takes away the sting of death, because it takes away guilt; but the full assurance of faith breaks the very teeth and jaws of death, by taking away the fear and dread of it."— Fairclough's Sermon in the Morning Exercises.

—his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you will often find he is so taken up with this internal warfare, that he has little leisure for other things, little time to work for God.

Now a believer, who has, like Paul, an assured hope, is free from these harassing distractions. He does not vex his soul with doubts about his own pardon and acceptance. He looks at the everlasting covenant sealed with blood, at the finished work and never-broken word of his Lord and Saviour, and therefore counts his salvation a settled thing. And thus he is able to give an undivided attention to the work of the Lord, and so in the long run to do more.

\* " Assurance, would make us active and lively in God's service; it would excite prayer, quicken obedience. Faith would make us walk, but assurance would make us run ; we should think we could never do enough for God. Assurance would be as wings to the bird, as weights to the clock, to set all the wheels of obedience a-rolling."— Thomas Watson.

" Assurance will make a man fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord. When the assured Christian hath done one work, he is calling out for another. What is next, Lord, says the assured soul; what is next ? An assured

Take, for an illustration of this, two English emigrants, and suppose them set down side by side in New Zealand or Australia. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and cultivate. Let the portions allotted to them be the same both in quantity and quality. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument,—let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs for ever,—let the conveyance be publicly registered, and the property be made sure to them by every deed and security that man's ingenuity can devise.

Suppose then that one of them shall set to work to bring his land into cultivation, and labor at it day after day without intermission or cessation.

Suppose in the meanwhile that the other shall be continually leaving his work, and going repeatedly to the public registry to ask whether the land really is his own,—whether

Christian will put his hand to any work, he will put his neck to any yoke for Christ; he never thinks he hath done enough, he always thinks he hath done too little, and when he hath done all he can, he sits down, saying, I am an unprofitable servant."— Thomas Brooks.

there is not some mistake,—whether after all there is not some flaw in the legal instruments which conveyed it to him.

The one shall never doubt his title, but just work diligently on.

The other shall hardly ever feel sure of his title, and spend half his time in going to Sydney or Auckland, with needless enquiries about it.

Which now of these two men will have made most progress in a year's time ? Who will have done the most for his land, got the greatest breadth of soil under tillage, have the

best crops to show, be altogether the most prosperous ?

You all know as well as I do. I need not supply an answer. There can only be one reply. Undivided attention will always attain the greatest success.

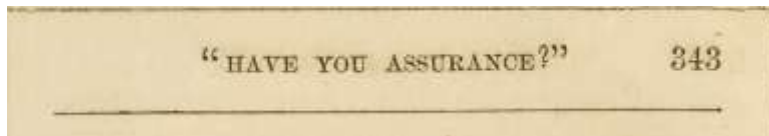
Brethren, so will it be in the matter of our title to " mansions in the skies." JStone will do so much for the Lord who bought him as the believer who sees his title clear, and is not distracted by unbelieving hesitations. The joy

of the Lord will be that man's strength. ^'Eestore nnto me," says David, "the joy of thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors thy ways." (Psalm li. 12.)

Never were there such working Christians as the Apostles. They seemed to live to labor : Christ's work was truly their meat and drink. They counted not their lives dear to themselves. They spent and were spent. They laid down ease, health, worldly comfort, at the foot of the cross. And one grand cause of this, I believe, was their assured hope. They w^ere men who could say, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 John, v. 19.)

8. Let me name another thing. Assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian a decided Christian.

Indecision and doubt about our own state in God's sight is a grievous evil, and the mother of many evils. It often produces a wavering and unstable walk in following the Lord. Assurance helps to cut many a knot,



and to make the path of Christian duty clear and plain.

Many, of whom we feel hopes that they are God's children, and have true grace, however weak, are continually perplexed with doubts on points of practice. " Should we do such and such a thing? Shall we give up this family custom? Ought we to go into that company ? How shall we draw the line about visiting ? What is to be the measure of our dressing and our entertainments? Are we never, under any circumstances, to dance, never to tx)uch a card, never to attend parties of pleasure?" These are a kind of questions which seem to give them constant trouble. And often, very often, the simple root of their perplexity is, that they do not feel assured they are themselves children of God. They have not yet settled the point, which side of the gate they are on. They do not know whether they are inside the ark or not.

That a child of God ought to act in a certain decided way, they quite feel, but the grand question is, " are they children of God

themselves ?" If they only felt they were so, they would go straightforward, and take a decided line; but not feeling sure about it, their conscience is forever hesitating and coming to a dead lock. The Devil whispers, " perhaps after all you are only a hypocrite ; •—what right have you to take a decided course ? Wait till you are really a Christian." And this whisper too often turns the scale, and leads on to some miserable compromise, or wretched conformity to the world. Brethren, I verily believe you have here one chief reason why so many in this day are inconsistent, trimming, unsatisfactory, and half-hearted in their conduct about the world. Their faith fails. They feel no assurance that they are Christ's, and so feel a hesitancy about breaking with the world. They shrink

from laying aside all the ways of the old man, because they are not quite confident they have put on the new. Depend on it, one secret cause of halting between two opinions is want of assurance. When people can say decidedly, "The Lord

He is the God," their course becomes very clear. (1 Kings, xviii. 89.)

Let me name one thing more. Assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make the holiest Christians.

This too sounds wonderful and strange, and yet it is true. It is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel, contrary, at first sight, to reason and common sense, and yet it is a fact. Cardinal Bellarmine was seldom more wide of the truth than when he said, "Assurance tends to carelessness and sloth." He that is freely forgiven by Christ will always do much for Christ's glory, and he that enjoys the fullest assurance of this forgiveness will ordinarily keep up the closest walk with God. It is a faithful saying in 1 John, iii. 3, "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." A hope that does not purify is a mockery, a delusion, and a

snare.\*

\* "The true assurance of salvation which the Spirit of God hath wrought in any heart, hath that force to restrain

None are so likely to maintain a watchful guard over their hearts and lives as those who know the comfort of living in near commn-

a man from looseness of life, and to knit his heart in love and obedience to God, as nothing else hath in all the world. It is certainly either the want of faith and assurance of God's love, or a false or carnal assurance of it, that is the true cause of the Ucentiousness that reigns in the world."—H'd-dersam on 51 st Psalm.

"None walk so evenly with God as they who are assm'ed of the love of God. Faith is the mother of obedience, and sm-eness of trust makes way for strictness of Hfe. When men are loose from Christ, they are loose in point of duty, and then' floating behef is soon discovered in their inconstancy and unevenness in walking. We do not with alacrity engage in that, of the success of which we are doubtful; and therefore, when we know not whether God will accept us or not, when we are off and on in point of trust, we are just so in the course of our lives, and serve God by fits and starts. It is the slander of the world to think assurance an idle doctrine."—Manton's Exposition of James. 1660.

"Who is more obliged, or who feels the obhgation to observance more cogently,—the son who knows his near relation, and knows his father loves him,—or the servant that hath great reason to doubt it? Fear is a weak and impotent principle in comparison of love. Terrors may awaken; love enlivens. Terrors may also "almost persuade;" love over-persuades. Sure jmi I that a believer's knowledge that his Beloved is his, and he is his Beloved's, (Cant. vi. 3.) is found by experience to lay the most strong and cogent obligations upon him to loyalty and faithfulness

ion with God. They feel their privilege, and will fear losing it. They will dread falling from their high estate, and marring their own comforts, by bringing clouds between themselves and Christ. He that goes on a journey with little money about him takes little thought of danger, and cares little how late he travels. He, on the contrary, that carries gold and jewels will be a cautious traveller; he will look well to his roads, his house, and his company, and run no risks. The fixed stars are those that tremble most. The man that most fully enjoys the light of G-od's reconciled countenance, will be a man trem-

to the Lord Jesus. For as to him that believes Christ is precious (1 Peter ii. 7), so to him that knows he believes, Christ is so much the more precious, even the 'chiefest of ten thousand.'" (Cant. v. 10.)—Fairclough's Sermon in Morning Exercises. 1660.

"Is it necessary that men should be kept in continual dread of damnation, in order to render them circumspect and ensure their attention to duty? Will not the well-grounded expectation of heaven prove far more efficacious? Love is the noblest and strongest principle of obedience: nor can it be but that a sense of God's love to us will increase our desire to please him."—Eobinson's Christian System.

being afraid of losing its blessed consolations, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Ghost.

Beloved Brethren, I commend these four points to your serious consideration. Would you like to feel the everlasting arms around you, and to hear the voice of Jesus daily drawing nigh to your soul, and saying, "I am thy salvation?"—Would you like to be useful laborers in the vineyard in your day and generation?—Would you be known of all men as bold, firm, decided, single-eyed, uncompromising followers of Christ—Would you be eminently spiritually-minded and holy?—Ah! you will some of you say, "these are the very things our hearts desire. We long for them. We pant after them, but they seem far from us."

Now, has it never struck you that your neglect of assurance may possibly be the main secret of all your failures,—that the low measure of faith which satisfies you may be the cause of your low degree of peace? Can you think it a strange thing that your graces are

faint and languishing, when faith, the root and mother of them all, is allowed to remain feeble and weak?

Take my advice this day. Seek an increase of faith. Seek an assured hope of salvation like the Apostle Paul's. Seek to obtain a simple, childlike confidence in God's promises. Seek to be able to say with Paul, \* 'I know whom I have believed; I am persuaded that He is mine, and I am His.'

You have many of you tried other ways and methods, and completely failed. Change your plan. Go upon another tack. Lay aside your doubts. Lean more entirely on the Lord's arm. Begin with implicit trusting. Cast aside your faithless backwardness to take the Lord at His word. Come and roll yourself, your soul, and your sins upon your gracious Saviour. Begin with simple believing, and all other things shall soon be added to you.\*

\* "That which breeds so much perplexity, is, that we would invert God's order, 'If I knew,' say some, \* that the promise belonged to me, and Christ were a Saviour to me, I could believe;' that is to say, I would first see, and

TV. —I come now to the last thing of which I spoke. I promised to point out to you some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained. I will do it very shortly.

This, brethren, is a very serious question, and ought to raise in us all great searchings of heart. Few, certainly, of Christ's people seem to reach up to this blessed spirit of assurance. Many comparatively believe, but few are persuaded. Many comparatively have saving faith, but few that glorious confidence which shines forth in our text. That such is the case, I think we must all allow.

Now, why is this so?—Why is a thing which two Apostles have strongly enjoined us



then believe. But the true method is just the contrary ; ' I had fainted,' says David, ' unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord.' He believed it first, and saw it afterward."— Archbishop Leighton.

" It is a weak and ignorant, but common thought of Christians, that they ought not to look for heaven, nor trust Christ for eternal glory, till they be Avell advanced in holiness and meetness for it. But as the first sanctitication of our natures flows from our faith and trust in Christ for acceptance, so our further sanctification and meetness for glory flows from the renewed and repeated exercise of faith on him" — Traill.

to seek after, a thing of wliicli few believers have any experimental knowledge ? Why is an assured hope so rare ?

I desire to offer a few suggestions on this point with all humility. I know that many have never attained assurance, at whose feet I would gladly sit both in earth and heaven. Perhaps the Lord sees something in the natural temperament of some of His children, which makes assurance not good for them. Perhaps in order to be kept in spiritual health, they need to be kept very low. God only knows. Still, after every allowance, I fear there are many believers without an assured hope, whose case may too often be explained by causes such as these.

1. One most common cause, I suspect, is a defective view of the doctrine of justification.

I am inclined to think that justification and sauctification are insensibly confused together in the minds of many believers. They receive the Gospel truth, that there must be something done IN us, as Avell as something done FOB us, if we are true members of Christ;—and so

far they are right. But then, without being aware of it, perhaps, they seem to imbibe the idea, that their justification is, in some degree, affected by something within themselves. They do not clearly see that Christ's work, not their own work,—either in whole or in part, either directly or indirectly,—is the alone ground of our acceptance with God;—that justification is a thing entirely without us, for which nothing whatever is needful on our part but simple faith,—and that the weakest believer is as fully and completely justified as the strongest."^

Many appear to forget that we are saved and justified as sinners, and only sinners; and that we never can attain to anything higher,

\* The "Westminster Confession of faith gives an admirable account of justification. " Those -whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth ; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by account" ing and accepting their persons as righteous ; not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone ; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and righteousness of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting oa him and his righteousness by faith,"

if we live to the age of Methuselah. Redeemed sinners, justified sinners, and renewed sinners doubtless we must be, but sinners, sinners, sinners, always to the very last. They do not seem to comprehend that there is a wide difference between our justification and our sanctification. Our justification is a perfect finished work, and admits of no degrees. Our sanctification is imperfect and incomplete, and will be to the last hour of our life. They appear to expect that a believer may at some period of his life be in a measure free from corruption, and attain to a kind of inward perfection. And not finding this angelic

state of things in their own hearts, they at once conclude there must be something very wrong in their state. And so they go mourning all their days,—oppressed with fears that they have no part or lot in Christ, and refusing to be comforted.

My dear brethren, think of this. If any believing soul desires assurance, and has not got it, let him ask himself first of all, if he is

quite sure he is sound in the faith, if his loins

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are thoroughly girt about with truth, and his eyes thoroughly clear in the matter of justification. He must know what it is simply to believe before he can expect to feel assured.

Believe me, the old Galatian heresy is the most fertile source of error, both in doctrine and in practice. Seek clearer views of Christ, and what Christ has done for you. Happy is the man who really understands justification by faith without the deeds of the law.

2. Another common cause of the absence of assurance is, slothfulness about growth in grace.

I suspect many true believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views on this point;—I do not of course mean intentionally, but they do hold them. Many appear to me to think that, once converted, they have little more to attend to, and that a state of salvation is a kind of easy chair, in which they may just sit still, lie back, and be happy. They seem to fancy that grace is given them that they may enjoy it, and they forget that it is given, like

a talent, to be used, employed, and improved. Such persons lose sight of the many direct injunctions "to increase,—to grow,—to abound more and more,—to add to our faith," and the like, and in this little-doing condition, this sitting-still state of mind, I never marvel that they miss assurance.

I believe it ought to be our continual aim and desire to go forward, and our watchword at the beginning of every year should be, "more and more" (1 Thess. iv. 1); more knowledge, —more faith,—more obedience,—more love. If we have brought forth thirty-fold, we should seek to bring forth sixty, and if we have brought forth sixty, we should strive to bring forth a hundred. The will of the Lord is our sanctification, and it ought to be our will too. (Matt. xiii. 23 ; 1 Thess. iv. 3.)

One thing, at all events, brethren, you may depend upon, there is an inseparable connection between diligence and assurance. "Give (iz'6?2ce," says Peter, "to make your calling and election sure." (2 Peter i. 10.) "We desire," says Paul, "that every one of you do

show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (Heb. vi. 11.) "The soul of the diligent" says Solomon, "shall be made fat." (Prov. xiii. 4.) There is much truth in the old maxim of the Puritans, "Faith of adherence comes by hearing, but faith of assurance comes not without doings

Mark my words, any one of you that desires assurance, and has not got it. You will never get it without diligence, however much you may desire it. There are no gains without pains in spiritual things, any more than in temporal. "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing." (Prov. xiii. 4.)"

\* "Whose fault is it that thy interest in Christ is not put out of question? Were

Christians more in self-examination, more close in walking with God; and if they had more near communion with God, and were more in acting of faith, this shameful darkness and doubting would quickly vanish," — Traill.

" A lazy Christian shall always want four things, viz., comfort, content, confidence, and assurance. God hath made a separation between joy and idleness, between assurance and laziness, and therefore it is impossible for thee to bring these together, that God hath put so far asunder."— Thomas Brooks.

" Are you in depths and doubts, staggering and uncertain, not knowing what is your condition, nor whether you have

8. Another common cause of a want .of assurance is, an inconsistent walk in life.

"With grief and sorrow I feel constrained to say, I fear nothing in this day more frequently prevents men attaining an assured hope than this. The stream of professing Christianity is far wider than it formerly was, and I am afraid we must admit at the same time it is much less deep.

Inconsistency of life is utterly destructive of peace of conscience. The two things are incompatible. They cannot and they will not go together.

K you will have your besetting sins, and cannot make up your minds to give them up, —if you will shrink from cutting off the right

any interest in the forgiveness that is of God ? Are you tossed up and down between hopes and fears, and want peace, consolation, and establishment ? "Why lie you upon your faces ? Get up, watch, pray, fast, meditate, offer violence to your lusts and corruptions ; fear not, startle not at their crying to be spared; press unto the throne of grace by prayer, supplications, importunities, restless requests ; this is the way to take the kingdom of God. These things are not peace, are not assurance ; but they are part of the means God hath appointed for the attainment of them."— Owen on the 130th Psalm.

hand and plucking out the right eye, when occasion requires it, I will engage you will have no assurance.

A vacillating walk,—a backwardness to take a bold and decided line,—a readiness to conform to the world,—a hesitating witness for Christ,—a lingering tone of religion,—all these make up a sure receipt for bringing a blight upon the garden of your soul.

It is vain to suppose you will feel assured and persuaded of your own pardon and acceptance with God, unless you count all God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every sin, whether great or small." (Psalm cxix. 128.) One Achan allowed in the camp of your heart will weaken your hands, and lay your consolation low in the dust. You must be daily sowing to the Spirit, if you are to reap the witness of the Spirit. You will not find and feel that all the Lord's ways are ways of pleasantness, unless you labor in all your ways to please the Lord.\*

\* "Wouldst thou have thy hope strong?—Then keep

I bless God our salvation in nowise depends on our own works. By grace we are saved,—not by works of righteousness,—through faith, —without the deeds of the law. But I never would have any believer for a moment forget that our sense of salvation depends much on the manner of our living. Inconsistency will dim your eyes, and bring clouds between you and the sun. The sun is the same behind the clouds, but you will not be able

to see its brightness or enjoy its warmth, and your soul

thy conscience pure. Thou canst not defile one without •weakening the other. The godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking, will soon find his hope languishing. All sin disposeth the soul that tampers with it, to trembling fears and shakings of heart."— Gurnall.

" One great and too common cause of distress is the secret maintaining some known sin. It puts out the eye of the bough, or dimmeth it and stupefies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provoketh God to withdraw himself, his comforts, and the assistance of his Spirit."— Baxter's Saints' Hest.

" The stars which have least circuit are nearest the pole; and men whose hearts are least entangled with the world are always nearest to God, and to the attainment of His favor. Worldly Christians, remember this. You and the world must part, or else assurance and your souls will never meet."— Thomas Brooks.

will be gloomy and cold. It is in the path of well doing that the day-spring of assurance will visit you, and shine down upon your heart.

^' The secret of the Lord," says David, "□ is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." (Psalm xxv. 14.)

" To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God." (Psalm 1. 23.)

" Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm cxix. 165.)

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1 John, i. 7.)

"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth ;

" And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." (1 John, iii. 18, 19.)

" Hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 John, ii. 3.)

Paul was a man who exercised himself to

have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. (Acts, xxiv. 16.) He could say with boldness, \*' I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith." I do not wonder that the Lord enabled him to add with confidence, "Henceforth there is a crown laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it me at that day."

Brethren, if any believer in the Lord Jesus desires assurance, and has not got it, let him think over this point also. Let him look at his own heart, look at his own conscience, look at his own life, look at his own ways, look at his own home. And perhaps when he has done that, he will be able to say, '^ there is a cause why I have no assured hope."

• JSTow I leave the three matters I have just mentioned to your own private consideration. I am sure you are worth examining. May you all examine them honestly. And may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

And now, brethren, in closing this important inquiry, let me speak first to those among you who have not given yourselves to the

Lord, who have not yet come out from the world, chosen the good part, and followed Christ.

Learn then, my dear friends, from this subject, the privileges and comforts of a true Christian.

I would not have you judge of the Lord Jesus Christ by His people. The best of servants can give you but a faint idea of that glorious Master.' Neither would I have you judge of the privileges of His kingdom, by the measure of comfort to which many of His people attain. Alas ! we are most of us poor creatures. We come short, very short, of the blessedness we might enjoy. But, depend upon it^ there are glorious things in the city of our God, which they who have an assured hope taste even in their life-time. There are lengths and breadths of peace and consolation therC; which it ha.s not entered into your heart to conceive. There is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house, though many of us certainly eat but little of it, and continue weak. But the fault must not be laid to our Master's charge, it is all our own.

Andj after all, the weakest child of God has a mine of comforts within him, of which you know nothing. You see the conflicts and toss-ings of the surface of his heart, but you see not the pearls of great price which are hidden in the depths below. The feeblest member of Christ would not change conditions with you. The believer who possesses the least assurance is far better off than you are. He has a hope, however faint, but you have nont at all. He has a portion that will never be taken from him, a Saviour that will never forsake him, a treasure that fadeth not away, however little he may realize it all at present. But, as for you, if you die as you are, your expectations will all perish. Oh! that you were wise! Oh ! that you understood these things ! Oh! that you would consider your latter end!

I feel deeply for you in these latter days of the world, if I ever did. I feel deeply for those whose treasure is all on earth, and whose hopes are all on this side the grave. Yes! when I see old kingdoms and dynasties shak-

ing to the very foundation,—when I see kings and princes, and rich men, and great men fleeing for their lives, and scarce knowing where to hide their heads,—when I see property dependent on public confidence melting like snow in spring, and public stocks and funds losing their value,—when I see these things, I feel deeply for those who have no better portion than this world can give them, and no place in that kingdom that cannot be removed.\*

Take advice of a minister of Christ this very day. Seek durable riches,—a treasure that cannot be taken from you,—a city which hath lasting foundations. Do as the Apostle Paul did. Give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek that incorruptible crown He is ready to bestow. Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him. Come away from a world which will never really satisfy you, and from sin which will bite like a serpent, if you cleave

\* " They are doubly miserable that have neither heaven nor earth, temporals nor eternals, made sm'e to them in changing times."— Thomas Brooks.

to it, at last. Come to the Lord Jesus as lowly-sinners and He will receive you, pardon you, give you His renewing Spirit, fill you with peace. This shall give you more real comfort than the world has ever done. This is a gulf in your heart which nothing but the peace of Christ can fill. Enter in and share our privileges. Come with us and sit down by our side.

Lastly, let me turn to all believers who read these pages, and speak to them a few words of brotherly counsel.

The main thing that I urge upon you is this,—if you have not got an assured hope of your own acceptance in Christ, resolve this day to seek it. Labor for it. Strive after it. Pray for it. Give the Lord no rest till you know whom you have believed.

I feel indeed that the small amount of assurance in this day, among those who are reckoned God's children, is a shame and a reproach. "It is a thing to be heavily bewailed," says old Trill, \*^ that many Christians

have lived twenty or forty years since Christ called them by His grace, yet doubting in their life." Let us call to mind the earnest "desire" Paul expresses, that "every one" of the Hebrews should seek after full assurance; and let us endeavor, by God's blessing, to roll this reproach away. (Heb. vi. 11.)

Brethren, do you really mean to say that you have no desire to exchange hope for confidence, trust for persuasion, uncertainty for knowledge? Because weak faith will save you, will you therefore rest content with it? Because assurance is not essential to your entrance into heaven, will you therefore be satisfied without it upon earth? Alas! this is not a healthy state of soul to be in; this is not the mind of the Apostolic day. Arise at once and go forward. Stick not at the foundations of religion; go on to perfection. Be not content with a day of small things. Never despise it in others, but never be content with it yourselves.

Believe me, believe me, assurance is worth the seeking. You forsake your own mercies when you rest content without it. The things I speak are for your peace. It is good to be sure in earthly things, how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things. Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. "Why should not you seek to know it too? There is nothing unscriptural in this. Paul never saw the book of life, and yet Paul says, "I know and am persuaded."

Make it then your daily prayer that you may have an increase of faith. According to your faith will be your peace. Cultivate that blessed root more, and sooner or later, by God's blessing, you may hope to have the flower. You may not perhaps attain to full assurance all at once. It is good sometimes to be kept waiting. We do not value things which we get without trouble. But though it tarry, wait for it. Seek on, and expect to find.

Another thing I will name is this,—you must not be surprised if you have occasional doubts after you have got assurance. You must not forget you are on earth, and not yet in heaven. You are still in the body, and

have in-dwelling sin; the flesh will lust against the spirit to the very end. The leprosy will never be out of the walls of the old house till death take it (John). And there is a devil too, and a strong devil; a devil who tempted the Lord Jesus, and gave Peter a fall;—and he will take care you know it. Some doubts there always will be. He that never doubts has nothing to lose. He that never fears possesses nothing truly valuable. He that is never jealous knows little of deep love. But be not discouraged; you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you.\*

Finally, do not forget that assurance is a thing that may be lost for a season, even by the brightest Christians, unless they care.

Assurance is a most delicate plant. It

\* \*\* None have assurance at all times. As in a walk that is shaded with trees and checkered with light and shadow, some tracts and paths in it are dark, and others are sunshine: such is usually the life of the most assured Christian."— Bishop Hopkins.

" It is very suspicious, that that person is a hypocrite, that is always in the same frame, let him pretend it to be never so good."— Traill.

needs daily, hourly watching, watering, tending, cherishing. So watch and pray the more when you have got it. As "Rutherford says, " Make much of assurance." Be alway'^s upon your guard. "When Christian slept, in Pilgrim's Progress, he lost his certificate. Keep that in mind

David lost assurance for many months by falling into transgression. Peter lost it when he denied his Lord. Each found it again undoubtedly, but not till after bitter tears. Spiritual darkness comes on horseback, and goes away on foot. It is upon us before we know that it is coming. It leaves us slowly, gradually, and not till after many days. It is easy to run down hill. It is hard work to climb up. So remember my caution, when you have the joy of the Lord, watch and pray.

Above all, grieve not the Spirit. Quench not the Spirit. Vex not the Spirit. Drive Him not to a distance, by tampering with small bad habits, and little sins. Little jar-rings between husbands and wives make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies, known

and allowed, will bring in a strangeness between you and the Spirit.

Hear the concTusion of the whole matter.

The man who walks with God in Christ most closely, will generally be kept in the greatest peace.

The believer who follows the Lord most fully, will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope, and have the clearest persuasion of his own salvation.

THE END.

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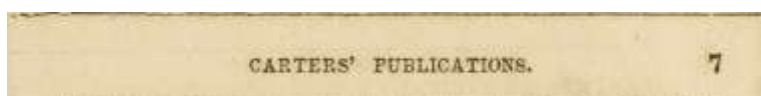
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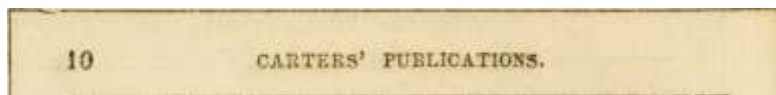
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