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LIGHT

IN A

Dark Alley.

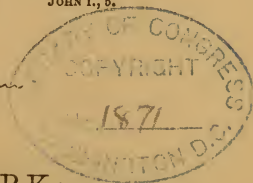
BY

HENRY A. ROWLAND,

AUTHOR OF A WORK "ON THE COMMON MAXIMS OF INFIDELITY," AND
OF "THE PATH OF LIFE."

"And the LIGHT shineth in DARKNESS,
And the darkness comprehended it not."

JOHN i., 5.



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M. W. DODD, PUBLISHER AND BOOKSELLER,

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Prefatory Remarks.



IN a small work entitled "The Path of Life," recently issued from the press, I have endeavored to give an elucidation of those great points of religious belief and practice which are essential to salvation. To that work the religious inquirer is respectfully commended, as containing truth adapted to lead him to the Saviour.

But it was not appropriate, in a work of that nature, to discuss the false principles which lead many of our fellow-men to live in the neglect of the Gospel, nor could I then explore the Dark Alley where they dwell. On this account, I have given to this discussion a separate volume.

Others have, with ourselves, a common interest in the plan of mercy revealed in the Gospel; and in our efforts to enlighten them, we ought ever to enlist their reason and conscience on the side of truth. The nature of that wrong state of heart which constitutes depravity, and of those Gospel truths designed to overcome and remove it, is susceptible of a clear and intelligible explanation. There are reasons lying back in the springs of human action and in the thoughts and emotions of the mind, for the existence of that moral state in man known as depravity, which ought to be generally understood. And there are reasons back of those Gospel truths which are designed to reach and change the heart, laying a foundation in the nature of things for the reclaiming influence of the Gospel, which ought not to pass unnoticed. It is as proper to inquire into the reasons of the facts which exist in religion, as of those which exist in nature; and these, when spread before the mind, go far toward producing conviction. An ability suitable to

discriminate these reasons, is essential to the clear exposition of truth. The mind needs to be informed, not subjected merely to authority.

Truth is wielded by the Holy Spirit for the conversion of the soul to God; and it is to the substance of truth rather than to its great Author, that the attention is here directed. An illustration of Gospel truth is but a vindication of that wisdom which has given it to the world. A work which should treat of the nature of the Gospel, and meet the false reasonings and the excuses of those who live in the neglect of this precious gift of heaven, exposing, at the same time, the source of that obscurity which rests upon the unconverted mind, seemed to me desirable, and fitted to answer a wise and useful purpose.

To those who are conscious of living in this neglect, or who have friends thus, this book is commended, as a suitable antidote to the many dangerous errors which are constantly instilling poison into the mind.

It assumes its present form, from a conversation had with an esteemed friend, in which the chief points of discussion here noticed were introduced; not that the exact words of this conversation are given, but its substantial arguments. Such as it is, I commend it to the public, anxious only that it may be useful.

Honesdale, Pa., September 21, 1852.

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LIGHT IN A DARK ALLEY.

INTRODUCTORY.

The Dark Alley.

THE security felt by many who live in the neglect of the Gospel, excites my wonder. How such darkness can shroud their minds as to the nature of true religion, and such indifference can be felt respecting it, I could never imagine, till led to inquire into the source of this obscurity, and into the causes of this neglect.

The Gospel is addressed to man as a wanderer from God, to point out to him the nature of his moral ruin and the method of his recovery. To restore him to the holiness and happiness lost through sin, is its great end and aim; and that it may become the efficient means of this restoration, it must

be comprehended and obeyed. But man often fails of this, through ignorance of his own moral state. He is blind as to the remedy, because ignorant of the disease. Intelligent men, estimable in their characters, pleasant companions, and agreeable friends, are not unfrequently misled as to the system of grace, by a profound ignorance of their own hearts. It is useless to unfold to them the truths of spiritual religion, while in this state, for they have no ability to comprehend them. They need to know themselves before they can understand the nature of the Gospel.

It would seem as if a multitude of our fellow-men were living in some dark alley, side by side, where the light of the Gospel never shines, so much alike do they think, feel, and act on the subject of their relations to God. They constitute a neighborhood by themselves, having opinions peculiarly their own, and yet all agreeing in their practical neglect of religion. Expecting happiness hereafter, they build their hopes of heaven on very different foundations. Hope,

in many instances, is only a dim and illusive vision of some object which they desire, rather than an expectation based on truth; and is often enshrouded in darkness. Erroneous views of their moral state by nature fill their minds with false conceptions of the whole Gospel system.

To you who are conscious of treating the Gospel with neglect, considerations of infinite moment are here addressed, to influence you to escape from your present dangerous position, into the way of life. To the truths here set before you, your earnest attention is solicited, as the effectual means to acquaint you with the dangers to which you are exposed, and to guide you safe to the end of your journey. It is not hastily turning over these leaves which will secure to you the benefit to be derived from this volume. It requires your serious and prayerful study. The greatest difficulty with which truth is obliged to contend in one who neglects religion, is to fix the attention long enough to make its appropriate impression on his mind. If you merely glance at truth which ought to com-

mand your most earnest attention, or if you cast aside the volume which contains it, satisfied with the fact that it treats of religion, in which you feel no interest, how can you meet the responsibilities which rest on you, or excuse yourself for this neglect?

If the subject of your relations to God, and of the responsibilities involved in them, is distasteful to you, is there not some sinful cause of this state of feeling, existing in yourself? May not the want of interest in religion indicate a wrong moral state, which requires special and immediate attention? Will you not inquire into this subject, and satisfy yourself of the rectitude of your course, if you can become thus satisfied? Do not continue to live thoughtless of your obligations to God as they are set forth in the Gospel, and in the neglect of this plan of mercy so indispensable to salvation. Come, and let us proceed, arm in arm, to survey the dark alley where you dwell, and then endeavor to find the path which leads from it to the celestial city. There are mistakes in religion to which you are constantly liable,

and there is a false hope; and fatal to your happiness will it be to trust in the delusions of error, or indulge such a hope. There is truth, eternal, blessed truth, which the Gospel unfolds to view; and happy will you be if you receive it, and are guided by it through the dangers and trials of life, safe to heaven.

Chapter First.

MAN NATURALLY IN THE DARK AS TO HIS OWN
CHARACTER.

THERE was an old man with hoary locks, more than seventy years of age, who became ill of a lingering disease, of which he died. On his death-bed, he sent for an evangelical clergyman, whom he had heard preach at a funeral. His mind was ill at ease. He knew that he was descending into the vale of death, and wished comfort. I think I see this venerable father, as he lay on his bed, surrounded by his weeping family.

My aged friend, said the minister, how do you feel?

He replied, I am very ill; and have sent for you to have some conversation with you before I depart.

The clergyman said, Yes, you are ill, and

may not be permitted long to remain with us; and on what, may I inquire, is your hope of happiness after death founded?

He replied, I have, for forty years, been a Universalist, and have indulged a belief that all mankind will finally be saved.

And do you depend upon this belief, asked the clergyman?

Yes, he replied, I trust in the Divine goodness, and that having received my being at the hand of God, he will not leave me to become miserable when I die.

But, said the clergyman, this will never do, unless you comply with the conditions of life revealed in the Gospel, which are, repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, said the dying man, I have always aimed to do right toward my fellow-creatures, and have never injured them in thought, word, or deed.

I fear, said the clergyman, that you know very little of the state of your own heart. While trusting in your morality toward men, you may have been living in the

neglect of God, and of the spiritual duties of his religion, and never, in one instance, acted toward him from a motive of true obedience. I would not risk my soul on what you are, for ten thousand worlds. Do you never have doubts of the sure foundation of your hope?

The old man turned his head aside and wept. Yes, he said, I fear I know not what. I fear that all may not be right. I do not know why I have these fears; but something seems to whisper to me that I may be mistaken.

But, said the clergyman, you know the Saviour's promises to those who believe in him?

Yes, he said; and I have seen Christians die calm, and even happy. I wonder how it is that they feel as they do, and that I have such gloomy forebodings, and such a sinking of heart, in view of death; and the old man again turned in his bed and wept.

The clergyman then pointed him to the Lamb of God, who was slain for sinners; but the dying man appeared perplexed, and

his mind seemed agitated with conflicting emotions. He was evidently afraid to abandon his old opinion, lest he should not find the pardoning mercy of which he felt the need, and should fall between the two, and be lost; and he continually repeated, as if balancing the subject in his thoughts—I don't know—I don't know.

After prayer, offered at his request, the clergyman took his leave; and, not many hours after, the spirit of this father was ushered into the presence of the Eternal Judge. Poor man! my heart bleeds for you, when I remember your trembling, fearful end.

One who had for years lived in the belief of a similar error, said, that amid his efforts to confirm himself in his belief, he could never feel at ease. He could explain away many of the texts of Scripture which speak of future punishment, but could never satisfactorily dispose of that little word "repent." He was aware that he had never known by experience what it is to repent; and sometimes, he knew not why,

that word would suddenly present itself, and would seem to ring in his ears, giving him no peace till he found it, as a repenting and believing sinner, at the feet of Christ.

There is one for whom I feel a strong personal friendship, who is blameless in his life, and the object of universal esteem, who lives in the neglect of the Gospel. He is led thus to treat it, through the confidence he feels, that one so eminently virtuous and upright, as he esteems himself to be, cannot fail of heaven. Not that he is a Christian, that he keeps holy the Sabbath, maintains a life of prayer, or lives in the observance of the spiritual duties of religion; but he is blameless in his life, so far at least as it is developed to observation.

During an interview with this friend, an opportunity occurred for a conversation on the subject of religion; and I endeavored faithfully to improve it. I found him quite willing to converse, and ready to lead off the conversation into a discussion of the deep truths of spiritual religion; but, aware of the inutility of such a course, I frankly com-

municated to him my opinion respecting it.

You would advance, I remarked, to a consideration of those great truths, which you cannot understand nor appreciate until you have acquired a view of that spiritual disease, for which the Gospel is a remedy. Let us rather begin with those things that are easy of comprehension, and have a natural precedence.

On inquiry, I found, as I had presumed, that he had no consistent and scriptural view of man in his natural state, as one who has apostatized from God, and is condemned by his righteous law. He appeared to think that man has only slid away, in some slight degree, from the path of duty, that he is still mainly good in heart, and that all he needs for the Divine acceptance is to cultivate this goodness, to preserve his moral integrity, and to live in peace with men. He seemed to be ignorant of the state of man by nature, as fallen and lost, that while in this state, he is destitute of moral goodness, and, as such, is condemned by the law, and exposed

to everlasting misery; and I stated to my friend these points, as demanding his special notice.

He received the statement with considerable astonishment, and asked, Do you believe in the doctrine of total depravity?

Let us, I replied, first understand what total depravity is, lest you should attach some meaning to it which would convey to you a wrong impression, if I should answer your question directly.

By total depravity it is not meant that man is as wicked as he can be, nor that he may not, in view of the world, possess a character that is strictly honest and benevolent. Some of the kindest and most exemplary of men, in these respects, have discarded a belief in the Christian religion, and denied even the being of a God; and yet, have set a laudable example to the world of outward morality. If you think that by total depravity we mean any thing which involves a denial of this virtue in all but Christians, and which teaches that men, in their natural or unconverted state, are as

wicked as they can be, you take a very improper view of it.

We mean by total depravity, that men are, by nature, without love to God—are in his view destitute of moral goodness, and, as such, are under the condemnation of his law, and exposed to a just and everlasting punishment. His law demands that we love him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and our neighbor as ourselves. But man fails of this obedience. He does not supremely love God, nor does he love him in any proper sense whatever. He is, therefore, in God's estimation, destitute of moral goodness. This destitution of moral goodness we call total depravity. It ever exists in combination with a disposition to turn from God, and to trample on his law. And this is our state by nature.

Man was not originally thus, but came from the hand of his Creator holy. He loved God supremely, and confided in him as a fond and obedient child clings to a parent. But he fell from this blissful state through the machinations of Satan, and his

love to God then ceased. He began to treat him as unkind, oppressive in his exactions, a tyrant, and not a friend. And in consequence of this apostasy the whole human race became morally degenerate.

The thoughts and desires spontaneously rising in your mind, when contrasted with the requisitions of the divine law, will discover to you that you are in a very different moral state from that of perfect holiness; and when you search the sacred Scriptures on this point, you will find their testimonies to be against you. You will see that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" that "there is none righteous, no, not one;" that "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God;" that "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent;" that "death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" and that "whosoever believeth not in him, is condemned already;" all of which texts show that the heart, in its natural state, is alienated from God, and that its

recovery through grace from this ruined state is necessary to salvation.

I have no doubt of the fact that man is a sinful being, said my friend; but if the general purport of his life is right, and he does as well as he can, God will unquestionably overlook his minor infirmities, and not judge him severely on their account.

You speak of the general purport of one's life, said I, as if that might be right while the motives governing its individual actions are sinful; and in this, you overlook the true position of man as a moral being under the divine government. If he truly loved God as did our first parents when holy, those infirmities and sins of which you speak could not exist. You admit that you do not love God perfectly; are you sure that you have any love for him whatever?

Why yes, said my friend, but not as much as I ought.

There is no doubt that this is your impression, I replied, but you certainly overlook the great facts illustrative of natural character, which show the state of the un-

renewed heart to be one of alienation and enmity toward God, instead of love.

But I am not conscious, said my friend, of any such enmity in my heart. I have no special fondness for the duties of spiritual religion, but yet I never supposed that there is any enmity in my heart toward my Maker. Why should there be, when I behold around me the constant evidences of his goodness?

You may well say this, I replied; for when you look out upon your broad meadows, and view your fields, under the fostering care of a kind Providence, yielding their abundance; when you are conscious of the pulsations of health, and your buoyant feelings are interested and pleased in the things around you, you have the evidence before you of God's goodness, and it kindles in your heart a kind of love for him. And when you read in the Bible that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," you think you know that this text is not applicable to you, who love God some, you say, but not as much as you ought.

But did you ever inquire into the nature of this supposed love, and ask yourself why you love God? You say, that it is because he is good to you; that is, because he is the instrument of your happiness. And is this all? Have you no love to him for his own intrinsic excellence, as a holy Being, who hates and punishes sin? If not, yours is not true love. Him you do not love, but only the development of his kindness toward yourself. You love the loaves and fishes which his bounty confers on you. It is loving him only as the instrument of your own happiness; and this is a selfish affection, and very different in its nature from the love which he commands.

A man naturally loves what he esteems good to himself; nor is this a virtuous, but a selfish affection. He loves the friend who confers favors upon him, the horse that bears him on his journey, the wine that tickles his palate, the money that purchases his pleasures, the mistress to whom he is devoted, and whatever administers to his personal gratification; and this love is only selfish. He

loves these things as the ministers of his pleasures. His love passes through all these objects, and fastens directly upon himself. He loves the world, and the good things it sets before him; and loves them proportionably to their power to interest and please him. This love he feels toward God. It passes through God, as the instrument of good to him, and fastens upon himself. It is all the love to God which multitudes of our fellow-men ever experience; and how does it differ from any other selfish affection? How must God estimate that regard for him which sets up the creature as first in the affections, and him as subordinate? Does it not conflict with the chief element of true obedience, and the first precept of the divine law, "Thou shalt have no other God before me?"

Chapter Second.

AS TO THE GOVERNING MOTIVE OF HIS CONDUCT IN LIFE.

BUT do you think, said my friend, that every man, in his natural state, loves himself supremely, and that he is governed by this affection?

I certainly do, was my reply. The natural state of man since the great apostasy, is one in which he loves himself supremely in place of God. This fact is commonly overlooked by those who are not disposed to regard man as alienated from his Maker; and yet it is the foundation of his sinful character.

It is a strange doctrine, said my friend, and its annunciation grates harshly upon my ears. I wish to know on what ground you are disposed to ascribe this selfishness to man, and how you regard it as the foundation of his

character. I cannot believe that the facts are as you represent.

Do not misapprehend the proper use of terms, I replied, or think that selfish, in this connection, has relation to any other state of mind than that which respects God. A man may love himself supremely; his affections may be wholly turned away from God, and he yet may treat with kindness a poor neighbor.

But how do you show that the heart is by nature turned away from God, and that its affections supremely centre upon one's self?

It is the testimony of Christ, I replied, that "no man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." "Ye cannot," said our Saviour, "serve God and mammon." By this he intimated, that two objects morally opposite in their nature, cannot, at the same time, command the supreme affection of the mind. Of the several objects of affection, which are of opposite moral qualities, one must be re-

garded as supreme, the others as subordinate. Man cannot love God supremely, and yet, at the same time, supremely love himself; for these moral affections are opposite and conflicting in their own nature, and cannot both reign in the heart at the same time.

The command is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" but it is evident from our experience and observation, that men do not naturally conform themselves to this holy precept. They do not naturally love to think of God as a spiritual and holy being, nor to please him, but to think of themselves and please themselves; nor do they naturally and instinctively shrink from disobeying those precepts of the divine law which their fancied interest or happiness prompts them to disregard; which they would do if they loved God with a supreme affection.

The fact that they aim to please themselves in preference to Jehovah, and are regardless of his law, and neglect it whenever it suits their convenience, shows that they love themselves more than they love him.

It is natural to please those we love, and if we aim to please ourselves more than we do God, it is because we love ourselves more than we love him. Or, if it is said, that it is the world that is loved, I ask, why? Is it not because it is the chief source of their pleasures? They love the world and its varied objects of delight, as the instrument of their enjoyment. And here, their affection passes through the world, and fixes on themselves. The world is nothing to them any further than it possesses the power to give them enjoyment. It is their own enjoyment that they love, or, in other words, they love themselves supremely, and love the world only as instrumental to their happiness. If you will analyze the affections which reign in the unconverted mind, you will discover that they all cluster around this love of self, and that this is the governing affection, and the motive of all disobedience.

If this were not so, and if mankind were naturally governed by supreme love to God, they would desire to please him.

Could they possess this desire, and yet live as they do in habitual disobedience to the precepts of his holy law, and of his Gospel? Could they dislike the spiritual duties of religion, and cast off fear and restrain prayer, if they supremely loved God? If the motive leading them to abstain from open vice, were love to God, would not this same motive prompt them in all respects to conform themselves to his wishes, to love what he loves, and hate what he hates? It is clear, therefore, that love supreme toward God does not naturally reign in the heart of apostate man, else it would certainly manifest itself in securing in him a life of holy obedience. But now "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent;" and this command is based on the fact, that all men are naturally sinners, and not under the guiding and controlling influence of supreme love to God. What need would there be of repentance, or of salvation, if this were not the state of man by nature? They need to repent, because they are naturally disobedient; they need to be saved, because

they are lost ; their hearts need to be changed, because they are alienated from God ; they need to give themselves up to him in true submission, because they now withhold themselves from him, and aim only to please themselves.

Here my friend introduced the case of one who plunged into the water from the deck of a steamboat, and saved the life of a child. It is true, he said, that the man was swearing a little, previously, for he was very profane ; but was there not something good in that man's heart over and above what you represent ? Could he have loved himself supremely, and yet have done an act so benevolent ?

You must admit, I replied, that profaning the name of God is inconsistent with loving him supremely, and that supreme love to God did not reign in his heart, for he was in the act of cursing his Maker, when he plunged in to save the child. What, then, you are ready to ask, led him to display this heroic conduct, if it was not love to God ? I reply, that it was an instinctive

impulse, such as that which leads one to care for his own preservation. There was an appeal of the weak and suffering to the strong, which it required only a fellow-feeling of man for man to regard. Even a dog will plunge into the water to save a helpless child. An atheist would as cheerfully have responded to such an appeal, as the Christian. Nor is Satan himself devoid of such natural sympathy, as to leave one of his fellows in difficulty, when he can, by a little timely aid, rescue him from danger. And if such heroic conduct may flow from other principles of action than love to God, it is not necessarily evidence of the existence of this love.

The natural sympathy between man and man, as members of the human family, is such as exists between the subjects of a revolted province, who may feel a kindness toward each other, even when in conflict with the rightful authority, to which they owe allegiance. There is a feeling of mutual dependence which would lead one from motives, wholly selfish even, to assist others, as he would expect like offices of kindness

from them. One who loves himself supremely and turns away from God in the neglect of duty toward him, may yet so love his race, as one to which he himself and his family belong, as to act the part of a hero in defence of the injured, or to save the drowning, while utterly regardless of his Creator. Other motives than that of holy love may influence him, and which are not inconsistent with the supreme love of self.

But what are we to think, said my friend, of that maternal tenderness which a parent displays to her offspring? Is there not something morally good here manifested?

There may be goodness of a certain kind, I replied, in yielding to the natural impulses of affection toward our offspring; but how does this show the existence of love to God? The impulse of affection, in such a case, is of no more moral virtue in his sight, than the desire of food when one is hungry, or of society when one is solitary; for it is evident that a mother may care for her child without ever thinking of God. Brutes, in this respect, are as kind to their offspring as the

human species are to theirs. The heathen, who know nothing of God, and the atheist, who denies his existence, may be equally kind and tender toward their offspring. Our natural sympathies do not depend on the manner in which we treat God, but exist alike in every human bosom.

If depravity were what many think the term implies, that men are as wicked as they can be, it would be in point to adduce the case of a mother who treats her child kindly, when she might treat it otherwise, to show that this depravity does not exist. But you perceive, that this is not the kind of depravity which the Bible teaches; for that is not inconsistent with the flow of our natural sympathies, or our being governed by the impulses of natural affection in the kind treatment of our offspring. All the depravity for which we contend is that which displaces God from the heart, sets up self in his place, and leads man naturally to love himself supremely.

But, said my friend, here is one who makes no pretension to religion, and yet

cheerfully sustains by his contributions the worship of God in his sanctuary.

He also enjoys the benefits of this sacred institution, was my reply; and in the approbation of his own conscience, and of his fellow-men, he has his reward; and it is sufficient to influence a mind which is under the supreme control of selfish affection.

But he also preserves an unblemished reputation, said my friend.

So may the atheist, was my reply. An atheist has no love to God, and yet he may be unblemished in character, while open and unrelenting in the avowal of his atheistical belief. It is presumed, that if the natural mind were alienated from God and in conflict with him, this enmity would constantly develop itself by acts of spiteful malice done toward him. But this presumption is wholly groundless. So long as one feels that God is good to him, he is sensible of no inimical feeling ever rising toward him in his mind. But it is very different when he comes to feel himself to be in God's hands, and that he cannot break away from his au-

thority, but must yield obedience to him, or suffer the infliction of his terrible wrath. When conscience alarms him, and he begins to reflect on his exposure to the divine anger on account of his sins, and that he must repent or be lost, then it is that his heart rises against God, and he wishes there were no such being in the universe. He would, if it were in his power, hurl him from his throne. Then it is that he finds by his experience the truth of the declaration, that the "carnal mind is enmity against God."

In the supreme love of self, which is the governing affection of the natural heart, is laid the elements of this enmity. God demands the love of man; man claims a right of directing his affection where he chooses; and when the day of trial shall come, when it shall be seen who will triumph in this conflict, it is evident what must be the feeling of man. Pure and unmitigated enmity toward Jehovah is the natural result of loving one's self supremely. Ignorance of the nature of this selfish principle, and of its supreme control in the heart of the unconverted sinner, leads mankind to take up with many

notions, and to trust in many errors, which they would not credit for a moment if they had right views as to the elements of natural character.

If you will weigh these facts and reasonings, you may discover what you have never yet seen, that the heart naturally turns away from God in disobedience to him, and in neglect of the Gospel, and resorts to the delusions of error, because man naturally loves himself supremely, and, as supremely devoted to himself, is inimical toward God; and this enmity will certainly be developed whenever circumstances occur which are adapted to call it forth. With this view of truth, the sacred Scriptures fully accord. They uniformly represent mankind as in a fallen and lost state, alienated from God, and needing to be reconciled; they teach that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, "to seek and to save them that are lost;" and that man must repent, that his heart must be changed, that he must be reconciled, that he must yield himself up to God through faith in the Redeemer, or he cannot enter into his kingdom.

Chapter Third.

AS TO THE MORAL ESTIMATE PROPER TO BE MADE OF
HIMSELF.

YOU speak, said my friend, as if there were nothing good in man. If he love himself supremely, and this love is the governing motive of his conduct, then it would seem that he does nothing out of love to his Maker, and, consequently, nothing which he can approve. Am I right in my conjecture?

I think you will not question the truth of the position, was my reply, if you reflect that the governing affection of the mind extends its influence down to all those acts which are subordinate and controls their character. If love to God were occasionally to come in, to control some of the acts of one who loves himself supremely, this love, by the terms of the supposition, must be only

subordinate to the love of self. The love of God in a mind where the love of self supremely reigns, is of course subordinate to the reigning affection. It cannot therefore be true love to God, for this is necessarily supreme.

What kind of love must that be which treats him only as inferior to the creature; which loves his benefits, but hates his excellence; which loves him only as the instrument of happiness, but hates that holiness which is his glory?

If you scrutinize the motives of your actions, you will detect the fact that man naturally bestows his chief regards upon himself. His thoughts and desires are all spontaneously directed to the promotion of his own worldly pleasures. He consults these first. The character which he assumes, and the morality which he practises, are but the natural result of what he esteems as most conducive to his own happiness. He does not avoid open sin because God has prohibited it, so much as because it is disreputable. His practice is moulded more by

the laws and customs of society, than by the law of God. The unhappiness to which the operations of his conscience give rise, springs from the disrepute into which sin brings him, rather than from its being offensive to the pure and holy Jehovah. If he is strictly honest and scorns a base action, if he is kind and gives expansion to his benevolence in acts of mercy, yet these are the offspring of that principle which leads him to exalt himself rather than God. And that they are the offspring of such a principle is evident from the consideration that, if love to God prompted these virtues, that love would also exert a moulding influence on the character, in other respects. One who is just in his dealings out of love for God, will also be inspired by this love to other acts of obedience in keeping with this principle. It would lead one to observe the holy Sabbath, to avoid the profanation of his Maker's name, to live devoted to Jehovah, and to be ever found in the observance of all the duties which he has commanded. It would not permit him to content himself with an outward obedience

only, and that which affects the reputation, but would impel him to the performance of all the duties, secret and open, which the divine law enjoins.

But when we discover the profane swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, the sensual, and those who live in the neglect of the duties of his religion, to be as strict in that moral integrity which prevails among business men, as any other class of persons, it shows that love to God is not necessarily the motive of this integrity, for it exists in many who evidently do not love God, as is evinced by their conduct. I personally know many men who would not violate their word sooner than dishonor their credit; but I perceive that it is not love to God which inspires their integrity, because these very men do not hesitate to take his holy name in vain on the most trivial occasions; which they would never do if they loved him; nor do they hesitate, for the sake of their own pleasure, to trample on any precept of his law which concerns his honor, and does not involve injury to their reputation.

So also do those natural sympathies which create a character truly amiable, and render society pleasant, exist, in connection with a treatment of God, which could not occur in one who loved him. The young ruler whom Christ loved for his amiability and much worth, thought himself deficient in nothing affecting his relations to God. But our Saviour unfolded to him the true state of his heart, by commanding him to go and sell his goods and distribute to the poor; but his heart clung to his wealth, and he found that he loved it more than God.

Course through all history, and you will discover that men do not naturally conform themselves to the feelings and wishes of their Maker, which they would do if they loved him, but to their own. They do not set him before them, as the object of chief love and aim, out of a principle of affection toward him, to act in accordance with his wishes. The heathen do not. Mohammedans do not. Those who live in neglect of the Gospel do not. Men naturally do not. They are not governed by a regard for their

Creator, any further than they have conceived it to be for their interests and happiness. If they think it for their interest to set aside any precept of the law, or any command of the Gospel, and utterly disregard it, they do not scruple thus to act. What precept of the divine law have they not violated? what sin have they not committed to please themselves? God, as the object of supreme regard, has not been in all their thoughts.

You may think yourself an exception to this; but you cannot deny, when you reflect on it, that you have loved yourself and lived to your own pleasure, more than you have loved God, or lived to please him. You have done everything you could, for yourself, to build your own fortune, acquire a reputation in the world, and seek your own happiness; but you have never hitherto done one act out of a sincere regard for your Creator, and because you love him with all your heart and soul.

Admitting that what you say is true, said my friend, and I am not now prepared to

question it, yet you would not surely class my prayers and religious duties observed by me, as fruits of that supreme love of self, to which you ascribe the government of the man.

But inquire, I pray you, said I, into the motive of these religious observances. What has led you to their performance? Not love to God, but a selfish fear of his anger. You have trembled in view of his wrath which is threatened against the wicked; and the motive of all your prayers has reached through God and centered only in yourself. It is not love to him for his intrinsic excellence which has drawn you into your closet, to commune with him, because you delight in him; but you have wished to invoke his gracious aid to deliver your guilty soul from hell. You have wished to promote your interests and happiness by inducing him to become your friend, and extending to you salvation. Can anything be more selfish than prayers offered from such a motive? And this motive is the fountain of your religion. All your prayers, and observance of reli-

gious duties, have sprung from supreme love to self, and not from love to God.

Your mistake of character consists in the estimate of it as partially defective only, whereas it is wholly so. You are, as a natural man, wholly destitute of all moral goodness in the sight of God. There dwelleth in you, as a child of the apostasy, no good thing. Good as estimated by a human standard there may be, but not in the view of that holy Being who commands the supreme affections of the heart to be fixed on him. In no suitable respect have you ever regarded him, and you are utterly destitute of that moral goodness which consists in supremely loving him.

You may call this total depravity, or give it any name you choose ; but it is indisputable, that man in his natural state is wholly destitute of love to God, is alienated in heart from him, and is possessed, in the controlling elements of his character, of the spirit of a rebel. This is the view of the Bible on this point. It is demonstrated to be correct by all that we observe of others, and know of

our own hearts. Man has utterly turned away from God. He is an apostate from that holiness which consists in loving him supremely and obeying him perfectly, in which he was originally created. As sinful, he deserves punishment, and is already under condemnation. He is lost forever, unless recovered through grace. And this state of man by nature is the foundation of the plan of mercy revealed to the world through Jesus Christ.

Chapter Fourth.

AS TO THE GROUND OF HIS ACCEPTANCE WITH THE DIVINE
BEING.

IF these facts are so, said my friend, I must confess that it is more difficult than I had thought, to be accounted just with God. It has always been a favorite opinion, that if one does the best he can, God, who is infinitely benevolent, will overlook his little sins, and not lay them up against him.

But you perceive, I replied, that instead of the life being mainly good, and these violations of his law little sins, as you call them, the life itself is one continued act of disobedience, in which nothing has been done from love to God, but everything from supreme regard to one's self. While acting under the control of this supreme affection, not one act of true obedience to God is ever

performed. For if the governing motive of the life be wrong, there is no room in that life for a single act done out of supreme regard to God; nor, on a close analysis of his real motives, can the unconverted sinner ever discover one. The entire purport of the life is wrong, because not prompted in any respect by love to God, and every act entering into the life is wrong, for the same substantial reason.

The scriptural fact applicable to this subject is, that the world is a revolted province of Jehovah's empire, and mankind are united in this revolt, those only excepted who have become reconciled to him through faith in the Redeemer; and though men are kindly affectioned one toward another, preserve toward each other truth and integrity, and are moral in their external deportment, possessing in constant exercise the sympathies of our nature, yet they are all revolted from God. And how absurd would it be for one thus in revolt against him, to say, if I do as well as I can toward my neighbor, God will never lay up against me the few sins com-

mitted against himself, when the life is one great sin, and the revolt is continued without intermission throughout all its stages! The sin, the great and damning sin, is this very revolt. And so long as the spirit of rebellion reigns in the heart and controls the life, how can one so deceive himself as to imagine himself good and acceptable to God, because he has not robbed his neighbor's hen-roost, or stolen his purse; when he has never, for one moment, ceased to rob God of the affection to which he is entitled, and of the obedience which he justly requires?

Do not then base your hope on a position so groundless, as the pretence that the general purport of your life is right, or can become right while you continue to live in the neglect of God and in disobedience of the Gospel. The question returns with renewed force, how can man, as a revolted subject of God, be regarded and treated by him as just?

That is more than I can tell, replied my friend, unless he can do something to com-

pensate his Maker for the injury done him by disobedience.

But what, I asked, can he do?

I know not, he replied, unless to conform his life more closely to his duty, and to strive to do better for the future. He should pray more, and be more faithful in his religious duties.

All this is very well, said I; but it does not reach the point of the difficulty. Suppose one who is in revolt against God should think he could reform his conduct, break off his outward sins, and be more attentive to the duties of religion than he had ever been before, and yet should continue in revolt, still maintaining his rebellion, of what advantage would be all his self-righteous endeavors, while animated by this wicked spirit of revolt? Could his prayers avail any thing, when offered to a God against whom he assumes the attitude of a rebel? It is evident that while in this state the guilty man could do nothing acceptable to him. All his works of righteousness, and his repetition of prayers, and religious servi-

ces, would partake of the same selfish and unholy character, as any other of his acts. He might read the Bible and pray ; he might constitute himself a member of the purest church on earth and partake its sacraments, and yet the great and damning sin of revolt against God remain. He can do nothing till he come out of this state through true repentance, and by faith be reconciled to God, which will give him any assurance of the divine acceptance.

Or if we admit, what is in its own nature inadmissible, that one in this state of rebellion against God could cease to be a rebel, and should lay down his arms, give up the contest, and purpose to live an obedient life hereafter ; yet this would not remove the guilt already incurred, of sins committed ; and for these, a just condemnation would impend over him. No proffered obedience for the future, therefore, can render one that is a sinner just with God, even on the supposition that he might cease at once from sin, and never sin again.

But this is impossible : for so long as the

supreme affection of the soul remains unchanged, and man loves himself supremely, he cannot render to God one act of true obedience, or offer one acceptable prayer. He cannot therefore do any thing morally good, or create in himself any righteousness, for the sake of which he may find favor with his Maker. The question therefore again returns, How can man in a state of rebellion against God be accepted of him?

I do not see, said my friend, how he can be, either in consequence of his own moral virtues, or of the religious services which he may perform. He cannot assume the character of a righteous person, and even if he should, he would but deceive himself.

Chapter Fifth.

AS TO THE EFFICIENCY OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS, AS TO
THE MEANS OF SECURING THE HAPPINESS OF MAN.

BUT may not a sinner, continued my friend, hope in the divine goodness, and that the God who created him will not make him finally miserable? It appears to me that I can cheerfully yield myself up into the hands of so merciful a being without fear as to the result.

You abandon then, said I, the hope of justification by your own morality, or the performance of religious duties, for you now cast yourself upon the goodness of God, and base your hope of escape from punishment on this alone. Let us then inquire whether this dependence is valid.

Who is God, and what are his relations to us? That he is infinitely benevolent none

can question. He is also infinitely wise, holy, just, and true. All these are parts of his perfect character. In the full endowment of them as the sovereign God, he created man, gave him a law for the guidance of his actions, and now sits as moral governor upon the throne to maintain his authority over him, and bless him by its just and rightful exercise.

His law grows out of the relations into which man, as an intelligent creature of God, is, by birth, introduced. It is not, therefore, an arbitrary enactment, but arises from the position of man as creature, under the administration of a wise and holy Sovereign; and man is bound by every tie of duty to obey it. It is as necessary for God to require the subjection of man to himself, as it is to maintain his government. He would sooner perish than yield this right. Goodness requires him to reign. The interests and happiness of all created beings depend on his maintaining his rightful supremacy.

But if he would maintain his government, he must execute his law. The greatest act

of goodness which a civil governor performs toward his subjects, is to maintain in its integrity the law upon which the peace and happiness of society depends. The criminal may suffer, but the obedient are secured in the enjoyment of their happiness through this means. If the criminal suffer, it is in consequence of their own wicked acts; the obedient are made happy through their obedience. It is impossible for a good civil ruler to change the character of those acts which are in violation of the law—of those crimes which are already committed; neither can God change the wicked and rebellious acts of his creatures into holy ones.

How ought he, then, as a good being, consulting the interests and happiness of all worlds, to treat those who are disobedient, and continue in wilful rebellion? He cannot have complacency in their conduct. He cannot forgive them while indulging the spirit of rebels. He can but punish them. His justice and truth require him to do this, and thus execute on them the penalty of his law. The highest benevolence which is conceivable, re-

quires him so to treat the wicked as to preserve his own just authority, and maintain his government; and, that any suffer in consequence of this, is not attributable to him, but to them. To suppose, therefore, that any conceivable view of goodness requires him to cast aside his law, and prove himself a God destitute of integrity or truth, in order to save men from the consequences of their own wickedness, is to mistake entirely the nature of goodness, or how it is divinely displayed.

Goodness impels him to do all that he consistently can to rescue the rebellious subjects of his empire from the misery consequent on rebellion; but for this purpose, to pass over their offences with impunity, and relinquish in their favor the claims of his holy law, would not be right; and goodness requires him to do nothing which he cannot do consistently with a perfect regard to rectitude, and to the interests and happiness of his extended empire.

When you cling to the divine goodness, therefore, as the ground of your hope, you

cling to that which allowed the holy God to cast off the sinning angels, and consign them to the prison of hell. You cling to that which allowed him to overthrow the world with a deluge, to destroy the cities of the plain, to cast off Israel, to threaten the deepest punishment against the impenitent, and to keep alive the devouring flames of perdition for the judgment of the great day, and the dreadful punishment of those who will then be sentenced to them.

Whence did you derive these views of goodness in God, which lead you to imagine that he will never separate you from heaven? Not from the sacred Scriptures, for these teach how his goodness has displayed itself in the gift of his Son for our salvation, that we may be saved through faith in his atoning sacrifice; but not a word do they contain which may lead you to believe that he will ever treat the wicked, in their rebellion, as he treats the just. Your belief, therefore, is only a fancy of your deceived heart, which has no foundation in point of fact. Tell me of one being, if you can, who is an instance

of a sinner continuing in rebellion, made happy through the divine benevolence. The thing is impossible. No sinner in his revolted state can find any happiness in God, or in the thought of the holy heaven where he dwells. You might as well suppose that a rebel, admitted to the presence of his sovereign, would feel happy there, while the dread consciousness fills his breast that he is in the power of his sovereign, and justly liable, at any moment, to be ordered away to execution.

All the goodness of God displayed toward you, of which it is possible to conceive as consistent with his rectitude, could not make you happy, while the consciousness should remain, that you are revolted from him. Nor could the society of the faithful and obedient in heaven save you from the gnawings of the undying worm, and the consuming flame of a quenchless fire, which would rage in your own breast.

God is too good, you say, having created you, to make you miserable. But he does not make you so. You make yourself

so. Acting freely under a system of government which is wise and holy, just and good, and fitted to make happy all who yield obedience to God, you choose to turn away from him, to transgress his laws, to live only to yourself; and misery is the natural and necessary result.

But will a good God allow me to run into this misery? He will; he does. It is no more inconsistent to suppose that he will allow you to pursue that conduct which will make you miserable in the world to come, than in this. His goodness equally reigns in both worlds. And if you may, by sin, create misery for yourself here, you may, as consistently with his goodness, create misery for yourself hereafter.

But why, you ask, does God permit man to act thus, if he is good? It is because he preferred a system of government, and adapted man to it, such as should leave him to the liberty of his own choice—to reward or punishment, according to his conduct. This is the system under which man comes into being. A good God established

it; and the same goodness will lead him faithfully to carry into effect its provisions. If, then, the goodness of God furnishes no ground of hope in your case, the question arises, How can sinful man become accepted, and happy with him?

Here my friend seemed fairly to abandon the point, and said he could not tell. I cannot deny the truth of your positions, said he; but I never before viewed the subject in this light.

That is very probable, I replied, for you have never before gone down into the reason of things, and seen what are the elementary principles of irreligion, as they exist in a heart revolted from God. You have regarded all those expressions delineating the natural character of man, as misconceived and overwrought; and, in conscious pride and in ignorance of your own heart, you have turned away from them, to views of human nature more congenial with your natural feelings, and in conflict with the truth. But now consider, I pray you, if human character be not naturally such as is

described by me, on what ground is the Gospel necessary to man's salvation? Why did God command obedience to it, and proclaim it as the only way of life? Why is salvation made dependent on the recovery to the soul, by regeneration, of supreme love to God? Why has he commanded all men everywhere to repent? If man is not wholly revolted from him, and lost as a sinner, why this provision for his recovery? Or, if he can, by his own obedience, recover himself, why the need of God's giving his only begotten Son to die as his ransom? Or, if the simple goodness of the Deity is all we need to rely upon as sinners, why communicate to man the Gospel, and enjoin obedience to it? Is it not palpably evident, that where God has provided so great a remedy as that set before us in the Gospel, there must be a spiritual disease in man which renders this remedy necessary? Could he for four thousand years have heralded the advent of his Son, prefiguring the great object of this advent by sacrifices; could he have sent his angels to proclaim with

songs of triumph over the plains of Bethlehem, the joyful news of his birth ; could he have begun and carried on a system of redemption for the recovery of lost man, so wonderful in its plan, so wise in its execution, and so effectual to the end he had in view, and yet when he devised this plan not have regarded the apostate race of man as spiritually degenerate and lost to holiness and heaven ?

You may speculate on this subject as you please, and indulge what errors you may, yet the great fact meets us at the threshold of all our inquiries into revealed truth, that man, in his natural character, is wholly estranged from his Maker ; and that it was to save him, by recovering in him holy affections and a spirit of obedience, that God introduced the blessed Gospel to the world. This is made known to teach man the great plan of his justifying righteousness, through an atoning Saviour ; and the very fact of its development, forever annihilates all those self-righteous hopes founded on his own morality. It sweeps away

the refuges of lies, to which, in his pride, he resorts, and brings him down to the simple principle, that he must be reconciled to God, and love and obey him, or he cannot enter into life.

Here, then, in your natural state, you stand, as a revolted subject of God, in rebellion against him, destitute of anything to commend you to his favor, and deserving to be cast away from him forever. Your character estimated by a just standard, as it respects your relations to God, is defective in all points. You have no holiness which he can approve, and no fitness of mind for the spiritual duties which he commands, and for the pure pleasures of heaven. The leading element of your moral nature is supreme devotion to self, in preference to Jehovah. You enthrone self in your affections as your idol; and God, in whom your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified.

Chapter Sixth.

AS TO THE CHIEF OBJECT FOR WHICH WE SHOULD LIVE,
AND THE HAPPINESS ATTAINED BY LIVING TO THIS
OBJECT.

IT is curious to observe how the darkness of the mind as to natural character casts its shade on the way of life, and obscures the path of duty and of happiness. They who are in the dark respecting their moral state as sinners, sensible of incurring no danger in consequence of their neglect of the Gospel, seem to live in the world without any definite object of pursuit other than to secure their present happiness. They devote themselves to the world, occupy their attention with its cares, and have no other object for which to live. Instead of making a proper estimate of what their happiness requires, laying their plans wisely to attain it, and building their hope on a suitable foundation,

they float carelessly down the tide of life, indifferent as to whither they are borne. Not reflecting that, in their present moral state, they cannot be happy, they will not set out in earnest to secure an interest in that divine friendship which only can confer true happiness upon them, but continue to live regardless of the proffered gift.

The Christian knows on what rests the foundation of his hope. He has an object definite and fixed, to which his life is devoted. He has carefully estimated what his happiness for time and eternity requires, and has made his calculation for both worlds. To live to the glory of God is the end and aim of his being. Once he lived only to himself. But he was led to perceive his error, and to feel that his Creator had claims upon him which he could not wisely or safely disregard. The consciousness of guilt in turning away from the great Jehovah to seek his happiness in the creature filled his mind, and, with tears of penitence, he retraced his wayward steps, and gave himself away to God, through faith in the Redeemer. Be-

lieving in the Saviour, he found pardon and peace. Henceforth devoted to his glory, as the glory of that Being whom he now supremely loves, it became the chief object of his life to please him. He now feels that his happiness centres in God, and that with his friendship he can never know the disappointment of the worldly mind at the failure of its schemes.

Choosing God as the portion of his soul, and loving him with all the heart, naturally tends to bring him into a sympathy of feeling and of interest with him; he loves his law, is obedient unto his Gospel, and feels a high elevation of Christian enjoyment in doing good; thus imitating him who is the fountain of all excellence, the only worthy object of praise. Living to the glory of this Being secures his happiness. It assimilates it to that of God. He feels the same spiritual joys that God does, and delights in the same holy pleasures. He is raised above the power of adversity. Disappointment cannot reach and tear away the foundation of his

hope. The loss of all earthly good cannot deprive him of the highest spiritual enjoyment which springs from God's friendship. His happiness is centered in him alone, and is as eternal as is his nature.

You draw a pleasing picture, said my friend, of the object for which the Christian lives, and of the happiness which living to it confers; can it be a reality? Is this a fair view of this subject?

It is indeed a pleasing picture, I remarked, but it is none the less true to nature. It is the essential characteristic of the religion of Jesus Christ that it brings man into friendship with God, and prompts him to live unto his glory. In the nature of things, this must be so. But it is not the tendency of that ignorance of natural character which causes men to live in neglect of the Gospel, to produce this happy result. They who live in this neglect are not led by their principle to draw nigh to God, but to depart from him. They come not to the light, but love the darkness, and continue to seek their

happiness in those temporal and fading objects where it does not exist and can never be found. •

The view which many persons take of the nature of true felicity, and of the means to attain it, shows their utter darkness on this subject. In how many different ways do men seek happiness? What object have they not sought with this end in view? And they have always failed to attain it, when they have turned away from God. Like men wandering in the dark, and roving from object to object in search of happiness, without a consciousness felt of what is necessary to secure it, do those who are ignorant of their natural character thus wander and find disappointment at every step. They know not what their happiness requires, or how to seek it, because darkness is in their minds. They are ignorant of the causes of their wretchedness, and feel no solicitude therefore for their removal. They are ignorant of the Gospel, as the means to effect their deliverance from these evils, and therefore live in its habitual neglect. Thus they

wander like men who live in a dark alley, and know not how to emerge from it.

I often meet with affecting instances illustrative of this moral blindness. Men who might have attained happiness and lived in the enjoyment of the divine friendship, had they listened to the teachings of the sacred oracles, but who, in ignorance of their moral state by nature, have treated them with neglect, have sometimes, after long wandering in the dark, been driven to desperation and to self-destruction, in consequence of their wrong conceptions of the object for which they should live.

That brings to my remembrance, said my friend, some whom I have known, who, having become disgusted with the world, have terminated their life by their own hands.

The same is the result of my own observation, I remarked. Disgusted with the world, ignorant of God as the fountain of true happiness and of the means to secure his friendship, ignorant of their own character as sinful, and of this as the source of all their spiritual wretchedness, they have de-

spaired of earth and died by their own hand. Could they have understood their moral state by nature, and been prompted to seek God, and to obtain reconciliation to him through Jesus Christ, they might have lived to higher enjoyments than earth affords. But they neglected the mercy offered in the Gospel, and died as does the fool. It is but a few days since I read in the public journals an instance of the kind specified. A young man, disgusted with the world, despairing of the happiness which he vainly sought in the objects of life around him, committed suicide ; and, to put at rest forever all speculations as to the cause of criminal disregard of life, he left the following statement of his views ; it is a melancholy testimony to the powerlessness of infidelity to provide for the soul those high enjoyments which are suited to its nature.

“I have passed my life,” said he, “in the search after happiness. Like other men I have tried and exhausted all the springs of action : ambition, friendship, love, have all

moved me in their turn, but yet have not brought happiness.

“ Mine has indeed been a ‘battle of life.’ And as I have kept my post upon its field, I have beheld all that makes life happy pass for ever away. Projects of fame have failed, friends have fallen from my side, the love of my youth has turned to gall in my breast, the wife of my bosom has deserted and denied me, wealth has slipped from my grasp—all has proved but a dreary blank. And now at the end of the strife, I stand alone upon the plain, my dead hopes strewn around in mockery, and nothing in the future but despair and death.

“ Why it has been thus with me—why I have never enjoyed the happiness that other men have revelled in around me, I stop not to inquire. Suffice it that I have not. As many another, many a better, many a wiser man has found it less terrible to meet death than to brave the scornful finger of the world and to endure the gnawings of bitter thoughts, so I; and from a life of care and

trouble, and more sorrow than my proud nature can bear, I turn to the quiet and silence of death. And what comes after? Eternity! dark, blank, mysterious, and unfathomed eternity! In a single hour I shall have solved its mystery."

It is an affecting illustration of the folly of living to the world. He vainly strove to find his happiness where, in the nature of things, it cannot be found; and it is melancholy to reflect how wantonly and wickedly he sacrificed his eternal hopes on the altar of a worldly ambition, and in profound ignorance of the truth which he was chiefly interested to know. Nor can I help regarding this as a fair example of the way in which many wander in the dark after happiness, to find themselves at last fatally deceived. There is light, glorious light, beaming upon them through the Gospel; but they neglect it. They make up their minds, often for very frivolous reasons, that the Gospel is unworthy their attention; they trust in the delusions of their own darkened minds, and find no refuge for the anxieties

and fears which press upon them; and, in ignorance of their responsibilities to God, and of the scenes which occur in the future world, they seek this refuge in the grave. Most emphatic is the language of our Saviour, expressive of the deep pity with which he regards such blind infatuation, when he says of his misguided countrymen, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

In the days of Christ on earth, there were those who lived in the neglect of his teachings, for the same reason that men now neglect the Gospel. They were blinded to their own natural character, and lived in the darkness which sin induced. The Pharisee, who trusted that he had injured no one, and confided in his own righteousness; the Sadducee, who denied a future state; the Scribe and the priest, all lived in the dark alley, and never came to the light. As the deniers of Christ they perished, as multitudes do, who now live in the neglect of the Gospel; and it is our Saviour's testimony res-

pecting them that "light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Men do not now come to the light, because they do not wish to be in subjection to those principles of truth and duty which the light reveals. Do you not, from your own observation, perceive the truth of this remark?

In some respects I do, said my friend. I once knew a man, whom his friends sought to reclaim from intemperance; but he professed a hatred of all temperance people, and would never be influenced to pledge himself against his sinful indulgence, though besought with tears to do so. But there was no difficulty in persuading the sober and temperate neighbor by his side. It is clear, therefore, that the love of strong drink influenced the opinions and conduct of the drunkard, and prevented him from pursuing the only course to be reclaimed.

In the same way, I said, do men avoid religion, and neglect the Gospel; because the tendency of giving heed to these things is to restrict them in their worldly pleasures, in

which they fancy their happiness to reside ; and, having no higher view of the chief end of life than to revel in such pleasures, they turn away from the blessed light of the Gospel which reveals God unto them, and teaches that their true happiness consists in living to his glory.

They are in the dark, because they love the pleasures which they find there, and fear the effect of the light, should it be let in upon them ; and this is the natural operation of depravity. Men who love themselves supremely, do not wish to have the claims of God on their affection asserted, nor to feel that they are under any obligation to regard his wishes. All that they desire or ask of him is, that he would let them alone, and leave them to the indulgence of their pleasures. Their greatest efforts are often made to keep him out of their thoughts, and this is the reason why they neglect the Gospel. They turn away from religion in disgust, because they are themselves so opposite in moral feeling to its holy requisitions. This inward disgust for spiritual religion, accom-

panied with a tendency to conjure up the various delusions of error as the ground of their confidence, is the evident token of that depravity which reigns with unbroken sway over the mind.

Those who live in the neglect of the Gospel are under the control of this feeling, and they are led by it into a thousand speculative notions, which are far from the truth. I doubt not, if you will examine the state of your own mind, you will discover that, combined with an inward feeling of dislike to the duties of spiritual religion, which arises from a depraved heart, there are a thousand forms of error afloat in your thoughts, upon which you would rest your hope of heaven, if you could do so with the assurance of truth. One thought passes through your mind after another, and one system of error after another; and yet you can fix upon nothing permanently and securely upon which you are willing to base a justification of your neglect of the Gospel.

What has given you such an insight into the operations of my mind, said my friend?

If I had attempted it myself, I could not have more accurately described my own spiritual state.

I know these states of mind, said I, from having myself once experienced them. As those who supremely love God have the same views, feelings, and enjoyments, or, a the state of one holy mind describes that of another, as to the substantial elements of its character, so does the mind in which self-love reigns supremely possess, with others of a kindred class, like elements: "As face answereth to face in a glass, so does the heart of man to man."

Men ignorant of their natural character as fallen and sinful, thus live in the dark as to the great object for which they should live, and as to the happiness which results from walking in the path of obedience to God; and herein consists the source of that wretchedness which depravity occasions. It blinds men to the chief good which they should pursue, and might, through grace, attain, and leaves them to grope in the dark after lesser pleasures which the world affords,

and which must at last disappoint them. No man can thus live to the world, yet fulfil the true end of his being. No man can thus turn away from God, and the duties which he commands expressly for his good, and not make in the end a miserable failure; and it is the tendency of sin thus to impel men on, in the neglect of God, to their own ruin.

Chapter Seventh.

AS TO THE LIGHT EMANATING FROM THE GOSPEL.

THE Gospel reveals a remedy for sin. If we know what is the natural state of man, wherein he fails of his duty, and what foundation there is laid in his moral nature for the ruin which sin occasions, it will enable us the more readily to comprehend how the Gospel becomes effectual to his spiritual recovery. Its peculiar nature and office present themselves but obscurely to a mind ignorant of these preliminary principles.

If the estimate of the Gospel, which is formed in ignorance of the evil which it is designed to remove, were correct, that plan of recovering grace would present nothing to our view worthy of notice. The sacred Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New, would resemble a dead letter. As

the means of man's spiritual recovery, wisely adapted to cure the moral evil existing in his sinful heart, they would never be received, nor known. The distinguishing feature of the Gospel is its power over the heart to reclaim it, by the restoration of those right affections toward God, which are appropriate to the relations of man as a creature. It is this which places the Gospel immeasurably above every other religious system. There is nothing in any other claiming to have come from God which produces the same effects. Nor is there anything in the erroneous views of religion, represented in the several creeds of the moralist, unitarian, universalist, infidel, or nothingist, which corresponds with the Gospel as the means of man's spiritual recovery. Did you never think, my friend, how useless this plan of mercy is, said I, if it accomplish no more for man than what these several classes of errorists ascribe to it?

I have often thought of it, he replied; and it has occasioned me no little perplexity to know why God should take such pains to

offer to the world a plan of mercy which cost him the blood of his own Son, if there were no more important results, involved in this sacrifice than what these represent. I could never perceive any particular necessity for the Gospel, if on their principles we may be saved. It appears clear to me that, if man is by nature such as you represent and claim the sacred Scriptures to teach—a revolted subject of God, already involved in guilt and ruin—something more must be required for his spiritual recovery than what I find taught by many who claim in their articles of faith to represent the Gospel.

You are unquestionably right in your conjecture, I replied. For if man love himself supremely, he must of necessity have different interests from those of God, and be in heart opposed to his rightful supremacy. To be recovered from this state, the governing affection of his soul must be changed. He must be won over to God in heart. A deep and abiding transformation must occur within him. And it is for the production of such

a spiritual change in the selfish heart of man, that the Gospel has been given to the world. But in the various shades of opinion in those who neglect the Gospel, there is nothing which has power to effect a spiritual change in man, and recover his affections back to God.

The moralist trusts in a mere external conformity to the rules of society. There is nothing in his creed to reach and renew the heart. When his principles have produced all the effect of which they are capable, they leave the soul enslaved by its wrong affections, and in the same state of moral degeneracy in which they find it.

Unitarianism, as a system professedly the Gospel, is also morally inert. It infuses no right affections into the soul of apostate and ruined man. Disrobing the Saviour of his divinity, it incapacitates him from offering up a propitiatory sacrifice, and making an atonement for sin; and it thus deprives the Gospel of the only effectual means to reach and change the heart.

Universalism is similar in its influence.

While denying the Saviour's divinity and his vicarious sacrifice, it removes all those motives to repentance which arise from the conviction of danger, by teaching a salvation inclusive of the whole human family, irrespective of their character or moral state.

Infidelity, in denying the truth and inspiration of the sacred Scriptures, would destroy the efficacy of the Gospel, and yet substitute nothing in its place. And there is a kind of nothingism also, which is a term expressive of absolute indifference to all religion whatsoever, and is chiefly characteristic of those who live in the neglect of the Gospel.

In these various systems of error, there is presented to view no principle which is operative in the recovery of the sinner's heart to God. Their influences are all of a different character, and bear no resemblance to those of the Gospel.

Is it to be believed that, for four thousand years, God would carry on a work of preparation for the introduction of the Gospel,

and that he would send his own Son to suffer the horrid agonies of death upon the cross for man, if there were no reclaiming power in this Gospel superior to that which exists in any or all of these false systems? Would he, in view of our moral ruin, have instituted any of those systems, or any other plan of recovering grace, but that which is competent to do for man what his spiritual necessities require? In the nature of things, it is right to presume that he would aim at no less a work than his complete recovery to holiness.

On this point, the testimonies of his word are very specific. "I am come," said Christ, "to seek and to save them that are lost." "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." He is set before us as "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." He came "to save his people from their sins." "I am not ashamed," said Paul, "of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the wis-

dom of God and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

It is the chief aim of the Gospel to communicate to man the knowledge of a system of forgiveness adapted to his case. It teaches that his best endeavors to remove from himself the curse of sin will be unavailing, but that he may be forgiven for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered in his behalf. It inculcates a system of forgiving mercy, based on the atoning sacrifice. It clearly unfolds the nature and grounds of this mercy, and how one who is alienated from God and under his curse, may be restored to holiness and happiness.

The Old Testament teaches the way of salvation through forgiveness as explicitly as the New. But it does not as distinctly set forth the ground on which pardon is conferred. Its types and symbols shadow forth what the Gospel more fully develops. There is no difference in the nature of their teachings, save as to the clearness in which the system of mercy is revealed. Abel was saved through the forgiveness of his sins, as

was Paul. It was not the blood of sacrificial offerings which purchased this remission, but the blood of Christ, thus symbolically represented. The Jewish system was founded on the same principles, and secured the same practical results, as the Christian; the only difference being, that the one, by its sacrifices, pointed to Christ, the great atoning sacrifice, who was to come; the other unfolds the way in which the shedding of his blood becomes effectual.

In the system of pardoning grace revealed in the sacred Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New, the same substantial principles are set forth, as essential to the exercise of pardoning mercy on the part of God, and which he could not disregard in any plan of salvation adopted for the recovery of lost men.

Chapter Eighth.

AS TO THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL AS UNFOLDING THE
GREAT PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERING GRACE.

To comprehend the peculiar office of the Gospel, and in what way God addresses himself through it to the recovery of his revolted and rebellious subjects, there are certain principles which must be recognized as naturally belonging to any system of recovering grace emanating from the Deity, and as essential to it; these the Gospel properly includes and distinctly reveals.

1. God, as a righteous moral governor, in a plan of grace proposed for the recovery to holiness of apostate man, MUST MAKE AMPLE PROVISION TO SUSTAIN HIS LAW, AND FULLY TO VINDICATE ITS CLAIMS. Any system of religion professing to have come from him, which fails to do this, or the tendency of which is to overthrow or annul the claims

of his righteous law, is unworthy of him, and cannot, therefore, have come from him, or be the Gospel that he has revealed. For it is evident that he cannot lay aside his own sovereignty, nor suffer his integrity to be impugned, nor permit his law to become a dead letter on his statute book. It is the fatal defect of all those systems which lead to a neglect of the Gospel, that they make no provision, in this respect, to sustain the divine integrity or justice.

The moralist imagines God to be so regardless of his law as, for the sake of a correct outward deportment, and a purposed honesty of life, to pass over all his sins. The unitarian and universalist, at one fell blow, sweep away both the law and its sanctions. The infidel, the practical unbeliever, the nothingist, and the neglecters of the Gospel of every description, practically set aside the claim of God on the love and obedience of men, as expressed in his law. In none of their religious systems is there provision made to sustain its righteous claims. It falls into nothingness before them, and is con-

sumed as the tow before the fire. This defect is fatal to these systems, as having come professedly from God. They show no provision made to uphold his truth and justice. They represent him as setting forth his law with its dreadful sanctions, and then, without any reason, other than that conceived by them as existing in his own mind, as casting it aside, and receiving the guilty children of the apostasy, without discrimination of character, to his bosom.

Here, in all these systems, is discoverable this main defect. They overlook the natural character of man, his apostasy, and the immutability and justice of the divine law; and they make no provision for the difficulty involved in the supposition, that the infinite Jehovah can prescribe a law, and then wantonly disregard it; or that, as a righteous lawgiver and sovereign, he can permit it to be trampled on with impunity.

But it is clear that, in the plan of mercy devised by him, God must and will sustain his law. No fact is more distinctly and fully set forth in the sacred oracles. Man, when

he sinned, therefore, fell under the curse. This God did not remove, but only suspended for a season, to give him a space for repentance, in consequence of that gracious plan of mercy revealed in the Gospel, which then began to take effect. View his treatment of the sinners of the old world, those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and those under the Jewish dispensation. All his dealings with Israel show a determination on his part not to permit his law to be treated with disrespect; nor is there any evidence contained in the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament to show that he has ever treated it as a nullity. When the knowledge of it had become partially obscured through the corruptions and sins of men, he solemnly proclaimed it on Sinai, and there published it to the world as the rule of life which every one is required to observe; and at every point of history illustrative of his treatment of men, down to the advent of Christ, he has shown how he feels and is determined to act, in this particular. No man, under the old dispensation, ever obtained mercy, except-

ing through repentance. This is the means of forgiveness set forth in the Gospel, and through it the law is sustained in all its integrity.

“I am not come to destroy the law,” said Christ, “for, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” He describes the law as casting the impenitent into outer darkness, and consigning them to the place of punishment in the world to come; setting forth this condemnation and punishment as the necessary and certain award of all who do not escape into the way of life through the Gospel.

In like manner the apostles and teachers of the Christian religion distinctly uphold the integrity of the law. “Do we then make void the law through faith?” said Paul: “God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” He represents it as having been the means of his own conviction, and that it is designed as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. There is no intimation given in any of the sacred writings, that God has ever dispensed with the claims of his law in favor of man, ex.

cepting in the way and through the means peculiar to the Gospel.

But if there were no other evidence to this point, that derived from the atoning sacrifice is sufficient. This sacrifice had a special reference to the justice and immutability of the divine law. How could Jehovah, as a just lawgiver, forgive the sin which he had threatened to punish, without endangering the respect which man should feel for his authority, and casting his law altogether aside? He could not, excepting through a provision peculiarly his own. And this it is the great end and aim of the Gospel to develop. His Son was to become incarnate, obey the law, and under it, suffer a punishment equivalent in its moral bearings on the universe to that which is due to sinners, and thus make it manifest that if God, out of respect to his law, would not remit its claims in favor of his own Son, no mere creature would dare to transgress, and yet expect remission. An atoning sacrifice, equal in grandeur to the infinite dignity of the lawgiver, may thus prove as efficacious

to sustain the law, as the execution of the penalty on erring man would have done. Hence it became necessary that he who would take upon himself this work of expiation, should be a divine person. And that such was our Saviour, is the unerring testimony of the sacred Scriptures. As a divine person he became incarnate, and as such obeyed and suffered; and such is the virtue of his atoning sacrifice that, for its sake, God can forgive the repentant sinner without endangering his law.

The same authority which prescribed the law, has provided this remedy for its transgression. The virtue of an infinite atonement equals the virtue of an infinite law; and its effect on the universe is the same as if the law had received a literal execution in the condemnation and eternal misery of man. It upholds the law as holy and good, and pleads exemption from the curse only as an act of grace, and in view of the equivalent offered by Jesus Christ. The justice of God presents itself to the universe as great and admirable, and as worthy of the same

reverence when displayed to view in Christ's sufferings under the law, as it would have been in the sinner's own sufferings.

In this way, God manifests his determination to sustain his law, even in the exercise of his forgiving mercy; and the Gospel is the development of this plan of mercy. It was first published in Eden, where the advent and sufferings of God's own Son as a Saviour were distinctly foretold. The sacrifices of blood, from the offering of Abel to the crucifixion of Christ, were but the means to shadow forth, and impress upon the mind, the plan of atonement through vicarious suffering, to be accomplished in Christ. The blood shed on the altar was the shadow, and that shed upon the cross was the substance of this great atoning sacrifice.

Repentance, as necessary to salvation, derives all its virtue from this atoning sacrifice. No sinner can ever approach God through the Gospel but as repentant, and basing his hope of forgiveness in Christ alone. But why is repentance demanded, unless in view of a transgression of the divine law, which

law is thus demonstrated to be even now in force? Repentance can be exercised only in view of a law broken or violated. In repentance, the sinner must confess his sin, and justify God in its threatened punishment; he must turn from his evil ways and renounce them; he must feel toward the divine law as God feels toward it, and treat it as God would have him do; and it is the effect of the plan of mercy revealed in the Gospel, of which the atoning sacrifice is the foundation, to bring man into this position. He cannot receive forgiveness, till, in repentance for his sins, he sustains the law as holy, just, and good, and acknowledges the holiness and justice of the divine character, in sustaining it by a penalty which condemns him, as guilty, to the perdition of the ungodly.

Here then, we perceive, as one of the main pillars of the system of mercy revealed in the Gospel, a uniform determination on the part of God to sustain his law, and not remove from any man its threatened curse, except in such a way as to secure in him the

acknowledgment of this law as just, and to bring him over to God in true repentance, and in dependence on the provisions of his grace to take away sin. Neither in God, nor in those who base their hope of salvation on a crucified Redeemer, is there manifest any design to cast aside the law, or treat its claims with disrespect.

Compare the Gospel as the means of sustaining the divine law with the various forms of error to which allusion has been made, and how infinitely does it transcend them! There are no such provisions to sustain the divine integrity, existing in all the forms of religion ever devised, separate from the Gospel. Unitarianism, universalism, and other similar systems of error, take away the virtue of Jesus Christ's vicarious sufferings, through the denial of his divinity. They thus remove the only means of making the world feel that God immutably adheres to the justice and integrity of his law. They virtually overthrow his law. They teach error as truly opposite to the Gospel, and as destructive of it, as Moham-

medanism does. As systems of religion in which to trust, they are not a whit safer for the sinner than idolatry, or the faith of the false prophet. Where do the infidel, the moralist, the nothingist, and the neglecter of the Gospel find anything in their several forms of belief to sustain God as holy, just, and good in the forgiveness of that sin which he has threatened to punish? Their systems of belief all tend to overthrow his righteous government, by teaching that he is regardless of the claims of his law, and that man may live as he pleases here, and yet, after death, be holy and happy in heaven. There is not one form of these errors which teaches us to treat God with holy reverence, or to acknowledge him as deserving it. They are all systems of falsehood. They cannot be otherwise. There is no element of truth in them. They are no part of the Gospel. They take away our Lord, and teach us not where to find him. They are no more consistent with the holiness, justice, and goodness of God, than Mohammedanism is.

Is not this a new view, said my friend?

No, I replied, it is as old as the apostasy.

But I never before took this view of the Gospel, said he.

That is very likely, I replied, because you never before have had a correct view of the character of man as apostate from God.

But, said my friend, you make the difference between your views of the Gospel and those of others which you enumerate to be very great. If you are right, they have nothing incorporated into their systems upon which to base a Gospel hope.

That is the very point, I replied, on which I wish to fix your attention. For it is clear that theirs are none of them the system revealed in the Gospel, and that they have not come from God, because they tend directly to overthrow his law.

2. It is another principle, unfolding the Gospel to view as glorious, that, in it GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO MAN AS SIN-FORGIVING, AND AIMS FULLY TO IMPRESS THIS GREAT TRUTH ON EVERY MIND. In consequence of a divine arrangement established

by an immutable covenant, that God the Son should come in the flesh and offer up his life a sacrifice for guilty men; Jehovah early manifested to the world the tokens of forgiving mercy. By the acceptance of Abel and his offering, he showed that he had already, in effect, been propitiated, and could freely forgive the sins of the penitent and believing. In his intercourse with Enoch, Noah, Abraham and the patriarchs, he manifested the same readiness to forgive. He proclaimed to Moses that he is long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; and the whole system of vicarious offerings promulgated, through him, to the Jewish nation, still further revealed his disposition to forgive.

When the Israelites repented, he freely forgave their sins. When David returned to God broken-hearted, on account of his transgressions, he experienced mercy. All the testimonies of the Old Testament illustrate this readiness in Jehovah to pardon and accept those who humbly seek his face. And,

in accordance with this, the directions of God by his prophets were, "Repent, turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity be not your ruin." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

Thus, by express precept, by innumerable examples, and by all the conduct of Jehovah in his treatment of mankind, it is made evident that he is a sin-forgiving God. The same truth our Saviour taught, and he illustrated it by his own affecting example, when he said to the penitent Mary, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." In the parable of the prodigal son, he inculcated the same great truth. He bade men repent, and believe in him, that they might be saved. All his instructions were, in fact, directed to influence them to come to him, and, through his grace, receive pardon.

The same great truth was also inculcated by the apostles. Paul taught that Abraham and David were saved through the forgive-

ness of their sins. John taught, that if we repent of our sins, he is faithful to forgive us.

Though God will not relax the claims of his law, and is determinately bent on inflicting its penalty upon all who persist in their impenitence, yet he is also represented as sin-forgiving, and as exercising this mercy toward the penitent and believing, not for their sakes, but for the sake of the vicarious sacrifice offered upon the cross in the person of his Son. All the blood shed at Jewish altars from the apostasy to the advent of Christ, points to this sacrifice. Forgiveness to the repenting for the sake of this atoning sacrifice, which was published in Eden to the fallen pair, presents itself to view in all the transactions of the Old Testament, in the examples, teachings and predictions of all its holy men, and in the instructions of Christ and his apostles.

Forgiveness of sins is proffered in view of the atoning blood which was shed on Calvary. The Gospel contains a perfect revelation of this scheme of forgiveness. It

teaches that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sins." "We are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Jesus Christ is set forth as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." "For without the shedding of blood, there is no remission." The substance of the Gospel is remission of sins through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. And this Gospel, which began to be published in the garden of Eden, will continue its merciful proclamations to the lost race, till the last sinner on earth that is redeemed shall be gathered in.

But, having no correct view of man's natural character as needing this remission of sins, there are many who live neglectful of this blessed Gospel. They view the surface only, and are influenced by depravity to pervert the truth. Hence the loose notions respecting the Gospel held by Socinians,

unitarians, universalists, moralists and nothingists. Where, in any of their systems, is there taught the great doctrine of forgiveness through a vicarious atonement? They overthrow this main pillar of the Gospel by inculcating such an erroneous view of Christ and his offices, as can have its origin only in ignorance of the state of their own hearts by nature. They teach Christ to have been a good man, to have displayed a virtuous example, and to have been an eminent moralist, and that is all. And this error is one which tears up by the roots the whole Gospel system.

But are there not good men, said my friend, among these several classes? I have sometimes heard their preachers, and if I had not known where I was, I should have thought myself listening to some of your best divines. Besides, how many do I know who live very exemplary lives, and are moral, honest and industrious? And there are some whom I would sooner trust in my business, than many of your church members.

There are various topics of pulpit instruction, I replied, which are common to all who believe in a God; in respect to these, there may be little or no diversity of sentiment; but your opinion would be greatly changed to hear these men attempt an explanation of the way to be saved as revealed in the Gospel. As a general thing, they say very little on this subject, but, in all their teachings, aim to make the impression, that if one only live a moral life, and is a good citizen and neighbor, he need not trouble himself about religion. And this is a horrid, yea, even a damnable error. They thus lead men to neglect the way of salvation till they perish. For you must perceive that if the natural character of man is such as I have described, these instructions do not meet the exigencies of his case. What he needs is forgiveness and restoration to the favor of God. But there is no forgiveness proffered in the Gospel to those who do not seek it, and seek it too for the sake of Christ's vicarious sufferings.

Do you mean to be understood, said my

friend, that all who abide in the various errors you have specified, will be lost?

You may yourself judge of this, I replied, when you reflect on what God teaches, and may then draw your own conclusions. If the natural character of man be one of alienation from him, you may judge whether that kind of instruction which tends to shape a few external actions only, and does not teach the need of forgiveness and the restoration to him of the affections of the heart, can ever save. You might as well presume that for a felon to brush his coat and behave like a gentleman, would take away the enormity of the guilt which rests upon his soul.

The Gospel lays down the exclusive truth, that no unforgiven sinner can ever be saved; that the impenitent, unbelieving, and unpardoned, cannot enjoy eternal life; that in respect to such, the claims of the law are unsatisfied, and that they are under condemnation, and will be cast away at last. And you may from this perceive what hope they have who neglect the way of mercy revealed in the Gospel.

3. Not only must God, in any plan of mercy for the recovery of man, maintain his law, while at the same time he extends to sinners the sceptre of his grace, but HE MUST DO SOMETHING EFFECTUAL TO INSPIRE THEM WITH CONFIDENCE IN HIM, THAT THEY MAY BE LED TO ACCEPT THE PROVISIONS OF HIS MERCY.

This he did when he gave up to death his only Son. "For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have eternal life." "Will he not with him also freely give us all things?" "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; but for a good man some will even dare to die; but God commendeth his love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God."

By the gift of his own Son for sinners, therefore, God has done all that could reasonably be demanded of him to awaken in them a confiding spirit, chase away their dis-

trust, and regain their confidence. What can equal the powerful influence which the fact of one dying in place of another, is fitted to wield, for inspiring confidence in such a friend? The appeal to the heart is irresistible. And it is this view of Christ's sufferings in his behalf so impressively set before him in the Gospel, which excites the sinner to repentance, and causes his eyes to overflow with tears. It breaks his heart to think of God's wonderful love to him. It so inspires his confidence in that Saviour as to lead him to cast himself by faith into his arms, and trust his salvation wholly in him.

What is there in the errors of those who neglect the Gospel, or who deny the atoning sacrifice, or the divinity of Christ, to waken in the guilty mind this confidence? There is no goodness in Jehovah which is not in perfect harmony with his justice. It was goodness which led him to prescribe his holy law as the rule of our actions; and the same goodness will lead him to execute it. And where, then, can the man who denies the vicarious sacrifice of Christ find any ground

of hope that he may be forgiven? What confidence can he repose in God, separate from the Gospel? The views of Socinians, moralists, and others of this description, tend to awaken in the sinner's mind no such confidence. They have no power to engage his affections, and fix them supremely on God. But when Jehovah, in the Gospel, presents himself to view, as giving the life's blood of his own Son to purchase redemption for us, it must and does excite the sympathies of the alienated and rebellious heart, and awaken its confidence in him.

That suggests, said my friend, an explanation of what I have often felt, but never understood, which is, a want of interest in the cold and chilling pulpit inculcations of many who lean to error. And those who preach, when they have coursed over the field of morality and can find nothing new, often tire of the sameness of their pulpit inculcations, and turn to some other employment.

And it calls to mind, I replied, what was once said by one who had sat for a few months under such inculcations. "After

all," said he, "orthodox preaching is the only interesting preaching there is." There are men, the beauties of whose elocution and style please and attract; but if these men were truly imbued with the spirit of the Gospel, and employed their talents in publishing its plan of mercy, with warm and earnest hearts, nothing could exceed the interest which they would awaken. For there is nothing which is so fitted to kindle interest in the mind of a poor sinner, a ruined and wretched wanderer from God, as the affecting truth, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Nothing can exceed the power of this truth to touch and melt the heart. What multitudes has it not interested and led to Christ! It shows that God feels for the miseries of sinners, and is in earnest to save them; and it thus gains their confidence. Under the means which he uses for this purpose, they know they may freely come to him, and trust in him. And it is the nature of the Gospel to produce this impression on every mind.

4. God must not only gain the confidence

of those whom he would recover, but REQUIRE SUCH CONDITIONS OF MERCY AS WILL BE EFFECTUAL TO SECURE TO HIM THE AFFECTIONS OF THEIR HEARTS. The idea is preposterous that man while in his natural state, alienated in his affections from God, and in rebellion against him, may be forgiven. Pardon naturally demands repentance. The heart must turn to God, penitent and broken on account of sin, to obtain mercy. It must approach him as the prodigal son in the parable approached his injured father. The repentance which God requires involves a change in the spiritual affections of the soul, such as our Saviour described under the figure of a new birth. The repenting heart is a renovated and changed heart. And it is the view of Christ dying for us upon the cross, which wakens this repentance. The Holy Spirit uses the great facts of redemption to accomplish this spiritual change in man. Not only must a change exist in the affections of the mind, but confidence must be restored. The repenting sinner must confide in God as a loved friend.

He is required to do this when commanded to believe. The faith thus inspired is remedial. As God is in his own nature great and terrible, and is at such an infinite distance from the guilty that man could never look up to him without terror he has sent his Son to teach the sinner, by dying for him, that he may safely confide in him. This view of Christ's love wakens the sinner's confidence. He trusts in Christ, commits himself to Christ, takes hold of Christ's hand, and is by him led back to God, to trust in him also. Thus, through Jesus Christ, the sinner's confidence in God is restored; and Christ, through the power of his dying love, becomes the means of his spiritual recovery.

The Gospel requisitions of repentance and faith, therefore, when obeyed, bring the soul of the alienated and conflicting sinner into a unison with God, and waken in it love and confidence toward him; and it is thus that the Gospel provides for man's recovery, by restoring his alienated affections, and kindling love to God in the heart.

But those who overlook the fact of this

natural alienation, do not believe such a spiritual recovery to be necessary; nor do any of their religious systems make provision for such a recovery. They wholly neglect the heart, and only gloss over the life, esteeming the observance of outward morality to be all that is needed for salvation.

What you observe on this point, said my friend, is certainly accordant with reason; but I never before had such a view of the nature and efficacy of the Gospel. I am one of those who have been living in the Dark Alley and by the side of neighbors who hold indifferently either or all the errors you notice; for it never before entered my mind that the Gospel is such as you describe, because I never understood its first principles. I cannot but acknowledge that I feel interested in your exposition of it, even though it condemns the neglect with which I have hitherto treated it.

5. There is one other principle, I remarked, well worthy of your notice in this connection. It is, that, COMING FROM A KIND AND BENEVOLENT GOD, THE GOSPEL

NATURALLY EXTENDS ITS PROFFERS OF PARDON TO ALL WHO WILL ACCEPT THEM. That this is true of its plan of mercy, is clear from the divine testimonies. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," says the prophet, "come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat without money and without price." "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." Our Saviour said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

In these, and in innumerable other similar testimonies, God invites a guilty world

to return to him. He points out the way by which even publicans and harlots may come to him and be saved. Let us suppose that one of high station in life has murdered his benefactor and friend, and is in prison, condemned to die. Let the moralist, the unitarian, the universalist, and the infidel come and unfold to him their various systems, and what is there in them to interest his mind? What comfort can their instructions impart? They teach him to be moral; but he has already sinned, and how can he repair the evils of a long and vicious life by thinking that if life were prolonged, he would amend his sinful ways?

But, bring the Gospel of forgiveness through an atonement already made by Jesus Christ, home to his understanding and his heart. Tell him how God's own Son came from heaven on an errand of mercy, became incarnate, and offered up his own life on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for guilty and condemned man. Tell him how he once saved a dying thief. Tell him that "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all ac-

ception, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief;" and you touch a chord of interest and sympathy in the breast of this guilty and lost man, which may bring him to true repentance, and lead him to cry in earnestness at the Saviour's feet, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me." "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."

And is not such a Gospel as this glorious—glorious to God, and glorious in the blessings which it confers on sinful man? Can we wonder that Paul should exclaim in view of it, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ?" "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

My friend made no reply. He seemed lost in his own meditations, and I continued: There is no doubt of the efficacy of this Gospel. It has power to save; not those who live in the neglect of it; not those who will continue to reject it; but it is the power of

God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.

This Gospel is addressed to you. It is the remedy for sin, the very remedy which you, as a sinner, need. I invite you affectionately to consider its value to yourself, and to receive and rest by faith on the Saviour whom it reveals. You may confide in some delusion. You may receive fatal error as truth. But it will have no other effect than to leave you in your natural alienation from God, and ruined through a failure to escape from condemnation in the way opened before you in the Gospel. All the plans of human device can neither cure, justify, nor save you. Unless, turning to God in penitence, you experience his pardoning mercy, you cannot be saved. Your heart must be changed. Its deep foundations of selfishness must be torn up, and Christ reign in your affections as the object of your supreme love, or you cannot be saved. And it is the glory of the Gospel that it effects this wonderful change in the soul of man.

There was a blind man once, who heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by; and no sooner did he learn this, than he cried out, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." So earnestly did he cry, that those around him rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But how could he cease? Consequences of momentous interest to him depended on his engaging the attention of Jesus Christ, and he cried yet louder still, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." Then the Saviour commanded him to be called, and asked him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto you?" And he said, "Lord, that my eyes might be opened." And Jesus touched his eyes, and immediately he received sight. So may you, in your moral blindness, present yourself before Christ; so may you plead for mercy; so may you bring your burden of sorrow and of sin, and lay it at the Saviour's feet; and looking upon him by faith, you may hear him say, "Go thy way; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Chapter Ninth.

AS TO THE WAY IN WHICH THE GOSPEL OPERATES TO REMOVE THE MORAL BLINDNESS AND EFFECT THE SPIRITUAL RECOVERY OF MAN.

IF the natural state of man is one of alienation from God, and the Gospel is the remedy for this evil, it must produce effects corresponding to the nature of the disease. No scheme of religion can justly claim to be regarded as the Gospel, which does not make adequate provision for man's spiritual recovery; and any scheme professing to have come from heaven, which does not secure in him a change of his governing affection, and a reconciliation in heart to God, bears in itself the evidence of its falsehood. It is the glory of the Gospel that it is adapted to our spiritual necessities, and does for us all that

is required for our entire restoration to God. It kindles love to him in the alienated soul, and so encourages the growth of this love as to effect an entire change in the spiritual affections of the mind, conforming it to the Divine image.

They who fail to gain a clear and scriptural view of man's moral degeneracy, also fail to comprehend the nature of the Gospel. Many have no consistent and scriptural view of it on this very account. They are in the dark as to their natural character, and discern no necessity, therefore, for that repentance and faith which the Gospel enjoins as the means of salvation. If they had correct views on the subject of their own natural character, it would prepare the way for the light of truth to irradiate their minds. The consciousness of their need would cause them to open their eyes on the excellence of the Gospel, and the nature of its recovering grace.

I admit, said my friend, that my views of this subject are clearer than they have ever before been. It is evident that the Gospel

must provide means to overcome the supremely selfish affections of the sinner's mind and change them to love, or it will prove a failure; and also that man cannot be restored to holiness and bliss by any other agency than that which will spiritually renovate his heart, and bring him into a state of love to God, and of holy obedience. But how is this great work effected?

It is indeed clear, I replied, that the sinner's heart must be changed; and it is the object of the Gospel not only to teach the necessity of this change, but how it is produced. There are many forms of expression which directly or by implication teach this. This change is included in repentance, which is enjoined throughout the sacred Scriptures, and is made obligatory upon the whole apostate race. "God now commandeth all men every where to repent." "Except ye repent, said Christ, ye shall all likewise perish." "And that repentance and remission of sins might be preached." The same duty was equally inculcated under the old dispensation. "Let the wicked forsake his ways

and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and unto our God, and he will abundantly pardon." "Repent, turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

This duty is enjoined upon all men, in view of the fact that they are sinners. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." In coming into the world to save sinners, Jesus Christ prescribed repentance as the means of their forgiveness. It is therefore a duty obligatory on all men.

But repentance, in its own nature, includes a turning from sin to God, both in heart and life. It therefore involves the very change in the affections of the mind already described. No man can repent of the sin of loving himself supremely, and yet continue under the influence of this love; or the sin of not loving God, and yet continue not to love him. And as it is the great object of the Gospel to call men to repentance, and teach them how this repentance may be available to their salvation; so, it is its ob-

ject to provide for the change in the sinner's heart which is included in repentance, and fit him for spiritual enjoyment with God in heaven.

The same spiritual change is involved in the Gospel requisition of faith. The command of Jesus Christ is, "Believe;" "he that believeth shall be saved." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Faith is the confidence of the soul reposed in Jesus Christ as one supremely loved; and it involves a state of mind opposite to that in which supreme love of self reigns as the governing motive.

But how do you show, said my friend, that faith includes the spiritual change in man which you have described? I myself believe in Jesus Christ, but yet am conscious of no such change.

Very true, I replied. You may believe in him in various senses, and yet not have true faith. You may believe that there was such a person on earth as Jesus Christ, that he was a good man, that he came into the world to save sinners, and will save all who come to

him ; and yet, this faith may be only of the head, and not of the heart, and not that kind of faith which expresses the confidence of the soul reposed in him as one supremely loved, which only is true faith, and the substance of all true piety.

He who loves himself supremely, naturally distrusts the Son of God, as he does the Father ; and this distrust can give place to supreme confidence only through a radical change of heart. In requiring faith in Jesus Christ, the Gospel demands the renunciation of this spirit of distrust, and a new spirit of confidence to assume its place. And how can the soul repose by faith, or, in other words, commit itself, with all its interests, into the hands of one whom it distrusts ? It cannot. And yet faith is trusting in Christ as a Saviour supremely loved. The change from enmity to love, is therefore included as essential to the exercise of faith. He who believes in Christ turns to him in the spirit of true repentance, and loves and obeys him. Where faith reigns

in the soul, therefore, a new spiritual life has already commenced.

The same changed affections are also described by other language equally appropriate. Thus, when our Saviour says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," he conveys to us the fact that the spiritual change in the soul of man must be as great as it would be in his physical state, were he to be born into a new world. It is a change connected with the introduction of the soul into the spiritual kingdom of God; and this must involve a change in its supreme and governing motive, or its object of supreme affection.

But how, said my friend, does the Gospel produce this change in the heart of revolted man? How does it restore in his soul the principle of supreme love lost in the apostasy? Will you please illustrate this point, for my mind is utterly in the dark respecting it?

Before proceeding to comply with your request, I said, it is important to gain a distinct view of the point to be illustrated, and

how it is regarded in the sacred Scriptures. Do these, in fact, recognize a real distinction in men, grounded on a difference in their spiritual state? What do they testify on this point? Clearly, that there is such a distinction. They teach that there is a wide difference between those who love God, and those who do not; those who obey his laws, and those who disregard them; those who delight in God and love the duties of his religion, and those who practically say unto him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." That class of persons who love the duties of his religion, who not only in form, but in heart worship God, and who adopt his law as the rule of life, and aim to please him as the great end of their being, show that they are spiritually different from those who live to themselves only, and use the world as the instrument of their happiness, regardless of their Creator. This distinction is acknowledged throughout the sacred Scriptures, and is variously expressed. Thus we are taught that there is a wide moral difference between the

righteous and the wicked; they who serve God, and they who serve him not; the penitent and impenitent; the believing and the unbelieving; the wise and the foolish; the faithful and the unfaithful; the sheep and the goats; the wheat and the tares; the redeemed and the condemned; the saved and the lost; they that are in Christ, and they that are out of him; the carnal and the spiritual mind; the saint and the sinner. These expressions all point out the two great classes into which the human family is divided. The difference between them arises from their different characters as the friends or enemies of God; those who supremely love him, and those who love him not.

I admit the fact, said my friend, that the Bible makes this distinction, and appears to base it on a real difference in the state of the heart; and I understand you to account for this difference, by maintaining that supreme love to God is restored to the heart of one of these classes, in place of the supreme

love of self, which once reigned there. Am I correct in my conjecture?

You are: for you must perceive that the law demands love to God and to man; and the Gospel aims to restore this love to the alienated heart, as the first step to the acquisition of that perfect holiness in which consists man's entire restoration from the apostasy. Supreme love fills the soul on its conversion to God; perfect love is the crowning act of redemption, and is a state in which the soul is completely delivered from the power and curse of sin, and enters on its glorious and everlasting rest.

It is strange, said my friend, that I never before perceived this. Faith, repentance, a new heart, ever seemed to me to be an unmeaning jumble, which the clearest discernment could not penetrate; but now I think I begin to see them in a very different light, as provisions of the Gospel adapted to the necessities of ruined man.

Not so very strange, was my reply, if we consider in what way you have heretofore studied these truths. You would not now

have comprehended their nature and excellence, had we not commenced with the simple truth of human apostasy, in order to develop the Gospel as an adequate remedy for the evils thus introduced into the world. Most men strive to acquire a knowledge of the Gospel very much as an old school-mate once attempted to acquire arithmetic. He had never studied it before, but appeared to busy himself with his book and slate as if he were very studious, when the teacher happened to look over him, and was surprised to see him working at sums under the rule of proportion.

John, said he, what are you about?

I thought, said John, that I would begin here, with the class of my own age, and go through with them, and afterward finish up the first part of the book.

But, said the teacher, do you understand the ground rules, numeration, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division?

No, said John, I design to learn them afterward.

It is precisely so in respect to religion.

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Many begin in the midst of a complicated system, and, because they cannot understand it, pronounce the whole to be a jumble of inconsistencies; when, if they had begun with the simple elements of truth, and taken them in their natural order, they would have avoided the difficulties which now confuse them.

If you will keep in mind the great distinction pointed out in the moral state of mankind, you will be enabled to comprehend more readily the point to be illustrated, which is the way in which God through the Gospel produces a change in the supreme and governing motive of the mind, and in its object of supreme affection; thus introducing into the soul a holy principle whose tendency is to recover it from the apostasy and effect its entire restoration to God.

The first point at which the Gospel aims, in this work of moral renovation, is to awaken in the soul conviction of sin. No spiritual change can be effected in that heart which is disposed to justify itself, and to feel that it is already right with God. And it is

from not being conscious of their own spiritual degeneracy, that all the admonitions and calls to repentance, and invitations of mercy in the Gospel, produce so little impression on the great mass of the hearers of the word.

The first step to escape the evil of sin is to be sensible of that evil. One must feel that he is lost, or he will not endeavor to be saved. Not only must the fact of his moral ruin, but the just ground of his condemnation be distinctly recognized, that his endeavors to escape may receive a right direction.

The means which the Holy Spirit uses to convince of sin, are, to set forth to man the great facts of the apostasy, and to show him the spiritual state of his own heart through the precepts, examples, and requisitions of the sacred Scriptures revealed for this purpose. The Gospel not only sets up the law of God as holy and immutable in its nature, but illustrates its spirituality and extent in such a way as to show the sinner the nature of his departures from God. It

arrays the law before the guilty mind, and threatens its penalty against all who fail to escape from its condemning sentence, through the Saviour. It thus uses the law as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

That God is determined to maintain his righteous law, is evident from the teachings of the sacred Scriptures. If he could have cast it aside, Christ would not have suffered under it. He gave his only Son up to death to provide an atoning sacrifice, and to sustain the law as just, that he might confer a free forgiveness on all who trust in this Saviour. The law, as thus sustained, drives the sinner from all refuge in himself, and shows him the need of forgiveness, and of justification in another way than by his own works of righteousness. When it produces its appropriate effect, it leads one to despair of mercy on strictly legal principles. The law recognizes no mercy. The divine goodness establishing it, recognizes no such principle. The natural effect of law, therefore, on the disobedient is to deliver him over to the curse. The soul that sinneth, it shall die,

is the proclamation which it makes to the world.

When the Holy Spirit, through the law, acquaints the sinner with his moral ruin, he also shows him the justice of his condemnation. He arrays before him God the law-giver as infinitely holy, just, and good, and shows him that, in the sins of his past life, he has offended this good being, and deserves only to be cast away. It is the tendency of conviction thus to impress the mind with the sin of loving one's self supremely, and living only to one's self; and to make the sinner sensible of his lost condition.

But were this all, it would be insufficient. Man might know himself to be lost, and justly condemned for his sin; he might feel all the agonies of this conviction, and yet reach no other state than one of despair, were it not for other principles revealed in the Gospel by which the Holy Spirit lays hold of the affections of this despairing mind, and turns them into a new channel.

The law which is sustained as holy, just, and good, in its legitimate effect on the sin-

ner, would inevitably destroy him. But the Gospel teaches that Christ has borne its penalty for those who will come to him, and it proffers free forgiveness, for his sake, to all who will trust in him. Encouraged by the invitations of mercy in the Gospel, the sinner looks to Christ. And no sooner does he behold the Son of God dying for him, and learn the application of this sacrifice to his own spiritual deliverance, than the goodness thus displayed toward him melts his heart. He looks upon the sacrifice of the cross, and, while he gazes upon that wonderful scene, the tears start in his eyes and flow down his cheeks. The supreme love of self in the soul yields to the motives of heavenly benevolence presented to view in Christ. His heart is broken and changed; turning in repentance unto this Saviour, he gives himself away to him, and a new and holy affection rises into being in place of that which before held possession. He now feels that he loves Christ; that he loves him more than he loves himself. He loves him so much that he cheerfully commits his

soul and body, his property and life, and his immortal destiny all into his hands. This is supreme love. It rises toward Christ, and is superior to the love he has for any other object, or all other objects in the universe. He loves Christ supremely, and yields himself, with all his active powers, into subjection to him. The rebel is won; the distrustful enemy has become a confiding friend.

Thus changed in his affections toward Christ, the conflict is ended. The rebelling heart is reconciled to him; and the Saviour becomes the medium of transferring its affections to God. In loving the Son, who is divine, the sinner loves the Father also; for both have the same attributes and the same divinity. The Son having thus gained the confidence of the sinner by dying for him on the cross, as mediator, leads him back to God, and through the virtue of his own blood gains for him acceptance. In consequence of the sinner's faith in Christ, the curse is removed from him, having been transferred to Christ himself. Jesus Christ is thus said to have borne the punishment

of his sins, to have died for him; to have "redeemed him from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for him." The sinner thus, through faith, avails himself of the Saviour's sufferings and death, as the ground of his own deliverance, Christ, though innocent, having endured for him that punishment which the sinner himself deserved to experience. And in view of Christ as thus standing in the place of the sinner and dying for him, the sinner gives him his heart, as worthy of his confidence and supreme love.

Loving Christ, he comes into a new moral state, and into new relations. "Old things are passed away, all things are become new." He is born again. Reconciliation to God is thus effected. Supreme love to God is thus restored to his bosom. Distrust yields to faith, and the reign of sin to that of holiness.

The first effect of love is to bring the soul with all its affections, and the body with all its powers, into subordination to Christ. It thus kindles the spirit of obedience in place

of that of disobedience, which reigned before; and this bears the soul on in the path of holiness till it attains complete sanctification. Not that it here in this world attains it, for while the sinful body remains it continually tends to lead the soul astray. But the tendencies from this source are all removed by death. The body, purified by the grave, will be raised in the likeness of Christ, and the soul, sanctified through grace and reunited to the body, will then reach a state of perfect holiness and felicity. It will rise to a more blessed state than was lost through Adam, and will enjoy with the saints an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Here then, under the proper influences of grace, the body is dead because of sin. It tends to corruption. But the spirit is life because of righteousness. It attains life through Christ's justifying righteousness. It is thus that the influence of the Gospel is directed to recover lost man. Its direct power is on the heart to mould its affections into a new and holy state; and to restore in

it the spiritual image of God lost in the apostasy.

But what impression do the various opinions of those who treat the Gospel with neglect exert upon it? Not a softening influence, but the reverse. All those forms of error which have been noticed, which some claim to be the Gospel, have no other effect than to render men indifferent to the spiritual duties of religion, and harden them in unbelief. They have no power, either singly or combined, to transfer the heart with its affections over to God. It is the Gospel only which has this power, and it is evident, therefore, that these do not represent the Gospel, for they are powerless.

Chapter Tenth.

NATURAL BLINDNESS AS TO SPIRITUAL THINGS INDICATIVE
OF ONE'S SPIRITUAL STATE.

HERE my friend seemed puzzled what to advance next. At length he said, This is indeed light in a dark place, so far as I am concerned. Living in the Dark Alley which you have described, by the side of those as inconsiderate and erroneous as myself, I had no suspicion that I knew so little of my own heart. How did it happen, think you, that I never saw these things in this light before? Why has the Gospel always been so dark to me?

Paul answers your inquiry, I replied, where he says, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of

them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." The reason here assigned is founded in the natural state of the heart, as alienated from God; and although you may be enlightened in some respects into the nature of the Gospel, yet, even now, you know not what is love to God, nor can you ever know till you shall feel it. You are without the threshold of the spiritual kingdom of God, and cannot know what the true feelings of the Christian are till you shall enter in.

Why, said my friend, am I not excusable then for my ignorance?

Because, I replied, no man is excusable for the consequences of his own neglect, any more than for the sinful negligence itself. If you are without the spiritual kingdom of God, yet the door is open before you, and has ever been. You may come to Christ through faith, and thus learn what it is to love him. And the obligation rests on you to press away from the state of condem-

nation in which you are, into the way of eternal life through Christ.

You may think that the mystery in which religion veils itself, is an ample excuse for your neglecting it. What have I to do, you may ask, with a subject which is so unfathomable to my comprehension, and which, it is acknowledged, that the mightiest intellect is, of itself, unable to grasp? But you are not accustomed, in this summary way, to dismiss other subjects which make their appeal to your interest. If you were born blind, would you reject the offer of medical skill because you could not, in your blindness, comprehend the nature of vision? Or if the kingdom of God should descend from heaven, like the New Jerusalem, and it should be credibly attested as beautiful, and you should hear of its golden streets, its jewelled gates, its glorious illumination, and the bliss of its deathless inhabitants, would you refuse to enter it, when invited, because you could not, while without the gates, enjoy a full comprehension of its magnificence? Would not your unbelief be justly rebuked by the

invitation to come and see for yourself, and behold the place whose existence you are disposed to question?

What if you have not known, and are now unable to comprehend the spiritual emotions of the renovated heart; are you therefore excusable for neglecting to seek that heart? Religion is a mystery to you, because you have not experienced it; and you are incredulous respecting the Gospel, because you have never perceived its truth in the experience of its saving power on your own heart. No, you know nothing of all this. The spiritual world is all dark to you, and it is because you are without. You are blinded to it, because you are lost to it. It is the same to you as if there were no Gospel, for you do not avail yourself of it as the only means by which to enter the kingdom of God. It is hidden from you because you are lost.

But your living in a dark alley will not justify your neglect to enter the path of life to which you are invited, and to press on in the strait and narrow way to heaven. You need not live thus. You may emerge from

this darkness into the light. And it depends on the course you pursue whether you shall ever experience the power of recovering grace. On you the sacred Scriptures cast the responsibility. "If thou art wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." They hinge your salvation on your turning in true repentance unto God, believing in Jesus, and you cannot throw off the responsibility which this involves. You must meet it.

If you have made a discovery of your error, do not hesitate to abandon it. No man who prizes the friendship of God should ever be held, by pride of opinion, to a course of religious belief which he is conscious is wrong. It is the demand both of reason and of God, that you should at once abandon the errors of your life, and put yourself under the guidance of truth. There is a way out of the dark alley, and through which you may return to God from whom you have wandered. Will you not choose that way, and press on in that path, that you perish not in the darkness, and amid the delusion of fatal error?

Chapter Eleventh.

THE STATE OF MIND WHICH LEADS ONE TO NEGLECT THE
GOSPEL, AND TO FRAME EXCUSES FOR SO DOING.

AVERSION to the duties which God requires is the natural feeling of every mind not yet reconciled to him; and this it is which occasions the neglect of his plan of mercy, revealed through Jesus Christ. Our Saviour intimated this when he said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." The mind whose affections are preoccupied with the world, will not yield itself to God, because, in its moral feelings, it is averse to his holy supremacy. Yet it is not often that we discover one honest enough to avow this as the real difficulty. Men generally wish to cloak this aversion to God from the knowledge even of their own

minds; and they strive to do it by setting up some excuse for their disobedience, involving, to themselves, less responsibility. Hence the numerous errors in belief of those who live in neglect of the Gospel. These are only excuses urged in justification of their conduct. Their name is legion; and they often occupy the mind in such a way as to lead one to step from one position into another, as impelled by the truth; and, as the wheel turns round, to take other steps, till he presently finds himself in the same position he was in before, and prepared again to renew the process.

He who views the religious errors of this class of men in any other light than as excuses for disobedience, sadly mistakes their nature. If we should write down the various opinions expressed as reasons for treating the Gospel with neglect which daily fall from the lips of our fellow-men, we should soon find that we had collected a curious medley of contradictory and absurd propositions, in none of which could we discover the elements of truth. The human mind, in

its degeneracy, has its wit stimulated to avoid the truth, rather than to devise the easiest and best method for its acceptance. It pleases itself with the hope of being able to make out a vindication of its errors. It exerts itself in every possible way to free itself from its responsibilities to God, by establishing error in place of truth.

A man who is averse to a given course, will be stimulated to invent excuses in justification of his conduct in neglecting to pursue it. There is no bound to the versatility of human genius thus inspired. In the desire to invent reasons to excuse disobedience to God, we may discover the fountain of most of the religious errors which infest the world, and hinder the progress of truth.

No man would have ever seriously maintained the opinion that all mankind will finally be saved, had it not been to excuse his neglect of the Gospel. And most effectual is it to accomplish the desired end; for who that receives this opinion as truth, ever troubles himself further about religion, than merely to confirm himself in this error?

He studies the Bible for no other purpose. Here, in this opinion, centres all his religion. And it is a poor religion indeed. It exerts no influence upon the heart to reclaim it. It throws no restraint upon the life. It never brings one in repentance unto God, never kindles in him the desire of prayer, never prevents him from the commission of any sin which his heart covets. But it justifies him, he thinks, in his habitual neglect of the duties of spiritual religion. It teaches that he who neglects the Gospel is as safe and happy after death as he who obeys it; he who rejects Christ, as he who accepts him; thus showing that if the Gospel be true, Universalism must be false; and that it is an error invented by the arch enemy of the race to deceive man; a mere excuse for the wilful neglect with which multitudes treat the Gospel.

In its practical tendencies, Socinianism is the same; and so is infidelity. The belief of the moralist, fatalist, and nothingist, is of the same class. It is an invention of error designed for the justification of a neglect to

come to Christ. Errors the most numerous spring from this prolific source. Every man has his opinion to which he resorts for justification, when inquired of why he lives in neglect of the Gospel.

Of the same kind are numerous excuses ever on the lips of men. One offers the faults of Christians in justification of the neglect of religion; another his want of a favorable opportunity to give it his attention; another the views he entertains of his own inability, and the necessity of his remaining impenitent; another proffers his future intention in excuse for present disobedience. These are the several shields by which those who neglect religion aim to ward off the arrows of truth. The secret ground of these excuses is aversion of heart to the duties which God requires.

This is sufficient to account for all the excuses and errors which the inventive genius of man has ever wrought out in vindication of his neglect of duty. Why need we severally refute them? The demolition of one defence will only open the way for the in-

troductioꝛ of another. If we should fairly meet and expose the falsity of one excuse, it would not convert the heart; it would only lead one to adopt a new error, and more carefully justify himself in its belief. The human mind is so constituted as to seek, in its depravity, this method to repel conviction. It is the natural aversion of the heart to God which prompts the invention of such errors. No man would credit them for a moment, if he loved God. If the heart should be converted and cease its aversion to Jehovah, it would not be necessary to refute them; they would fall of themselves.

So changed in conversion does the mind become, as no longer to desire or seek an excuse for disobedience; and, consequently, the falsity of all such excuses becomes at once apparent. This shows that they have their origin in prejudice, not in reason; for when this is removed they vanish.

Why do you treat the Gospel with neglect? Is it not because you dislike the duties which it commands? If you loved God, you would also love the Gospel of his Son.

If you lived in obedience to him, you would also live in obedience to Jesus Christ. If you delighted in God, you would also delight in pleasing him. You would find your chief happiness in spiritual communion with your Father in heaven.

But, in none of these things are you conscious of finding pleasure, nor in God himself as a holy being. You more naturally turn to the world for your happiness, than to God. You love the world more than him. And this love of the world which is supreme, renders you averse to him. Choosing between these moral opposites, you select the world as the source of more pleasure to yourself than God; and because you do not love him, you strive to excuse and justify your neglect. Your choice is voluntary. Your neglect of the Gospel is voluntary. Your sacrifice of heaven to the world is voluntary.

When an intelligent mind capable of choosing selects a given course because he prefers it, he assumes the responsibility of the choice. This is the case of him who

neglects the Gospel. He may try to lay the blame on others; he may strive to inculcate God, his ministers, or his church in the blame; but it rests on himself only. It is his own aversion of heart to religion which is the occasion of his neglect; and where this neglect is, there is in the eye of God a wicked and rebellious heart.

If your heart were right toward him, this neglect would give place to holy devotion. You could not live in this neglect and yet be a converted man, a true Christian. It would be, in the nature of things, impossible. You could not live as a neglecter of religion and yet supremely love God.

Take all the excuses you have ever framed, all the errors on which you have attempted to justify your neglect, and lay them aside, for they are worthless. Lay them all aside and view the naked truth, that you must cease this neglect of heaven's mercy, and that speedily, or it will be withdrawn from you forever.

It is painful beyond endurance to a sensitive mind to reflect, that all the neglect of

the Gospel which exists around him, springs from a heart averse to God. What crowds are passing along the broad way that leadeth to destruction, without the shadow of an excuse for the manner in which they treat God, and the plan of his mercy published to the world! All, all are without excuse. And for what is this sacrifice of hope and heaven made? Ask the man of the world. Ask him who lives only to amass riches. Ask the votary of pleasure. Ask the disappointed and miserable, for what they choose to forego eternal happiness, everlasting joys?

O why do these neglect the Gospel? Why do they persist in the darkness of a depraved mind, when the glorious light of heaven streams into this darkness, but they will not behold it, will not come to the light? Eternal blessedness with God in heaven, is the fruit of obedience to the Gospel. Deliverance from sin and all its wretched consequences, in this world and the next, is included in this gift.

Do you ask, how you must possess yourself of it? You must come to Jesus Christ

in true penitence, and with humble faith, yielding yourself to him, and trusting in him alone for salvation. And if you thus come, you shall not be disappointed. Nothing else can save you. If you continue to neglect the Gospel, you must perish. You will fail of the blessings which it proffers. You will be left in the same state of guilt and ruin as you would have been had no plan of mercy ever been published to the world. You will continue to reject the Son of God who came to redeem you. And when you shall behold him upon the throne of judgment, nothing can save you from the overpowering conviction of having refused to listen to his invitation when he calls, and to yield to the influences of his blessed Spirit, which move with a reclaiming power upon the heart.

Chapter Twelfth.

TRUTH ILLUSTRATED BY EXAMPLE.

THERE was one, well known to me, who lived in the habitual neglect of religion. I do not remember having ever seen him within a church, though his family attended. Intemperate in early life, he had abandoned the use of intoxicating drink, and in a few years, by a course of industry, had amassed a considerable property. He seemed to regard his strict abstinence as religion enough for him, and trusted in it as a moral virtue, on which he might safely rest the hope of a blessed immortality.

My interest naturally became awakened in one who stood before the world so firm in his adherence to principle, amid the temptations to which he was exposed; and I often threw myself in his way, hoping, by cour-

teous treatment, to gain his confidence, that I might use the influence thus acquired over him, for his good. For a long time no favorable opportunity presented itself to converse freely with him; and when there occurred such an one, I found that he was obdurate. He appeared to have no settled religious opinions. Sometimes he inclined to a belief in universal salvation, and sometimes to a denial of the truth and inspiration of the sacred Scriptures. Whatever were his views on the subject of religion, he had, all his life, lived in the practical neglect of the Gospel. Nor did he ever put himself in the way of gaining scriptural information.

As often happens, when most busied in the world, he was taken ill with a severe cold, which settled down into the consumption, of which, after lingering more than a year, he died. Like others afflicted with a pulmonary disease, he was cheered with the hope of a speedy recovery, and would not believe himself to be in danger. I frequently visited him, and endeavored to lead his thoughts to the subject of religion. But

there were great obstacles in the way of making an impression on his mind. Extremely ignorant of his natural character as a sinner, he confided, apparently, in the rectitude of his past life, and especially in the good work of his reformation from the life of an inebriate. He was destitute of all proper acquaintance with the Gospel. He neither felt his need of mercy, nor perceived why the Gospel is necessary to the recovery of fallen man.

When the conversation was directed to any important practical truth, he would course off into some erroneous opinion; and it was very difficult to detain his attention long enough at any one point to meet and overthrow his error. It became necessary to commence with instruction in the simple elements of religious knowledge, and to lead his mind on from one point to another, attacking the strongholds of error, not directly, but by advancing the truth in respect to the peculiar error which was before his mind.

It was pleasing to observe, that as one

point after another of his subterfuges was torn away, and truth began to gain a lodgment in his intellect, how conviction seemed to follow. He grew more and more interested in the explanations of religion; and, at the same time, felt more uneasy lest he should presently have left no foundation of hope. He was willing to read, and I left with him two works, which he read attentively; one, designed to cure him of his skepticism, and the other, to lead him to Jesus Christ. These had a perceptible good effect.

It was curious to mark the honesty with which he would advance his opinions, and how strongly he would assert his claims to divine acceptance on account of his own morality; not, however, with a boastful spirit, but as one who felt that this was his rock. On one occasion, I pressed upon him the claims of God and the duties of spiritual religion. He replied, "Why, sir, I have never done any thing that is bad, except perhaps to swear a little;" and then he hesitated. His whole past life flashed before

his mind, and he finished the sentence in a remarkable manner:—"Except," said he, "to swear a little, to profane the holy Sabbath, and——to do every thing that is bad," he added, as if one sin had deliberately forced itself upon his mind after another, till he found it useless to strive to justify himself, and finally acknowledged his whole life to have been sinful. He saw that he had lived in habitual disobedience to God. This confident hope founded on his own goodness, had arisen from ignorance of his true character, and it was now severely shaken. When the divine law in its spirituality and power was applied to his conscience, and he saw how great had been his defection from God, he could say with Paul, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died."

From this period he became deeply in earnest to secure his own salvation. It was easy to lead his thoughts to Christ, and a pleasure to impart instruction. At times, he seemed to have found the Saviour; but his

mind was not fully at rest. During his extreme anxiety for himself, on one occasion, when I led his devotions in prayer, he seemed to make a full and unreserved surrender of himself, by faith, to God.

Returning after a temporary absence, I found him in the enjoyment of a sweet peace, and trusting with implicit faith in the Saviour. The most searching inquiries led me to feel that he had experienced a great and a joyful change in his spiritual affections. But I wished to deal with him faithfully, and pointed out the danger of being influenced by fear, to indulge a false hope, as it often happens, in view of approaching death.

I know it, he said, but fear did not influence me; I had no fear. But, said he, raising both his hands toward heaven, as he lay upon his bed, "when I thought of the love of God, who gave his own Son to die upon the cross, for such a poor, miserable sinner as I am, it broke my heart. How could I help loving such a God?" And, while the tears streamed down his cheeks, he said,

“O how wonderful has been God’s love and mercy to me, the chief of sinners!”

One thing seemed to trouble him; it was the neglect with which he had treated the sanctuary. He longed to be able to go there, to profess before the world the Saviour he had found. “I wish you to say to my companions and friends,” said he, “that I die trusting in Jesus Christ alone, and have no hope of salvation but through his atoning blood.” This was several weeks before he died, and when his mind was clear and his understanding sound, as it continued to be while life lasted. He maintained the same peaceful and happy frame, perfectly resigned to the will of God, till his spirit took its departure. Blessed Gospel, which thus brings to the bed of the dying the joyful hope of religion! most worthy is it of all acceptation.

This example shows in what profound ignorance of his own natural character a man may live all his days, and never suspect that in consequence of his neglect of the Gospel, he is in danger of being lost.

Such an one feels no consciousness of danger, but ever keeps before his mind a vain and illusive hope that all will be well with him at last. Not that this hope has any scriptural foundation, for it springs only from self-love; and he is so destitute of knowledge as to his own need of salvation, and of the plan of mercy revealed in the Gospel, as to pass on in life without giving himself any concern as to its termination.

Thousands live thus, indulging this self-confident hope, and destitute of a knowledge of their danger. They neglect religion, because they have no relish for its duties, and feel not its need. The discovery may never, in this world, be made, that the course which they pursue is fatal to their eternal happiness. But the time will come, when conviction will flash on their minds, and then, perhaps, it will be too late to remedy their fatal error. Hence the earnestness with which the Gospel addresses every man, saying, "Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." This appeal is addressed to you. Will you not

give heed to it? Will you not earnestly seek God, and give no rest to your endeavors till you feel in your soul the assurance of his mercy, the joys of pardoned sin?

You remember the incident related of the old man who trusted in error, and died comfortless. "I fear," said he, "I know not what. I fear lest, after all, I may be mistaken." What a dreadful position this for one at the close of life! to stand, as it were, upon the threshold of eternity, trembling lest his hope should not prove well-founded! How different his state of mind from that of the true Christian!

Often have I stood by the death-bed of those who loved the Saviour, and heard from their lips the language of humble faith; expressions more confiding and joyful, as awakened by a view of Christ, than any to which the ears of man ever listened. An instance of this kind now rises in remembrance; it is the case of an aged pilgrim about to die, who felt that he was going home. Long had he struggled with the temptations and trials of the world, and his race was almost run.

I said to him, My friend, on what do you ground your hope of happiness hereafter?

On Christ, my precious Saviour, who died for me, was his reply.

But may you not be deceived, I asked, and trust only in a delusion?

So far as the ability and willingness of Christ to save me are concerned, he said, I cannot be deceived; for it is written in his word, that "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." And I am the chief of sinners; but "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he can keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Does the thought, said I, afford you comfort?

Yes, he replied; what comfort can be greater to a poor sinner, like myself, about to die, than to feel that Christ is with me, and that when I depart hence, it will be into his presence in glory? O, he is a precious Saviour. "Lord Jesus, into thy hands

I commit my spirit." And the old man departed to his long home, triumphing in the mercy of God as manifested toward him through Jesus Christ. Happy man! glorious, everlasting rest! blessed portion of all who, through the Gospel, are recovered from sin and its dreadful miseries, and made eternally happy with God in his celestial mansions!

Chapter Thirteenth.

THE OFFERED FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST, THE INFLUENTIAL
MOTIVE TO INSPIRE A RETURN TO GOD.

WE are smitten with wonder to behold the heavens opened and the Son of God laying aside his crown and descending to earth, to perform those offices of humanity and kindness for man, which are scorned by the proud and unfeeling of our race. The object of his mission was to save. "I am come," he says, "to seek and to save them that are lost." None are so vile that they may not come to him; none so despairing that they may not hope, through his grace, for acceptance. "Him that cometh unto me," he says, "I will in no wise cast out." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Having given his own life for sinners, he freely offers mercy to all who will accept of

it on the terms which he proposes. There is no distinction made in this respect between a king and a beggar, the master and his slave. Christ is as willing to save the poor as he is the rich, the ignorant as the learned. They must all enter through the same door, sit at the same table, be clad in the same robes of righteousness, and be indebted for pardon to the same sovereign grace.

The plan of mercy by which he saves is not by lowering down the standard of moral excellence to include the guilty children of the apostasy while in their sins, but by raising them up from their degradation to the character which they should possess, and from which they have fallen, and conferring upon them the privileges of the children of God. This is mercy, indeed! and it is the manifestation, on his part, of such exalted compassion, such kind regard for the children of misfortune and crime, which wins their hearts.

It is a lesson of practical wisdom which we are slow to learn, that much of what

passes for friendship, in this world, is but mere pretence. Smiles are often assumed to conceal the real sentiments and professions made, which, on being tested, prove to be insincere. Mutual interest constitutes the bond of society, and is the tie of most of its apparent friendships. Few are those friends who stand the test of adversity, and fewer still are they who abide faithful when adversity is embittered by the loss of character. When this is gone, the last link which binds man to society is severed, and he is cast forth from its bosom as the dead are cast into the darkness and forgetfulness of the tomb. Who will restore the fallen to the embraces of friends, or interest himself in the happiness of the degraded and lost? Who will take them by the hand, lead them back into the path of virtue, and administer to them the consolations which are adapted to confer peace on a penitent and broken heart? Not one.

But it is the object of Christ's mission to earth to save this class of men; those who have sinned against God and their own

souls, and are morally degraded and unclean. This characteristic of his mission is distinctly presented to view in all those testimonies of his word which speak of the design of his advent. His kindness and compassion are beautifully delineated by the Prophet, when he says, "A bruised reed will he not break; and smoking flax will he not quench." What is more frail than a bruised reed, which can hardly sustain itself, which trembles when loaded with the dew, and which the softest zephyr prostrates; fit emblem of man? Or what is more easily extinguished than the flame of a dying taper? But we are told that Christ will so regard the humble who trust in him, as to extend to them every care, and every suitable encouragement which they require. He will support the aged and infirm, and gently take by the hand the little child, and lead it on the way, as a kind shepherd cares for the tender lambs.

Nothing can exceed his kindness to the wretched and miserable of our race; and his offered friendship is the great and influen-

tial motive which the Gospel uses to reach and change the heart of rebel man. It is the means by which the Holy Spirit reclaims and saves. The lost in sin beholds in Christ one who feels a deep interest in his welfare, and is desirous to restore him to happiness. And this truth, more than any other which the Bible contains, interests and affects his heart. The law may utter its thunders, Sinai may flash and groan under the display of Almighty power, threatening punishment to the wicked; but it is the love of Christ beaming from the cross, which melts and subdues the heart. The threatened punishment may excite alarm, and waken a sense of danger, leading one to feel that he must escape the ruin which impends over him; but it is mercy which attracts him, and love displayed in the death of Christ for so guilty a wretch as he, which breaks his heart, and causes the tears of penitence to flow down his cheeks.

Here is the source of the reclaiming power of the Gospel. The view of Christ's wonderful love in dying for the sinner, is the

means to awaken confidence in this Saviour, and inspire in him trust. "Behold," says Jesus to the distrustful, "my hands and my side. See where the cruel nails tore my flesh, and the soldier's spear opened its passage to my heart. I suffer these agonies for you, to make atonement for your sin, to save your guilty soul. And can you not confide in me? Will you not believe in the sincerity of my offers to save you? Can you withhold from me your heart?" Who can withstand such an appeal? What heart can remain obdurate in view of such love?

Every thing may seem to you dark in life. You may feel yourself poor, deserted, and friendless. You see that the world must soon fail you, and where to go for happiness you know not. Lift up your eyes, my friend, to the glorious Redeemer, who proffers you his friendship on the most honorable and the kindest terms. All that he requires of you is, to turn to him in true repentance, and to accept him by faith as your Saviour. The most exalted and glorious being in the universe offers to become your friend; to raise

you out of the gloom and despondency which sin occasions, to set before you a noble object for which to live, and make you eternally happy in its pursuit. And will you treat his mercy with neglect? Will you scorn his love? Knowing his true excellence, and what he has done and suffered for your salvation, can you continue to treat him as you have hitherto done, and to turn away from him, contemning his Gospel?

Do not act so unwisely, so wickedly. Do not place yourself in such a posture of ingratitude and rebellion, as will lead all who love God, in the great day of Judgment, to feel, that in the sentence "Depart from me," you receive only your just desert; and that the Lord of heaven could not be holy, and just, and good, and yet not inflict upon you the dreadful punishment of those who will not come unto him that they may have life.

Chapter Fourteenth.

THE URGENCY OF THE GOSPEL CALL.

I DISCOVER around me multitudes of men living in the neglect of religion, and unwilling to come to its light. Busied with the world, deluded by error, and ignorant that they are, in heart, opposed to God, they successively disappear from the stage of life, and often very unexpectedly. In view of this, the thought suggests itself, whether you have ever understood your true position under the divine government, or the nature of that Gospel given to reclaim and save you.

You may think that you ought not to be included with the wicked in their condemnation, because of your many estimable qualities. Paul, before he was converted, thought the same of himself. "I was alive," he said, "without the law once." No man

can ever hope to be more moral than he was, or more religious, after his way; no man ever preserved a more unblemished deportment, or stood a fairer chance of acceptance with God on account of his own righteousness. "But when the commandment came," he said, "sin revived and I died." When he came to perceive the motives by which he had been governed, through the application of the law in its spirituality and power to his heart, he relinquished all hope of heaven. He felt the agonies of conviction. He saw that he had offended a holy God, and had exposed himself to his infinite displeasure. Then he cried to him for mercy, penitently turned from all his transgressions, and trusted for the remission of his sin in the Saviour whom he had despised.

You may have accustomed yourself to indulge false views of your own character; but of what avail will it be thus to delude yourself, and to build up a hope on the sand, which the storm will sweep away? Conscious of your unfitness to meet God, and to be

happy with him in heaven, you cannot but perceive that without a different state of heart from what you now possess, you can never behold his face in peace. Be not deceived on this point. You must feel differently ; your affection must be changed, and you must love God, or you cannot find in him your happiness.

You may strive to forget the peril of your position ; but, as alienated from him in your affections, you are lost. All the righteousness of the church on earth, all the good works ever performed by those who have lived and died in its bosom, if they could be transferred to your account, could not save you ; much less can any righteousness to which you can lay claim, or of which you may fancy yourself to be possessed. Do not here deceive yourself. Error, however sincerely believed, will not help you. The universalist, free-thinker, moralist, fatalist, and nothingist, have nothing in their several creeds to meet the necessities of your case, and to deliver you from your danger. They may hide from your view the precipice be-

fore you, but they cannot prevent your fall.

It is your heart, your heart which is in error. Your heart is turned away from God. It is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and you know it not. It is not that it is sincere, and your actions only wrong, but your heart and life are both in error. The governing motive of all your conduct is wrong. You love yourself supremely, and not God. You are trusting in fatal errors which a faithful study of the Bible might easily correct. The obscurity which rests upon your mind as to the plan of mercy revealed in the Gospel, is self-created. It will vanish before the beams of that glory which shall shine in the face of Jesus Christ, when he shall come to judge the world. But it will then be too late to remedy your fatal course. Better is it now to come to the light, that you may be guided by it to the everlasting rest.

Never can you be happy with God in heaven without a heart to love him. Never can you enter the celestial mansion where

he dwells. Where have gone the multitudes who have lived and died without repentance? Where, the myriads who have been deluded through fatal error? Can the man who neglects religion, and lives to the world only, enter heaven at death? It is impossible. We might as readily believe that Jehovah could forsake his throne.

Be assured that the Gospel is no human device. It is no inert and useless revelation. It has been given for a wise and good end. It is designed to recover to God the alienated affections of the heart. You know whether it has produced this effect on you. If it have not, there is a reason for it, and that reason is discoverable in yourself. It is because you have never come to the light, nor accepted and rested by faith on Jesus Christ. And you have never come to the Saviour because you have never felt your spiritual need of him. You have neglected the Gospel because you have been in the dark as to your moral ruin, and your need of it. Never will you benefit or save yourself, by refusing to come to the light. Neg-

lect will only harden you the more. Error will complete the work of your ruin. But if you come to Jesus Christ in the way pointed out in the Gospel, all your ignorance will vanish, your darkness will be dispelled, and you will find Christ to be just such a Saviour as you need.

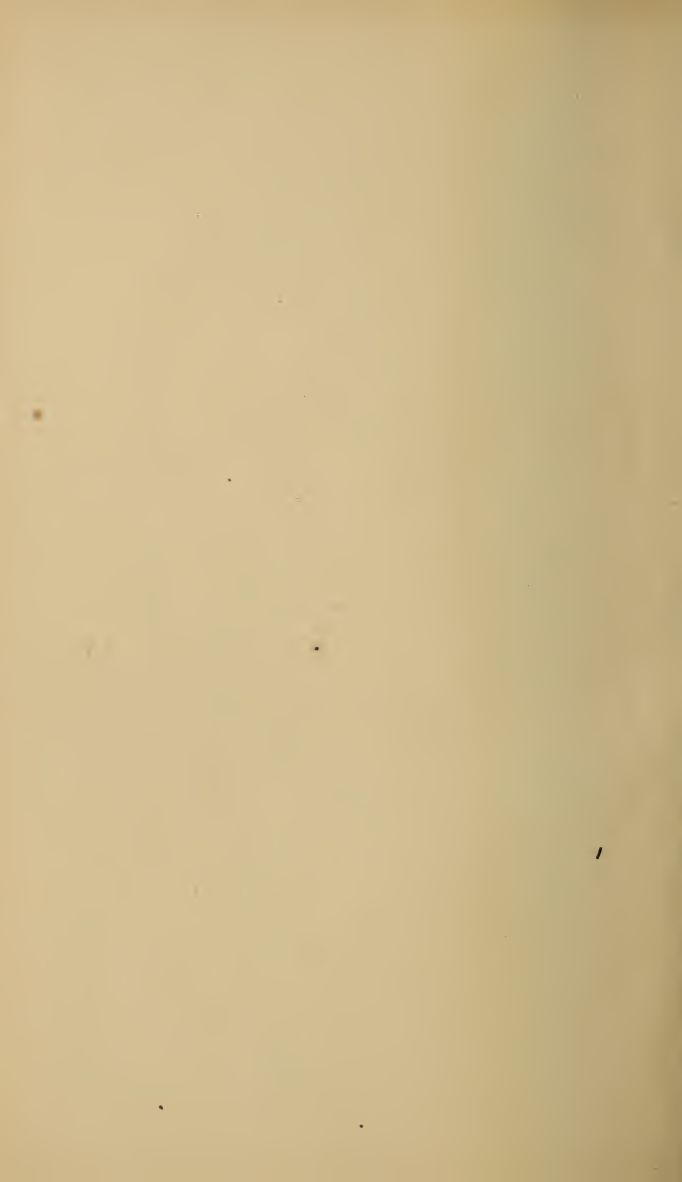
Is it not due to yourself thus to provide for your own happiness? Is it not due to Christ that you should treat him according to his true worth, and receive with gratitude the mercy which he proffers? Motives of infinite weight press you no longer to delay. How vast those motives are, and how far-reaching and influential, eternity only can disclose.

Turn not away from this kind endeavor to win you to Christ. What other motive could have prompted it but a desire for your happiness? Visions of worldly pleasure may dance before you, but happy you can never be, while destitute of the friendship and love of Christ. You are in his world, and under his wise and holy government; and you must be happy with him as

a sinner redeemed and saved by his grace, or be excluded from his presence forever as a neglecter of the Gospel. You are to choose for yourself which of these results shall be your joyful or bitter portion. On you rests the responsibility.

Reader, I leave you here, and implore the Father of Mercies to enlighten, impress, and guide you, so that you may escape from sin's destructive path, into the way that leadeth unto life, and may attain, through Jesus Christ, everlasting felicity and glory. Blessed are all they whom the Gospel thus reclaims from their wandering, and restores to holiness and bliss!







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