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## Lights and Shadows of Spiritual life

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### Chapter 1.

#### CHRIST, The Nature and Source of Spiritual Life

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me."—Gal. 2:20.

In a treatise designed to illustrate the moral phenomena of Spiritual Life—the *lights* and *shadows* which pencil its chequered history, it is essential that, in the outset, we scripturally and distinctly define its *nature* and indicate its *source*. On this vital subject it must not be concealed that opinions are extant which, when measured by the standard of God's Word, by which alone all theological teachings must be tested—will be found diametrically antagonistic to its teaching, and fatally perilous to those who receive them. In the creed to which we have referred, the idea is advanced—imported, doubtless, from the German school of thought, and endorsed with the name of one of its most learned divines—that Christianity is life derived from the sinless nature of Christ, as the 'ideal of humanity' and communicated solely by the authority and agency of the Church.

A more unscriptural and subtle theory—one more destructive of the true idea of spiritual life, and fatal to the eternal interests of those who adopt it, could not possibly be conceived. A spiritual and thoughtful mind will at one glance detect its fallacy and danger. The fact appears on the surface that it involves,

as it is intended that it should involve, a total denial of the Deity and Atonement of Christ; while it equally includes a daring negation of the Office and Power of the Holy Spirit as the Divine Communicator of spiritual life, by whom alone the soul, "dead in trespasses and in sins," becomes truly and emphatically a "living soul."

It is a solemn enquiry how far the conception and reception of this heretical theory comprehends a real belief in the Bible as true, and in the religion of Christ as divine. If this be the accepted idea of spiritual life, and nothing more, it is difficult charitably to believe that those who hold it are really and experimentally, partakers of this divine blessing—are, in reality, "quickenened with Christ."

Intellectually and theoretically they may accept the Bible to a certain degree as true; guarding their unbelief by the admission that, if not wholly inspired, there is at least inspiration in it; and that thus, par excellence, it is the most wonderful volume existent, as a book of history and philosophy, of poetry and ethics! As a Book of history and philosophy, of poetry and ethics, it is the most wonderful volume existent; *but is it nothing more?* Alas! what multitudes there are the fruitful offspring of this age of *broad theory* and *speculative thought* who thus accept the Bible as a text-book only without the slightest knowledge or profound conviction of its being wholly and only the Word of God: whose great revealed truth is, "Christ our life."

Enamored by the casket, they see not the Divine jewel it contains; admiring the frame, they are oblivious of the marvellous Picture it encases; fascinated, as we have remarked, with the Bible as a book profoundly philosophical, sublimely poetical, and divinely ethical; they are spiritually and wilfully blind to HIM to whom the Scriptures testify as the "light and the life of men;" who has emphatically declared—"I am the Way, the Truth, and the LIFE."

It is with SPIRITUAL LIFE, then, that we are now concerned. It will be acknowledged that *life* in its every form is a marvellous and a beautiful thing. There is, in reality, no place where life is not; there never was a time when life was not; and there never will be a period when life will cease to be. But, passing by all other forms of existence, our thoughts are now concentrated upon the divinest, most sublime, and holiest of all life—the life of God in the soul of man.

It is to this life the Apostle refers in the remarkable words which we now

attempt to expound: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." An important truth meets us in the outset—the believer's crucifixion with Christ. "I am crucified with Christ." The crucifixion of Christ had a twofold object—His *personal* crucifixion for sin, and our *spiritual* crucifixion to sin. It is in this latter sense we are to interpret the language of the Apostle.

Doubtless, the death of Christ, as a substitutionary offering for their sins, constituted the death of the *power* and *dominion* of sin in the regenerate. There could not possibly have been the breaking the scepter, and the overthrow of the despotism of sin in the soul, had not Christ "condemned sin in the flesh" when, impaled upon the cross, He exclaimed, "It is finished!" Crucified for them, all believers clearly recognize the truth that, through the sacrifice of Christ, they are delivered from the *penal* consequences of sin, and are, consequently, fully and forever saved. Resting simply by faith in Christ, they reach the happy experience of peace with God through Him who "made peace by the blood of His cross," and thus can joyfully exclaim, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Oh what a vital and blessed truth is this! It is the brightest light in the picture of the Christian's spiritual life. Indeed, there had been no light but for this, the *source* from where all other gleams of brightness flow. *Every spring of blessing, every rill of joy, every ray of hope which composes the Christian life, has its primal cause in the cross of Christ.* The Fountain that was there—opened the satisfaction that was there offered—the victory that was there achieved; laid the basis of that stupendous superstructure of salvation which but awaits the crowning of the edifice—to wit, "the redemption of the body," and its reunion with the redeemed soul, at the "glorious appearing of the great God our Savior."

But, not the least result of Christ's crucifixion for sin is the believer's crucifixion to sin—in other words, the *gradual*, and, when death releases him, the *entire* overthrow of sin's power and dominion in the regenerate soul. *Christ crucified for us*, is not the same thing as *our being crucified with Christ*. The one aspect of the cross puts away what we have done (our sins)—the other puts away what we are. The one is the crucifixion of *sin*—the other, the crucifixion of *self*; the one is the death of what I was—the other, the death of what I am.

**By the substitutionary death of Christ, in virtue of our mystical union with Him, we died to the law, as a means of justification—"Through the law, I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God;" and we also died to sin as an accusing and condemning element—"God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh."**

**Oh how faintly we apprehend this vital and glorious truth of SUBSTITUTION! It is the very soul and marrow of the gospel. All that Christ did was in the name, and on the account of, His Church; and in virtue of its oneness with Him, its Head, believers are mystically crucified with Christ, and are buried with Christ, and are risen with Christ, and are ascended with Christ, and are seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father in the heavenlies. We have nothing, then, to do with the putting away of sins which eighteen hundred years ago were arraigned and tried, sentenced and condemned, by our Substitute and Surety on the cross. What we have now to do with sin is *its daily mortification and crucifixion in the body*, that we should live no longer unto sin, or to ourselves, but as believers in Christ, to God, even "as those that are alive from the dead."**

**This introduces the second clause of the passage—the spiritual life of the believer, "Nevertheless I live." The Christian's is a paradoxical life; and no feature so strikingly and truly proves the dual, or the twofold, nature of the regenerate, as this. He is composed of opposites as wide apart as the poles asunder. No marvel that he is a wonder to others, and a yet greater wonder to himself! "I am," says David, "a wonder unto many." When he is weak, then is he strong; and when he dies, dies by the lingering death of a moral crucifixion—then, and only then, can he exclaim, "I live!"**

**It is an impressive declaration—not less true than solemn—which we pronounce in the exquisitely beautiful burial service, "In the midst of life we are in death." But Christianity reverses this sad sentiment, and in exultant language affirms of the believer in Jesus—"In the midst of death we are in life." In words more inspired and apostolic—"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." Such may be the declaration of every believer in Christ "I live."**

**He is the subject of new and spiritual life—not born with him *naturally*, nor communicated to him *humanly*, but is the result of a new birth, and is imparted by the Holy Spirit. "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,**

**nor of the will of man, but of God. "**

**The condition, of which this new life is the reverse, is one of the most difficult truths to bring home to the moral conscience of the *unregenerate* mind. And why? Simply because he is spiritually dead. No reasoning, no persuasion, no appeal will convince a corpse that it is a corpse. Neither can you convince an unregenerate soul, spiritually lifeless, "dead in trespasses and sins" that, before it becomes an heir of glory, it must become a subject of grace. We have to deal with death in the mind, death in the affections, death in the will, in a word, with death in the whole being. The moral sentence under which the whole human race rests is the original one pronounced upon our first parent—"In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." In the Hebrew, "in dying, you shall die the death."**

**Addressing the converted Ephesians, the Apostle, describing their present renewed state, forcibly reminds them of their former condition "You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." This is no figure of speech, no hyperbole, but the announcement of an indisputable and most awful fact. *Oh, it is a solemn reflection how far you may go in a Christian profession, in pious duties, and in religious forms; how orthodox may be your creed, and punctilious your ritual, and yet all the while remain in the rigor of spiritual death.* To you may be addressed the solemn reproach of the Church in Sardis—"I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead."**

**But every true believer is a quickened soul, and with the Apostle, in the words under consideration, can exclaim, "I live!" He is in possession of another, a new and spiritual life; and to some of the features of this spiritual life let us now proceed to address ourselves. The first one we mention is, the moral death which it involves. It is a life unto death, and yet a life unto life!—the germ and first-fruits of the life that is eternal. It would seem to be a life engrafted upon death. Thus the Apostle expresses it: "You are *dead* and your life is hid with Christ in God." "I through the law am *dead* to the law, that I might live unto God." "I am *crucified* with Christ; nevertheless I live." In what sense are we to understand this apparently contradictory language of the Apostle?**

**Clearly the *moral death* to which he refers, as a consequence of spiritual life, is the believer's death to the law as a covenant of works, as an instrument of life, and as a condemning power; his death also to sin as no longer ruling and**

reigning, though still dwelling and conflicting, in the living soul. This spiritual life, too, involves death to the slavery of the flesh, to the power of the world, and to the supremacy of Satan. In all this, beloved, you are dead, if the life of God pulsates in your quickened soul. *The spiritual death that once held you as its victim has no more dominion over you.* You are "through the law *dead* to the law, that you might live unto God." And a new and divine nature having been imparted, "sin shall no more have dominion over you;" for "you are *dead*, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Another feature of this life is, its divine nature and supernatural origin. It is *above* Nature (supernatural). 'Human nature' may counterfeit, but cannot imitate it. That there may be *counterfeits of spiritual life*, God's word makes it evident. *Simon Magus* believed, and yet was "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." *Judas* repented, yet "went out and hanged himself." *Herod* sent for John and heard the word from his lips gladly, but was eaten by worms. Oh, yes! Nature can go far in its forgeries of God's superscription, its counterfeits of the Spirit's work, and yet be Nature still.

'Human nature' prompts not the anxious question, "What must I do to be saved?" 'Human nature' inspires not the penitential prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" 'Human nature' wrings not the agonizing cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" 'Human nature' awakens not the sweet confession, "Lord, you know that I love you!" 'Human nature' can go so far, but no farther.

Convinced of its impotence and defeat, it retires baffled and discomfited from the vain attempt successfully to imitate God's own work of grace in the soul of man; and so it becomes an unwitting and unwilling witness to the truth, that there is a *genuine supernatural life* in the regenerate, which no spurious, galvanized religion can counterfeit—of which God the Father is the Source, God the Son the Author, and God the Holy Spirit the Conveyancer; and of which all spiritually-quickened believers are, through sovereign grace, the happy subjects.

How solemn is the personal question which this statement forces upon the thoughtful mind—"Am I truly born again? is my religion a reality? is the spiritual life I profess the divine breathing of God in my soul? O you 'Second Adam!' you who are a 'quickening Spirit!' decide this solemn question, and cause me to know that, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me! Lord, when you come in your glory, shall I be found but as 'reprobate silver;' grasping the

burnished lamp of an empty profession, destitute of converting grace in my soul, having a name to live while yet dead? Search me, O Lord, and try me heart; examine me, and root out all that is false and spurious and dead, and make me a true temple of God through the Spirit!"

This conducts us to a most vital and important view of spiritual life—the indwelling of Christ in the soul. "Christ dwells in me." The spiritual life is Christ. It is not the believer that lives, but Christ living in the believer—"Christ, who is our life." "I have come that you might have life." "Christ in you the hope of glory." "I in them, and You in Me." Such are the terms which set forth this stupendous truth—the indwelling of Him who is essential life, in the quickened soul of the regenerate.

What a vivifying, *sanctifying* truth is this! Did we but live in the constant realization of an indwelling Savior, a reigning Sovereign, a loving Friend, what manner of people would we be in all holy conversation and godliness! How slow would we be to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom Christ dwells in us, ever remembering that our bodies are the temples of God through the Spirit.

The indwelling of Christ in the regenerate soul is not less *comforting* than sanctifying. He dwells in the believer. It is His permanent residence, never to forsake it. He dwells there to watch His own vineyard night and day, lest any hurt it; to upbuild His kingdom in the soul; to subjugate to the scepter of His grace its corruptions and infirmities, the affections of the heart, the faculties of the mind, and the passions of the soul; in a word, Jesus dwells in the renewed heart as its consolation and hope; stopping the proud waves of sorrow which else might overwhelm it; illumining and gladdening it with the joys, the hopes, the sunlight of heaven.

Thus, it is a mutual indwelling of Christ and the believer. The believer dwells in Christ, his life hid with Christ in God; and by His Spirit, Christ dwells in the believer, his fount of consolation and his hope of glory. Blessed Jesus! make my body Your residence, my heart Your throne, my whole being Your sacred temple!

"As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,  
Such is a dying Christ to me;  
And while He makes my soul His guest,  
My bosom, Lord, shall be your rest."

Another and most instructive characteristic of this spiritual life is, the crucifixion of self in us which it involves. This is, perhaps, one of the strongest and most convincing evidences of its reality and growth. "I live; yet not I." Here was *an entire abnegation of self* in the Apostle, and this grace constitutes the first round in the believer's ascent in this divine life. *Self is the first citadel of the soul against which grace directs its battery. Until this is successfully besieged, there is no taking of "the town of Mansoul." Self-righteousness, self-trust, self-glorifying, must yield to the humbling, emptying power of the Spirit. Self must be mortally wounded before Christ lives in us. The two sovereigns cannot reign at the same time and upon the same throne. Self-righteousness, self-glorifying, self-seeking, must fall when Christ enters triumphantly to set up His kingdom, to erect His throne, and to subjugate all the powers and faculties of the soul to His own holy and gracious supremacy.*

"I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." And so should every believer respond! "I live to God—I labor for man—I win souls to Christ—I give my wealth—I devote my time—I consecrate my gifts—I mortify the flesh—I vanquish Satan—I overcome the world *yet, not I, but Christ that lives in me!* Though I be nothing in myself, yet, Christ *in* me, and Christ *with* me, and Christ *strengthening* me, I can do all things."

Oh what vigilance it demands, lest this wretched self in us obtain a partial, or even a momentary, ascendancy! The two principles—self and grace—are in deadly antagonism the one to the other in the regenerate. In proportion as Christ lives in us, *self dies*. It is recorded that, "there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker."

And thus it is with the principle of self and the principle of grace in the believer; in other words, the old and the new nature in the regenerate. Between these two kingdoms—"the house of Saul" representing the old nature, "the house of David" the new nature—there is a perpetual and long war; but, as Christ increases in us, as we grow in a knowledge of Christ, and are more filled with Christ, and more closely assimilated to Christ—the new man will grow stronger and stronger, and the old man will grow weaker and weaker, until it dies.

And the instant that the work of sanctification is complete—for it is a *progressive* work, and is destined to completion—that instant the believer will

hear the Lord's words—"Come up hither," and he will ascend to that pure and blissful world of which it is said, "And there shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination;" for all are washed in the blood and are robed with the righteousness of the Lamb. Oh blissful life! Oh glorious hope! The thought that I shall before long be freed from all sin, and be emancipated from the body of death, thrills soul with "a joy unspeakable and full of glory."

That very thrill convinces me that I am the subject of a life that is eternal, that I possess a nature containing the *germ* of perfect holiness, and that before long, beneath a warmer sun and a brighter sky, the germ will reach its full perfection, and I shall be—not what I now am, a sickly, drooping plant of righteousness—but a full-blown, perfect flower of holiness, blooming in deathless beauty in the Paradise of Heaven!

Such is that spiritual life the variations of which these pages propose to delineate. Oh seek to know it more and more in its reality, power, and growth! It is, "Christ in you the hope of glory." And since there are fluctuations in the spiritual as in the natural life of the soul—its ebb and flow, its lights and shadows—let this truth be uppermost in your mind, that through whatever phases and variations your spiritual life may pass, He who is your life, in whom it is safely and eternally lodged, knows not the shadow of a change: "Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever."

## **Chapter 2.**

### **TWILIGHT—Day-dawn Before Sunrise of Spiritual Life**

Until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."—2 Peter 1:19.

The acknowledged analogy of *Nature* and *Grace*—the argument of which Bishop Butler has so conclusively established, and with such a master's hand—must impress every thoughtful mind with the conviction that, One Infinite and Divine Intelligence is the Creative Power and emanating Source of both. Few points of analogy are more striking and beautiful than the one suggested by our present subject the *day-dawn which precedes the sun-rising of grace in the soul*.

Long before the orb of day has peered above the horizon, soft and golden rays trembling upon the eastern sky, have foretold and heralded his approach. To

the poet's eye "In fine frenzy rolling, "few spectacles in nature are replete with such interest and loveliness as this. To a mind susceptible of the most delicate forms of beauty, the scene is far more enchanting and impressive than even the sun's full, noontide splendor. Now this is just the image the Holy Spirit employs to illustrate a most beautiful and interesting phase of spiritual life—that *delicate and incipient state of grace* which, in numerous cases of conversion, is the harbinger of the full advent of the Sun of Righteousness in the soul.

In this light we interpret the passage which supplies our present subject, "Until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." There is a day-dawn of grace, as there is a daydawn of nature—and the analogy is true and striking. Few who have not studied the varied phenomena of spiritual life are aware how faint and colorless, how almost insensible and invisible, may be the *advent of the kingdom of grace in the soul of man*. To this beautiful feature of conversion, day-dawn before sunrise, let us address our thoughts. "Until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

The first feature which arrests the mind is, the profound darkness of the soul which precedes the first dawn of spiritual light. The spiritual darkness of the mind, in its abnormal or natural condition, it is almost impossible by any description or image adequately to depict. It surpasses Egyptian darkness; it is a darkness that might be felt. When God, who was the original Sun of the soul, withdrew from this magnificent orb, all spiritual light was extinguished, and a cloud of great darkness ensued, filling and mantling the whole being of man. True, there still remained the *natural* light of reason and of conscience and of the affections, when God left the soul; and these constitute man a morally responsible and accountable being.

But, spiritually, the soul passed into profound and total eclipse; and the darkness of night and of death, with all its derangement and disorder, flung its gloomy pall over man's entire being. How clearly the word of God puts the solemn truth! "Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." "Their foolish heart was darkened." "Having their understanding darkened." "If the light which is in you be darkness, how great must that darkness be!" What spiritual darkness veils the mind to the Being, character, and truth of God! What gross darkness steeps the soul, deranging the mental and enshrouding the moral faculties of the whole man! What impenetrable and fatal darkness hides the exceeding sinfulness, the indescribable enormity of sin!

**My reader, this is your condition by nature. With all the splendor of your intellectual powers—with all the natural light of your reason—with all the luster of your scientific discoveries—with all the wealth of your gathered wisdom—with all the love, amiability, and winning attractions of your natural disposition, character, and address, you are still in nature's darkness, "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in you, because of the blindness of your heart." You are walking in darkness, not knowing how perilous is your path, upon what a precipice you stand, and to what a world you go! Oh that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, may shine into your heart," and give you to see your darkness, and then "to behold the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Seek this in earnest prayer, lest your feet stumble, and your soul is finally and eternally landed in "outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

**"But, "the day dawns." How beautiful the image! how significant the words! How faint and trembling the first dawn of divine grace! How feeble and fluctuating the first pulse of spiritual life! It is, perhaps, but a thought, an emotion, a sigh, a misgiving, a tear, the first breath of prayer gently heaving the anxious breast. But it is real for all that. Just as the first and faintest streak of light trembling in the eastern sky is as really light as the meridian splendor of noontide day, so the first sigh, and the first tear, and the first prayer in the soul is as truly divine as the faith that moves the mountain, or the grace that embraces the martyr's stake. Cheer up then, you awakened, trembling soul! You have just enough light to render darkness visible; enough to see yourself a poor, ignorant, lost sinner, needing Jesus. Following, and not quenching, that light, it will increase more and more, grow brighter and brighter, until the perfect day.**

**And who is this "Day Star arising in the heart," of which the passage so glowingly speaks? Who but the Lord Jesus Christ, the "Star that should come out of Jacob," and who Himself declared, "I am the bright and Morning Star." Christ is emphatically "the Day Star." *Stars* are the jewelry which adorn the brow of night. When the sun has disappeared, the firmament blazes with countless constellations, fixed and revolving, vast and minute, which enkindle the vault of heaven with indescribable effulgence. A star in full, unclouded splendor, shining out at noonday would be an astronomical phenomenon, strange and unheard of.**

**But it is written, "His Name shall be called WONDERFUL." The *Incarnation* of the Eternal Son of God was the center and source of all the countless wonders that clustered around His wondrous life. And this is not the least, that He is the DAY, or Morning Star from on high, shining in the soul with a life and splendor compared with which all other is but the torpor and the shadow of death. As the "Day Star," our Lord Jesus Is Essential Light. Divine, His nature is self-existent and independent; Infinite, His resources are boundless and inexhaustible. Borrowing light from none, He imparts light to all others. Who but the Son of God could with reason and truth thus authoritatively and sublimely affirm, "I Am the Light of the World"?**

**All light the light of the natural and of the intelligent world—light of grace and of glory—flows from Christ, the Essential Sun of the universe, the "Day Spring from on high." This is the only light that can guide the soul to heaven. The light of reason and of nature "Leads but to bewilder, Dazzles but to blind." We ignore and undervalue not the natural light God has given to man. It is from Him, and, as such, is to be gratefully acknowledged and revered. But yet more unhesitatingly we affirm that, guided to eternity by this light alone, it is a light that will most assuredly and fatally mislead the traveler there. We cannot place this fact too prominently before the reader, that the human intellect is fallen and benighted; and that without the life of Christ and the illumination of the Spirit, it cannot find its way to God, or up to heaven.**

**We will concede to the soul of man all the marvellous powers—second only to Himself—with which God has furnished it. We will admit that it is capable of solving the most abstruse problems in science; that it can mathematically calculate the distance of the sun from the earth, and of the planets from each other; that it can triumph over the most formidable obstacles in nature, subjugating its most potent agencies to its control, bidding the very lightning obey its behests; and yet, with all this magnificent display of power, it cannot find out God, or take one step towards Him!**

**Let the reader study thoughtfully the first chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and learn from thence the attested and solemn truth that, "the world by wisdom knew not God;" that, when every expedient of art and science had been tried to find out God, and discover a healing for creation's fatal wound, a panacea for man's moral malady, had failed, God took the work in His own hand; and "it pleased Him by the foolishness of the preaching of Christ crucified to save those who believe." Oh, when will the wise of this world cease to glory in their wisdom, and learn to place their**

intellectual powers and high attainments, not above the cross, where Pilate placed his Greek and Latin and Hebrew, but beneath the cross, where alone they must receive the kingdom of God, even as a little child? "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

But daylight before sunrise is deepening—the twilight is dissolving, and spiritual life, thus gently and gradually dawning, is about to rise in the heart in all its noon-tide power. The *heart* is the orbit of this new-born sun. It is there the first conviction of sin is experienced; it is there the first pulse of life is felt; it is there the first victory of faith is achieved; it is there the first emotion of love thrills the soul. The heart is the home, the temple, the throne of God's life in man's soul. A religion that illumines the intellect only, that goes not beyond an informed judgment, is as the moonbeams playing upon a palace of ice, poetical and beautiful, but lifeless and dead.

But the light of spiritual life is *quicken*ing. It illumines the judgment; but it does more, it quickens the soul, renews and takes captive the heart, vitalizing the passions and powers of the entire being; it ushers into existence a new world of thought and feeling and action, claiming our entire being, all for, and consecrating all to, God. This is the new birth! This is that great change of which Christ spoke as essential to the kingdom of heaven—"Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be BORN AGAIN."

Its advent, like the day-dawn before the sun-rise, may be faint and progressive; or, like the "new-born babe," may have a gradual and a hidden growth, and its birth be ushered in amid the throes and pangs of a soul convulsed to its lowest depths by sin's conviction, and the terror of the law. Nevertheless, the perfect day comes, the heavenly child is born, and all the angels sing together for joy! And thus the spiritual life enthrones itself upon the soul, never, never to be dethroned!

We are not, however, we trust, in thus depicting the process of spiritual life as a gradual work, from dawn to day, from childhood to full age, entrenching upon the sovereignty of the Spirit, who in this marvellous work does not limit Himself to one line of procedure, or restrict Himself to one process of action, but, "working all things after the counsel of His own will," quickens the soul at a time and by a mode that illustrates the inexhaustible opulence of His own means, and receives the largest revenue of glory to His own self. Thus, while spiritual life in some, perhaps in many individuals, is as the dawn of day,

faint, slow, imperceptible, as in the case of Nicodemus; in others, it is rapid, sudden, instantaneous, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, and of the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost.

Let us be cautious, therefore, of limiting the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit to a given and prescribed mode of operation; and equally so how we sit in judgment upon any case of conversion, simply because it has transpired, not according to the mode by which we, perhaps, were 'born again,' but in a way totally different to our own,—in the one case, gradual as the day-dawn; in the other, rapid as the lightning's gleam; in the one, the soul is drawn; in the other, it is driven to Christ.

But, oh, though the paths by which the goal is reached may be different, the goal itself is one—Christ Jesus the Savior of sinners! All are taught alike to know the plague of their own hearts; all are led to wash in the same sin-cleansing blood; all put on the same soul justifying righteousness; and all alike produce the same "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God." And thus, whether we enter the divine temple of God's Church by the south gate or by the north, whether by a soft gale or by a tempest,—all are brought to Jesus, and *free and sovereign grace wears alone the crown*, and the Triune Jehovah receives all the glory! "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell where it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

"As blows the wind, and in its flight  
Escapes the glance of keenest sight,  
So are the wonder-working ways  
Of God's regenerating grace.

"As nothing can its power withstand  
But Him who holds it in His hand,  
So are the heart's corruptions slain  
When once the soul is born again.

"As over our frames we feel the gale  
Gently or mightily prevail,  
So some are *softly drawn* to heaven,  
And others as by tempest *driven*.

"And as the herbs, the flowers, the trees  
Are seen to bend beneath the breeze,  
So visible the change we view  
When grace does thus the heart renew.

**"Come, Holy Spirit, and impart  
Your *secret virtue* to my heart;  
And let this be the happy hour  
To show Your mighty, quickening power!"**

**But there is the twilight of glory—the daylight before the sunrise, as well as of grace. What, indeed, is the day-star of earth but the harbinger of the Morning Star of Heaven? *Grace in the soul is the embryo, the germ, the first-fruits of glory.* It is not the quantity or the ripeness of the first sheaf that determines the future harvest, but the nature of the grain. And so, it is not the amount, or the strength, or the achievement of divine grace in the believer, but its reality that forever settles the question of its future and glorious harvest of eternal blessedness.**

**Oh to be true, real, honest, and genuine believers in Christ! Look more, my reader, to the *character* of your religion—to the *reality* of your conversion—to the *nature* of your faith, than to the amount of your religious knowledge, or the splendor and popularity of your Christian profession. We may have a name to live—a name high up in the records of the Church, and emblazoned on the roll of its charities—and yet be 'dead' to that divine and spiritual life, the faintest dawn of which in the soul is the token and pledge yes, the very commencement of the life that is eternal—a life of glory forever with the Lord.**

**In the anticipation of that glory, and in a growing fitness for its inheritance, let us aim to live! Soon it will dawn—yes, in countless souls, it has already dawned. *If you feel sin a plague, and Christ precious, if you trample your own righteousness in the dust, and have put on by faith the righteousness of God, if your walk and conversation is holy, and are careful to maintain good works as fruits and evidences of your faith in Jesus, if you are 'chastened of the Lord, that you may not be condemned with the world,' of which chastening all the sons of God are partakers—then, beloved, the day-dawn of glory, the daylight before the sunrise of heaven, has already begun in your soul; and your path through the wilderness—though it be rough and thorny—the lights and shadows of spiritual life alternately penciling your way—shall be as the "shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day."***

**And then comes the meridian of glory! the noontide splendor of eternal purity and blessedness: no more clouds to shade—nor tears to dim—nor sickness to waste nor pain to torture—nor death to separate; best, and brightest, and**

holiest of all—nor SIN to disturb, mar, and taint. "As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness." Oh yes! SATISFIED, perfectly and forever satisfied. 'Satisfied' with all the way—its sunshine and its shade—by which You, my Lord, shall have led me there!

"I shall be satisfied, but, oh, not here,  
Where sin its wild, dark waves tumultuous rolls:  
Here is the conflict of the world and hell,  
But never calm repose for human souls.

"Here is the turmoil, loud and fierce, of strife;  
Here is the widow's woe, the orphan's tear,  
The parent's grief as closes some young life;  
I know there's nothing can satisfy me here.

"Earth's fairest scenes are soonest desolate,  
Her coolest streams most speedily run dry;  
No sooner is a new Elysium found  
Than the Destroyer to its gates draws near.

"Where, then, may we ever reach that wondrous bliss?  
Is there above or 'neath the firmament  
One spot where longing souls may know the joy,  
The speechless happiness of full content?

"Yes! to my mind a vision rises, fair  
A royal city, streets of purest gold  
A river through it flowing, trees and flowers  
Whose loveliness can never on earth be told.

"There evermore to roam in those sweet fields,  
No more to war with Satan, sin, and pride,  
To join the wondrous chorus round the throne  
Ah! then I shall be fully satisfied.

"But who can tell the bliss of that one word?  
Satisfied! satisfied! while the ages roll!  
Nothing to mar the joyous full content  
There felt by every blessed, ransomed soul.

"Then when and where shall I be satisfied?  
I ask, and know the answer that will come:  
When in my Savior's likeness I awake  
Where I shall dwell with Him in Heaven, my home."

### **Chapter 3.**

## **"The Obscurations of Spiritual Life"**

**"Until the *shadows* flee away."—Solomon's Song 4:6**

Shadow is as essential as light to the beauty of a *landscape*, or the perfection of a *painting*. Either, destitute of shading—the darker hues heightening the effect of the more brilliant coloring, and throwing into bolder relief the objects of nature, and the studies of the pencil—would lose more than half their expression and grandeur. Thus is it with the spiritual life of the soul. *Light* and *shade* are closely and artistically blended with the picture of the Christian's life. Drawn by a Divine Artist, all its parts—however inartistic and incoherent they may appear to the superficial eye, or even to the more tutored eye of the Christian himself—are essential to the completeness of the work, and are the production of Him who is "excellent in counsel, and great in beauty."

Let it be once admitted that God is a Great Artist, and that the Divine Image restored to the human soul is the masterpiece of His productions, and all mystery vanishes touching the necessity, wisdom, and perfection of blended light and shade in the daily walk of the believer. Our present subject, then, is of the SHADOWS of spiritual life. The words which suggest it are replete with instruction and beauty. They are, if we correctly interpret them, the language of the Church. "Until the day break, and the SHADOWS flee away, I will get to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." The truth embodied in the first part of this passage has already received our attention. And yet we cannot too frequently or too emphatically remind the reader of the strong tendency there exists of overlooking the "day of small things" in the history of divine grace in the soul.

Living in an age of rapid thought, and of yet more rapid action—an age in which even religion has caught the spirit of the times, and immediate conversion would seem to be the popular idea of the day—and against this idea we are loath to breathe a word of dissent, seeing that the Holy Spirit is a Sovereign, and that, *instant grace* may be as real; and as frequent, as instant glory—may there not exist the danger of overlooking the *mere faint and progressive* process in which, perhaps, the majority of cases, divine grace dawns and grows in the regenerate soul?

But our present chapter proposes to delineate, not the lights which illumine, but the *shadows which darken*, the path of spiritual life in its course to that 'perfect day' of glory, that 'morning without clouds,' to which it is destined eventually and surely to arrive. In the absence of those shadows, which we

now proceed to notice, how much of the beauty and completeness of the Christian character would be lacking! The landscape would be too light, the picture too brilliant. Both would lack that soul-subdued and chastened tone which the varied and somber hues of the Christian life impart. Let us, then, briefly trace a few of the clouds which thus shade the spiritual life of the believer.

The first we adduce is, the shadow of spiritual ignorance, which, more or less deeply, rests upon every pious mind. The spiritual education of the believer is, in its most advanced stage, but *initiative* and *progressive*. Compared with what he may yet attain, he has learned but the *alphabet* of divine knowledge. The Bible, with all his profound knowledge and research, is still but as the kindergarten book in his spiritual training; and the more advanced his attainments, the profounder and more humbling is his conviction how little he knows in comparison with what he yet may know.

Such was the experience and such the testimony of Paul, who, writing to the Philippian Church, thus expressed himself. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." "That I may know Him." He knew Christ as few knew Him; but, placing no limit to his attainments, and thirsting for yet higher ones, praying to know more and still more of the Divinest, loveliest, and most wonderful Being in the universe, he was willing to forget—not ignore—'the things which were behind' -the ground he had traversed—pressing forward and upward to higher rounds in his heavenly ascent, 'apprehending' or taking hold of that for which he was also 'apprehended'—or taken hold of by Christ Jesus.

Oh for more of this Christ-longing spirit of the Apostle! The grand secret of growth in grace, of planting our feet higher in the steep of holiness and love and heavenliness, of rising above earth and its sins and sorrows, is in knowing more of Christ. Realizing more our resurrection and ascension with Christ, it will be moral lever lifting the soul into a higher region of love and purity and communion, even where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Nor was the Apostle alone in this aspiration after the increase of spiritual knowledge. Listen to the prayer of Elihu: "That which I see not, teach me." Here is the *humble acknowledgment of conscious ignorance*.

How much there is in our spiritual education for heaven which we do not see! "We know *in part*." Let the range of study be as wide, and the spiritual eye as

strong as it can be, the confession of the most advanced Christian will still be, "I see through a glass *darkly*—I know *in part*." Take, for example, our knowledge of sin. We do, indeed, know something of its blackness just enough to impel us to the Open Fountain; but our views are shallow, our conceptions cloudy, and our contrition imperfect. There is a depth in sin we have not sounded, a mystery we have not unraveled, and a turpitude we have not felt. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults." The error of the judgment, the error of the will, the error of the affections. Hence, the necessity and wisdom of David's prayer—"Cleanse me from secret faults."

The secret faults against which he prayed were not sins committed in secret and veiled from every eye; but those faults which in themselves were secret, of which he himself knew nothing, nor even suspected—sins of the mind, sins of the affections, sins of nature, and "the iniquity of our holy things." "Cleanse me from secret faults." What a needed prayer for Christian men of business! The vast commercial transactions of the day, the opening fields of enterprise, the thirst for wealth, the ease with which it is acquired, the temptations to deviate from the strict line of integrity and uprightness, must, necessarily, involve a tendency to many 'secret faults,' against which the religious professor, borne on upon the rapid current of the age, has need vigilantly to watch and pray. Oh when will the mercantile men of our nation, imitating the example of the devout Thornton, that true Christian merchant of his day—erect an oratory side by side with the counting-house, to which, in 'all times of their wealth,' and in all times of their adversity, anxiety, and temptation, they may resort, and receive grace and strength and soothing, where alone it is found in holy, confidential communion with God!

Closely allied with the cloud of spiritual ignorance of sin, is the passing shadow of guilt upon the soul. Perhaps no shadow of the spiritual life is so darkening and depressing as this. It may, indeed, be but as a vapor—some known duty neglected—an opportunity of usefulness lost—an unkind word spoken—a hasty spirit betrayed some Christian principle faltering—still, it is a passing shadow; and the mirror of the conscience, which should ever be kept in the highest polish, is in a moment dimmed, and the soul is affected thereby.

And is there no remedy for this temporary obscuration of spiritual life no dissolving of this passing cloud? Oh yes! The blood of Jesus applied, effaces in a moment the sense of guilt, leaving not the shadow of a shade upon the conscience.

And what a chill shadow is the temporary obscuration of the Divine presence—the veiling of the light of God's countenance—the momentary hiding of Jesus from the soul. The vicissitudes through which spiritual life passes—its ebb and flow—its partial or its total eclipse—are, more or less, the experience of every believer. Oh, there is no sorrow like spiritual sorrow: no cloud so dark, no shadow so cold, no sky so rayless as that which intervenes between God and the living soul. It is a solemn and instructive thought, that He who is our spiritual life, Himself traveled through this stage of its history. "My God, my God! why have You forsaken Me?" It was the total eclipse of the "Sun of Righteousness," of which the natural sun, now clothed in sackcloth and in sympathy with its Creator, was a type.

Are you walking in soul-darkness, beloved? Is God hiding His face? Has Jesus suspended His sensible presence? and is this shadow, deep and dark, resting upon your spirit? Cheer up! It is not the darkness of unregeneracy, but the *passing shadow* of Christian life, and before long it will dissolve and vanish. Listen to the language of your covenant God and Father: "For a *small moment* have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord." The 'small moment' will before long pass, and the shadow will disappear—and the joyous language of your soul will be, "O God! You were angry with me; but Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me."

With the shadow of adversity, in some one or more of its protean forms, all true believers are familiar. "The Lord tries the righteous," and He tries them because they are righteous. Not more essential the knife that prunes the branch—not more necessary the fire that refines the gold—not more needful the storm that rarifies the atmosphere—than is adversity to the growth of the spiritual life of the soul. Is not the experience of every believer in harmony with that of the Psalmist? "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your word." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes." To no discipline is the divine life of the soul under greater obligation than that which thus *prunes* and *refines*, and which thus *fructifies* and *purifies*.

*Sweet* are the uses of *adversity*; and never so sweet as when most bitter! "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness;" and from an adversity that looked so consuming—from an event that threatened, as with lion-strength, to crush every fair prospect of life—there

has issued some of the costliest blessings in the believer's history.

God fashions graciously the hearts of all His children alike; "for what son is he whom the Father chastens not?" All are tried. The family provisions are "the bread and the water of affliction." "Humble and scanty fare this!" exclaims the worldling; nevertheless, lowly and distasteful as it may be to those who are living upon 'husks'—that which they call food—there is in it an element of sweetness, and a power of nourishment and growth, which the living soul only knows and fully tests. "The full soul loathes a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

Affliction times are *fruit promoting* times to God's "trees of righteousness." Afflictions deepen the roots, and clothe the boughs with the foliage and fruit of righteousness. Oh, who can fully estimate the real advance of the spiritual life of the soul in one hallowed trial, through one sanctified sorrow? The slumbering spirit of prayer is roused—the truant heart is recalled—trembling faith is strengthened—and the spirit shaded with sorrow and the soul bowed with calamity, turns to Jesus, and finds in the wounded and wounding hand of the Savior, the balm and the succor which 'heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.'

There are some believers who only become fruitful in trial, who make no headway in their spiritual voyage but in a storm! Their language is the echo of the sweet poet of Olney; "More the treacherous calm I dread, Than tempests bursting over my head." And does not this shadow pass away? Oh, yes! When, like a faithful servant, it has discharged its errand; when its heaven-sent mission is fully accomplished, it will dissolve into the light of joy, and issue in a new song of praise. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

In the literal night, when suffering, nervousness, or mental depression, banish sleep from the pillow, life's shadows—its responsibilities, cares, and anxieties—gather thick and dark around the soul. Every object assumes an exaggerated form of terror, and is clothed with a deeper hue of gloom. But all is not shadow to the Christian then. One remembrance of God, one glimpse of Jesus, one thought of heaven, one moment's realization of eternity, and the clouds dispel, the shadows flee, and the melody of the song—never so sweet as at night, floats like angel's chimes around the pillow.

**"I have remembered Your name in the night"—Your name as Father, Your name as Jesus. "In the night His song shall be with me." "When I awake"—as from a troubled dream, from those darkling shadows which drape my bed—"I am still with You," and find myself reposing upon Your paternal bosom. Oh what a mercy to wake in the morning and feel ourselves with Jesus!**

**So it will be when we fall asleep in death! We shall awake in Heaven, and find ourselves still and forever with the Lord!**

**"In silence or the middle night,  
I awake to be with Thee;  
And through the shadows as the light  
Your mercy smiles on me.  
"I talk with You upon my bed,  
In meditation blest,  
And sweetly pillow there my head,  
Upon my Savior's breast.  
"I think of Him who knelt and prayed  
At midnight on the hill;  
Then walked the sea, His friends to aid,  
And bid the storm be still.  
"I think of Him who took the cup,  
In dark Gethsemane,  
And, gathering strength from prayer, rose up  
To die for such as me.  
"I think of heaven, where never more  
The weary ask for night,  
But ever freshening glories pour  
New raptures on the sight.  
"So do I learn a parable,  
That in my darkest day,  
When waves of sorrow round me swell,  
The storm shall pass away.  
"Nor will I turn my head aside,  
Though bitter griefs be mine;  
But say with Him, the Crucified,  
Father, my will is Thine.  
"Thus shall I praise You while I've breath,  
To sing Your love to me,**

**And welcome even the night of death,  
To wake and be with Thee."**

**The shadow of temptation, be it from Satan, from the world, or from his own heart is, to many Christians, the most severe and terrible of all that fall upon the soul. Our Lord passed through this fearful ordeal as none other ever did, or ever can. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. "And during forty days and nights He fought single-handed with the foe, assailed by him with every form of weapon, yet foiling him at every point, and quenching the flaming dart with the Divine shield of the Word—"It is written." Long and dark was the conflict, but He came out of it—as every tempted believer will—more than conqueror, even triumphant; as Daniel from the lions' den, unwounded; as the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace, unscathed.**

**Look up, tempted one! Your spiritual life needs this discipline. It is but a *passing shadow*, obscuring for a moment its luster and beauty. And yet how little of Christ as tempted in all points like as we are, and as succouring those who are tempted, should we experimentally know but for this shadow falling upon our spirit!**

**It is a pleasant thought, that the shadow of temptation, however severe, leaves no trace of *guilt* upon the conscience, except only when we voluntarily yield to its power. The mere assault of a temptation involves no sin, and leaves no taint. And this reflection should go far to lighten the dark shadow with which this subtle and malignant foe of the Christian seeks to overwhelm the soul.**

**"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation," and He will deliver you. When He has tried you, you shall come forth as gold, your spiritual life all the purer, and your Christian character all the brighter, for the fiery temptation through which your loyalty to Christ and truth and conscience has passed.**

**But all is *shadow* here! The world is a shadow—and it passes away! The creature is a shadow—and the loveliest and the fondest may be the first to die! Health is a shadow—fading, and in a moment gone! Wealth is a shadow—today upon the summit of affluence, tomorrow at its base, plunged into poverty and dependence! Human friendships and creature affections are but shadows—sweet and pleasant while they last, but, with a worm feeding at the root of all created good, the sheltering gourd soon withers, exposing us to the**

sun's burning heat by day, and to the frost's cold chill by night! Oh, yes! 'Passing away' is indelibly inscribed upon everything out of and below, God; yet how slow are we to realize the solemn lesson it teaches—"What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!"

In this point of light our subject addresses itself pointedly and solemnly to the unconverted reader. What is your life but a vapor that passes away? and what its pursuits but shadows—unreal, unsatisfying, evanescent? Your rank, your wealth, your honors, your pleasures, are but phantoms which appear but for a little while, and then are lost in the deeper shadow of the grave, and the still deeper and longer shadow of eternity! Oh, turn from these dreams and hallucinations, and, as a rational, accountable, immortal being, on your way to the judgment-seat of Christ, fix your mind upon the solemn, endless future! You are going to die! And, oh, when that dread hour comes—viewed from a stand-point so real and appalling—how will your past life appear?

While penning this chapter, the writer was requested to visit a gentleman approaching the solemn hour of death. Casting his eye upon the rich gems of art which crowded the walls of his room, he pointed to them, and solemnly exclaimed, "What can all these shadows do for me now?" And such will be your exclamation when you come to die! Oh flee to Jesus! Believe in Christ! Embrace the Savior, who rejects no poor penitent sinner who comes to Him! "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

"But there is a Shadow—which yet is not a shadow—beneath which we may recline and find perfect refreshment and repose. It is CHRIST, the "Shadow of a Great Rock in a weary land." He is a "Shadow from the heat," when the sun of affliction scorches us; "the Rock that is higher than we," when the heart is overwhelmed with the billows of grief. All other shadows will dissolve, but "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and forever," and "knows not the shadow of a turning."

Soon the last cold shadow will fall upon us, and then all will be glorious and endless reality. Shrink not from death, O believer in Jesus! for, through Christ, it is but a shadow. Jesus, by dying and rising again, has annihilated the substance of death, transforming it into a phantom, a shadow, a sleep, an unsubstantial thing; through which the ransomed soul passes, and finds itself in a moment encircled by the realities, the splendor, and the music of Heaven—"absent from the body, present with the Lord."

"Yes, though I walk through the valley of the *Shadow of Death*, I will fear no evil: for You are with me." Until then—"Until the shadows flee away, I will go to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense,"—I will go to Christ, and give myself to prayer.

"The clouds hang heavy round my way,  
I cannot see;

But through the darkness I believe,  
God leadeth me.

'It is sweet to keep my hand in His,  
While all is dim,

To close my weary, aching eyes,  
And follow Him.

"Through many a thorny path He leads,  
My tired feet;

Through many a path of tears I go;  
But tis sweet

To know that He is close to me  
My God, my Guide;

He leadeth me, and so I walk  
Quite satisfied."

#### **Chapter 4.**

#### **"REVIVAL: The Depression and Revivification of Spiritual Life"**

"O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more."—Psalm 39:13.

A dying bed is a solemn and searching standpoint from where to review the personal and past history—its lights and shadows of spiritual life! All is stern reality! The fictions and deceptions of religion now yield to the tremendous conviction that the soul, disengaging itself from the relations and delusions of time, is about to confront the dread realities and changeless decision of eternity! Such was David's position, and such his feelings, when he breathed the prayer—"O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." His mental powers were waning, and the scepter of a long and prosperous reign was falling from his death stricken grasp. But, a more startling and solemn fact was unveiling to his mind!

Now it was that the real state of his soul, as before God, burst upon him in all its reality! In the true and searching light of that tremendous hour he discovered a declension and loss in the tone and evidence of his spiritual life which filled him with dismay. At the moment that he was about to confront the 'last enemy,' and fight the last battle, lo! the 'standard-bearer faints' by reason of exhausted spiritual power! The subject is singularly instructive and profoundly solemn. May the Spirit of life make its consideration a quickening power to our soul!

The first point raised is the spiritual state which David thus deeply deplures: it was the declension and decay of the life of God in his quickened soul. And, before we unfold this state, it may be necessary to remark that, this is not the condition or the prayer of a soul utterly destitute of spiritual life. A corpse is insensible of feeling—it has no consciousness of the absence of life. But *where there is life, there is the intelligent and acute consciousness of waning health and vigor*. So is it with the living soul. The fact of a believer's possession of spiritual life is *evidenced by the consciousness of its decay*. The felt loss of spiritual power proves to demonstration its previous existence just as pining sickness brings home to the sufferer the painful consciousness of the loss of vigorous health.

We should, therefore, in considering this condition, be careful to mark the distinction between a soul actually "dead in trespasses and sins," and a living soul lamenting, as David does, the *decay of spiritual life*. It is thus the Lord often teaches us by its negative, the real value of a positive blessing. He will have a thankful and praiseful heart. "Whoever offers praise glorifies me." And when, undervaluing His mercies, gratitude congeals in the heart, and praise sits silent upon the lips, He most wisely and righteously suspends His favor for a while, that we might appreciate more fully the value of the gift and the goodness of the Giver. "Open my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise."

It is thus with the greatest of all gifts—the gift of spiritual life. We may not have valued that life, as we should have done; we have not employed it in the service of Christ and for God's glory, as He intended; and so He has allowed it for a while to decay, and permitted sin to have the ascendancy; and that thus we more deeply estimate its value, and learn to watch against its declension. We now turn to the case before us. A believer, in the near prospect of his departure, may deplore the loss of the *sense* of his adoption. At the moment that he plants his foot upon the threshold of his heavenly home, he discovers

that—like Bunyan's pilgrim—he has "lost the white stone with the new name," and has to retrace many steps to find it. And thus, in place of the joy and hope he should experience in the near prospect of his arrival at his father's house, he is filled with doubt and dismay, and cannot enter glory with "Abba, Father," breathing from his lips.

May not this loss of the sense of adoption be attributed to two causes—the little filial dealing of the heart with God, and to the spirit of bondage in which the soul had been allowed too long to travel? If, then, receiving instruction from this fact, we would find ourselves in full and undoubted possession of the "white stone, and the new name written therein," at the moment when we shall need all the consolation and succor it is possible from every source to receive, let us be careful of our filial and close walk with God. Examine each day the evidences of our sonship—see that nothing shades a fact so divine and precious, and so walk in the holy liberty with which Christ has made us free from the power of sin and the fear of death—the liberty of filial communion with our Heavenly Father, and of submission to His paternal will—that thus living in a sense of our adoption, we may not drag our slavish chains to a dying bed, but meet our last enemy with the shout of liberty and the paean of triumph!

Not less conscious may the departing saint be of the loss of his sense of a present and complete acceptance in Christ. His prayer is "O spare me, that I may know my standing in Christ: my acceptance in the Beloved." And, alas just at the moment that he is summoned to the Banquet, he is casting about in search of evidence of his possession of the robe in which he is to appear! To what may this sense of loss be attributed? May it not, in part, be traced to *those activities of religious life which too much draw off the believer's care of his personal and spiritual interests*? The white robe may be loosely girded, and carelessly worn; it may hang slovenly, and trail heedlessly. And when most we need to know our full, free, and present justification our possession of the 'wedding garment' and the 'best robe'—the plaintive cry is heard, issuing as from the dying pillow—"O spare me, that I may recover strength."

We have ventured to ascribe this sense of loss to the Christian life lived too much in the region of social and public religious engagements; and to this we may add *the deteriorating, deadening influence of theological polemics and ecclesiastical controversy*. Scarcely any causes are more prolific of a loss of the vigor and evidence of spiritual life than this. Baxter speaks of his "hand as crushed in the vice of religious controversy." Now many a man of God will

confirm this testimony of the worthy puritan, touching the spiritual loss of the soul experienced in the heat and strife of religious conflict—contending, it may be—not for some vital tenet of the faith—but for a non-essential rite, or a denominational shibboleth. A solemn lesson is taught us here!

We live in an age of great religious activity: the active, rather than the reflective and devotional element, would seem to be the leading characteristic of modern Christianity. It behooves us, then, to be doubly vigilant and prayerful, that we allow no earnestness and labor for others to draw us off from the state of our personal religion—our present standing before God, lest the lamentation is wrung from our lips in the hour of our departure—"They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

But, a fresh view of Jesus in death brings back the departing soul to its right position; faith is enabled to come to Christ, just as though it had never come before—and looking to Him, if not as an accepted believer, yet as a poor empty sinner, thankful to be able to come as such, the departing soul, having recovered strength, enters the valley with the victor's song upon its lips—"O death, where is your sting?"

The departing believer may discover that he was equally at fault in the distance at which he traveled from the "Open Fountain" thus finding himself on a dying bed without the clear sense of the applied blood—the sweet, joyous consciousness of the present and full pardon of all his sins. This is traceable, as we have hinted, to the too infrequent washing in the blood of Christ. The dwelling-place was pitched too far from the stream; the travel was at too remote a distance from the laver: and so the feet—dusty and soiled—when they smote the cold waters of the River, found the need of a renewed application to "the blood of Jesus that cleanses from all sin." "O spare me, that I may recover strength."

We need scarcely trace the declension and decay of spiritual life to its many exciting and proximate causes, since they will for the most part be obvious to every devout and observant mind. We may, however, briefly group a few of the more ordinary and fruitful ones. Among which we may cite: *the distance of the soul in following Jesus; the restraining of secret prayer before God; the absorbing influence of the world—its calling, its conformity, its pleasures; sin indulged, unrepented and unconfessed; cold neglect of the means of grace; the walking by sight and not by faith; a separation in charity, affection, and*

*communion from other saints; covetousness in withholding from the cause of Christ and of truth of our worldly substance more than is fit; the neglect of a daily washing in the fountain of Christ's blood, thus keeping the conscience tender, and the feet of our Christian travel constantly purified from the habitual contraction of earth.*

All these are among the more immediate causes of the decay and declension of the spiritual life of the soul—fully discerned, it may be, only at the moment of its departure, with the prayer, breathing from the expiring lip, "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more!"

But there is revivification of spiritual life, the existence of, and the provision for, which we must not overlook. This fact is implied in the prayer of David—"That I may *recover* strength." If spiritual life has its decays, it has also its recoveries; if its depressions, it has also its revivings. *Nothing is more imperishable than the life of God in the regenerate; nothing more deathless than a spiritually living soul.* The revivification may not transpire, in some cases, until the soul's near approach to eternity, yet, come it will, before the soul takes its flight to heaven.

It is the quaint remark of an old divine, that "God never puts any of His children to sleep in the dark;" that is, He does not allow them to die without some clear evidence, that, in death they are in life "dying in the Lord," who is their life, and are passing to that blessed "hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." But every true believer will feel it too solemn and momentous a thing to postpone the work of a renewed spiritual life until 'heart and flesh are failing,' and his feet smite the cold river over which he is about to pass.

It is our true wisdom to be laying up for a dying hour—living as those who are watching and waiting for the Royal Chariot that is to bear us to the King. Dying grace is, indeed, reserved for the dying hour; but it is the privilege of the child of God to "die daily,"—dying *to the power of inbred sin, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life; dying to the attractions of the world, the idolatry of the creature, and the still greater idolatry of self.* Then, when we really come to die, having detached ourselves one by one from the "things that are seen and temporal," and, with a carefully-trimmed and brightly-burning lamp—the evidence of adoption, acceptance, and pardon, unquestionable and undimmed—we shall have nothing to do but to die!

Oh seek, then, a daily supply of spiritual life from Christ! Not merely has He come that you might have life, but that you might have it more abundantly. Christ is prepared to impart so richly and freely of this divine and precious blessing that you shall rise to a higher life—not another life—but a higher degree of the same spiritual life you already possess; a loftier standard of holiness and love and service—ascending the rungs of the spiritual ladder—the type of which Jacob saw in his midnight vision—until you plant your foot upon the summit, and find yourself—oh sweet surprise!—in heaven, 'safe in the bosom of Jesus!'

Among the most fruitful means of spiritual revival, overlook not the hallowed results of sanctified affliction. Times of trial are times of *restoring* and growth in the history of spiritual life. "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me." The *cloud of sorrow* may be upon your heart, the shadow of death upon your tabernacle, but this may be the appointed way of *quicken your soul to more spiritual sensibility, of recalling the truant affections, and of drawing you nearer, and still nearer to God. Oh blessed discipline of trial that quickens, revives, and strengthens the life of God in the soul!*

Above all means of spiritual revival, seek to be "filled with the Spirit." All spiritual life is of *His* breathing; all communications of grace are of *His* conveyancing; of all evidences of our sonship, and pardon, and acceptance, *He* is the Witness; and of our hope of glory He is the earnest and the seal. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." Honor the Spirit—worship the Spirit—obey the Spirit—walk in the Spirit, and your peace will flow like a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

And if 'clouds'—dark and depressing—sometimes shade the picture of your spiritual life, 'lights'—luminous and cheering will throw a pleasant and hopeful radiance across the scene: and thus, through *sunshine* and *shade* you will be preparing for the glorious world of which it is said—"There shall be *no night* there, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light and glory thereof." Oh, then, let your faith's eye—afresh anointed with Christ's true 'eye salve'—look from the present *shadows* of your spiritual life to the light beyond, where no shadow will ever fall upon your soul, but where all will be perfect and eternal sunshine—undimmed, unclouded forever! "Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."

**"Beyond the stars that shine in golden glory,  
Beyond the calm, sweet moon,  
Up the bright ladder saints have trod before you,  
Soul! you shall venture soon.  
Secure with Him who sees your heart-sick yearning,  
Safe in His arms of love,  
You shall exchange the midnight for the morning,  
And your fair home above.  
"Oh, it is sweet to watch the world's night wearing,  
The Sabbath morn come on!  
And sweet it were the vineyard labor sharing  
Sweeter the labor done.  
All finished! all the conflict and the sorrow,  
Earth's dream of anguish over,  
Deathless there dawns for you a nightless morrow  
On Eden's blissful shore.  
"Patience! then, patience! soon the pang of dying  
Shall all forgotten be,  
And you, through rolling spheres rejoicing, flying  
Beyond the waveless sea,  
Shall know hereafter where your Lord does lead you,  
His darkest dealings trace,  
And by those fountains where His love will feed you  
Behold Him face to face!"**

## **Chapter 5.**

### **SERVICE, The Sphere and Culture of Spiritual Life**

**"And to every man his work."—Mark 13:34.**

**God has formed nothing—not the most infinitesimal product of creation—that has not a mission and that answers not an end. There is no waste in nature—nothing superfluous, or in excess. But, it is in the Christian life we find the most true and impressive illustration of this fact. If God has charged any creation of His wisdom, goodness, and power with a mission and a purpose worthy of Himself, it is the new creation, or, in other words, the spiritual life of the soul.**

**A new creation—as the believer is—a new world of being, of thought, and**

action, floats before him. He himself is that world! Partaking of a divine nature, invested with new powers and tastes and purposes, the regenerate man has found an *object* and *end* of life worthy the motive and the Author of his new-born being. It is now the noblest end and happiness of his life to live for God. Hitherto he has lived for himself. Up to a certain point of his creation, he has lived to the flesh. It could not possibly have been otherwise. *Nature, apart from a supernatural power, will never rise above itself.* "That which is born of the flesh is flesh,"—and will be flesh, and nothing but flesh, until the end of its existence.

The new birth is not the transubstantiation—so to speak of the flesh into spirit; of the carnal into the spiritual: it is the infusion or impartation of a new and divine nature whereby the recipient becomes "a new creature in Christ Jesus." The old nature, though brought into subjection to the new, still retains its fleshly principles and its incessant propensity to sin. Now, it is for the appropriate and full exercise of the new nature or, the spiritual life of the believer—that God has provided.

It is a fixed law of our natural organism that *exercise* is essential to its development and growth. Its powers, left to an inert and inactive condition, would soon become paralyzed and bedwarfed. God has, therefore, mercifully ordained that *labor* should constitute an integral part of man's existence. This is not an accident, but an essential part of his original creation. Anterior to the fall of man, God sent him into the yet unsinced and uncursed garden to till it, thus teaching that labor is coeval with man's creation—a part of his abnormal existence. Now the same law equally applies to the spiritual as to the natural creation: and it is to this the preceding remarks have a bearing.

The object of the present chapter, therefore, is, to illustrate and enforce the truth, that *Christian service is an appropriate sphere, and provides an efficient means for the development and culture, of the spiritual life of the soul.* And we believe that the sequel will prove that, where indolence, selfishness, and inactivity have traced the personal religion of a Christian, his Christianity has, to a great degree, become stunted in its growth, unfruitful in its results, and impotent for good in its influence upon others.

The parable of our Lord upon which our present subject is based, strikingly and impressively illustrates it. Our blessed Lord speaks of Himself as "a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work." The simple and obvious interpretation of the

parable is found in the return of our Lord to the glory from where He came, leaving His house—or Church—on earth, and assigning to His ministers and all His servants each their duty—"to every man his work." The truth thus taught, and the precept thus enjoined, recognizes individual Christianity, and points to *individual responsibility* and office.

Christ has gone to heaven, to return again. During His absence, pending His return, all His servants have each one a charge to keep, a service to perform, a duty and a privilege to discharge in His name, and for His glory. "To every man his work." Now it is in a personal, diligent, and faithful performance of this service, the believer is to evidence the possession, develop the power, and promote the growth of his own personal religion. It is in this field of Christian service the *active* graces of the Spirit find their most appropriate sphere of exercise and culture. Before, however, we advert particularly to this point, let us first speak of Christian service: this will have prepared us to trace its reflex influence upon individual character.

"To every man his work." Personal responsibility and duty is the lesson here taught. As in a great building there are a variety of workmen, and each one has his special part in the superstructure so is it with Christ and with the world. Every Christian is a co-worker with God: employed in rearing that "spiritual house"—His Church which is destined to replenish the universe with His glory, and to fill eternity with His praise. All have not the same office; are not appointed to the same sphere; are not fitted for the same work. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office," so we, being many, are one body in Christ; and to every man individually God has assigned his own work. It would be difficult to determine for *another* what is the most appropriate sphere of Christian service he is to occupy: this must be left to the Lord, and to his own intelligent consciousness.

No earnest Christian, longing to serve Christ, need be at a loss to know in what sphere the Lord would have him labor. He has but honestly and earnestly to send up the petition—"Lord, what will You have me to do? Show me Your way. Direct my steps to that field of service and of duty which You have ordained, and for which You have fitted me. Here am I, send me." This petition, offered with true-heartedness, the sphere of duty and of privilege, sooner or later, will be made known. That the Great Head of His Church—the Divine Architect and Builder of His spiritual Temple—has fitted you for, and appointed you to, a service, is not a question of doubt. He who does nothing without a purpose—who has formed not an atom or an insect without its

adaptation to an end has not created you for an object unworthy your intelligence, responsibility, and destiny.

The obligations to a personal consecration of service to Christ are many and strong. Let a few suffice. And the first we mention is, your natural creation. "God has created all things for Himself." "I have created Him for my glory." The law of your creation imposes upon you the duty of loving, serving, and glorifying God. Not made to terminate in yourself, but in Him who made you, you are bound, by the law of your creation, to make God the one and the great end of your being. "No man lives to himself." He may strive so to do, but his relation to God renders it impossible. From that relation, as God's creature, he cannot disengage himself. It will follow him into eternity, and hold him in its grasp forever! *Lost* though he may be, he is still the creature of God's natural, and the subject of His moral, government; and God must cease to be what He is, before He relinquishes His claim!

But the obligation of the *Christian* to Christ's service rests upon a higher basis than the natural. He is not only the Lord's by creation, but he is His by redemption. As a redeemed subject, he is under the most imperious obligation to consecrate his ransomed being to the service of his Redeemer. "You are not your own," says the Apostle; "for you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your souls, which are His." Could any argument be so convincing, or any plea so touching, why we should dedicate to Jesus' service our entire being? Bought with a price so precious—ransomed at a cost so immense—can we hesitate for a moment compliance with the call, "Son, go work today in my vineyard"?

Oh, did we more vividly realize what it cost Jesus to make us what we are—delivering us from the curse, rescuing us from condemnation, paying our whole debt, and "opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers"—it would not be the question of a moment how much we should do, or how much we should suffer, or how much we should give, as an act of consecration, and as an expression of gratitude to Him, "who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich."

Called to be saints, with the especial and effectual call of the Spirit, implies that, henceforth, we are Christ's servants, and that His most free service is our highest ambition, our supremest delight, and our richest reward. Christians, in general, realize so faintly what Jesus has done and suffered for them, that the sense of obligation to enlist in His service, to advance His

kingdom, and to vindicate His truth, is correspondingly faint; and the result is, a withholding—Ananias-like, of a 'part of the price,' all of which—without the slightest reservation should be laid at Jesus' feet. Called, then, with so high a calling as a saint—adopted to so high a dignity as a son of God—the obligation to service, the most demanding and self-denying, for Christ, allows not of a moment's hesitation or demur.

And when to these grounds—upon which Christ's claim to the consecration of our people, our intellect, our substance, rests—is superadded the hope of glory, the inheritance of heaven, the "forever with the Lord," the obligation is complete. What more could be added to render the bond more solemn, the reasoning more conclusive, the plea more irresistible? The reward of Christ's servant distances all conception, outvies all description. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God has prepared" for him who serves the Lord Christ here. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor." "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life that fades not away."

"To every man his work." Thus we are taught our individuality. It is a personal service, a service for the Lord, the discharge, responsibility, and account of which cannot possibly be transferred to another. "Son, go work in my vineyard," is the Lord's address to every individual Christian. None are exempt. "To every man his work"—and not another's. The important question with each one, then, should be "Lord, what will You have me to do? Show me, Lord, my work; then furnish me with the gift and grace it demands." And do you think that the Master and Owner of the Vineyard will leave you long in ignorance and suspense? Oh no! There is too much to be done—"the field is the world"—and, with many a saint of God, the night of the grave is near when no man can work. The sun of your life has far gone down, and nothing is left to labor and suffer for Jesus in, but the dim and shadowy twilight! Up, then, and work for Christ!

"To every man his work." You have yours. It may be as "a teacher of babes;" or, to visit the sick and the dying; or, to seek the wanderer, restore the fallen, and rescue the lost; or, to be an evangelist, or a Christian minister, or a foreign missionary, traveling to some far distant climate to unfurl the standard of the cross amid the gross darkness and degrading superstition and idolatry of a heathen world. Whether called to the highest post of Christian service abroad, or to be a "hewer of wood and a drawer of water" at home

**"anywhere, Lord, where I may best serve, and most glorify and honor You!"**

*In thus working for Christ and for man, we best promote our own spiritual life.* The soul is as much created and fitted for activity—the mind as much formed and adapted for service—as the body. Yes, far more so. How often do we see the soul putting forth a might and majesty almost superhuman at the very moment that its mortal casement is falling in ruins from around it!—the mind thus asserting its superiority to, and its triumph over, the body. There are two classes of the graces of the Spirit—the *active* and the *passive*; the former, find their proper field and development in doing; the latter, in enduring; the one, in service; the other, in suffering. It is with the *active* graces this chapter especially deals. In Christian work the active graces of love-zeal-patience-fidelity-faith-and prayer are brought into appropriate and vigorous action; and, thus employed, acquire development, robustness, and growth.

Unemployed—allowed to vegetate and slumber—they grow enfeebled and paralyzed, and the spiritual life of the soul becomes retarded, stunted, and bedwarfed. But, as the present chapter has exceeded its assigned limit, we must hasten to conduct it to a conclusion by exhorting the reader to listen to the call of providence and of grace which is none other than the voice of Jesus—"Why do you stand all the day idle? Son, go work today in my vineyard?"

Oh, there is much to be done for a fallen world, and for a redeeming Christ! There is much land yet to be possessed. Souls are hurrying fast to death—what are we doing to save them? They are speeding rapidly to the judgment—what are we doing to prepare them? "This is a day of glad tidings, and we hold our peace." Satisfied of our conversion—if, indeed, we are—we heed not and seek not the conversion of others! Lord, deliver us from blood-guiltiness—the most terrible of all blood—the blood of souls! "When I say unto the wicked, you shall surely die; and you give him not *warning*, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at *your* hand."

Solemn work! tremendous responsibility! appalling result! Oh that, when we give in our account when our work is done and our career is finished—we may, through grace, be enabled to exclaim with the faithful Apostle—"I am clear from the blood of all men!" Live, then, earnestly and lovingly in the service of Christ, and rich will be your present, great and glorious your future, reward. Your spiritual life—deepened and enlarged—will be enriched

and beautified with many a precious fruit of righteousness; and your eternal life decked and honored with a many jeweled crown—will grow in knowledge, increase in happiness, and deepen in glory, as the endless cycles of eternity roll round. "They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever," "And he brought him to Jesus."

"What can I give to Jesus,  
Who 'gave Himself for me'?  
How can I show my love to Him  
Who died on Calvary?

"I'll give my heart to Jesus  
In childhood's tender spring:  
I know that He will not despise  
So mean an offering.

"I'll give my soul to Jesus,  
And calmly, gladly rest  
Its youthful hopes and fond desires  
Upon His loving breast.

"I'll give my mind to Jesus,  
And seek in thoughtful hours,  
His Spirit's grace to consecrate  
Its early, opening powers.

"I'll give my strength to Jesus,  
Of foot, and head, and will;  
Run where He sends, and ever strive  
His pleasure to fulfil.

"I'll give my time to Jesus;  
Oh that each hour might be  
Filled up with holy work for Him  
Who spent His life for me!

"I'll give my wealth to Jesus:  
It is little I possess;  
But all I am and all I have,  
Dear Lord, accept and bless.

"And if, O dearest Jesus,  
Long life to me is given,  
Your missionary let me be,  
To win some precious souls for Thee,  
And win them through eternity

To praise Your name in heaven."

## Chapter 6.

### "Sickness: The Succor and Soothing of Spiritual Life"

"Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers."—3 John 2.

There is, perhaps, no picture of spiritual life in which its lights and shadows more strangely meet, or more harmoniously blend, than the one selected for the present chapter of our work. Certainly, there is no affliction in which sympathy, succor, and soothing, are more imperiously demanded; or, in which the grace and fruit of spiritual life are more conspicuous and rich, than the season and *suffering of bodily sickness*. Taking a comprehensive view of the subject, the circle to which this chapter will apply is illimitable.

Bodily disease, in some one or more of its complicated and countless forms, is a part of the sad inheritance bequeathed by our fallen Parent, of which every individual of the human race is heir. "All the world," says England's Poet, "is a stage, and all the men and women merely players," in the great drama of life, the scenes and issues of which are indescribably solemn and momentous! With equal truth, and by a figure yet more expressive, *the world may be described as a vast Hospital, of which all are patients*. But the present object limits our illustration of this subject to the "household of faith" sickness being one of the most common trials, as one of the most certain tests and helps, of spiritual life.

It was to such an one the beloved Gaius—the loving Apostle addressed the present epistle. How instructive and touching his words! "Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers." The connection of bodily disease with soul health will at once suggest itself to the thoughtful reader. In the history of the believer's spiritual life, physical disease and spiritual health would seem almost convertible terms—as closely united and as reciprocally dependent the one upon the other as the body and soul itself. *Sickness, viewed in the abstract—and apart from its hallowed results—is not a thing to be desired*. And Bunyan—that wise and holy man, who at one period of his life derived so great a blessing from a season of illness—was betrayed into the unwise act of asking God for such another discipline! Thus *a wise man may not always be wise*. The Apostle would seem to

have fallen into a similar mistake when three times be prayed for the removal of a dispensation of trial, the existence and prolongation of which, God saw the absolute necessity.

Oh, these examples should teach us to desire nothing—to seek nothing—to ask for nothing, less or more, than that God, in His infinite wisdom and goodness, knows we need, and sees fit to send. *It is not proper or wise to pray for any evil that good might spring from it.* Our duty, as our wisdom, simply is, to be still, committing all our concerns to the government of God, placing all our affairs in our Father's hands, who is too wise to err in counsel, and too good to be unkind in discipline. As our present object is *to show how promotive bodily disease and suffering are of spiritual life*, and to suggest such succourings and soothing as this most painful discipline demands, let us at once approach the subject.

We must remark, in the outset, that, in the sovereignty of God, sickness has often proved a means of conversion. Speaking figuratively, the sick-bed has become a converting-bed. Withdrawn by disease from the world's busy hum—its absorbing interests, its busy engagements, its ambitious hopes—to the quiet seclusion, the restless couch, the sleepless pillow, of a sick-room, the Holy Spirit approaches, and, amid the scene of pain and languor, of gloom and depression, commences that marvellous work of spiritual quickening which is to end in the soul's perfect and eternal health. And here the first pulse of spiritual life beats—and the first conviction of sin is felt—and the first tear of penitence is shed—and the first prayer for pardon is breathed—and the first look of faith is exercised—and the first thrill of love is inspired; and JESUS, that great Physician, has—as was His way when upon earth—made the body's physical disease the occasion and the channel of the soul's spiritual health.

Thus God, in the wonder-working of His sovereign grace, has brought that poor sinner to review penitentially his past life—to reflect thoughtfully upon his present condition—and to take a close, solemn, and realizing view of eternity! and in the agony of his soul to fly to Jesus—to look—believe and be saved; and from that sick-bed he has arisen a new creature in Christ Jesus—thanking God for his sickness through all time and through all eternity.

And who can fully describe the hallowed results of sickness in the experience of the advanced Christian? The quickening of his spiritual life—the deepening of the work of grace—the stirring up of the spirit of prayer—the recall of the

truant heart to God—the self-acquaintance and sin-loathing—and the increased sense of Christ's preciousness are sacred and costly results of the sanctified discipline of sickness.

That illness has, perhaps, rescued from an existing evil, or has averted a threatening one. It required this 'decoy of health' to raise you from some profound depth—or to rescue you from some yawning precipice—or to place you in some yet loftier position of power and usefulness in the Church and in the world. And so the sickness of the body has, by its sanctified influence, quickened and advanced the spiritual life of the soul—and thus has, perhaps, proved the greatest boon, the most salutary and precious visitation of your life!

We have observed that, there are few experiences of the Christian in which the lights and shadows of his spiritual life meet and blend with such remarkable and perfect harmony as in the hour of sickness. Here are bodily disease-physical languor-torturing pain-and extreme nervousness; and, for a while, all objects, temporal and spiritual, and all beings, the closest and the fondest, are viewed through a jaundiced and distorted medium—the mind is shaded, the heart unstrung—and shadows, many and dark, dance upon the walls of that lone chamber, and fall thick and fast around that pillow of suffering. Hard thoughts of God are cherished—wrong interpretations of His providence are indulged—it is the "fourth watch of the night, and Jesus has not come!" and Satan, taking advantage of bodily suffering, mental despondency, and the temporary absence of Jesus, is hurling a whole quiver of fiery darts at his poor, enfeebled, and dejected victim!

These are the *shadings* of the scene. But, are there no *lights* in the picture? no bright touches of the Artist's Divine pencil? Oh yes! many and brilliant! and all the more brilliant from the dark shadows which have so thickly penciled it, the effect of which has been to bring into bolder relief the great and essential features of the scene. Let us trace them.

The first bright light illumining the picture is the submission of the will. The conflict has been long and painful, the struggle terrible and severe—but, grace has conquered—God's will has triumphed! "Not my will, O my Father, but Yours be done," is now the music of the soul—the sacred anthem pealing from that sick pillow. Oh what a beauteous light is this—how pure, how brilliant! Angels, methinks, look down from heaven's glory to gaze upon the light of grace thus bathing that scene of suffering and languor. "The cup

which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

When Dr. Payson was asked by a friend, in a season of severe illness, if he could see any particular reason for the present dispensation, he replied—"No; but I am as well satisfied as if I could see ten thousand. God's will is the very perfection of all reason." Sublime reply! God's will—be it His permitting or His approving will—is the perfection of infinite wisdom, righteousness, and love; and therefore must do right, and cannot do wrong! Beloved, in your present *mystery of suffering* and season of languor, be your experience that of the pious Payson; yet higher and holier still—that of our Lord and Savior—"May Your Will Be Done!"

Oh, what words can describe, or imagery depict, the perfect peace, the sweet repose which, like the gentle dawn of light, or the soft zephyr of evening, will steal calmly over your soul the moment *the conflict of the will* ceases, and, in suffering and weakness, you are brought to "Lie passive in His hands, And know no will but His!"

The discipline of patience is another light blending with the shadows of sickness. No unimportant or untimely grace of the Spirit is this; the development and culture of which finds no school more appropriate, or discipline more effectual, than that of 'pining sickness.' The continuous endurance of unmitigated pain—the prolonged and deathly weakness—the failure of skill and remedies to promote a cure—the morbid irritability and fretting almost inseparable from the prolongation of suffering—and the remembrance of duties neglected, of affairs deranged, of expenses incurred—all conspire to render the discipline of patience the most needed and precious; and when attained, to shed one of the most luminous graces of the Spirit upon the shaded picture of bodily disease.

Patience is one of those flowers of the wilderness, springing up from the seed of heaven, which never grows so truly or blooms so lovely, as amid the sharp, cutting bursts of affliction. "The trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." "In your patience possess you your souls." "Lord, subdue my impatience and rebellion, and grant that, in this hour of pain and uneasiness, I may wait Your time and mode of recovery; and that, the true posture and acknowledgment of my soul may be that of Your servant David—'Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.'"

The strengthening and increase of faith constitutes one of the brightest lights in the picture of spiritual life—and nowhere does that light glow with a richer luster than on a sick-bed. It requires no small faith, beloved, fully to believe that *you are a sick one whom Jesus loves*. "Lord, he whom You love is sick," is a precious declaration, as applicable to you as it was to Lazarus. Love blew upon the *health that fades*; love permitted the *pain that afflicts*; love appointed the *disease that wastes*; love, and nothing but love, has done it all. "Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten. Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." Thus, when fever is consuming, and pain is torturing, and the nerves are quivering, and the mind is desponding, and the harpsichord of the soul hangs mournfully and silently upon the willow, it demands no little exercise of faith in the unchanging love, infinite wisdom, and righteous government of God to feel that it is all well!

But, this light shall not be lacking amid the deep shadows now gloomily draping the spiritual life of your soul. Faith shall triumph; for there is One in heaven "now to appear in the presence of God for us;" and, in virtue of Christ's present intercession, your faith, tried though as by fire, shall not fail, but shall rise superior to the slow process of decay, and grow brighter and stronger as the shadows fall, and strength fails—heaven thus opening and letting down such streams of glory around your sick and languid pillow as that faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," shall exclaim—"My heart and my flesh fails: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." Thus, "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

"But a brighter light playing amid these darkling shadows is—the sensible, manifested presence of Jesus in the sick chamber of the disciple whom He loves. Yes, He is there! He is there as the Refiner—watching and tempering with unwearied eye and infinite skill the furnace fire of the sufferer. He is there as the Shepherd—guarding this tempted one of His flock, that no power pluck it from His hands. He is there to succor with His grace, to soothe with His love, to illumine with His presence, to cheer with His voice, and to encircle with His everlasting arms, the feeble, suffering, fainting child of His heart. "Lo! I am with you always."

The glory brought to God by a long and lingering illness, eternity alone can fully reveal—and this is the brightest light of all, gilding and softening the shadows that drape the sick and dying-bed of a believer in Jesus. *The sick-bed,*

*the languid couch, of a saint of God is the most powerful and impressive pulpit in the land!* No sacred rostrum of the most eloquent preacher gives utterance to such a sermon as issues from thence! The assembly waiting upon its instructions is large! Children and families, friends and neighbors, the Church below and the Church above, intent upon the scene, are waiting and watching, as with bated breath, the *practical testimony to the reality and power of Christianity* as a divinely sustaining, soul elevating, death-conquering religion—to the comfort of the divine promises—to the faithfulness of God—and to the sustaining grace and human sympathy of Christ—borne from this touching and solemn stand-point of life. The meekness and patience, the submission to the divine will, and the animating hope of glory, witnessed in that scene of debility, restlessness, and pain, speak with an argument more convincing than an Apostle's reasoning, and with an eloquence and pathos more winning than an angel's voice.

God is glorified in the fires, and the Name of the Lord Jesus is magnified. Sick and suffering saint of God! your couch stands upon the borders of that blessed land, the "inhabitants of which shall no more say, I am sick." Shrink not from the near approach of the "last enemy!" his form is lovely—his voice is soothing—his dart is stingless—and his mission a mission of love—sent to open your cage and set your spirit free—free as the dove soaring to its dove-cote in heaven! "Oh that I had wings like a dove! then would I fly away, and be at rest."

"When languor and disease invade  
This trembling house of clay,  
It is sweet to look beyond our cage  
And long to fly away.

"Sweet to look inward, and attend  
The whispers of His love;  
Sweet to look upward to the place  
Where Jesus pleads above.

"Sweet to reflect how grace divine  
My sins on Jesus laid!  
Sweet to remember that His blood  
My debt of suffering paid.

"Sweet, in the confidence of faith,  
To trust His firm decrees;  
Sweet to lie passive in His hands,  
And know no will but His."

## **Chapter 7.**

### **"Bereavement, The Submission and Solace of Spiritual Life"**

**"Those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.... Wherefore comfort one another with these words."—1 Thes. 4:14,18.**

**We approach in the present chapter—and with a tremulous hand the delineation of a cloud shading for a moment the luster of spiritual life, than which, perhaps, none falls upon the heart so darkly and coldly as it—the shadow of bereaved grief. What believer has not experienced it? Our blessed Lord Himself—the Lord of life and glory—was not exempt from this cloud, veiling for the while the sunshine of His human soul. It was one of the bitter ingredients of His cup of woe, as the "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He tasted it, and WEPT!**

**"Friend after friend departs: Who has not lost a friend? There is no union here of hearts That finds not here an end." We speak of death as casting its cold shadow upon the brightness of spiritual life. Let us not be misunderstood. That the life of God in the soul of man can be exposed to anything beyond the passing shadow of death is an idea which no scripturally informed mind will for a moment entertain. Intrinsically immortal, it cannot possibly be endangered by a vicissitude so sad and destructive as this. It may, indeed, as we have already shown be subjected to serious reverses, its vigor may be impaired, its growth checked, its luster dimmed, but its principle is as deathless as its Author; its existence as enduring as eternity. "They shall never perish," is the assurance of Him in whom this life is hid, and with whose eternity it is indissolubly entwined. Let this be for the comfort of those who are of a "fearful heart," who are "ready to halt," and often exclaim, "I shall one day perish by the enemy!"**

**With the *shadow* of bereavement, however, the believer is familiar. And in devoting a chapter of this volume especially to its consideration, our object is not heartlessly to re-open wounds partially healed; but rather *to illustrate the hallowed influence of this dark shadow*, in evidencing the actuality and in heightening the luster of spiritual life—as planets appear more numerous, and shine more brilliantly, when the night grows more dark and dense. These pages find you drowned in grief at the loss of one dearer to you, it may be, than life itself; for willingly would you have sacrificed your own to save that**

one life; and now that you have lost it, "life is less sweet, and death less bitter." With what words—words that shall not aggravate, but rather sooth; not wound, but rather heal—can we approach you in this the hour when the shadow of death is upon your tabernacle, and the 'desire of your eyes' is removed as in a moment, and the music of your heart is hushed in the stillness of the grave? Shall we endeavor to raise your mind above this terrible calamity by reminding you that—"God Himself has done it"?

In the first stage of your anguish you are, perhaps, searching amid its *natural* and *proximate* causes for some clue that will unravel the mystery, and for some ray of light that will illumine the cloud. But you can find none! The more exclusively you deal with the immediate circumstances of the event, the more bewildered you are with its mystery, and the more profoundly you are plunged in its grief. But, listen to the voice which says—"I have done it. Be not afraid. It is Lord" Whose voice is this? It is the voice of your God and Father—the voice of Jesus your Elder Brother—the voice of the widow's God, and of the Father of the fatherless.

Thus you are led to look from the painful circumstances of your bereavement, from its more immediate and distressing causes which, perhaps, you are tempted to think you might by affection and skill have greatly mitigated or, by more forethought and arrangement have prevented altogether—and you are filled with self-accusation, and tortured with self-remorse. But all this is dishonoring to God, and unjust to yourself; ungrateful to Him, and distressing to you. But, listen to the voice which says—"I have done it!" "Be still, and know that I am God." Thus you are invited to *rise above the second causes, to the First Great Cause of your bereavement*; and view this dark shadow, and interpret this inexplicable event, and seek soothing in this crushing sorrow, by *recognizing in it the Hand of your Father* in heaven, whose divine wisdom can do nothing wrong, and whose infinite love can do nothing unkind. "God Himself has done it."

Another strong consolation in this hour of your grief is the truth that, this event—so dark and crushing—was among the 'all things' of the everlasting covenant, and that, therefore, it must be right. Not by accident or chance—for there are no such terms in the Christian's vocabulary has this bereavement transpired. Your mind, in its first transport of grief; finds it difficult to grasp this anchor of your tempest-driven soul; and you can see nothing but darkness and mystery in an event that veils—as with scenery of your life. But, oh, heed the precious truth with which the King of Israel—wading far deeper and darker waters than yours—controlled their turbulence, and floated safely and

serenely upon their topmost wave: "Although my house be not so with God; yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: and this is all my salvation, and all my desire, though He makes it not to grow." In this same covenant is ordered your present shadow—ordered by the *eternal purpose*, the *infinite wisdom*, and *divine love* of your covenant God. Allow this truth to have its full weight with your bewildered mind, and anguished spirit, and your broken heart will sob its sweet response—"IT IS WELL!"

Let us briefly trace the relation of this discipline of sorrow to the spiritual life of the soul. The hallowed influence is most salutary. Bereavement, *when sanctified by the Spirit* is a life-quickening Power. Death, natural, thus becomes the secret of life spiritual. Oh, how many an individual has traced his first pulse of spiritual life his first conviction of sin—his first close, realizing view of eternity his first prayer to God—to the hour of bereavement! Not the *beginning* of spiritual life only, but its *quickening* and *advance*, we trace to the hallowed discipline of bereavement.

It is often the season of *revived spirituality*. *Eternity is more solemnly realized*—the mind is more withdrawn from the affairs of the present life—the heart is disengaged from the shadows of earth; and the things that are seen, and temporal, give place to the things that are unseen and eternal. Oh, see that this is one hallowed fruit of your present sorrow! *God has sent it to revive His work in your soul* to draw off your thoughts and affections from those earth-born things which have too much absorbed the vitality and impaired the vigor of your higher life your life for God—for heaven—for eternity!

Bereavement is a time of *prayer*. If ever the solace of prayer is felt, *the preciousness of the Mercy Seat* is realized, it is now. Your heart, stricken with grief, turns to God. The sad and startling discovery is made—unsuspected while the light of God was upon your tabernacle—that too far and too long your heart had roved from God—your communion had grown distant, and your affections chilled—and, shyness of God and leanness of soul have supervened, as the natural consequence of your remote and careless walk. But now the shadow of death has darkened the sunshine of your life: *the destroyer* has invaded the sanctuary of your home, and has plucked a cherished flower from your bosom—or, has broken a 'strong and beautiful staff' at your side—or, has laid low a venerable oak spreading its branches beneath the roof-tree of your dwelling—and your heart, bowed with grief, now bows itself in prayer to God, and the spiritual life of your soul throbs with a newer and more

quickened pulse. Oh hail that as a heaven-sent blessing—robed though it be with the habiliment of mourning—which wakes the slumbering spirit of prayer, and sets you upon the work of calling upon God! The human idol is removed, but the Divine Savior takes its place!

Not the least blessing accruing from your bereavement is, the wholesome discipline to which it subjects the will. There is, perhaps, no affliction in which our will is brought into such collision with God's will as that of bereaved sorrow—the attitude of our will being either that of stern opposition to, or of sweet acquiescence with, the divine will. Before the conflict terminates, long and painful has been the struggle. Oh, it is so hard to yield what was most dear; to give back to God a loan, the possession of which seemed intertwined with every fiber of the heart, and the existence of which had become essential to life itself! But the issue of the conflict, prolonged though it be, has proved most blessed: God's will has prevailed! Tracing a Father's hand and a Father's heart—His all-wise and righteous government appointing the event, and His infinite and unchanging love sending it—your bewildered mind and bleeding heart bows in submission, with the words of Christ breathing from your lips—"My Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, Your will be done."

Oh holy and blessed discipline! It is the highest attainment of grace this side of heaven! Angels and glorified spirits, bending from their thrones in glory, must view the struggle with the most intense interest, and celebrate the victory with a new anthem of praise! *And thus, in this submission of your will to God, this terrible calamity has issued in such a development and growth of your spiritual life as leaves its reality without a doubt, and its luster without a cloud. And, as music sounds the sweetest in the still night, and as flowers, when bruised, breathe their richest perfume—so, your night of weeping and crushing grief has issued in the sweetest song of your bruised spirit, and in the holiest fragrance of your spiritual life.* Oh, who can adequately portray the perfect calm—the hallowed repose—the ecstatic joy, when the Divine will is supremely enthroned in the soul, and the sad heart nestles itself—as a child weaned of its mother—in the very bosom of God!

A more intimate acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ may be placed high up in the list of blessings springing from the season of bereaved sorrow. We had almost placed it at the very summit. *To know Christ more personally—more experimentally—more confidentially—must be the loftiest and most blessed attainment to which the spiritual life can aspire.* But how is He truly to

be known, except in the school of trial and suffering? In the varied perplexities and afflictions of life, how naturally we turn for counsel and sympathy to those who have trodden our path, have drank of our cup, and thus have become our "companions in tribulation." How truly will this apply to the Lord Jesus as to no other being in the universe! Do we confront a *mountain of difficulty*—tread we a path of trial—quaff we a cup of sorrow to which our Savior was an utter stranger?

How appropriate, then, your resort to Him in this special affliction which has befallen you—this *shadow* that descends so somberly and frigidly upon your heart! What being in the universe ever came into such close contact with Death as our adorable Lord? He "tasted death" that every man that is, silently, quietly, calmly tasting its bitterness, might repair to Him for succor, sympathy, and deliverance.

*And now that the cup trembles in your hand* composed either of the bitterness of your own anticipated and approaching end, or, the, perhaps, greater bitterness of parting by death from one so loved—to whom can you turn with such confidence of faith, and with such assurance of sympathy, and for such supplies of strength, as to Him who wept at the grave, died on the cross, and is now alive, to gild with the bright sunlight of His love, the dark shadow of your sorrow?

"Those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Does your departed one 'sleep' in Him? Then, 'sorrow not as those who have no hope.' The body sleeps, but the soul is awake, and has awakened perfected in the likeness of God! They are done with toil and conflict, with sin and sorrow, with sickness, suffering, and death, are in the immediate presence of, and are forever with, the Lord. Would you beckon them back to earth? Oh, no! not for myriads of worlds! They will not, nor would they, come again to you; but you shall go to them when the 'little while' is past; and, reunited on the other and sunnier side of the River, shall spend eternity together in love that will know no chill—in light that will know no shadow—in fellowship that will know no weariness—in song that will know no interruption—and in service that will know no end!

"All is not lost that's passed beyond our keeping;  
Light is not gone though sight be dim with weeping;  
Sweet voices still are sounds of love repeating,  
Though heavy ears scarce catch the tones retreating.

**"Wave after wave, in endless circles flowing,  
Breaks on the shore to which our barks are going;  
Our parted treasures, wafted there before us,  
Tomorrow's dawn may safely all restore us.**

**"The gales of heaven, their odorous freshness bringing,  
With swifter speed our battered hull, are winging;  
And clouds, that hide the sun from our discerning,  
Quench not the distant beacon's steady burning.**

**"Brief is the space that from our loved divides us,  
Thin is the mist that from their haven hides us,  
Soft hands on high are beckoning signals holding,  
White arms wait patient for our heart's enfolding.**

**"There, where from sight our blessed ones have vanished,  
There, where our Father dear recalls His banished,  
There lies the home that knows no removing,  
There lives the love that never needs proving.**

**"There, dawns are pure, and purple lights unfading,  
On happy brows dull sorrow casts no shading;  
There gentle souls of coming ills are fearless,  
And eyes once drooping, shining now, and tearless.**

**"There all, and always, dwell within His keeping,  
Who sleeplessly cares while our care is sleeping;  
How can we dare to falter in our praying,  
Their perfect bliss against our sorrow weighing?**

**"Yet while we cease unwise and vain complaining,  
We have but loaned—our title still retaining;  
Love has a lien that time nor death can sever,  
Our own are ours, forever and forever!"**

## **Chapter 8.**

### **"Retirement, The School and Discipline of Spiritual Life"**

**"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Mark 1:35.**

**We have already remarked, in the progress of this work, that the leading characteristic of the present age is far removed from anything approaching monastical life. On the contrary, the prevailing feature pervading all classes of society is that of *extreme activity and feverish unrest*. The spirit of the age is**

anything but in sympathy with the philosophy of Diogenes, or favorable to the culture of asceticism. This, however, must not be considered a cause of lamentation, since it is not for this species of retirement for which we plead! Limiting our remarks to what is termed 'the religious world,' it is in this the narrower and more sacred circle we repair for the illustration and enforcement of our present subject. *The spirit of religion, as it now prevails, has caught the infection of the spirit of the world, and is far remote from that holy isolation and sacred retirement, so essential and helpful to the development and progress of the spiritual life of the soul; apart from which it must, necessarily, become attenuated in its character and checked in its growth.* In devoting, therefore, a brief chapter to the especial consideration of this subject, we feel that we are but aiding the advancement of that religious life of the soul, to the promotion of which the present volume is devoted.

The words which form the basis of our remarks, unfold one of the most interesting and instructive incidents in the life of Christ. Our Divine and adorable Lord felt the absolute necessity—as man—of *retirement for repose, meditation, and prayer.* With extreme simplicity and conciseness the incident is thus recorded: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed to a solitary place, and there prayed." The day preceding was one of incessant and unwearied employment in healing the afflicted and tormented resorting to Him for relief. For we read that, "At evening, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and those who were possessed with devils." The sun had gone down—the shadows of evening had gathered around Him—His benevolent work was done—and exhausted in body, yet more wearied in mind and agonized in spirit by the scenes of suffering and grief He had witnessed—He retired to His couch but not to rest. Bearing with His jaded frame the feeling of the infirmities He had witnessed and relieved, sleep had, in all probability, been a stranger to His pillow; "and in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

From this touching example of our blessed Lord in retreating from the society of men—even that of His disciples—to seek in retirement and solitude, in meditation and communion, that strength and energy and fortitude so essential to the accomplishment of the work His Father had given Him to do, teaches every believer one of the holiest and most instructive lessons of the Christian life. To its consideration let us address our thoughts, blended with the silent prayer that, an example so illustrious, a duty so essential, and a privilege so holy, may, with the divine blessing, greatly promote the health

and advancement of the life of God in the soul of the reader.

*Spiritual life is eminently fitted for religious retirement. It is a plant of Paradise—a flower of Eden—which only really grows in solitude. It is from Heaven—it derives its nourishment, as its existence from God—with God it deals, and to God its aspirations ascend. Our Lord emphatically declared that, "His kingdom was not of this world." And as his kingdom in his saints is composed of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," the inference strictly logical, that the growth of this kingdom which is in the saints, cannot possibly be advanced by a world with which it has no sympathy, and from which it is so essentially alien. "For, what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness? and what concord has Christ with Belial?"*

Thus we find Him who is Essential Life, and who is the spiritual life of the regenerate, retreating from the multitude who pressed so eagerly around Him—and even, as we have remarked, from the more genial companionship of His chosen apostles—and, threading the mountain ravines, seeking in their hidden recesses and profound solitudes, that quietude, stillness, and sequesterment for private meditation and prayer so essential to the repose of His spirit, the replenishing of His strength, and the accomplishment of His mission.

Follow Him on the memorable night which preceded His crucifixion—see Him pass over the brook Kedron into that lonely garden where he was wont to resort with His disciples; and, amid its sylvan walks, its leafy groves, and solemn shades, behold Him prostrate on the ground engaged in agonizing prayer, imploring strength and succor and comfort from His Father for the terrible 'hour' so near at hand! Oh, if He, the *Source* of our spiritual life, needed this its school and discipline, the lesson thus taught, is invested with tenfold import and interest to all who would mold their religious life on that of their Divine-human Exemplar!

A study of the lives of the *Old Testament saints* will also supply an impressive illustration of the necessity of religious retirement for the culture of spiritual life. See *David*, the king of Israel, retreating from the pomp of his court, and from the cares of his kingdom, to seek retirement for the purpose of holy communion with God. And on no occasion, and in no place, did his magic harp vibrate with sweeter music, send forth more pealing anthems of praise, or tremble with more soft and pensive notes of sorrow and contrition, than when *alone with God in the solitude of the mountain, or in the seclusion of the*

*cave.*

Look at *Daniel*—interdicted by the decree of Darius from praying to his God, his life threatened in consequence—"entering into his chamber, and kneeling upon his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God." And who will doubt the connection of that retirement for communion with the Invisible One, with the faith and fortitude which enabled him to confront, with such dignity and calmness, the appalling terrors of the lions' den?

Such, too, was the holy habit of the *primitive* and *puritan Christians*. Persecuted and expatriated, "wandering in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth"—hunted like wild beasts—interdicted from worshipping God beneath their own sweet vines—driven to the shelter of the mountains, and to the solitude of the forest—oh! how sweetly did the voice of prayer and praise rise from beneath the overshadowing rock and the deep ravine, as from those *secret sanctuaries* ascended the rich, inextinguishable incense of holy devotion to the skies!

What has been, in all ages of the world, and in all dispensations of God's Church, a powerful aid to spiritual life, still is—*the hallowed influence of religious retirement*. It is necessary, in the first place, for self examination. No wise or prudent merchant will allow his yearly accounts to pass without a close and careful scrutiny as to his exact financial condition—balancing accurately his gains and losses—and taking an intelligent account of his present position. And no true Christian will be less anxious to know the exact state of his soul: *ascertaining where he has made progress, and where he has lost ground; and how matters of such infinite moment stand between God and his soul*. But absolute retirement is essential to this self-scrutiny. There must first be *time made for the work*—then *disassociation* from the too fond and flattering opinion of others—and then the 'calm retreat and quiet shade' appropriate to a process so spiritual and solemn, demanding mental examination the most profound, and *no presence but that of God and the soul*.

How can this close anatomy of the heart this honest dealing with self—this faithful turning over the page of conscience, be properly and effectually done, except as we retreat from our business, our profession, and our families, and accompany Isaac at eventide to the quietude of the fields to meditate, or follow Jesus to the solitude of the mountain to pray?

This holy retirement, too, is absolutely essential to the devout and careful

study of the Word. The nourishment of spiritual life is the word of God. The Bible is the divine granary from where is extracted the fine wheat—the "incorruptible seed" by which the soul is fed and nourished. The divine life can only grow as it is *sustained* and *strengthened* by that which is divine. It seeks its native food. *Fruit from the "Tree of life" alone can meet its requirements.*

*Hence the sickly life exhibited by many religious professors! The frivolous and frothy literature of the day—of which, alas! the press is so prolific—is exerting a most baneful influence upon the spiritual life of many Christian professors. In numberless cases the exaggerated fiction—the sensational story—the high wrought romance—is supplanting those works of the religious press contributed by the most intellectual, highly-cultivated, and spiritual minds in the literary and religious hemisphere. The effect of this upon the Christianity of the age must be deteriorating and disastrous in the extreme. How far the prevailing taste for this vapid, worldly literature—thus lowering the intellectual and impairing the spiritual powers of the mind—may contribute to the religious scepticism of the age, is a question of the profoundest gravity. What, then, is the great antidote to this far-circulating moral poison? We unhesitatingly answer—the private and devout study of God's word. We believe that the Bible can only be spiritually and experimentally understood as the student retreats from the arena of religious controversy and biblical criticism into the privacy of his chamber, and there, as upon his knees, invoking the aid and teaching of the Holy Spirit.*

On one occasion our Lord gave utterance to a parable, the interpretation of which was obscure to the minds of His disciples to whom it was addressed. We then read that, "When they were ALONE, He expounded all things to His disciples." The crowd had dispersed the voices were hushed—the excitement had subsided—and "when they were alone"—in the calm, quiet privacy of that moment He interpreted the parable, and opened their understanding, that they might understand the meaning thereof. Thus He teaches us now.

It is not always in the crowd, and amid the voices of conflicting interpreters, or even from the pulpit, that the literal and spiritual meaning of the Scriptures is understood; but, when we withdraw into the privacy of the closet, or the solitude of the sick-chamber, He explains to us, and causes us to understand, the mind of the Spirit in the Word as at no other time and in no other way. And it may be that for this end, the Lord has set you apart by sickness or bereavement that He might set you apart both for Himself and for the deeper and more spiritual teaching and understanding of His truth. "The

**Lord has set apart the godly for Himself "-and to this end, He sets them apart from all others.**

**And, oh! in the quietude of that separation—in the stillness of that hour—you may have closer communion with God—know more of Christ and understand more of the truth, than at any previous period of your spiritual life! "And when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples."**

**'Alone' now with yourself—'alone' with God—'alone' with Jesus—'alone' with the Spirit—oh how clear, how precious, and how comforting does the word of God become! and we exclaim with Jeremiah—"Your words were found, and I ate them; and Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." And with David—"How sweet are your words unto my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Oh, it is thus when sequestered from man, and only with God, we excavate the gold and extract the honey from that "word which he has magnified above all His name."**

**Closely allied to this, is the necessity of religious retirement for the purpose of fortifying the spiritual and devout mind against the doctrinal errors, the ecclesiastical superstitions, and the infidel assumptions of an age like ours. How much there is in all this to divert the Christian from the maintenance and culture of personal piety—from a close, vigilant care of the health and growth of his higher, his spiritual, life! It is the strong current of Infidelity which we have in the present day more especially to breast. *Superstition* appeals not to the intellect, but to the senses; not to the mind, but to the passions. *Infidelity* on the contrary, professes to assail the mental citadel of the soul, and, consequently, its range of operation is wider—its proselytes more important, and its effects upon society more far-reaching and disastrous. The infidelity of the age is insinuating and plausible. It is not what it once was, ignorant and gross, bold and defiant; stalking abroad, stamped with features hideous and vile, blasphemous and repulsive. Modern religious scepticism, on the contrary, is in close alliance with learning and refinement, with place and power—civil and ecclesiastical; it walks abroad attired in silk and lawn, assuming the attractive and insinuating form of liberality and fashion; of expediency and worldly policy.**

**Oh how necessary it is that the man of God should frequently withdraw from these bewitching and seductive wiles of the enemy, that he may become more conversant with God's word—examine these wiles in its unerring light—and, from the armory of divine truth draw those heaven-tempered weapons by**

which he shall "be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand!"

The limits of this chapter will only allow us to refer at length to the paramount importance of seasons of retirement, for the sacred and solemn purposes of devout meditation and communion with God. It was for this purpose our Lord rose a great while before day, and retired to a solitary place. His oratory was the mountain's side—the deep ravine, overhung with dark, beetling crags—studded with ancient forests whose profound stillness alone was broken by their Divine Creator's voice of wrestling, agonizing prayer! There must we repair—tracking His holy footsteps—would we promote the life of God in our soul!

Prayer alone is the atmosphere of spiritual life. The word of God is its food, prayer is its atmosphere. As bread alone could not possibly sustain our natural life, apart from air, so the Word—divine and precious as it is, must be combined with a constant and close walk with God. Especially is this necessary after severe engagement in the active duties and privileges of religion. Our Savior presented a striking and instructive illustration of this in His own beautiful and consistent life. The whole of the day, and far into the night, preceding His retirement to the solitude of the mountain, He had been engaged in relieving human suffering, in curing disease, and in casting out demons; and before the day dawned—a great while before—He rose from His lowly couch, and "departed into a solitary place, and there PRAYED."

Oh, what a lesson learn we here! Of what moment it is that, after a day spent in religious activities—the mere machinery and scaffolding of the Christian Church—we should, in lowly imitation of the Savior, retreat to the hallowed solitude of our closet, and there commune with God—confess the failure and infirmity of our doings—and lave the 'feet' afresh in the blood that cleanses from all sin—even the iniquity of our holy things! "When you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly."

Oh the precious privilege of thus being alone with God!—the privilege of confessing all sin unveiling all sorrow—revealing all need—confiding every fear and feeling of the heart and from that hidden source drawing renewed supplies of grace and strength, counsel and comfort, to go forth and battle afresh with the temptations of the world, to discharge more efficiently the duties of our calling—and to struggle more manfully with, and to bear more

patiently under, the trials, disappointments, and sorrows of life.

**"Come apart, and rest awhile." Such is the loving, considerate invitation of Christ to all His servants! How needful, too, is the season of sacred sequesterment from the world—for refecation upon, and preparation for, the world of glory and blessedness, of purity and service, for which we hope, for which we long, and to which we hasten! Everything here—comparatively—is unsubstantial, unreal, and evanescent! "All, all on earth is shadow; all beyond Is substance!" Do we long to be more heavenly? we must commune more closely with Heaven. Do we desire to be more spiritual? We must deal more frequently with the Divine. Realizing more vividly our mystical resurrection with Christ, we shall "set our mind on things above, not on things on the earth," "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."**

**We plead not for a monastic, or a conventual life; the life of the ascetic, or the recluse. Far from it! Monasteries—Convents—Retreats, are as opposed to the genius, as to the teaching, of Christianity. The gospel inculcates no such religion as this. But, we do plead for *occasional sequesterment* from the business of the world, *and from the active duties of religious life*, for the important and solemn purposes of trimming afresh the waning lamp of our Christian profession; for prayer, contrition, and confession; and for filling our urn with the pure water of life that flows fast by the oracles of God, and down from the crystal river proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb.**

**It is in retirement, too—separated from those we most fondly love, and from the sympathy for which we most deeply sigh—that our divinest and richest consolation is often found. No condition of our humanity so perfectly harmonizes and shrinks from publicity—sorrow delicately loves retirement as the stricken gazelle nurses its wound alone. "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." Thus, beloved, the Lord may now be dealing with you. He is gently leading you in a solitary way—into the separation and loneliness of the wilderness—that He might speak to your sad, and bind up your bleeding, heart.**

**It was in the wilderness that David's hands were strengthened in God—it was in the wilderness that Jonathan ate of the honey—it was in the wilderness that the Israelites drank of the smitten rock—and it is still in the isolation and solitude of the wilderness of the world, and of all creature good, that God,**

**"the God of all comfort," comforts those that are cast down, through the word, meditation, and prayer, imparting that *mental repose and soothing of spirit* found only as the soul lies down by the 'still waters' of a hallowed and devout retirement.**

**If, then, the Lord is now gently alluring you into the separation and solitude of the wilderness, be assured it is but to speak words of comfort and strength to your sad and lonely heart; and the solitary wilderness shall echo with your music, and the dreary desert shall bloom and blossom as the rose. There is no comfort so divine, no consolation so sweet, as that experienced in the depth of the world's solitudes—alone with God! "And Jesus departed into a solitary place, and prayed." And who can describe the divine soothing, strength, and comfort which His human heart, broken and crushed with sorrow, found in that solitude of fellowship With His Father?**

**Oh it is here, in the wilderness, your sorrow is understood, your grief is fathomed, your sympathy and soothing are experienced. It is here, with Christ alone, we feel our independence of human sympathy, rise superior to creature love, realize the grandeur of our nature, the sublimity of solitude, and the wealth of consolation, in being wholly, blissfully, and eternally swallowed up in God!**

**And yet there are moments, doubtless, when you are oppressed with a sense of isolation and loneliness, and sigh for a more enlarged enjoyment of 'the communion of saints' than as yet you have experienced. How much there is that sunders even saint from saint! Alas! that it should be so! Doctrine separates you from some—ecclesiasticism from others—or, perhaps, a more advanced stage in the divine life—outstepping in your spiritual knowledge and Christian experience many who but linger in the rear—and thus you are as "a pelican in the wilderness," as "a sparrow upon the house-top."**

**But this solitary way in which you walk has its especial and divinely-sent mission. There are experienced in it blessings found in no other path. Apart from its molding influence upon your religious character, it throws you more entirely upon God, and brings you into closer personal sympathy with one of the most touching and instructive periods of the Savior's history when, checking the rising sense of loneliness which stole over His spirit, He exclaimed—"And yet I am not alone; for my Father is with me." Oh count it a great honor when you can descry the footprint of Christ, and say—"Here my Lord and Savior walked, and here would I walk!"**

May the practical effort of this meditation be the stirring of you up to seek more retirement from the world, that you may grow in grace and in fitness for heaven. *Make time for the cultivation of personal and private religion, for prayer and meditation, and for the spiritual study of God's word,* even though, like your Savior, you may be compelled to 'rise up a great while before day.' Let not your religion be an out-of-door religion—a Sunday attire—a professional robe! Let it be a religion which—while visible to every eye like the glow-worm, shines the brightest when no eye sees it but God's!

Is the time of your departure at hand? Are the shadows of life's evening falling fast and darkling around you? Oh let there be a solemn pause between time and eternity—between earth and heaven! Drive not the shadowy affairs of time into the dread realities of eternity! Seek a renewed baptism of the Spirit—a deeper seal of your acceptance in the Beloved—a fresh looking to, and taking hold of, Christ—*casting from you all good works and all bad works, and running into Jesus, hiding you from them all in a fissure of the Rock cleft for you!*

"Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,  
From strife and tumult far;  
From scenes where Satan wages still  
His most successful war.

"The calm retreat, the silent shade,  
With prayer and praise agree,  
And seem by Your sweet bounty made  
For those who follow Thee.

"There, if Your Spirit touch the soul,  
And grace her mean abode,  
Oh, with what peace, and joy, and love,  
She communes with her God!

"What thanks I owe You, and what love,  
A boundless, endless store,  
Shall echo through the realms above  
When time shall be no more!"

## **Chapter 9.**

### **HOLINESS, The Fruit and Flower of Spiritual Life**

**"Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Phil.2:1**

**The great end of God (His own glory being the greatest of all) in imparting spiritual life to the soul, is its ultimate and complete restoration to the Divine Holiness. Sin had effaced His image and destroyed His work in man. The vessel—when scarcely had it passed from the hands of the Divine Artificer, a beautiful and perfect reflection of His moral and intellectual Being, was broken—shivered as into a thousand atoms—by the Fall. But, "known unto God are all His works from the beginning." Foreseeing the catastrophe, and from eternity anticipating its result, God revealed to the fallen creature man—pending his expulsion from Paradise—His purpose and mode of restoration to the nature and the image he had lost.**

**To the arch-destroyer of His work God thus announced it: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." How worthy of, and how like God, was this—how worthy of His love, and how like His holiness! "The vessel that He made of clay was marred in the hand of the Potter: so He made it again another vessel, as it seemed good to the Potter to make it." It is to this *restoration of the Divine holiness* we devote our present meditation.**

**The spiritual life of the regenerate is a holy and a fruit-bearing life. Sown with "the incorruptible seed of the word," and embodying the germ of the Divine nature, the fruit it bears is, "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Thus the passage—of which this chapter is a brief exposition—applies in a greater or less degree to every regenerate soul—"Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." The *Fruit*—the *source* of the fruit—and the *end* thereof—are the points which these remarkable words suggest for our meditation.**

**It is, "the fruit of righteousness." The soul of man is a fruitful tree, and there are two species of fruit which it bears—the fruit of *unrighteousness*, and the fruit of *righteousness*. In its natural, or unregenerate condition, the fruit it bears is, the fruit of sin. It must in the nature of things be so. Every seed has its own body, and the fruit it yields corresponds with its nature. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." It is a fixed law of nature that, like produces like. And if men would but bring the common sense to bear upon things spiritual, that they bring to bear upon things natural, no truth would be more self-evident to the mind**

than that, the *consequences* of the life they live must be in harmony with the *character* of that life.

**"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Solemn words! Oh that they may sink deep into the inmost recess of the soul of each sin-loving, sin-living reader of this page! You, O man! you, O woman! are sowing for eternity! If to the flesh, then of the flesh will be the harvest—a harvest of woe-blighted and blasted-fit fuel for the fire that knows no quenching. "He will gather the wheat into His garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Oh, with a destiny so appalling; with a Hell so awful and so endless as the certain result of your present life of self and sin, of worldliness and folly, of irreligion and atheism, staring you in the face, how can you remain so careless and insensible? "What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God!" Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for, as you *sow* in the life that now is, so shall you *reap* eternally in the life that is to come. But, it is with the "*fruits of righteousness*" we have, at present, more especially to do. And what are they? A few only can we name.**

What a holy fruit is repentance for sin! It is the first-fruit which the trees of righteousness bear—"Repentance toward God." If, as we approach the tree, we discern the feeble, gentle putting forth of the bud of godly sorrow for sin—the conviction which the Holy Spirit imparts, the contrition which He alone inspires—then are we assured that life-divine, spiritual life—has begun in that soul; and this is its first and holiest fruit. Oh, what an guaranty—the first-fruits—of a golden harvest is that tender conviction of sin, that falling tear, that self-abasement, that broken and contrite heart! "To this man will I look," says God "even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word." If God "has made your heart soft"—if the Holy Spirit has made you 'sorry for your sin'—oh, despise not this first sheaf of the harvest! *No sinner will ever repair to the sinner's Friend—no soul will ever betake itself to the Divine Physician—but he who, by the Spirit, is convinced of sin and its fatal disease. The first step to Jesus is measured by the first tear of godly sorrow for sin.* "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

And what a precious "*fruit of righteousness*" is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This fruit may well be termed by the apostles—'Precious faith.' Faith is the moral alchemy that transmutes everything into gold. Where FAITH is, there

is every divine blessing; it is the root and foundation of all holiness. It turns the curse into a blessing—trials into mercies—the water of affliction into the wine of joy—poverty into wealth—weakness into might—and from the eater brings forth food. It is the true philosopher's stone, that transmutes the basest metal into the most precious; builds with the tears of penitence a lovely bow of hope—resplendent and unfading—springing from the lowest base on earth to the highest arch of heaven.

A fruit, then, so marvellous and precious, must be a "fruit of righteousness." *Faith is a holy and sanctifying grace.* "Purifying their hearts by faith." It travels with sin to the Savior—with guilt to the blood—with emptiness to the fullness—and in all its conscious, clinging weakness, leans upon the Almightyness of the Almighty God. In view of a grace of the Spirit so mighty—of a "fruit of righteousness" so precious—we marvel not that the Apostles should pray—"Lord, increase our faith." That prayer—the holiest breathing, as the most lovely flower and precious fruit of spiritual life—shall be answered, that blessing shall be given, by whomsoever offered, by whomsoever asked.

Sorrow-laden, guilt-burdened soul, only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and your burden shall fall, and your guilt shall vanish! Simple, unquestioning faith in Jesus saves—saves now, saves to the uttermost, and saves forever—the very chief of sinners. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

The very *trial*, too, of faith is precious. There is, perhaps, no grace of the Spirit which its Divine Author and Finisher more frequently or more surely subjects to the process of trial than the grace of faith. The more real and valuable the ore, the more the smelter subjects it to the crucible. Untried, untempted faith, is uncertain and unsifted faith. And, oh, how imperfectly are we aware of the small degree of our faith until God tests it, and tests it, perhaps, as by fire.

When the stream upon whose bosom we softly glide is undimmed by a shadow and unruffled by a wavelet, we can speak fluently, and preach eloquently, and write forcibly of the nature and properties of faith—its strifes and its trophies—but, when God gauges it by some heavy trial, fathoms it by some deep line of sorrow, then we discover the littleness and shallowness of the principle which we thought so strong and so profound. How then do we shrink from the excision of the *knife* that prunes it—from the *flame* of the *furnace* that tries it—from the roughness of the *sieve* that winnows it!

**We asked the Lord to let us come to Him upon the waters, and we came but when the winds arose, and the waves surged and foamed around us, our faith trembled, our courage failed, and beginning to sink, we cried, "Lord, save, I perish!" Still, the trial is more precious than gold, though it be as by fire. 'The sin that does most easily beset us' is unbelief—"an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." And to eliminate this dross from the gold—to purge this leaven from the wheat—is the great and holy end of our Father in every circumstance that tries, in every temptation that assails, in every cup His own hand presses to our lips. Oh precious, God-glorifying faith, that hangs upon God—that places all its affairs into His hands—that trusts His veracity, and that takes Him at His word!**

**And what a lovely flower of spiritual life is love! This is, perhaps, the most divinely-assimilating grace of the Spirit "God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." Filled with the fruit of love—love to God—love to Christ—and love to man, we grow God-like. We dwell in the Infinite Ocean of love and the Infinite Ocean of love condescends, in measure, to dwell in us. And just as, sometimes, we read a volume in a word, even so we experience an ocean in a drop! The spiritual life blooms with no fairer flower, and yields no sweeter fruit than this.**

**The religion of Christ is the religion of love. The "glorious gospel of the blessed God" is the proclamation of love; and the most astounding and most precious announcement floating upon its standard is the declaration—"God SO LOVED the world that He gave his only begotten Son." It is by love God seeks to overcome the evil of our nature, to dislodge the enmity of our mind; and thus He "overcomes evil with good." "The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which He has given us," is the great constraining principle of the gospel, the motive-power of the soul. "The love of Christ constrains us;" that is, bears us onward upon its resistless current, to do and to endure, to obey and to suffer, just as He appoints. Oh to be filled with this divine-like fruit of righteousness!**

**The great need of the Church is LOVE—LOVE to the Lord, and LOVE to the disciple; LOVE to the Master, and LOVE to the servant; LOVE to Christ, impelling us to an unreserved obedience to His commands—willing and ready to be where, and to be what, pleases Him best and glorifies Him most; and LOVE to His people, constraining us to 'wash the feet of the saints,' if so be we might serve them and glorify Him.**

But the "trees of righteousness"—like the "Tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God" bear "all manner of fruit." "The fruit of the Spirit is LOVE, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." What a lovely fruit is Christian sympathy and benevolence! How distinctly and touchingly our Lord has defined it, while He foreshadowed its final reward! "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom of heaven prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave me food: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: naked, and you clothed me: I was sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came unto me." What a rich cluster is here! Who, as he views it, is not self-abased that his religion has been so barren of fruit so precious? Have we, in any measure, been thus fruitful?

A Christian poet, long gone to his reward—but who, though dead, still speaks, has left so expressive and beautiful a versification of these words of our Lord, that, though lengthy, we are tempted to transfer it to these pages, as presenting, perhaps, the most true and touching illustration of Christ's meaning to be found; and which will, doubtless, be as new, as acceptable, to many of the readers of this volume.

"A poor wayfaring Man of grief  
Has often crossed me on my way,  
Who sued so humbly for relief,  
That I could never answer Nay.  
I had not power to ask his name,  
Where He went, or where He came;  
Yet there was something in His eye  
That won my love, I knew not why.  
"Once, when my scanty meal was spread,  
He entered: not a word He spoke.  
just perishing for lack of bread,  
I gave Him all. He blessed it, broke,  
And ate; but gave me part again:  
Mine was an angel's portion then;  
For, while I fed with eager haste,  
That crust was manna to my taste.  
"I spied Him, where a fountain burst  
Clear from the rock: His strength was gone.  
The heedless water mocked His thirst;

He heard it, saw it hurrying on.  
I ran to raise the Sufferer up:  
Thrice from the stream He drained my cup,  
Dipped, and returned it running over:  
I drank, and never thirsted more.  
"Twas night the floods were out; it blew  
A winter hurricane aloof.  
I heard His voice abroad, and flew  
To bid Him welcome to my roof  
I warmed, I clothed, I cheered my guest,  
Laid Him on my own couch to rest;  
Then made the hearth my bed, and seemed  
In Eden's garden while I dreamed.  
"Stripped, wounded, beaten, near to death,  
I found Him by the highway-side;  
I roused His pulse, brought back His breath,  
Revived His spirit, and supplied  
Wine, oil, refreshment: He was healed.  
I had myself a wound concealed,  
But from that hour forgot the smart,  
And peace bound up my broken heart.  
"In prison I saw Him next, condemned  
To meet a traitor's death at morn.  
The tide of lying tongues I stemmed,  
And honored Him midst shame and scorn.  
My friendship's utmost zeal to try,  
He asked if I for Him would die;  
The flesh was weak, my blood ran chill,  
But the free spirit cried, 'I will!'  
"Then in a moment to my view  
The Stranger darted from disguise;  
The tokens in His hands I knew  
My Savior stood before my eyes!  
He spoke, and my poor name He named:  
'Of Me you have not been ashamed;  
These deeds shall your memorial be:  
Fear not! you did them unto Me.' (James Montgomery)

And what holy fruit is the mortification of indwelling sin—the conquest of the world—the successful resistance of Satan—the sanctification of your

intellectual powers—the consecration of your worldly substance—and the dedication of your influence, time, and service to Christ—in the vindication of His truth and the promotion of His kingdom: thus "walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

But, we now reach an important enquiry—From where does the believer's fruitfulness come? The passage we are expounding supplies the answer—"Fruits of righteousness, which are *by Jesus Christ.*" "*From me* is your fruit found." In these wonderful words the secret of all holy fruitfulness is revealed. Our blessed Lord, as it were, reproduces them—"I am the Vine, you are the branches: he that abides in me, and I in Him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing." Thus we are taught the most vital lesson of spiritual life—that, from Christ all our real holiness is derived.

How are we to understand this? We answer: We are fruitful of righteousness, in consequence of the atoning work of Christ. His obedience and death laid the foundation of our spiritual life, and from that spiritual life all holiness springs. We live, because Christ died. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it die, it brings forth much fruit." Our Lord, by this expressive simile, illustrates the precious truth. He was that "grain of wheat" that died. The process is a remarkable unfolding of the wisdom and goodness and power of God in creation. The substance of the grain dies, leaving the life of the germ untouched; and the substance which thus dies, forms the first nourishment of the tender germ by whose nutriment it germinates until it reaches sufficient vigor to extract its support entirely from the earth.

Thus the Lord Jesus taught that, though His body died, His essential life—the vital germ—remained; and, in process of time, He arose from the grave, "the first-fruits" of a rich and glorious harvest of countless souls saved, and eternity replenished with His praise and glory. Now, it is in virtue of this "grain of wheat," this dying and this living, that the divine nature becomes, as it were, engrafted upon our fallen nature; and thus we are "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ."

In virtue, too, of our spiritual and personal union with Christ, we became fruitful. Apart from this engrafting into Christ, there can be no true evangelical holiness. *Spiritual life derives its fruit, as its existence, solely from Christ.* He Himself has taught us this truth in that beautiful simile of the Vine

and the branch just quoted. As the scion is grafted into the stock and partakes of the vitality of the tree, and so yields fruit according to the nature of the stock, so the believer, engrafted into Christ, the living and true Vine, brings forth fruit corresponding with the nature, doctrine, and example of Christ, to whom he is thus united.

It is in virtue, too, of the *grace* that Christ, imparts, and of the *strength* that He gives, that the soul is filled with the fruits of righteousness; for, without Him we can do nothing—nothing! All our resources are in, and all our supplies are from, Him. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell;" "of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace"—grace following grace, as wave follows wave. "The life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."

Behold, my reader, the source of your holiness! You can do nothing without Christ; but with Christ strengthening you, you can do all things. There is no daily cross you may not cheerfully carry—no deep-rooted sin you may not effectually vanquish—no fiery temptation you may not successfully resist—no self-denying service for God you may not willingly do—no fond idol you may not immediately surrender—no cup of sorrow you may not submissively drink—with Christ strengthening, succouring, helping you. "My grace is sufficient for you." Oh, live daily, hourly upon Christ! Make large drafts upon His immeasurable, unfathomable fullness. The 'Well is deep.' Your resources in God your supplies from Christ—are as immeasurable as infinity, as inexhaustible as Deity.

Thus you will be "filled with the fruits of righteousness." Do not despond and despair that your soul is so barren, your spiritual life so sterile. Take your emptiness, take your unfruitfulness to Christ in confession, prayer, and faith; and in the very act of so traveling to Him—telling Him all, and asking all—the withered branch will bud, the drooping plant will revive, the faded flower will bloom; and sweet will be your invitation to the Lord—"Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." Quick and loving will be His response—"I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey." Oh how rich now the fruit, and how fragrant now the flowers, of spiritual life! Not Eden in its pristine loveliness bore fruit so golden, or bloomed with flowers so sweet. Let your invocation be urged, until Heaven responds to your prayer—"Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden,

**and eat His pleasant fruits."**

**The great and holy end is, "the glory and praise of God." God does nothing and permits nothing that shall not terminate in the manifestation of His glory. He will be glorified in the eternal condemnation of the condemned, as He will be yet more glorified in the eternal salvation of the saved. "God has made all things for Himself. yes, even the wicked for the day of evil." "I have created him for my glory." Heaven and hell will both yield their tribute to His great Name! Not a sinner lost but will glorify forever His Justice and Holiness, His Truth and Power! Not a sinner saved but will yield Him a richer and more lasting revenue of glory, honor, and praise than the creation of countless worlds greater far than this.**

**Oh, let this thought animate us in our moral struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil—that, every infirmity we conquer, every sin we avoid, and every temptation we foil—every fruit of righteousness we bear—and every flower of holiness we cultivate—enriching and adorning our spiritual life—yields to God more glory and praise and honor than the creation of the universe. "Herein in My Father Glorified, That You Bear Much Fruit; So Shall You Be My Disciples."**

**Accept the afflictive discipline of God as graciously and wisely designed but to increase the fruit and flower of your spiritual life. "He prunes it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Nothing will He remove but what has impeded your spirituality and usefulness; nothing will He send but what shall promote them. The vine-dresser, as he examines his vinery, may descry here and there a branch or a twig that appears thrifty and ornamental, but which itself bears no fruit, and excludes the sun from those that do. These he is compelled to remove. "Every branch in me that bears not fruit, He takes away."**

**And thus God removes our idols—and withers our gourds—and dries our springs—and lops off our branches, only that our spiritual life might be quickened, our heavenly mindedness increased, our usefulness promoted, and His great Name glorified. Oh, Divine Husbandman! prune and refine and sift me as seems best to Your godly wisdom, may I but bear more fruit of grace on earth, and in Heaven bloom with fruit immortal, to Your endless glory!**

**Not to wound you, lovely vine,  
But your strength to foster,  
That on these fair boughs of thine,**

**Richer fruits may cluster.**

**Skillful hands must prune and train,  
Guiding hands must lift you;  
Soon will you reward my pains,  
Beautiful and thrifty.**

**Not to grieve you, heart of mine,  
Does your dear Lord chasten;  
But His wayward, trailing vine  
To His strength would fasten.**

**Not a leaflet would He crush,  
Not a tendril sever  
Only teach you how to grow  
Fair and good for ever.**

**Do not droop, my gentle vine,  
At my rugged dealing;  
Soon will summer's breath of balm  
Bring you growth and healing.**

**Murmur not, O stricken heart,  
At your loving Master;  
You shall know His purpose wise  
In the bright hereafter.**

## **Chapter 10.**

### **The Coming of the Lord, The Crown and Consummation of Spiritual Life**

**"Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1Peter 1:13.**

**Could this volume close with a theme more appropriate to our subject, or more animating to the believing soul, than the present—the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the crown and consummation of the Spiritual life of His saints? There are three revelations of the Lord Jesus spoken of in the Scriptures, with each one of which our spiritual life is essentially connected. His first revelation is His coming in the flesh to accomplish the salvation of**

**His Church. His second, is His spiritual revelation in His saints. "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." His third revelation is that which is now to engage our thoughts. "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."**

**Such is our present subject—the Second Coming of Christ to complete and crown the spiritual edifice of His kingdom in His people. Between His first and second Coming there are strong points of analogy, as there are of contrast. These, however, will incidentally appear in the progress of our subject. We have only to premise—to prevent disappointment—that we are now concerned with the *fact*, and not with the *mode* of our Lord's Coming. Our object is simply to treat the subject, not so much in its relation to the structure of prophecy, as in its connection with the perfection and crown of the spiritual and glorious life of the Church—the 'grace'—that is, the glory—that is to be 'brought unto it at His revelation.' The Coming of the Lord in His glory, is the Hope—"the blessed Hope"—of the Christian Church, even as the coming of the Lord in His humiliation was the long-predicted and looked for hope of the Jewish Church. A Savior to come has in all ages and dispensations been the expectation of God's people. The terms which set forth this doctrine are decided and impressive. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those who believe." "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I ask God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a notable and instructive fact that, very rarely is the event of the believer's death—in other words, the believer's going to Christ—employed in the sacred writings as an argument to holiness, or an incentive to preparation; while, on the other hand, the Appearing of the Lord—or Christ's coming to him—is constantly set forth as a motive to diligence and watchfulness, comfort and prayer.**

**But let us not be misunderstood. We are far from looking with a cold and indifferent eye upon the fact of the Christian's going to Christ. It is indescribably blessed, and ought never to be foreign to our thoughts. "To die is gain." "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." "Having a desire to depart and be with Christ." The thought that, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, my 'soul may be as the chariots of Amminadab,' bearing me into the presence of the 'King in His beauty' is a solemn and sanctifying one. The death of the believer is a covenant mercy, as much in the covenant of grace as**

any covenant blessing. "All things are yours—death." It is therefore the privilege of the Christian to die; and he may be assured of this, that, as his death is in the covenant, so the covenant has provided for all the circumstances and exigencies of the impressive event. 'Grace' dying grace—will be brought unto him in death, even as 'grace' glorifying grace—will be 'brought unto him at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'

But, the pole-star of the believer is the Coming of the Lord. Thus is he taught to look above and beyond death—to Him who "has abolished death," and His coming as the "Resurrection and the Life" of all who believe in Him. The adaptation of this doctrine—the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ to the constitution of our being, will appear obvious to every individual who has studied the philosophy of human nature. Is death, we ask, an object of dread to the natural mind in general? Far from it! With no event in human history is man more familiar—none does he less fear—and for none is so little preparation made—as death. It is a fact patent to every mind that men brave death in almost every form from considerations the most puerile and insignificant. Challenge their bravery, insult their people, and they will hasten to vindicate the one at the cannon's mouth, and resent the other at the point of the sword. Death is not the 'king of terror' to such. Thus, we may urge it as a motive to conversion with all the fervor and eloquence we can command, and yet fail to inspire one alarmed feeling, or rouse one serious thought.

But, change the theme—hold forth the Second Coming of the Lord to judge the quick and the dead—portray the august scene—the great white throne—the descending judge—the unfolding books—the trumpet sound—the graves opening—countless myriads crowding up to the judgment seat—the solemn decision—the shrieks of the wicked, rising far above ..... the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds. "Mountains! rocks! fall on us!"—and you have touched a chord of feeling, and have unsealed a fount of thought, which the most vivid and impressive presentation of death would never have effected.

But let us direct our thoughts to this august event as it relates to the final glory of the saints. Not to speak prophetically, what are some of its most prominent and impressive features? The Coming of the Lord will be Personal. With the Personality of Christ we deal too faintly. Oh, it is not with the gospel of Christ or with the Church of Christ—or with the Ordinances of Christ or with the Ministers of Christ—we have mainly to do; but with CHRIST HIMSELF! "Come unto ME, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I

will give you rest," is the gracious invitation. Oh truth most divine! oh privilege most precious! that teaches me to repair—not to a creed, or to a dogma, or to a system—but, to a PERSON: that Person God in my nature! One like myself—a personal Savior, and personal Friend—"touched with the feeling of my infirmities."

Now such will be the revelation of Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. It will not be a spiritual, but a Personal, revelation of our Lord. The angels, at His ascension, preached the Personal Coming of Christ. "This *same* Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." Blessed hope! That same Jesus—in the same form will come Himself to raise His saints, and present them as a "glorious Church" to His Father.

But, oh, how changed! No mock-majesty invests Him now! no thorn-crown is upon His head! no reedy-scepter is in His hand! no look of anguish shades His brow! He comes in His proper personal glory, and before His face the heaven and the earth flee away!

The revelation of the Lord will be Visible. "Every eye shall see Him." Magnificent spectacle! Appalling thought!—magnificent to those who loved, confessed, and served Him here below: appalling to those who, living and dying as Balaam, take up his melancholy lamentation—"I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not near." Oh how the imagination droops its wing in the attempt to soar to the splendor and sublimity of that spectacle—Christ visible to every eye!

Pause, then, for a moment, and contemplate, with the eye of faith, or if you have no faith, with the eye of imagination, this tremendous scene. Look at that point, far away in the ethereal regions, where the gradually lessening form of our Savior disappeared from the gaze of His disciples, when He ascended to heaven. In that point see an uncommon, but faint and undefined, brightness just beginning to appear. It has caught the roving eye of yon careless gazer, and excited his curiosity. He points it out to a second, and a third. A little circle soon collects, and various are the conjectures which they form respecting it. Similar circles are formed, and similar objections made, in a thousand different parts of the world. But conjecture is soon to give place to certainty—awful, appalling, overwhelming certainty. While they gaze, the appearance, which had excited their curiosity, rapidly approaches, and still more rapidly brightens. Some begin to suspect what it may prove; but no one

dares to give utterance to his suspicions. Meanwhile the light of the sun begins to fade before a brightness superior to his own. Thousands see their shadows cast in a new direction, and thousands of hitherto careless eyes look up at once to discover the cause. Full clearly they see it; and now new hopes and fears begin to agitate their breasts. The afflicted and persecuted servants of Christ begin to hope that the predicted, long-expected day of their deliverance is arrived. The wicked, the careless, the unbelieving, begin to fear that the Bible is about to prove no idle tale. And now fiery shapes, moving like streams of lightning, begin to appear indistinctly amid the bright, dazzling cloud which comes rushing down as on the wings of a whirlwind. At length it reaches its destined place. It pauses: then, suddenly unfolding, discloses at once a great white throne, where sits—starry, resplendent, in all the glories of the Godhead—the Man Christ Jesus. Every eye sees Him; every heart knows Him.

Too well do the wretched, unprepared inhabitants of earth now know what to expect, and one universal shriek of anguish and despair rises up to heaven, and is echoed back to earth. But louder, far louder, than the universal cry, now sounds the last trumpet; and far above all is heard the voice of the Omnipotent, summoning the dead to arise and come to judgment. New terrors now assail the living on every side, no, under their very feet, the earth heaves as in convulsions; graves open, and the dead come forth; while, at the same moment, a change, equivalent to that occasioned by death, is effected by Almighty power on the bodies of the living. Their mortal bodies put on immortality, and are thus prepared to sustain a weight of glory or of wretchedness which flesh and blood could not endure. Meanwhile, legions of angels are seen, darting from pole to pole, gathering together the faithful servants of Christ from the four winds of heaven, and bearing them aloft to meet the Lord in the air, where He causes them to be placed at His own right hand, preparatory to the sentence which is to award to them everlasting life.

Christian, if you would gain more and greater victories over the world than you have ever done, bring this scene often before the eye of your mind, and gaze upon it until you become blind to all earthly glory. He who gazes long at the sun becomes unsusceptible of impressions from inferior luminaries; and he who looks much at the Sun of Righteousness, will be little affected by any alluring object which the world can exhibit.

It will follow from this exceedingly graphic description that the Coming of the Lord will be a visible spectacle—a spectacle seen by every eye; but especially

and more gloriously so to the enraptured vision of the saints. "Behold, He comes With clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him." This is not a minor feature of the august event; it is one which the believing mind delights to anticipate.

A Savior *seen* is an object both to faith and sense. A believing sight of Christ is the spiritual life of the soul. Until He is thus seen, He must be an unknown and an unapplied Savior. The uniform teaching of the Bible is consonant with this truth. "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Responsive to the divine invitation of the Old Testament is the evangelist's invitation of the New. "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." And all this harmonizes with the writing of the Apostles—"Looking unto Jesus."

Such is the action of faith. Looking to Christ is believing in Christ. It was by a look—a look of faith—that the serpent-stung Israelite was healed. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Oh what a guilt-removing, heart-cheering, soul-saving truth is this! Penitent sinner! a look of faith at Jesus will bring an immediate and free salvation to your soul. *However distant the Object or dim the sight, one glance of Christ is life!* Sensible of the moral virus circulating through your entire being—made to know the plague of your own heart arrived at the end of all human remedies—like the poor woman in the gospel, having "spent your all on physicians, and are nothing bettered, but rather grown worse"—now behold the Lamb of God! look and live!—look and be forever healed of your plague!

All your merit is in Christ all your salvation is in Christ: all your help is in Christ. "Christ is all, and in all," of your hope of heaven. And this salvation is yours on one condition only—that you receive, and do not *merit* it; that you accept, and do not *purchase* it. It is the free—unpurchased and unpurchasable—gift of God. "By grace are you saved." "It is of faith that it might be by grace." "By the works of the law shall no man living be justified." Oh, if you, a poor sin-laden soul—longing to find rest will but cast overboard the oar of your own doings, with which you are 'toiling in rowing' to get to heaven, and accept in faith the finished work of Christ, that weary soul of yours soon would find the rest for which it sighs!

But this first saving sight of Christ is the commencement of a series of yet

clearer, more sanctifying and assimilating views of the same *ineffable Object*. The history of spiritual life—and this is one of its brightest 'lights'—is a continuous "looking unto Jesus." It is a looking to Jesus, and *learning*; looking to Jesus, and *admiring*; looking to Jesus, and *loving*; looking to Jesus, and *obeying*; looking to Jesus, and *suffering*; living and dying, still looking unto Jesus, until the dim but ravishing vision of earth is changed for the full, beatific vision of heaven!

This will be the "grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ"—the unveiled sight of our glorified Redeemer. "We shall see Him as He is." To have seen Him by faith in His humiliation was a marvellous, soul-saving spectacle: but, to see Jesus in His glory—our true Joseph—"taken from prison and from judgment," and highly exalted with 'a name which is above every name,' coming in the clouds of heaven, escorted by angels, encircled by saints, and on His head the jeweled diadem of the universe, oh, this will be a spectacle, transcending and eclipsing all others! What a sanctifying effect should this hope have upon our mind! what a molding, unearthly influence should it exert upon our life! "Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He (Christ) is pure." Thus the doctrine of the Coming of the Lord is one of the most practical, as one of the most consolatory, truths of the Bible. It is impossible fully to believe it, much less to receive it in the heart, and be insensible to its Christ-endearing and Christ-assimilating power. Surely the believer, whose heart is in heaven where Christ its treasure is, will be in frequent and close communion with his absent Lord; and the Church, as a Body, 'looking for and hastening unto the Coming of the Lord,' will long for the cry that shall break the stillness of the midnight hour—"Behold, the BRIDEGROOM comes; go out to meet Him!"

Lord, may I be found waiting and watching and praying for Your appearing! To see You, be this the ardent desire, the highest ambition of my soul: and whether I cross the river to come to You, or You do cross the river to come to me, let my lamp be daily trimmed and brightly burning, lest, "coming suddenly, You find me sleeping."

We can only allow ourselves a passing glance at two events consequent upon the Coming of the Lord, which must ever be radiant with hope, and replete with a soothing and sanctifying power, to the Christian mind—the first, the believer's Resurrection. This is "the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is termed "the First Resurrection," a thousand years intervening between it and the Second. "The Lord Himself

shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Could we fix your mind upon a blessing connected with the Coming of the Lord more glorious and precious than this?

The Resurrection of Christ was the crown and consummation of His humiliation; the Resurrection of the Christian will be the crown and consummation of his glory—the edifice of his spiritual life will then receive the 'top-stone, amid the shoutings of grace, grace unto it!' "Blessed is the pen"—so wrote an aged saint nearing her heavenly flight "and blessed the heart that indites it, that gives one cheering view of the mighty blessings that await the sleeping dead! The dust of the Christian reposes in quietude until the voice of Jesus rouses the slumberer perfected in His own beauty. Happy Christian! your journey may be a thorny one, and 'the last enemy' may be even now approaching; but, courage! the time is coming when this identical body—re-united to the soul—will be raised a glorious body—the soul increasing in knowledge, beauty, and bliss, through the countless ages of eternity. Oh the glory and the happiness of that moment, who can fully describe! Lord, increase my faith!" (Mary Winslow)

Such is the animating influence of a simple faith in the hope of the Resurrection, and such the spiritual breathing which that hope inspires! Who would not strive after holiness, "if by any means"—by the most strenuous exertions—he might, with the Apostle, "attain unto the resurrection of the dead;" and, with all who have departed this life in the Lord, have part in the First Resurrection. The re-union and the recognition of the saints stand high up in the catalogue of blessings synchronizing with this revelation of Jesus Christ.

One of the saddest and bitterest sorrows of earth is the separation, by death, from those we love. Oh the pang of receiving the last sigh—of catching the last look—of listening to the last word—of one who was to us in life more precious than life itself! But, the gospel unveils the hope of a re-union, and even before the risen body—of a recognition of all the holy dead! "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.... Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Who longs not for the "grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ"?

"Oh thrilling thought, that I shall be

**With Him who shed His blood for me,  
Where nothing from Him can sever!  
Where I, with sainted hosts above,  
Overshadowed by the Holy Dove,  
Shall banquet on His boundless love,  
And know that word—'forever'.  
"Oh thrilling thought, to see Him shine,  
For evermore to call Him mine!  
With Heaven-all Heaven-before me;  
To stand where angel myriads gaze,  
Amid the illimitable blaze,  
While He the Godhead full displays  
To all the sons of glory."**

**And now will come the crown and consummation of our spiritual life!  
Unshaded by a cloud—uneclipsed by an object—it will shine forth as the sun  
in its meridian glory, ever deepening, ever widening with its new orbit of life  
and knowledge, of happiness and splendor. No *shadows* will dim it no doubts  
will disturb it—no fears will ruffle it—no sin will taint it now; but, lost in the  
Infinite Ocean "Where flows this river down to us," it will be swallowed up in  
God, and "God Shall Be All in All!"**

**Be watchful; be diligent be holy; for the Coming of the Lord draws near! The  
events flow transpiring in the world's history indicate its approach. The  
"signs of the times" are pregnant with profound and solemn significance. The  
'fig-tree' blossoms! The Jews are hastening to their own land—the Turkish  
power is drying up—the nations of Europe are arming—earthquakes, and  
judgments, and rumors of war are, to the intelligent and observant eye—if not  
proximate signs of the Lord's Coming—yet are indices of a most ominous and  
significant character! "When these things begin to come to pass, then LOOK  
up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near." Be this our holy  
and constant attitude—under all circumstances looking up, waiting and  
watching our Lord's appearing.**

**"Look up! when all around is bright,  
And sunshine gilds each day;  
When every earthly, sweet delight,  
Is strewn along the way.  
"Look up! and bless the God above,  
Let gratitude arise;**

**Forget not Him, who in His love  
Your every need supplies.**

**"Look up! when all is darkness round,  
Your heart with grief oppressed;  
When sorrow's darkest shadows drown  
The joys within your breast.**

**"Look up! in earnest, faithful prayer  
All is in mercy given;  
Your every grief, your every care,  
Is meted out in Heaven.**

**"Look up to Jesus! who has shed  
His precious blood for thee;  
Oh, raise your weary, drooping head,  
And His salvation see!**

**"Look up! for strength and heavenly might  
Upon your Savior wait;  
And He shall make your Shadows Bright,  
And crooked places straight.**

**"Look up! when death is hastening on  
When life is almost over;  
The victory then will soon be won,  
And joys for evermore!**

**"Look up! by steadfast faith and see  
The land of holy rest,  
Where saints through all eternity  
Shall be with Jesus blest.**

**"Look up! and hail your Coming Lord  
He comes to call for you;  
To burst your chain-to break your cord,  
And set His prisoner free!"**

**"Until the Day Break, and the Shadows Flee Away, I Will Get to the  
Mountain of Myrrh, and to the Hill of Frankincense."**