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THE INNER LIFE

by Octavius Winslow

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Preface

It was the dying observation—penned the day preceding her departure—of one of the most amiable and intellectual of her sex (Jane Taylor)—"Did you know what thoughts I have now, you would see as I do, that *the whole business of life is preparation for death.*" In contrast with this weighty sentiment of the dying Christian, we place the solemn testimony of the dying worldling—"I have all my days," said he, "been getting ready to live, and now I must die!" What an affecting declaration is this! And how true of the great mass of our fellow immortals—all planning, and toiling, and preparing to live—*yet how few preparing to die!* To place before such the subject of real life, and to awaken in their minds a consideration of its nature, and a sense of its solemnities, is one design of the following pages.

But they address themselves more especially, and at length, to a smaller, though by no means a limited class—the religious professors of the day. The subject of his work suggested itself to the author's mind during a visit to the metropolis. His close communion, at that time, with what is called the 'religious world,' forced upon his mind the painful conviction, that while religious profession was greatly on the increase—and never more so in the higher classes of society than at the present—vital godliness was in proportion on the decline; that while—to speak commercially—the quantity of religion

was increasing, its quality was deteriorating. The vast number whose Christian profession was avowed—whose religious character was recognized—whose theological creed was sound—whose conversation was pious—whose sacred observances were rigid—whose benevolence was applauded—whose zeal was admired—who prided themselves upon their eloquent preacher, and their favorite religious author; but who yet were living in the world, and living as the world, and living to the world—deeply and painfully saddened him. The question frequently arose in his mind—"Where is the salt? Where are the really living souls? Where are those who know what true conversion is? Who are following Christ, and are living for God? Where are the possessors of the true spiritual life?" Alas! the world has become so like the Church, and the Church so closely resembles the world; the one so religious, and the other so carnal; an unskilled eye may be deceived in searching for the essential points of difference. Nor this alone. Even among those in whose souls it would be wrong, no, impossible, to deny the existence of spiritual life, how few are found who really seem for themselves to know it!

On his return to his flock, the author—in his usual extemporaneous mode of address—unburdened his mind from the pulpit. The result, in a calmly written and greatly amplified form, is now, with lowliness and prayer, presented to the public. Deeply sensible as he is of the many imperfections of his performance, he yet does not regret its undertaking. The hours of holy, tranquil thought stolen from the pillow, abstracted from the attractions of the domestic circle, and the engagements of a pleasant pastorate—and devoted to the preparation of this work, have been to his own mind inexpressibly soothing and solemn: may a kindred influence—tenfold in its measure—rest upon the spirit of the reader!

The object of this simple treatise—as its title sufficiently intimates—is to unfold the nature, the relapse, and the recovery of the spiritual life of the believer. The work may with propriety—and with God's blessing, may with profit—be placed in the hands of the unconverted, to whom much of its contents are particularly and earnestly addressed. It chiefly, however, appeals to the conscience of the 'religious professor', and is designed *to meet the general character of the prevailing Christianity of the day*. But the experienced and matured Christian is not overlooked in the discussion of the subject. The temptations—the conflicts—the trials, and the various fluctuations of feeling, through which he passes in his difficult but blessed way to his heavenly rest, together with his encouragements, consolations, and hopes, pass under review in these pages. To the prayers of the living soul the work is commended—to

the blessing of the Holy Spirit of life it is committed—to the glory of the Triune God it is dedicated. And should He condescend to own it, to the quickening of any dead soul—to the reviving of spiritual life in any believer—to the confirmation of any wavering, or to the comfort of any tried child of God—to Him shall be all the praise. Amen.

Leamington, January, 1850.

The Nature and Manifestations of the Inner Life

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

It is impossible for a truly spiritual mind to resist the conviction, or close the eye to the fact, that *inward vital godliness* by no means keeps pace with the *profession* of Christianity which almost universally prevails. A more alarming sign could scarcely appear in the moral history of the world. If the prevalence of a *nominal Christianity* be one of the predicted and distinct characteristics of the approaching consummation of all things—if it is to be regarded as the precursor of overwhelming judgments, and as immediately ushering in the coming of the Son of man, then who can contemplate the *religious formalism* which so generally exists among professing Christians without a feeling of sadness, and the excitement of alarm? Were we duly affected by the spectacle which we see around us, of multitudes substituting signs for things, symbols for realities, an *external profession* of Christ for the indwelling of Christ, *the mere semblance of life* for life itself, how should we, sympathizing with man, and jealous for the Lord, sigh and cry, as those who have God's mark upon their foreheads.

It seems but proper that, in a work called forth by this alarming state of the professing Church, and designed to lay open that state in some of its scriptural and figurative delineations, we should commence with *a consideration of the nature, properties, and actions, of the spiritual, or inner life, of the quickened soul*. It is a self-evident truth, that the absence of spiritual life is but the existence of spiritual death. There is no link that unites the two conditions. A soul is either living or dead. The artificial representation of life is no more real life than a painted sun is the real sun, or than a corpse under powerful galvanic shocks is a living body. The reader will therefore at once perceive that, in entering upon an inquiry into this state of religious formalism, it is of the greatest moment that we have a clear and distinct idea

of that inward, deep, spiritual life, apart from which, with all his intellectual light, orthodox creed, and religious profession, a man is "dead in trespasses and in sins." I know of no words which more distinctly and beautifully bring out this subject than those of the apostle, in referring to his own experience—"I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

The first great truth which the passage suggests is, that **EVERY TRUE BELIEVER IN THE LORD JESUS IS THE SUBJECT OF AN INWARD, SPIRITUAL LIFE—"I live."** It is altogether a new and supernatural existence. The old and the natural state, as we have just affirmed, is a state of death. Death! it is a solemn word! Dead! it is an awful state! And yet how difficult to bring a man to a real belief and conviction of this his condition! And why? because he is dead. No argument, no reasoning, no persuasion, however profound or affecting, can convince a corpse that it is lifeless. Equally impossible is it to convince the natural man that his soul is spiritually dead.

The dissolution of the body is not the destruction of the soul. The perishing of the material is not the annihilation of the immaterial. Death is not the end of our being; no, it is not even an interruption of it. It is an event that befalls a man at a certain point of his existence, but it is a change of place and circumstance only, involving the suspension of his immortality—no, not for a moment. How infinitely more momentous, solemn, and appalling, then, is that spiritual state of man which links his future destiny to all the certain horrors of the second death! O that this might be a quickening truth, startling, an arousing reflection to the unconverted reader! What grand impertinences, what, mere non-entities, do all other considerations appear in contrast with this! You may lose and recover again everything else, but your soul. This, once lost, is irrecoverably and forever lost. And have you never paused and reflected upon the probability of your losing it? You are at this moment the subject of spiritual death; in the strong language of the Savior you are condemned already; and the last enemy, with the funeral pall of your soul in his hands, stands prepared to enshroud you within its dark folds, at the word of Him "in whom you live, and move, and have your being." Does not this affect you, alarm you, arouse you? Spirit of God! who but yourself can quicken the soul? Who can convince of danger, convict of sin, and lead to Christ, but You? Speak but the word, and there shall be light. Touch but the soul, and it shall awaken. "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

But, with regard to the great truth before us, we again remark, that every truly gracious man is *a living soul*. He is in the possession of an inner, spiritual life. He can appropriate to himself the words of the apostle—"I live." The first important characteristic of this spiritual life is its engrafting upon a state of death. The words of the apostle will explain our meaning, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God," "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." Addressing the believing Colossians, he says, "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The simple meaning of these declarations is—the living soul is dead to the *law* of God as an instrument of life, and to its *works* as a ground of salvation. It is dead, too, to the curse and tyranny of the law, and consequently to its power of condemning. To all this, the soul made alive by Christ, is dead with Christ. Thus is it most clear that a man, dead already, though he originally is, in trespasses and in sins, must morally die before he can spiritually live. The crucifixion with Christ must precede the living with Christ. *He must die to all schemes and hopes of salvation in or by himself, before he can fully receive into his heart Christ as the life of his soul.* This spiritual mystery, this divine paradox, the natural man cannot understand or receive; he only can, who is "born of the Spirit."

Then let me ask and press upon you the personal and searching question, has the law of God been brought into your conscience with that enlightening, convincing, and condemning power, as first to startle you from your spiritual slumber, and then to *sever you from all hope or expectation of salvation in yourself*? If so, then will you know of a truth what it is, first, to die before you live. Dying to the law, dying to self, you will receive him into your heart who so blessedly declared, "I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly." Thus is the life of God in the soul engrafted upon a state of death. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live."

The second view of this inner, spiritual life is, its supernatural character. It is *above* nature, and therefore all the power of nature cannot inspire it. Nature, we admit, can go far in imitating some of its characteristics, but nature cannot create the essential property or principle of this life. Nature can produce a semblance of faith, as in the case of Simon Magus; of repentance, as in the case of Judas; of hearing the word with joy, as in the case of Herod; it can even appear to taste the heavenly gift, and feel the powers of the world to come all this, and much more, can nature do, and yet be nature still. Here its power stops. There is that which it cannot do. It cannot counterfeit the indwelling of Christ in the sinner's soul. It cannot enable a man to say, "I live,

and Christ lives in me." This infinitely transcends its mightiest power. *Spiritual life, then, springs not from nature, and is therefore produced by no natural cause or means. It is from God.* He it is who calls this new creation into being, who pencils its wonders, who enkindles its glories, and who breathes over it the breath of life. It is God's life in man's soul.

Thus the true Christian is one who can adopt the expressive and emphatic language of Paul, "I live." Amplifying the words, he can exclaim, "I live—as a quickened soul. I live—as a regenerate soul. I live—as a pardoned sinner. I live—as a justified sinner. I live—as an adopted child. I live—as an heir of glory. I live, and I never lived before! My whole existence until now has been but as a blank. I never truly, really lived, until I died! I lived, if life it may be called, to the world, to sin, to the creature, to myself; but I never lived by Christ, and I never lived to God."

O tremendous truth! O solemn thought! for a soul to pass away into eternity without having answered the great end of its creation—without having ever really lived! With what feelings, with what emotions, with what plea, will it meet the God who created it? "I created you," that God will say, "for myself, for my glory. I endowed you with gifts, and ennobled you with faculties, and clothed you with powers second only to my own. I sent you into the world to expend those gifts, and to employ those faculties, and to exert those powers, for my glory, and with a view to the enjoyment of me forever. But you buried those gifts, you abused those faculties, you wasted those powers, and you lived to yourself and not unto me; and now to yourself, and in everlasting banishment from my presence, you shall continue to live through eternity."

Come from the four winds, O breath of the living God, and breathe upon the dead, that they may live! Avert from the reader so dire a doom, so fearful a catastrophe! And permit none, whose eye lights upon this solemn page, any longer to live to themselves, but from this moment and forever, gracious Savior! may they live for you—their solemn determination and their sublime motto this—*For me to live is Christ.*

But we are now conducted to a great and a most precious truth—THE INDWELLING OF CHRIST IN THE HEART AS CONSTITUTING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE BELIEVER. "I live; yet not I, *but Christ lives in me.*" It is not so much that the believer lives, as that Christ lives in the believer. I in them. The Lord Jesus is *essential life*. Were it not for this, the doctrine of indwelling life would be but a dream. With what authority of tone,

and with what sublimity of language, has he affirmed this idea, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Can thought be more grand, or words be more intelligible? "With You is the fountain of life."

Couple together these two passages, and what demonstrative proof do they afford to the doctrine of the essential Deity of the Savior. How could he be the Resurrection and the Life, and in what sense the Fountain of Life, but as he was *essentially God*? No comparison can be instituted between finite being, however exalted, and Infinite. It has been truly said, that all finite beings are infinitely more destitute of life than they are possessed of it; and this will be the case forever. Standing by the grave that entombs the soul dead in sin, *Essential Life* exclaims—"I AM the Resurrection and the Life—Come forth!" and in a moment the soul is quickened, and rises to newness of life. What but Deity could accomplish this? Take off your shoes from your feet, for you stand upon holy ground! Jesus is the True God, and *Essential Life*. The smallest seed, the most loathsome insect, the lowest creature on earth, and the mightiest angel, and the brightest saint in heaven, draw their life from Christ. All life—vegetable, animal, rational, spiritual—emanates from him, the Fountain of Life to all creatures. What a mighty and glorious Being, then, is the Son of God, the ceaseless energy of whose essence prevents each moment, every thing that has life from being destroyed, and from accomplishing its own destruction! Who would not believe in, who would not love, who would not serve such a Being? Who would not crown him Lord of all? The spiritual life, then, of the believer is the life of Christ, or rather, "Christ who is our life" in the soul. The Scripture proof of this is overwhelming. "I in them," are words declarative of this truth by the Savior himself. Again, the apostle thus exhorts—"Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?"

Alas! how is this precept overlooked! How few are they who rightly and honestly examine themselves! They can examine others, and speak of others, and hear for others, and judge of others; but themselves they examine not, and judge not, and condemn not. To the neglect of this precept may be traced, as one of its most fruitful causes, the relapse of the inner life of the Christian. *Deterioration, and eventually destruction and ruin, must follow in the steps of wilful and protracted neglect, be the object of that neglect what it may.* The vineyard must become unfruitful, and the garden must lose its beauty, and the machinery must stand still, and the enterprise must fail of success, and the

health must decline, if toilsome and incessant watchfulness and care has not its eye awake to every symptom of feebleness, and to every sign of decay.

If the merchantman examine not his accounts, and if the husbandman examine not his field, and if the nobleman examine not his estate, and if the physician examine not his patient, what sagacity is needed to foresee, as the natural and inevitable result; confusion, ruin, and death? How infinitely more true is this of the soul! The lack of frequent, fearless, and thorough searching into the exact state of the heart, into the real condition of the soul, is before God, in the great matter of the inner life, reveals the grand secret of many a solemn case of declension, shipwreck, and apostasy. Therefore, the apostle earnestly exhorts, Examine yourselves; as if he would say, "Do not take the state of your soul for granted. Do not be deceived by the too fond and partial opinion of others. Judge not yourselves by a human and a false standard, but examine yourselves, prove your own selves by the word; and rest not short of Christ dwelling in your hearts—your present life and your hope of glory."

But HOW DOES CHRIST DWELL IN THE BELIEVER?—a most important question this. An ignorance with regard to the mode of Christ's indwelling at one time opened the door for the introduction into the Church of one of the most fanatical errors that ever assailed its purity. We allude to the heresy of the personal, corporeal indwelling of Christ in the believer, which, being believed and asserted by many, they set themselves up as being themselves Christ, and thereby rushed into innumerable extravagant, blasphemous, and deadly sins. Thus has Satan ever sought to engraft the deadly nightshade of error, upon the life-giving Rose of Sharon, *rendering the most spiritual and sanctifying truths of God's word subservient to the basest and most unholy purposes. But by what mode does the Lord Jesus dwell in the truly regenerate?* We answer—*by his Spirit*. Thus it is a spiritual and not a personal or corporeal indwelling of Christ. The Scripture testimony is most full and decisive on this point. "Know you not that your body is the temple of the *Holy Spirit*." "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies *by his Spirit that dwells in you*." And that this inhabitation of Christ by the Spirit is not the indwelling of a mere grace of the Spirit, but the Spirit himself, is equally clear from another passage—"Hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God (Here is a grace of the Spirit) is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which he has given us"—(here is the possession of the Spirit himself). This is the fountain of all the spiritual grace

dwelling in the soul of the truly regenerate, and at times so blessedly flowing forth in refreshing and sanctifying streams. "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spoke he of *the Spirit*." Thus, then, is it most clear that *by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Christ has his dwelling in the hearts of all true believers.*

Christian reader, what a solemn truth is this! What an unfolding of true Christianity! What a view of real, vital, saving religion, does this truth present! How do all religious rites, and forms, and ceremonies, dwindle into insignificance, before this all-important, all-essential, all-commanding doctrine of the inhabitation of Christ in the soul by the Holy Spirit of God! Apart from the experience of this truth, every other is a false religion.

But there is one view of our subject too interesting and important to be overlooked. "Christ *lives* in me," says the apostle. *It is a living Christ dwelling in a living soul.* It implies permanency. The religion of some is a religion of the moment. Like the gourd of the prophet, it appears in a night, and it withers in a night. It is the religion of impulse and of feeling. It comes by fits and starts. It is convulsive and periodical. *It is easily assumed, and as easily laid aside.* But here is the grand characteristic of a truly converted man. Christ lives in him, and lives in him never to die. He has entered his heart, never to retire. He has enthroned himself, never to abdicate. And although the fact of his permanent indwelling may not always appear with equal clearness and certainty to the mind of the believer himself, nevertheless Christ is really there by his Spirit. It is his home, his dwelling-place, his kingdom. He lives there, to maintain his government, to sway his scepter, and to enforce, by the mild constraint of his love, obedience to his laws. He lives there, to guard and nourish his own work—shielding it when it is assailed, strengthening it when it is feeble, reviving it when it droops, restoring it when it decays; thus protecting the "lily among the thorns," preserving the spark in the ocean, and keeping, amid opposing influences, the life of God that it die not. Truly is the believer in Jesus a living soul; and all are dead who cannot say, "Christ LIVES in me."

But let us briefly contemplate some of THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INNER SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE SOUL, as more fully illustrating its character, and as supplying evidences by which we may test the question of its personal possession. The first characteristic which we notice is its self-renouncing tendency. "I live, YET NOT I." The life of Christ and the life of self cannot co-exist in the same heart. If the one lives, the other dies. The sentence of death is written upon a man's self when the Spirit of Christ enters

his heart and quickens his soul with the life of God. "I live," he exclaims, "yet NOT I." What a striking and beautiful example of this have we in the life and labors of the Apostle Paul. Does he speak of his ministry?—what a renunciation of self appears! Lost in the greatness and grandeur of his theme, he exclaims—"We preach *not ourselves*, but Christ Jesus the Lord." Again—"Unto *me, who am less than the least of all saints*, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Does he refer to his office?—what self-crucifixion! "I magnify my office." In what way? Was it by vaunting proclamations of its grandeur and legitimacy, its Divine institution, or its solemn functions? Did he challenge for it—"otherwise than as it was connected with miraculous endowments, the unquestioning and instant submission of men's hearts and consciences, as to an oracle that must not be disputed—or their subservience in the conduct of life, as to a law that was death to disobey? Did he ever exalt its possessors to a height of unintelligible and mystical sacredness, above the condition of humanity and the common feelings and infirmities of nature, which might demand the prostration of others at their feet, as if separated from them by an impassable, though invisible chasm—an abyss which it was sacrilege to traverse even in imagination, and which still divided the priest, the bishop, or the pastor, from the man?

Never! But he magnified his office, by diminishing himself and exalting his Master. He was nothing—ay, and even his office itself was comparatively nothing—that "Christ might be all and in all." Does he speak of his gifts and labors? what absence of self! "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But, by the grace of God, I am what I am; and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet, *not I*, but the grace of God which was with me." Such was the religion of Paul. His Christianity was a self-denying, self-crucifying, self-renouncing Christianity. "I live, *yet not I*. I labored more abundantly than they all, yet *not I*" O what self-denying spirit was his!

"But where," asks somewhat quaintly a writer of olden time,—and how appropriate the inquiry to our own!—where is this self-denying power of heart now to be found among us? how does this I, this same self, creep into all our speeches, and into all our doings! If it please the Lord to use a minister in his service, what an *I-ing* is there! I converted such a man, and I comforted such a man; and it was my prescription, and it was my receipt, and I did it. And if a Christian do but pray, or perform a duty, Thus and thus *I* said, and

these words *I* spoke! did not *I* tell you so? *I* told you what would come to pass. O what an *I-ing* is there among the people! How does this *I* and self creep into all our speeches, and into all our doings!"—Bridge

But every truly spiritual man is a self-renouncing man. In the discipline of his own heart, beneath the cross of Jesus, and in the school of trial and temptation, he has been taught in some degree, that if he lives, it is not he that lives, but that it is Christ who lives in him. Upon all his own righteousness, his duties, and doings, he tramples as to the great matter of justification; while, as fruits of the Spirit, as evidences of faith, as pulsations of the inner spiritual life, as, in a word, tending to authenticate and advance his sanctification, he desires to be "careful to maintain good works," that God in all things might be glorified.

This thought suggests another of much importance. We should be always careful to distinguish between the denial of self and the denial of the life of God within us. The most entire renunciation of ourselves, the most humiliating acknowledgment of our personal unworthiness, may comport with the strongest assurance and profession of Christ living in us. Self-denial does not necessarily involve grace-denial. *It is the profoundest act of humility in a Christian man to acknowledge the grace of God in his soul.* Never is there so real a crucifixion, never so entire a renunciation of self as when the heart, in its lowly but deep and grateful throbbings, acknowledges its indebtedness to sovereign grace, and in the fervor of its adoring love, summons the whole Church to listen to its recital of the great things God has done for it—"Come, all you that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul." O yes! it is a self-denying life. Listen to Job—"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Listen to Isaiah—"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Listen to the penitent publican—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" Listen again to Paul—"I live, yet not I." Thus does a sense of sin, and a believing sight of Christ, lay the soul low before God in self-renunciation and self-abhorrence.

Judge your spiritual condition, dear reader, by this characteristic of the inner life. Is it yours? Has there been this renunciation of your sinful self, and of your righteous self? Has the Spirit of God emptied you? has the grace of God humbled you? has the life of God crucified you? Are you as one in whom Christ lives, walking humbly with God? O, it is the essence of vital godliness, it is the very life of true religion. *If Christ is living in you, you are a humble*

soul. Pride never existed in the heart of Christ. His whole life was one act of the profoundest self-abasement. In the truest and in the fullest sense of the emphatic declaration, "he humbled himself." It is impossible, then, that he who was thus "meek and lowly in heart" can dwell in one whom "pride compasses as a chain." "I live, yet *not* I," are two states of the renewed soul as inseparable as any cause and effect.

A humble and a self-denying Christ dwells only with a humble and a self-denying soul. If your gifts inflate you, if your position exalts you, if your usefulness engenders pride, if the honor and distinction which God or man have placed upon you have turned you aside from the simplicity of your walk, and set you upon the work of self-seeking, self-advancing, so that you are not meek and gentle, child-like and Christ-like in spirit, be sure of this—you are *either not a partaker of the life of Christ, or else that life is at a low ebb in your soul.* Which of the two, do you think, is your real state?

And have the self-denying, the self-renouncing, no reward? O yes! their reward is great. They are such as the King delights to Honor. When John the Baptist declared, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and on another occasion, "Whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose," Christ pronounced him "the greatest born of women." When the centurion sent to say, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof," our Lord places this crown upon his faith, "I tell you I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." When the publican exclaimed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" he descended from the temple justified, rather than the self-vaunting Pharisee. Yes, "when men are cast down then there is lifting up."

There is *a present reward of grace* to the humble. Christ exalts them. "Humble yourselves under the hand of the Lord, and he will exalt you in due time." And what tongue can describe the inward peace, satisfaction, and contentment of that soul in whom this self-denying life of Christ dwells! Such an one has a continual feast. He may be deeply tried, sorely tempted, heavily afflicted, severely chastened, but his meek and submissive spirit exclaims, "It is the Lord, let him do as seems good in his sight."

Another characteristic of this life is—It is a Christ-honoring, Christ-advancing life. A self-denying life, proceeding from a gospel principle, must be a Christ-exalting life. The Lord Jesus can only erect and carry forward his kingdom in the soul upon *the ruins of self* and as this kingdom of grace is perpetual in its growth, so *the demolition of self is a work of gradual*

advancement. "He must increase," says the lowly-molded Baptist. As the inner life grows, Christ grows more lovely to the eye, more precious to the heart. His blood is more valued, his righteousness is more relied on, his grace is more lived upon, his cross is more gloried in, his yoke is more cheerfully borne, his commands are more implicitly obeyed. In all things Christ is advanced, and the soul by all means advances in its knowledge of, and in its resemblance to, Christ. Reader, is Christ advanced by you? Is his kingdom widened, is his truth disseminated, is his fame spread, is his person exalted, is his honor vindicated, is his glory promoted by the life which you are living? O name not the name of Christ if it do not be to perfume the air with its fragrance, and to fill the earth with its renown.

We must group the remaining characteristics of the inner life. It is a conflicting life. It always wears the harness, and is ever clothed with the armor. Opposed by indwelling sin, assailed by Satan, and impeded by the world, every step in advance is only secured by a battle fought and a victory achieved.

It is a holy life—springing from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, it must necessarily be so. All its actings are holy, all its breathings are holy, all its fruits are holy; and without holiness no man has this life, or can be an inheritor of that life to come, of which this is the seedling and the germ, the foretaste and the pledge. "The water that I shall give him," says Christ, alluding to the spiritual life, "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Need I add that happiness, progression, and deathlessness, are equally its characteristics? *Happiness is but a phantom and a name, where Christ dwells not in the heart.* Progression is but an advance towards eternal woe, where the love of God is not in the soul. And death is an eternal, lingering despair, the soul and body ever dying, yet never ceasing to exist—where the Spirit of life has not quickened the inner man, creating all things new.

Such, reader, is the life, the inner, spiritual, and deathless life, the relapse and recovery of which, the pages that follow will unfold. No imagination can fully depict, nor language adequately describe, the importance of this life, the grandeur of its nature and destiny, and the necessity of its progression and its manifestations. Reader, the world without you teems with sentient existence. All is life, activity, and progress. There is vegetable life, and animal life, and rational life. The flower that scents the air with its perfume, the insect that

renders it vocal with its music, and man who fills and beautifies the earth with monuments of his greatness and creative genius, testify to the possession of a life of amazing power, activity, and progression. To this may be added a species of moral life, maintained by many, developed and embodied in religious forms, observances, and sacrifices. But there is a life as infinitely superior to all these as the life of him whose mind conceived the towering pyramid, is to that of the little insect that flutters its brief hour in the sunbeam and then vanishes forever. It is **THE LIFE OF GOD IN THE SOUL OF MAN**. Deep planted in the center of his spiritual nature, lodged within the hidden recesses of his deathless mind, diffusing its mysterious but all-pervading and renovating influence through the judgment, the will, the affections, and linking his being with a future of glory, "which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man to conceive;" the world rushes on, and knows not its existence, and sees not its glories, and heeds not its joy—so deeply veiled from human eye, ay, and so far removed from human power, is the inner spiritual life "hidden with Christ in God."

Reader, there is a religion towering as far above your religion of *merit*, and of *works*, and of *forms*, as the heavens are above the earth, even as the spiritual life of God is above the sensual life of man. It is the religion of a renewed mind, of a renovated heart, of a conquered will, of a soul—all whose sanctified faculties are consecrated to the glory of God here, and are destined to the enjoyment of God hereafter. Illustrious as may be your position in the Church, luminous as may be your profession of Christianity, splendid as your gifts, and rich as your endowments, and costly as your offerings, and apostolic as your zeal, and unwearied as your labors may be, bear with me while with all solemnity I remind you, that you still may live, and toil, and die, a stranger to the *inner life*. Deeper and loftier and more momentous than all these is the great truth upon which we are expatiating—"Christ Lives in Me." Its foundation is in the soul, its summit is in heaven.

I enunciate to you a great mystery—the mystery of Christ and his Church, of the soul of man and the life of God—both spiritually and indissolubly one. Have you thus "passed from death unto life?" Has the great transformation taken place? Has the destroyer, entrenched within, in all the plenitude of undisputed power, been dispossessed? Have the avenues of the heart, closed and barred against the admission of Christ, been thrown open? Has the fearful alienation, and the withering curse, and the deep guilt, which portrays to you God as an enemy, and which arms all the powers of your soul against him as his foe, been revealed, felt, and deplored? Has the captive spirit been

disenthralled, the prey taken from the mighty, the power of the destroyer broken, and the soul awakened from its deep slumber to listen to its Creator speaking in tones of mercy, and in thoughts of love? Has light, emanating from the abodes of glory—invisible to others—dawned upon the midnight of your spiritual desolation? has a voice, speaking from the throne of heaven—unheard by others—startled your spirit in its deep trance, and dispelled its floating dreams? has a hand, mighty and unseen, riven the chain, thrown open the dungeon, and led you forth to liberty and joy, to life and immortality? In a word—and this is the sum and consummation of all—has another and a Diviner life, a new and a superior nature, descending from God, and begotten within you by the Spirit, and unfolding to your view a heaven of brightness, full of purity and fragrance and song, been communicated to your soul, thus creating you a new creature, and constituting you an "heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ Jesus?" If so, then you may adopt the language of Paul, and exultingly exclaim, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." O deem not this a vain thing, for it is your life!

But I will suppose your honest reply to these searching interrogatives decides the case against your claims to a possession of spiritual life; then let me beseech you, with a knowledge of this alarming fact, rest not where you are. What is your natural life but a vapor that is soon dissolved, a dream that vanishes away? And what are your present pursuits but things unworthy of your rational existence, and inappropriate to your approaching destiny? O what egregious folly, O what moral insanity, to merge all consideration of your future existence in the present brief space graciously allotted you for its study and its preparation! You are all life, all nerve, all animation, all ardor, all activity, all excitement, all hope, to whatever is noble, and intellectual, and refined, and enterprising, of earth; but all death, all insensibility, all indifferent, all languor, all hopeless, to every thought and feeling and consideration of the great things that relate to your state beyond the grave. Is this wise, is this rational, is this sane?

Your studies of literature, your pleasures of taste, your pursuit of gain, your toil of ambition—those splendid impertinence, those cruel mockeries, those heartless soul-murderers of the present time; stifle in your heart all feeling, and annihilate in your mind all thought that you are an accountable steward, a moral agent, a deathless being; and that soon, yes, in one moment, your soul may be in eternity—standing agitated, trembling and speechless, before the tribunal of God! Yearning for your salvation, let me with the tenderest affection and the deepest solemnity plead with you for your life. Reflect for a

moment what your present careless, unbelieving and impenitent state really is. It is nothing less than to challenge the vengeance of the Most High God, to defy his power, to disdain his clemency, to refuse his compassion, to reject his pardon, to insult his majesty, and to expose yourself to the fierceness of his eternal wrath. It is to be without the regeneration of his Spirit, to have no part in the propitiation of his Son, to have all your sins uncanceled, and to stand before the throne of eternal justice, a culprit and a criminal, upon whom the righteous judgment of God must pronounce and execute its withering sentence of an unchanging destiny, and an inexorable doom.

Where, then, can you flee to hide from the dark storm that gathers over you, from the thick clouds, and treasured-up lightning, and embosomed bolt, and desolating winds that wait but the signal of God's uplifted hand to rush forth upon you in all their unchecked, unmitigated fury? Where can you flee? You have "made a covenant with death, and are at an agreement with hell." You are fascinated with the world, and are enamored with yourself, and are satisfied to have no other portion. You reject the Rock of Ages, refuse the sheltering pavilion of the Savior's cross, and despise the offers of his grace, where, then, when the tempest leaps forth in all its maddening fury, will you flee?

Yet how calmly you tread upon the very brink of ruin, how sportively you sail along the very edge of the vortex, how content and happy to course your way to the bar of a holy and a just God, through a world of disease and casualty and death, without one anxious thought to obtain deliverance, or one earnest struggle to escape your doom! Listen to a fact of recent occurrence, for the truth of which, in all its awful particulars, my personal knowledge of the parties can safely vouch. The conversation of a group of gentlemen, after dinner, turned upon the doctrine of a future state. Each one gave his opinion. It came to the turn of an elderly gentleman, a man of high legal attainments, of considerable wealth, and general esteem. He remarked that, "as it regarded himself, this life was good enough for him; that he desired no better, and would be willing to enter into an agreement to live in this world forever." The words had scarcely passed his lips when his hand relaxed its hold upon the glass it was grasping, his countenance changed, his head drooped, and he was borne insensible to a sofa. Restoratives were used, and every effort made that skill could devise; but life was extinct—his spirit had fled to the God who gave it! Reader, I leave this appalling fact to make its own impression. May that impression be deep, permanent, and saving!

But I turn to the living. I address those in whose souls are the deep, holy, deathless throbbings of an inner, spiritual life. Blissful day, Christian reader, that witnessed your resurrection from the grave of sin to walk in newness of life! Happy hour when you left your soul's shroud in the tomb, exchanging it for the robe of a glorious deathlessness, when your enmity was conquered, and your hostility was subdued, and you were led in willing and joyous captivity, amid the triumphs of your Lord, to the altar where he bled—self-consecrated to his service. O memorable moment, when Jesus, by the resistless but gentle power of his grace, broke down every barrier, entered your heart, and planted there the germ of a life as Divine, as holy, and as immortal as his own! Ever keep in mind your deep indebtedness to sovereign grace, your solemn obligation to Divine love, and the touching motives that urge you to "walk worthy of the vocation with which you are called."

Welcome all the dealings of God, whatever the character of those dealings may be, designed as they are but to animate, to nourish, and to carry forward this precious life in your soul. The *north wind* of sharp trial, and the *south wind* of covenant mercy, are made to breathe their blended gales over this beautiful garden, that the fruits and flowers of holiness may abound—that the actings of a living faith and love and hope may evidence to yourself, to the Church, and to the world, that you are indeed "risen with Christ," a partaker of his new resurrection-life.

It is perhaps a question of deep anxiety with you—"Oh, that I knew I were in reality a possessor of this inner spiritual life! My heart is so hard, my affections are so cold, my spirit is so sluggish, in everything that is spiritual, holy, and divine." Permit me to ask you—Can a stone feel its hardness, or a corpse its insensibility? Impossible! You affirm that you feel your hardness, and that you are sensible of your coldness. From where does this spring but from life? Could you weep, or mourn, or deplore, were the spiritual state of your soul that of absolute death! Again I say, Impossible! But rest not here—*go to Jesus. What you really need is a fresh view of, a renewed application to, the Lord Jesus Christ.* Sit not brooding over your mournful condition, in fruitless lamentation, but rise, and go to Jesus. Take to him the stone-like heart, the corpse-like soul. Tell him that you want to feel more, and to weep more, and to love more, and to pray more, and to live more. Go, and pour out your heart, with all its tremblings, and doubts, and fears, and needs, upon the bleeding, loving bosom of your Lord, until from that bosom, life more abundant has darted its quickening energy, vibrating and thrilling through your whole soul. "I have come," says Jesus, "that they might have life, and

that they might have it more abundantly."

You are, perhaps, *a severely tried, a sorely tempted, a deeply afflicted believer*. But cheer up! You have Christ living in you, and why should you yield to despondency or to fear? Christ will never vacate his throne, nor relinquish his dwelling. You have a suffering Christ, a humbled Christ, a crucified Christ, a dying Christ, a risen Christ, a living Christ, a triumphant Christ, a glorified Christ, a full Christ, dwelling in you by his Spirit. Yes! and you have, too, a human Christ, a feeling Christ, a sympathizing Christ, a tender, loving, gentle Christ, spiritually and eternally reposing in your heart—why, then, should you fear the pressure of any need, or the assault of any foe, or the issue of any trial, since such a Christ is in you? "Fear not!" They are his own familiar and blessed words—"It is I, do not be afraid." You cannot lack for any good, since you have the fountain of all good dwelling in you. You cannot be finally overcome of any spiritual evil, since you have the Conqueror of sin and Satan and the world enthroned upon your affections. Your life—the inner, divine and spiritual life—can never die, since Christ, *essential life*, lives and abides in you. Like him, and for him, you may be opposed, but like him and by him you shall triumph. The persecution which you meet, and the trials which you endure, and the difficulties with which you cope, shall but further your well being, by bringing you into a closer communion with Jesus, and by introducing you more fully into the enviable state of the apostles—"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Soon the portals of glory will expand their gates, and receive you into the beatific life—the life which is eternal.

You are, perhaps, *mourning* the loss of those who sleep in Jesus, or you are the occupant of a sick chamber, or, ecstatic thought!—it may be you are poised upon the wing for heaven, waiting only the signal for your upward flight. Whether it be the sorrow of bereavement, or the languishing bed of sickness, or the immediate prospect of eternity, *how appropriate, and animating, and soothing, the contemplation of the life which is before you!* How exceeding great and precious are the promises which refer to the security and assured enjoyment of that life: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all: and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's

hand." Listen to his words of indescribable sweetness and overwhelming grandeur, breathed over the grave of one whom he loved: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever believes in me shall never die." "Enough, dear Lord," may you exclaim. "You have spoken words of soothing and of hope to this bleeding, sorrowing heart of mine, and I am comforted. You have dried my tears, bound up my wounds, and calmed my spirit, healing, and hushing it to rest upon your own gentle, loving bosom—once stricken with a sorrow infinitely deeper, and keener, and bitterer than mine."

Are you, my reader, a searcher of this life? Are you breathing for it, panting after it, seeking it? Then, be it known to you, that he who inspired that desire is himself the Life for which you seek. That heaving of your heart, that yearning of your spirit, that 'feeling after God, if haply you may find him,' is the first gentle pulsation of a life that shall never die. Feeble and fluctuating, faint and fluttering, as its throbbings may be, it is yet the life of God, the life of Christ, the life of glory in your soul. It is the seedling, the germ of an immortal flower. It is the sunshine dawn of an eternal day. The announcement with which we meet your case—and it is the only one that can meet it—is, "*this man receives sinners.*" O joyful tidings! O blessed words! Yes, he receives sinners—the vilest, the lowest, the most despised! It was for this he relinquished the abodes of heavenly purity and bliss, to mingle amid the sinful and humiliating scenes of earth. For this he abandoned his Father's bosom, for a cross. For this he lived and labored, suffered and died. "He receives sinners!" He receives them, of every name and condition—of every stature, and character, and climate. There is no limit to his ability to pardon, as there is none to the sufficiency of his atonement, or to the melting pity of his heart. Flee, then, to Jesus the crucified. To him repair with your sins, as scarlet and as crimson, and his blood will wash you whiter than snow. What though they may be as clouds for darkness, or as the sand on the sea-shore for multitude—his grace can take them all away. Come with the accusations and tortures of a guilty conscience, come with the sorrow and relentings of a broken heart, come with the grief of the backslider, and with the confession of the prodigal—Jesus still meets you with the hope-inspiring words—"Him that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Then, "return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Such, reader, in conclusion, is the nature, and such the manifestations of the inner spiritual life, whose relapse and recovery, whose declensions and

revivings, we are about to consider. Alas! that a life so heavenly and divine, so holy and so happy, should ever fluctuate and change—should ever droop and decay. Alas! that in its onward progress to the paradise of God, it should have its autumn and its winter—the seared leaf and the congealed current—and not be always clothed with the perpetual verdure of spring, and be ever laden with the ripe fruit of summer. But such is the fallen nature in which it dwells, and such the hostile influences by which it is surrounded and assailed, the utmost vigilance is demanded to maintain the heavenly spark alive and glowing in the soul.

Before, beloved reader, we pass to a more minute examination of our important subject, together let us solemnly "bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," praying "that he would grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith: that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God. "Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen." Ephes. 3:20-21

"GRAY HAIRS" (The Inner Life in its Gradual and Imperceptible Relapse)

"Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knows it not; yes, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows it not."—Hosea 7:9.

Such is the graphic and mournful description of that peculiar state of backsliding which must be regarded as the most dangerous and alarming, because the most insidious and concealed, of all processes of spiritual relapse from God. It is not *a surprisal into sin, a sudden fall before the power of a strong temptation*, a stolen march of the enemy upon the tardy steps of the celestial traveler—a man overtaken by a fault—but it is *the slow, gradual, yet certain relapse of the inner life, lulling all suspicion of its existence, and veiling itself from the most searching eye*. Having its original in the Jewish Church, it will not yet be difficult to point out the strong resemblance of this spiritual portrait to a large portion of the Christian Church in the present day—professors of religion, office-bearers, sentinels upon the outposts of the camp,

workmen upon the scaffolding of the building, in whose souls this species of spiritual decline, and decay of the Divine life may be proceeding, like the footfall of death, stealthy and unsuspected; or like the progress of age, gradual and unobserved. "Ephraim has mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knows it not; yes, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows it not."

Deeply and solemnly impressed with this consideration, we propose to spread before the Christian professor several distinct views of this state of spiritual relapse, each one unveiling a new symptom, and presenting a new phase of the disease. Having in the preceding chapter explained the nature of the inner life of the believer, and glanced at its tendency to decay, we now proceed with a more minute analysis of our subject. May the Holy Spirit be our teacher! May we be kept from unprofitable speculation, and from all trifling with a case so desperate, and with a theme so momentous! May an unction from the Holy One impart a searching, personal, and sanctifying application of the truth to our hearts!

The first idea which the passage suggests is that of spiritual loss. "Strangers have devoured his strength." The existence of real strength in the soul is here supposed. All spiritual *declension* in the true believer necessarily implies the *actual possession* of grace. We must not lose sight of this truth. Never, in the lowest condition of the believer, does Christ deny his own work in the soul. "You have a little strength," are his heart-melting words to the backsliding Church in Sardis. O what a gracious, patient Savior is ours! But there is a real loss affirmed. It may be proper to inquire what are some of these strangers that devour the spiritual strength of the believer?

The world may be quoted as a prominent and formidable one. The world is a strange thing to a child of God. It is but his *temporary dwelling*, not his home; the *inn* at which he tarries for a night, not his abiding place; *his path, rough and perilous, to his Father's house*. It is a strange world to one who is born of God. Its principles are strange, its policy is strange, its maxims are strange its pleasures are strange, its religion is strange, its entire genius and inhabitants are strange to him whose citizenship is of heaven, and whose treasure and heart are there. He sojourns in it, he passes through it only as a stranger and pilgrim. And yet—melancholy truth!—this stranger devours the spiritual strength of many a Christian professor! The power which the ungodly world still maintains over the renewed mind, and the influence which it exerts in modifying and deteriorating the religion of many professing Christians, is of

an appalling character.

I am solemnly convinced that the world, in its relation to the religion of the day, is the giant snare and the crying evil of our times. It is not the world in one form only, but the world in its many shapes, its numerous forms of fascination and power, which gives it so amazing and subtle an influence over the Christian Church. Were the onset of the world from one quarter only, familiarity with its mode of attack, and experience gathered from its past assaults, might place the Christian upon his guard. But, like the impersonation of vice, portrayed by Solomon, its "ways are moveable, and cannot be known." There is no shape it cannot assume, no garb it will not wear, no plea it may not urge, no concession it is not prepared to yield, thus to obtain the ascendancy over the Christian's mind.

Alas! the infidel expediency of the day, and the compromising character of the prevailing religious profession, present but little obstruction, and offer but faint resistance to its rapid and alarming encroachments. There is everything in the easy Christianity of the times to court, and but little to discourage, the advances of the world upon the Church—impairing its strength, crippling its efforts, and shading its luster. The facile compliance with its solicitations, the inordinate attachment to its principles, the sinful conformity to its customs, the humiliating participation in its pleasures, form the grand secret of the dwarfish religion of so many who ought to have arrived at the "stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus." This strange world has devoured their spiritual strength, and thus the life of God in their souls is stunted in its growth, and they are but infants when they ought to be men; dwarfs when they should be giants in knowledge, in grace, and in holiness.

The policy of the world; the gay enjoyments of the world; the self indulgence of the world; the soaring ambition of the world; the vain glory of the world; the sinful alliances of the world; the covetous, grasping desires of the world; the love of vain show and fondness for dress; and the easy religion of the world; are the fearful and fatal snares into which many professing Christians are drawn. The ball; the gay party; the concert; the novel; the whist; the drama; O how do these things devour the little strength that some seem to possess; to what small dimensions do they contract their Christianity; how do they wither and shrivel up their religion, reducing their spiritual power of resistance to an

infant's weakness!

Professor of religion! can you cross the broad separating line between the Church and the world, can you transact business with it for a day, or participate in its pleasures for an hour, and come forth with the locks of your spiritual strength as thick and flowing as before? Impossible! You have suffered a real loss; and you cannot but be sensible of it. There is an exhaustion in the soul, a wound in the conscience, a deadness in the spirit, a vagrancy of thought, an indolence and listlessness of mind, with feelings which partake more of earth and less of heaven, which unfit you for communion with God, incapacitate you for any spiritual duties whatever, and leave you, like Samson despoiled of his glory, the victim and the sport of the uncircumcised Philistines. "Are you also become weak as we are? are you become like unto us?" is the exclamation of the world that has thus cruelly robbed you of your vigor, and now exultingly taunts you with your loss.

O! it is "for this cause many are weak and sickly, and many sleep." I repeat it with earnestness and in bitterness of soul—the world—the WORLD is the deadly foe, and worldliness is the crying sin of the Church of God. This is the great hindrance to the success of the Christian ministry, and the growth in grace of many who are "called to be saints." You profess to have separated yourselves from the world, to not be of the world, and by the cross of Jesus to be dead to the world; and yet how opposite and falsifying is your practice! You mix up with the world, you float down the stream with the world, you woo and embrace the world; and but for the enrolment of your name upon the records of the Church, and your punctilious appearance at the communion table of the Lord, we should scarcely suspect that you were a follower of him who solemnly and emphatically declared, "My kingdom is not of this world."

But, take warning! Upon this rock numbers who once walked outwardly with Jesus, have made shipwreck of faith, and walk with him no more. One of the most heart-affecting sentences the apostle ever penned was the record of such a case: "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." He was a professed Christian, was baptized as a believer, and was the companion and associate of the apostle. But he loved the world, and loving the world he forsook the apostle; and forsaking the apostle he forsook Christ; and forsaking Christ he forsook the way of holiness, the way of happiness, the way of heaven.

And where is he now! No mention is made of his restoration. No record is left of his return as a penitent to the cross. All that we know of his melancholy history is a solemn warning to professors to shun the world, and to beware of worldliness, as the foe and the bane of their religion.

O, listen to the faithful yet tender pleadings of the Spirit—"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed in the spirit of your mind. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away." Listen to the words which warn you against contracting unholy alliances, either in the way of business or of marriage, with the people of the world—"Don't you know you that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God. Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; therefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Christian professors! can you resist these touching appeals? Will you not retire from their perusal, resolved, that "by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, "from henceforth you will "keep yourselves unspotted from the world?"

Again, with increased earnestness we beseech you, love not the world—imitate not the world—go not needlessly into the world! It is a cruel, treacherous, soul-destroying world. It crucified your Lord, and seeks nothing less than your eternal destruction. Come out of it, and let your unearthly principles, and holy enjoyments, and heavenly mindedness, and simplicity of walk, integrity and uprightness in all your transactions with the world, be a witness against it for God, for Christ, and for eternity. Labor for its good, pray for it, be kind and gentle to it, and, if need be, suffer for it; but let your daily motto be—the mark of Christ upon your forehead—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

The unsubdued power of indwelling sin must be regarded as occasioning the Christian severe spiritual loss. Even where there is the absence of that outward

worldly conformity of which we have been speaking, there may yet be the *prevalence of unmortified corruption in the heart*, secretly and silently, but effectually undermining the fabric of the soul's strength. Alas! how effectually does this 'stranger' devour the vigor of our faith, the fervor of our love, the power of our prayers, the simplicity of our confidence in God. In how many sad instances of secret declension, of outward backsliding, and of avowed apostasy from God, may the evil be traced to this cause! Sin dwells in the heart of the most deeply sanctified, is ever at work in the most eminent Christian; and it has been truly remarked, that *the best of saints have need to be warned against the worst of sins*. Where there is not, then, a perpetual battle with this hidden foe, a constant mortification through the Spirit of this deep-seated, veiled corruption, the most dire and mournful consequences must ensue. Hence the agitation of doubts and fears, the drooping wing of faith, the powerlessness of the promises, the unanswered prayers, the plague in the camp, the ship in the storm—the Achan and the Jonah. Nothing enfeebles a Christian man like this. No 'stranger' devours his strength more voraciously and effectually. It closes the heart to the fruitful reception of the word, and shuts up heaven to the dew and the rain of the Spirit's grace. The idol of the soul still occupies its niche, and is enthroned upon its pedestal; and so long as it is not deposed and removed, the Spirit retires, God ceases to answer prayer, and there is no profitable trading between the soul and heaven, and no refreshment flowing through the channel of means and ordinances. These are solemn words; "Son of man, these men have set up their *idols in their hearts*, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their faces; should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord God, Every man of the house of Israel that sets up his *idols in his heart*, and puts the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that comes, according to the multitude of his idols." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." "Strangers have devoured his strength."

But in what does this mortification of sin consist? We reply, in nothing less than the drying up of its fountain, the destruction of its root. The great evil and power of sin lies in the sin of our nature, the body of death which we bear about with us. And herein consists true mortification—the slaying of the principle from where all sin proceeds; the subduing of the original corruption, the strength of which weakens the actings of grace, by impairing the principle

of grace. O, then, be earnest in seeking this attainment! Do not be content to arrest the *stream* while the *fountain* runs; nor to sever the *branches* while the *root* remains. But going to the *source* of the evil, descending to the *depth* of the corruption, begin the holy work where the potency of sin mainly lies.

What is your predominant sin?—lay the axe at *its root*. Seek its death and destruction, or it will be death and destruction to you, as long as it prevails. It must bring a deathliness into the life of God within you, and prove the ruin of your peace and joy and happiness. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you shall die; but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live." O, then, take this 'stranger' which seeks to devour your strength, to the cross of Jesus, and transfix it there; and as it dies, your soul shall live. Nothing but the cross of Jesus will prove its death, and your life. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." There must be the crucifixion before the life. *Christ's death for sin must be our death unto sin.*

No more outward mortification, no fastings, nor self-inflictions, nor painful austerities, will ever weaken the principle or mortify the root of sin. *Nothing but faith in the atoning blood of the Son of God can effectually meet the case.* Far be it from me to speak indifferently of that aid to the mortification of indwelling sin which God's word encourages. I would not lightly esteem, as *auxiliary* to faith in the atonement, the diligent reading of the word—frequent meditation upon its truths—seasons of retirement from others, and from surrounding objects—private communion with God—self-examination—self-judging, and honest, minute confession of sin. Nor would I overlook the immense blessing which often flows from deep affliction, from painful, bitter trial, traced in the deeper mortification of sin in the temper, spirit, and life of the true believer.

But in this great and solemn work our constant motto must be, "Looking unto Jesus." Without the eye of faith upon the cross, apart from the efficacy of the atoning blood, and the power of the grace that is in Jesus, there can be no effectual progress in the real work of sanctification. *One sight of a crucified Savior imparted by the Holy Spirit will more effectually weaken the power of indwelling sin than all other means combined.* O the might of the cross! O the virtue of the blood! O the power of the grace of Jesus to crucify, cleanse, and

subdue our iniquities! Allow not this 'stranger,' then, any longer to devour your strength, seeing Jesus can enable you to oppose it, and will crown your sincere and persevering opposition with a certain and glorious victory. "He will subdue our iniquities."

Spiritual *decay* is another idea suggested by the expressive figure of the passage—"Gray hairs are here and there upon him." These 'GRAY HAIRS' are decided 'evidences of backsliding'. And what are some of them? What are a few of the more marked SYMPTOMS OF SPIRITUAL DECAY in the soul? A lessened appreciation of Jesus is a clear and affecting evidence of spiritual relapse. Once he was, in your estimation, "the chief among ten thousand." He was

the sovereign of your hearts. 'His name was as ointment poured forth.' He was to you as the "apple tree of the woods." You "sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to your taste." His cross attracted you, his love constrained you, his voice charmed you, his person was all your admiration, and his work all your boast. O how precious was Jesus to you then! You never thought his yoke irksome, nor his burden heavy, nor his cross painful. No time spent with him was deemed lost; no sacrifice made for him was counted costly; no labor for him was wearisome; no shame, or ignominy, or suffering for his sake, was worthy of a thought. The secret of all was—you loved the Savior with a deep and intense affection. But the 'gray hair' has appeared! Jesus is less precious to you now. Reverse the picture, just drawn of your former self, and you have the faithful portrait of your soul's present state! Your love has waxed cold, the ardor of your affection has waned, your heart is divided, other objects have displaced the Savior; and if you follow him at all, it is like Peter, "a great way off." Is not this real decay? "Gray hairs are here and thereupon him."

Another symptom is, neglected prayer. I will not say that the habit of prayer is *entirely* relinquished; but the spirit and fervor of prayer seem greatly to have evaporated. The time was when communion with God was the element in which you lived. You could more conveniently live without your daily food, and even pass your nights without sleep, than live without prayer, or compose yourself to rest without converse with God. That was registered as a lost day which found you holding no filial communion with your Heavenly Father—spending no blissful moments with Jesus. O happy days! How precious their

memory! How sanctifying their recollection! Then, your walk was with God—your "fellowship truly was with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ." You were wont to take every thing to the throne of grace. As your *needs* came, you told your Father; and as your *sorrow* was felt, you laid it upon Jesus. You walked with God in everything, in the most minute circumstances in your history. And O what an opening was there of the heart of God to you at the mercy-seat! More truly, and how much more fully, was God wont to realize to you the promise to Moses—"There I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy-seat." But the 'gray hair' is seen—sad symptom of decay in prayer. As to *frequency* and *power, earnestness* and *success-as* to any real communion, any filial, confidential opening of the heart to God, there is a palpable and melancholy failing off. Weak in prayer, you have no longer power with the Angel of the Covenant to prevail. Is not this decay? "Gray hairs are here and there upon him."

The neglect of confession is an undoubted symptom of a state of soul backsliding from God. Perhaps there is not one more strongly indicative of the true decay of grace in the heart than this. When the habit of a contrite acknowledgment of sin is cherished, when a daily confession over the head of the atoning Sacrifice is made, and the blood is thus constantly sprinkled upon the conscience, the soul maintains, even in its advance to the "stature of the perfect man," all the vigor and beauty of youthful piety. There is a freshness and verdure which distinguish the soul in close proximity to the 'open Fountain'. But the "gray hair" betrays a change in this holy habit. It is now almost entirely neglected; or, if not quite abandoned, is yet performed in so careless and partial a manner, as to rob it of all its power, and neutralize all its efficacy. Your acknowledgment of sin is so general and heartless, blended with so imperfect a view of the turpitude of the sin confessed, with so feeble a sense of holy, humble contrition—in a word, the true spirit and posture of confession are so entirely absent, as to deprive the whole performance of its character, and to render it of none effect. This was not always the state of your soul. In times that are past, the least sin gave you distress, the slightest speck upon the conscience made you uneasy, and you could not rest until you had told it to the Lord, and had sought and found a renewed application of the peace-speaking blood. Surely this is a manifest decay of grace in your soul. "Gray hairs are here and there upon him."

A slighting of the means of grace, and the ordinances of God's house, is not the least mark of a state of heart-backsliding. How 'green' were these 'pastures' once to your soul! How you hailed the arrival of the hour that took you to them! How you delighted to walk and feed in them! To have neglected the assembling of the saints—to have refused to meet them for praise and prayer—as, alas! the manner of some is—to have turned your back upon the house of God, upon the ministry of the word, upon the ordinance of the Lord's supper, upon the hour of gathered prayer, would have filled your heart with inexpressible pain. But, ah! you can do so now without an emotion! Your place is often vacant in the sanctuary—at the Lord's table—and when others meet to promote the kingdom of Christ; and yet your absence creates in your heart no sense of loss, and awakens in your conscience no alarm nor sorrow. The preached word, when you are in attendance, does not profit you. You have lost your relish for a Christ-exalting, soul-awakening, soul-winning, soul-searching, soul-loving ministry, and can only tolerate that service which intones its lullaby to your drowsy spirit, or deepens the slumber in which you are profoundly locked.

To this we must add your sad lack of sympathy for the salvation of others. Ah! what can more truly betray the real condition of your own soul than your cruel, criminal apathy, in view of the multitudes perishing around you without the 'vision,' each one raising that wail of agony, as it passes away—"No man cared for my soul!" These are some of the "gray hairs" which indicate a weakening and decay of the kingdom of God within the soul.

But there is one feature of this state of backsliding brought out by the prophet which we must not overlook. I allude to the ignorance and insensibility which mark it. "Strangers have devoured his strength, *and he knows it not*; yes, gray hairs are here and there upon him, *yet he knows it not*." It is by slow and imperceptible degrees that time steals upon us. Old age never surprises a man. We are not young today, and old tomorrow. Today, reveling in all the life, elasticity, and buoyancy of youth—and tomorrow, suffering from all the melancholy effects of senility. But we grow old *by degrees*: "Gray hairs are here and there upon us, and we know it not." Thus is it with the progress of spiritual declension. A Christian professor may lose the power and freshness of grace in his soul, and for a time not be sensible of his loss. This I consider to be the most alarming symptom of his case. For a man to be going further and

further from God, losing ground every moment, the 'gray hairs' thickening around him while he continues insensible to his condition—supposing that all is prosperous with his soul, when all is the very reverse—is alarming in the extreme. The case of Samson, already alluded to, fully illustrates this trait. While in a state of slumber we read that his wife Delilah, "called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines are upon you, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And *he did not know* that the Lord was departed from him." How soon the strong man had become weak! Strangers had devoured his strength, and he knew it not! Thus is it with many a Christian professor. Asleep upon the lap of some sinful self-indulgence, his enemies come upon him and severed the locks in which his might lay—and he knows not that the Lord has departed from him.

You are ignorant, too, of the great extent of your backsliding from God. You are not aware how far you have gone, what a fearful breach has been made between God and your soul; what a distance has come between Jesus and your spirit. You are not sensible how many steps you will have to retrace before you recover what you once so blissfully possessed—the presence of God, the witness of the Spirit, the consciousness of your being a pardoned sinner, an adopted child.

There is, too, an alarming unconcern as to your state. It becomes a matter of very little importance to you, whether God sees in you a growing conformity to his image, or a growing conformity to the world. You have been robbed of the locks of your strength, and either you do not know it, or are coldly indifferent to it.

But let us, in closing, briefly trace this melancholy state to some of its CAUSES, that we may be better able to point out its appropriate remedy. The first cause undoubtedly is, the unguarded state of your soul. A merchant or a tradesman accustomed to neglect his accounts through the year must be prepared to find himself at its close in a state of embarrassment and uncertainty as to his actual position—his affairs bordering perhaps on a state of insolvency. A Christian living in the daily neglect of self-examination must not marvel if, at a certain period of his religious course, he finds himself

trembling upon the brink of gloomy despondency, his evidences gone, his hope obscured, and all the past of his Christian profession appearing to his view as a fearful delusion. But here let me suggest the cure. Examine before God the real state of your soul. Ascertain where you have lost ground. Retrace your way. Look honestly and fairly at your condition. Do not be appalled at it. Discouraging and repelling as it may appear, look it fully in the face, and lay it open before God exactly as it is, in the spirit and language of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

I quote the grieving of the Spirit of God as a most fruitful cause of your present state of spiritual relapse. We have yet much to learn of our entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and of our eternal obligation to him for all the blessings of which he is the author and the conveyancer. What themes for grateful contemplation to the spiritual mind are the love of the Spirit—the faithfulness of the Spirit—the tenderness of the Spirit—the grace of the Spirit—the patience of the Spirit! And yet, in the long catalogue of the believer's backslidings, not the least is, his grieving this Holy Spirit of God. To this must be traced that barrenness and unfruitfulness, that premature decay, those spiritual relapses, which impart a death-like, skeleton appearance, to the Christianity of so many of its professors. Their worldliness grieves him—their sinful indulgences grieve him—their light, frothy conversation grieves him—their inattention to his 'still small voice,' and their forgetfulness of all his kindnesses grieves him—and suspending, but not wholly withdrawing, his gracious influence, their souls become like Mount Gilboa, upon which *no dew* rested. But there is a remedy. Seek that Spirit whom you have driven from your presence; implore his return, beseech him for Jesus' sake to revisit you, to breathe his reviving influence as of old upon your soul, "that the spices thereof may flow out," and that your "beloved may come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Then will return the happy days of former years, the sweet seasons of your early history, and you shall "sing as in the days of your youth, and as in the day when you came up out of the land of Egypt."

"Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made you mourn,
And drove you from my breast."

Distance from the cross has contributed greatly to your present state of spiritual relapse. Retiring from beneath its shelter and its shade, you have left the region of safety, light, and peace, and, wandering over the mountains of sin, worldliness, and unbelief, have lost yourself amid their darkness, solitude, and gloom. Finding in your backslidings no 'green pastures,' nor refreshing spring, nor shadowing rock, nor sweet repose, you have been almost ready to lie down, weary, faint, and bewildered. Turning away from the cross of Jesus, you have lost the view you once had of a sin-pardoning, reconciled Father; and judging of him now by his *providences* and not by his *promises*, and contemplating him through the gloomy medium of a conscience unsprinkled with the blood of Christ, you are disposed to impeach the wisdom, the faithfulness, and the love, of all his conduct towards you. But listen to the remedy. Yield yourself afresh to the attractions of the cross. Return, return to it again. No burning Cherubim nor flaming sword guards its avenue. The atoning blood, there shed, has opened the way of the sinner's approach, and the interceding High Priest in heaven keeps it open for every repentant prodigal. Return to the true cross. Come and sit down beneath its grateful shade. Poor, weary wanderer! there is life and power, peace and repose, for you still in the cross of Christ. Mercy speaks from it, God smiles in it, Jesus stands by it, and the Holy Spirit, hovering above it, is prepared to reveal it to you afresh, in all its healing, restoring power.

And is it thus that 'strangers' have devoured your strength, and that 'gray hairs are here and there' upon you? Do not despair of a better state. How powerful and persuasive the motives to your return to God which we have arrayed before you! The Father holding out his hand—Jesus alluring you—the Holy Spirit bending over you—and your vacant seat at the gospel-feast, so long deserted, still inviting your return. Say not, O wandering child, O mourning penitent, "My way is hidden from the Lord." No! *His eye has been upon you in all your waywardness and wanderings*; and now, in the tender character and with the quenchless, deathless love of a Father, he is on the watch for your return. Will he upbraid that loss of spiritual strength? Will he despise those thin, gray hairs? O no! "He gives power to the faint; and to those who have no might he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

"The Inner Life Contrasted with its Counterfeit"

"These are *wells without water*." 2 Peter 2:7.

It is one of the ever-working schemes and master strokes of the prince of darkness—and too successful is his exploit—to annihilate in the view of man, the essential difference which God's holy word draws between *the mere external profession of Christianity*, and *its internal and vital possession*. And yet, while we concede that in every true disciple of Jesus these two extremes meet—the possession and the profession of Christ—at the same time we must remark that, existing apart and alone, heaven and earth, midnight darkness and meridian light, life and death itself, are not more essentially distinct from each other than they. To break down this broad, unbending line of separation, and thus to reduce the life-possessing and life-imparting religion of Jesus to a religion of mere sentiment, or of feeling, or of form—in other words, to the religion of death—is Satan's grand and too successful scheme. It would be, perhaps, difficult to say from which field he has reaped a more appalling harvest of souls—that of a nominal religious profession, or that of a profane and avowed ungodliness. We speak not lightly, but it is our solemn conviction, that more souls have gone down to the regions of despair reposing in their baptismal vows, and sacramental grace, and works of human righteousness, than those who made no profession of religion whatever, except the religion of the infidel, the atheist, or the world. It is to this large and solemn class the apostle applies the searching words selected as the basis of our present remarks "These are wells without water." The passage suggests two distinct and important topics of consideration: the character of the true believer, or what the real Christian possesses; the character of the false Christian, or what the mere professor does not possess.

The figure of "wells without water" is not only one of frequent occurrence in the word of God, but *in its reverse interpretation* it is highly expressive of the gracious character, and holy, dispensing influence of the true believer in the Lord Jesus. Reverse the awfully significant meaning in which it is used by the apostle, and you have the exact portrait of a truly Christian man. The 'well without water', supposes the existence of the 'well with water'. And as the well

without water is descriptive of the false Christian, so the well with water is descriptive of the true—and it is of him we are first to speak.

THE REAL BELIEVER in Jesus is a gracious man. He is a 'living soul.' He is the partaker of a new and a Divine nature, and is the depository of a heavenly and a precious treasure. In exhibiting him under the figure of the 'well with water', we are naturally led to trace *the source of his supply*. The well may *contain*, but it does not *originate* the supply. It *holds* the water, but it cannot *create* the water. It is dependent upon a foreign and a hidden source. From a depth which no line can fathom, and which no skill can explore, the precious fluid rushes forth, sparkling and bounding in the joyousness of its own independent and mysterious existence. It is thus with Christianity and the Christian. There is not a well of salvation in the gospel, nor a spring of life in the believer, which is not dependent for its supply upon a source extraneous from itself. The Lord Jesus Christ is that Source. He is the well-head of all salvation and of all grace. The well with water is the well that has its source in him, "of whose fulness all we have received, and grace for grace."

God, the Fountain of life, light, and grace, has ordained that the Lord Jesus Christ, his own beloved Son, should be the well-spring, the one source of supply from where all the salvation of the sinner, all the sanctity of the saint, and all the grace and truth of the Church, collectively and individually, should be derived. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." What a glorious declaration is this! How should our hearts leap for joy, and our souls thrill with gladness at its very sound! All the "fulness of the Godhead bodily;" all the fulness of the Church graciously; all the fulness of the sinner savingly; all the fulness of the Christian sanctifyingly; in a word, all that a poor, fallen, tried son of Adam needs, until he reaches heaven itself, where this fulness has come—is, by God's eternal love and wisdom, treasured up in the "Second Adam, the Lord from heaven."

From Jesus the well derives its water. In the description which we have of the creation of the world, there is a distinction observed between the "waters which were under the firmament and the waters which were above the firmament." In the new creation not less striking and observable is this difference. The water above, is the "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God," and gathered together in one

mighty confluence in Jesus; and by him brought down to earth and deposited in all true believers, who thus become wells with water; and so, by the dispensing influence of their grace and holiness, "water the whole face of the ground." Thus the "waters are divided from the waters"—the water in the Fountain above, from the water in the well below.

But this truth will be unfolded more fully in the consideration of THE WELL ITSELF. The Christian, figuratively speaking, is this well, deriving, as we have seen, his supply from that hidden Spring to whom he is closely united. There is, first, the interesting fact upon which a preceding chapter has fully expatiated, and therefore to which we need but simply now refer—the indwelling of Christ in the soul. Christ himself enunciates the truth—"I in them." Observe, these are not the words of the apostle, whose ardent mind and glowing imagination might be supposed to exaggerate a truth beyond its proper limits; but they are words of Jesus himself—of him who is the Truth, and who therefore cannot lie. "I in them." *Christ dwelling in the soul forms the inner life of that soul*. The experience of this blessing stands connected with the lowest degree of grace, and with the feeblest faith; the *lamb* of the flock, the soul that has but *touched* the hem of the Savior's garment, prostrate as a penitent at the feet of the true Aaron—in each and in all alike, Christ dwells. He has a throne in that heart, a temple in that body, a dwelling in that soul, and thus, as by a kind of second incarnation, God is manifest in the flesh; in Christ's manifestation in the believer. Truly is he a well with water, who has "Christ in him the hope of glory."

In addition to this is, the indwelling of God's grace in the soul. Grace is a thing *foreign* to the natural state of man. His possession of grace is not concurrent with his birth, nor can it be his by right of hereditary law. No parent, however holy, can transmit a particle of saving grace to his posterity. The law of primogeniture, or the privilege of the birthright, is set aside in the kingdom of grace, whose subjects are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." But see how this mystery is cleared up in the conversation which Jesus held with the Samaritan woman, as he sat wearied upon the mouth of Jacob's well "Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink, you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water." This is the grace of which we speak, and this the source from where it flows into the hearts of all the truly regenerate. It is in you, Christian reader, "a well of

water," a springing well, mounting upward and ascending to the source from where it rises. God looks upon you, not as a dry well, but as a springing well—his own renewing, adopting, sanctifying grace, flowing into your heart—and thus ascending to Him from whom it proceeds, in holy desires, and spiritual aspirations, and divine actings—the living water seeking its level, and rising to its source. Blessed words—"Springing up into everlasting life!" As the first blush of morning is a part of the day, so the least dawn of grace in the soul is a portion of heaven. The well below, is the spring of grace—the well above, is the fountain of glory.

Yet a third blessing of the renewed state is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Thus says the apostle; "don't you know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" He would seem to say—"If you do not know it, you ought to know it as one professing godliness." O what a celestial well—though in himself a poor earthen vessel, a broken cistern—is that regenerate man who has the Holy Spirit reigning in him, living in him—never to abdicate his throne, never to forsake his sanctuary, never to vacate his dwelling; never, by all the corruptions that are there, by all the slights, and piercings, and woundings which he receives, forced to retire from the temple he has constructed, beautified, and made his own!

In view of these statements, who will, then, deny that all *believers in Jesus are wells with water*? What an exalted character, and what an enviable man, is the true Christian! All the resources of the Triune God unite to replenish this earthen vessel. No angel in heaven contains a treasure half so costly and so precious as that poor believing sinner, who, getting near to the Savior's feet, and bathing them with tears of penitence and love, can look up and exclaim, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you."

But we must not overlook an interesting thought suggested by the figure of the text. I allude to the dispensing influence of the well. What is the proper design of a well? Certainly it is not constructed for itself. It is designed to disperse abroad its fulness, and to communicate the blessing it contains. Unless the water of a well finds an outlet, it becomes of necessity stagnant and inert; and instead of being a well giving out and spreading abroad its sparkling streams, it is a still, lifeless reservoir, yielding nothing, and consequently receiving

nothing. Striking emblem of the Christian! The knowledge and the grace that God has given you, though for yourself primarily, are not for yourself exclusively. God, in making you a well of living water—in other words, a possessor of Divine grace—designed to disperse abroad the streams; so that *through the consistency of your walk, the holiness of your life, and the personal activity of your grace in the cause of God and of truth, it might find an outlet for the benefit of others.*

What a well of spiritual knowledge is the true believer! To him it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, while from others they are hidden. Where may we look for an understanding of the revealed mind of God but to him? Who knows the secret of the Lord, and to whom does he show his covenant, but to those who fear him? Having 'an unction from the Holy One,' he knows all things. He knows something of that mystery, which no philosophy of man can teach him—the *plague of his own heart*. He knows something, too, of the value of *Christ*—his person, his work, his glory, his fulness, his tenderness, his sympathy, his preciousness. He knows something of *the character and dealings of God*—as a holy God, as a sin-forgiving God, as a just God, and yet who blots out sin and remembers it no more forever. He knows, in some measure, what the *intricacies of the Christian way are*; what the *narrowness* of the narrow path is; what are the *difficulties* of walking with God; what are the *conflicts, the trials, the tribulations* of the Christian life—and the stream flows abroad.

What a well of holiness is the true believer! The Spirit of holiness inhabiting him, despite the corrupt sediment of his fallen nature, he contains and dispenses abroad that stream of holy influence which carries with it a blessing wherever it flows. Where do we look for true holiness except in the soul born again of the Spirit? A holy man is earth's greatest blessing, is the world's richest ornament and shield.

What a well of compassion is the real Christian! He it is who, taught the priceless value of his own eternal happiness, has affections of compassion for the souls of others involved in like ruin with himself. "O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears!" says Jeremiah. "Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not your law!" exclaims David. These men were mourning wells—and God has distinguished such. "Set a mark upon the

foreheads of the *men that sigh and cry* for all the abominations that be done." The Lord Jesus, the great mourner, who wept, not for himself, but for others, has his bottle for the tears of these wells of pity and compassion; whose sympathies, and prayers, and exertions, flow forth for the conversion of sinners, for the salvation of souls.

Wells of charity, too, are they. Where shall we look for the Divine cement, the true bond, which unites the heart of man to man, but in the one Church of God? Who is the true peacemaker, the diligent sower of peace, the zealous promoter of love, charity, and good-will among men, but he in whose heart the love of God finds a home? Who has such sincere pity for the poor, whose hand is more ready to relieve their necessities—than he who himself is a conscious partaker of the benevolence of God? Such, reader, are some of the *characteristics* of true Christians—the wells with water—dispensing wells.

There is yet another essential feature of a gracious state suggested by the figure, which we must not overlook. These wells with water are perpetually receiving as well as dispensing. Indeed, they can only dispense to others what is dispensed to them. We have intimated that believers are but wells. All their springs are in God. Listen to the acknowledgment: "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God! My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. O God, you are my God! early will I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." And then comes the Divine answer: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." And then follows the response of the soul thirsting after righteousness: "Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not."

Thus does the gracious soul derive all its grace from Christ, "who of God is made unto him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He stands by to *replenish* the well as its resources are exhausted. When the water is low, he raises it; as it gives out, he pours in; and the more liberally it imparts, the more bountifully it receives. "The liberal soul devises liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." "There is one who scatters, and yet increases." Who has ever become poor for God? Who has given freely that

has not in return received freely? Who has ever laid himself out for the Lord, consecrating his substance, his influence, his time, his talents, that has not experienced a welling up in his own soul of the hidden spring, more than replacing all that he has dispensed? The grace that has been employed, the faith that has been exercised, the wealth that has been consecrated, the influence that has been exerted, the reproach that has been endured, the suffering that has been experienced, the health that has been expended, the loss that has been sustained for Christ; Christ has more than recompensed even in the present time-state. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"—is the precept—"and all these things shall be added unto you"—is the promise; and He who enjoins the precept, will make good the promise. Such, then, are some of the characteristics of true Christians.

The reverse of all this we now proceed to consider, in an analysis of **THE CHARACTER OF THE FALSE CHRISTIAN—THE GRACELESS PROFESSOR—THE SELF-DECEIVED.** "These are wells without water."

Let it be distinctly observed that they are spoken of as *wells*; that is, they are *professors of religion*. They have the "form of godliness." They have all the external appearance of real grace and sanctity. Judging of them by their church, or by their minister, or by their creed, or by their party zeal, or even by their knowledge, we should at once rank them, and perhaps rank them high, with the true possessors of grace. So strong are some of the features of resemblance, that it needs the most skillful eye to detect the difference. Looking, not at *the external construction* of the well—the beautiful and costly materials of which it is composed—but looking *within* the well, we soon discover that it is a well without water. Again we remark, that, forming our judgment of them by their church membership, their correct orthodoxy, their showy Christianity, many would be deceived as to their real state, beguiled into the belief that they were truly converted. But when judged of by God's word—alas, how awful the deficiency! Thus far may you go, professors of religion, and yet rest short of the reality. You may be baptized, may partake of the Lord's Supper, may be enrolled upon the records of the Church, be thought a Christian, be respected as a Christian, be confided in as a Christian, and yet His searching glance 'whose eyes are as a flame of fire,' discovers in you nothing but a well without water, a soul without grace—religious profession without religious principle.

Thus have we shown that a godless professor, a false Christian, is but A DRY WELL. There is no indwelling of the Spirit, no possession of Divine grace. No tears of repentance have ever moistened the eyes. There are no wellings up from the heart of holy aspirations after God, of loving desires after Jesus. There are no indications of the plague known, of the burden felt, or of the conflict experienced. No echoing of the apostle's language, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are no breathings after holiness, no longings after Divine conformity, no desires to depart and be with Christ, no anointing of the Spirit. With all the light that is in his judgment, and his observance of days, and months, and seasons, he is but a dry well—a well without water. He possesses not the inner life.

Contemplate this affecting character in yet another point of light—the influence which a mere religious professor exerts. A well with out water!—what a miserable privation! The weary traveler after much endurance of thirst and suffering sees in the distance the inviting well. Rejoicing in the discovery, he quickens his pace, and lo! he finds it indeed a well, but a *dry* well—a well *without water*! His expectation is turned into disappointment, his joy into sorrow; and like the Savior who came hungry to the fig tree and found upon it no fruit, and retiring, breathed upon it his withering curse; so departs the traveler from the well which has so cruelly mocked his raging thirst.

Thus is it with a mere professor—an empty, graceless professor of religion. We go to him, hoping for a little lift in our journey homeward; we go, seeking for some sweet consolation in our deep trial, for counsel in our perplexity, for sympathy with our sorrow, for the communion of saints—but alas! there is no response, no echo, no vibrating chord—nothing in union with what we feel: the well is dry, and not one drop can we extract from it. Oh, is it not one of the bitterest reflections that can fasten upon your mind, that, perhaps, many a poor thirsty soul has repaired to you for instruction, for sympathy, for strength, and finding you a stranger to the mysteries of the Divine life, to the trials, the conflicts, and the joys of the Christian, has turned away in bitter disappointment, even as the weary traveler, parched with thirst, turns from the well without water. It is a solemn thing to be mistaken for a real believer, to be looked up to as a true Christian, and yet to prove destitute of the

knowledge and grace of Christ!—to awaken hope, and to raise expectation, and to create an interest, and to inspire confidence, and when the test is made, when the trial comes, to prove but a graceless soul—deceived and deceiving!

And yet what numbers there are of such! We speak of Jesus—there is no echo. We introduce the subject of all subjects—the most interesting and momentous—the subject of heart religion—there is no response. We go into the detail of Christian experience, the warfare, the sorrows, the joys, the trials, the burdens, the progress, the hope of the Christian, but we speak a language that they understand not. "These are wells without water." No ingenuity can elicit, no possible effort can extract, one drop of the living water. "We play the flute for them, but they do not dance; we sing a dirge for them, but they do not weep."

Turning now to THE TRUE CHRISTIAN, in view of this sadly affecting character we have been attempting to portray, let me remark upon the deep humility which ought to distinguish him as a real professor of the grace of Christ Jesus. What are you in yourself but the mere well? The grace which you possess is a communicated grace. We have this precious treasure in earthen vessels. All that is really holy and gracious in us, springs not from *our* fallen nature, but, like "every good and perfect gift, comes down from the Father of Lights." It is the spontaneous outflowing of the heart of God—the free, unmerited bestowment of his sovereign mercy. Then what meekness of heart, what profound humility of mind, ought to mark you! What a prostration of every form of self—self-confidence, self-seeking, self-boasting, that arrogant view of *our* attainments and doings, which mars the Christianity of so many—should there be, as reasonably becomes *those who have nothing but what they have received, and whom free and sovereign grace alone has distinguished from others!*

How precious ought Jesus to be to us, who has condescended to pour this heavenly treasure into our hearts, and to undertake its constant supply! In what way can we best prove our sense of his goodness, but by drawing largely from the Fountain, and by glorifying him in what we receive? Truly "the well is deep" from where we draw this living water! Our resources are inexhaustible, because they are infinite. Nor can we come too frequently, nor draw too largely. "Spring up, O well of grace and love, into our hearts! Let not

our waters be shallow nor sluggish. O for more depth of indwelling grace! O for more fervor of holy love! O for richer supplies from the fulness of Christ! O for a gracious revival in our souls! 'Come down,' blessed Jesus, 'as rain upon the mown grass!' Breathe, O south wind of the Spirit, upon the garden of our souls, that the spices may flow out! Truly *the well is deep*, from where we have this living water; but *faith can reach it*, and in proportion to the strength of our faith, and the directness and simplicity with which it deals with Christ, will be the plenitude of our supply. "Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved," is our Lord's gracious invitation to his Church.

Nor let us fail to learn the secret of receiving much from Christ—*the free dispensing abroad of what we have already received*. Be assured of this, that *he will receive the most from God who does the most for God*. "The diligent soul shall be made fat. He becomes poor that deals with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent makes rich. There is one who scatters, and yet increases." This is God's law, and he will never repeal it; his promise, and he will ever, and in all cases, make it good. Go forth, believer in Christ, and let your beams of light irradiate; let your streams of grace be dispersed abroad; live for God, suffer for Christ, witness for the truth, and labor for man. Be such a depository of this living and life-giving treasure, that others, less favored than yourself; instructed, guided, and strengthened by your wisdom, experience, and grace, may proceed on their way, glorifying God for the grace given to you. O to have the word of God dwelling in us so richly, and our hearts so intensely glowing with the love of Christ, as to be ever ready to open our lips for God—a well always full, and running over.

This, then, is the secret of *augmenting* our supplies of grace, even by *scattering them*—of replenishing our resources, even by exhausting them. Who, we repeat the question, has ever become impoverished by giving and laborings for God? Where lives the Christian steward whose fidelity to his Master's interests has compromised the welfare of his own? Where is the Christian man who, with cheerful munificence, has consecrated his intellectual wealth or his temporal wealth to advance the truth and kingdom of Jesus, whom Christ has not reimbursed a thousand fold? Where is the believer in Jesus who has endured reproach and suffering, patiently and silently, for conscience' sake, for truth's sake, for Christ's sake, who has not infinitely gained in the rest which he has found in God? Where is the active Christian, who, zealously laborings to

dispense abroad the life-giving waters, has not felt, in the solemn retirement and calm repose of his closet, when pouring out his sorrow into the bosom of his Savior, or in holding close and holy communion with his God, the springing up into his soul of a hidden well of peace, and joy, and love, which has more than restored the energies he has exhausted, and recompensed him for the sacrifice which he has made?

God meets his people in all their works of faith, and labors of love. They are never alone. He meets them in the path of duty and of trial—both in doing and in suffering his will. He meets them, when embarrassed, with counsel; he meets them, when assailed, with protection; he meets them, when exhausted, with strength; he meets them, when faint, with cordials. If we take up Christ's cross upon our shoulder, Christ will take both us and our cross up in his arms. If we bow down our neck to his yoke and bend low our back to his burden, we shall find our rest in both. "You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness; those that remember you in your ways."

"How may I know that I am a well with water?" may be the anxious inquiry of many as they come to the conclusion of this subject. "O that I were quite sure that I was more than a mere professor!" But why ask the question? why be in doubt? Never was so momentous a matter more easily and speedily settled. "He that believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself." Thus, from yourself you need not travel in order to ascertain your true spiritual condition. No one can be a substitute in this great matter for yourself. It is a thing which has too close and personal a relation to you as an individual, to admit of a transfer of its obligations to another. You must feel for yourself—you must experience for yourself—you must have the witness for yourself—and you must decide for yourself alone. I repeat the solemn words—"He that believes in the Son of God, has the witness in himself." And again says the same apostle, "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he rejoice in himself alone, and not in another."

Thus may you come to a right and safe decision in a question involving interests as solemn and as deathless as eternity. Seek this inward witness. Witnessing to what?—that your heart has been convinced of sin—that you have renounced your own righteousness—that you have fled to the Lord Jesus Christ—and that your soul is breathing after personal holiness. Do not, I

beseech you, rest short of this. Here I must hold you. All your reasonings, and objections, and cavilings, and hair-splittings, and subtleties, and sophistries—they are but sparks of your own kindling, in the midst of which you will lie down and die, and die the horrors of the second death, if you are not fully awake to your real condition before God. Give them all up, I implore you. Do not be concerned about others; let your first and chief concern be about yourself. You have no time, just now, to analyze the motives, or sift the principles, or search into the character, or mark the foibles, and detect the inconsistencies of other Christian professors.

Every moment to you is more priceless and precious than all the gems of India; yes, one second of time saved, is of more value to you than a whole eternity lost! Once you shoot across the dark gulf of death, and land on the other side without the inner life—you may then trifle with your existence, and sport with your soul, and laugh at death and hell, and recriminate and reproach others, and brave your doubts, and invent your objections, and frame your excuses, and speculate, and refine, and analyze in theology, and play the fool, as you like—for "there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for (an eternal anticipation) of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." But you cannot afford to act so now. Your precious soul is in danger, your future happiness is in peril, you are in the hands of an angry God, and you are, in fact, fast coming to the close of your probation. To act the fool and to assume the lunatic now, would be more than a mere semblance of the melancholy and awful reality. O come, then, to Christ—I bid you, invite you, implore you to come to Christ. He will answer all your questions, resolve all your doubts, remove all your difficulties, meet all your objections, and quiet all your fears. Only come to Christ. To this one alternative, to this last resort, I would shut you up.

From this I cannot release you. You must come to Christ, or you are lost. He is all, and he has all, and he will freely give you all that you need. One drop of his blood falling upon your conscience, one beam of his love darting in upon your soul, one stream of his grace flowing into your heart, will make all right within; and the morning, when the sun rises in splendor, will not look more radiant, and the lark when it mounts heavenward bathed in its beams, will not sing more sweetly, than you when Jesus thus enters your soul, filling it with sunshine and music. Accept the invitation, "He who comes unto me, I will in no

wise cast out"—and you are saved.

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that your blood was shed for me,
And that you bid me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To you, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

"Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
With fears within and wars without
O Lamb of God I come!"

"Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yes, all I need, in you to find
O Lamb of God, I come!"

"Just as I am, you will receive,
Will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because your promise I believe
O Lamb of God, I come."

"Just as I am, your love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now, to be yours, yes, yours alone
O Lamb of God, I come!"

We may anticipate another anxious enquiry. "What course am I to adopt when the water is low, when the well is dry, when no effort avails to bring the living fluid to the surface?—in other words, when I find *a spiritual drought and deadness in my soul*, and cannot feel, nor weep, nor sigh, nor desire?—when to read and meditate, to hear and pray, seem an irksome task?—when I cannot see the Savior's beauty, nor feel him precious, nor labor as zealously, nor suffer as patiently for him as I would desire?" The answer is at hand—Look again to Jesus. This is the only remedy that can meet your case. Search the Bible through, inquire of all the ministers who have ever lived, and still the answer would be—LOOK AGAIN TO JESUS. Go direct to Christ—he is the

Fountainhead, he is the living Well. True, the well is deep—for its fulness is infinite—but faith, be it of the smallest capacity, can with joy draw sufficient to quench your thirst, and make your soul as a garden which the streams have refreshed and made to "rejoice and blossom as the rose."

The Infinite and Eternal Well is near to you! Like Hagar you are within its reach. May the Holy Spirit open your eyes to see that while *all emptiness exists in you, all fulness dwells in Jesus*—that, however low may be the living waters in the well of your heart, there is a fathomless depth in the heart of Christ—of love unchangeable, of all-sufficient grace, of immutable truth, of salvation from all sin and trial and sorrow, commensurate with your need, and vast as his own infinity. Never can your grace be too low, nor your frame too depressed, nor your path too perplexing, nor your sorrow too keen, nor your sin too great, nor your condition too extreme for Christ, because he is both Divine and human: thus *uniting the nature that can relieve, with the nature that can sympathize*. "Son of God! Son of man! how wondrous and glorious are You!" Weeping in lonely sorrow, and pining in sickening need, you may, like the banished wife of Abraham, be looking wistfully around you for support and relief. See! that relief and support are near! Rise—that relief is at hand! Christ is with you, Christ is near you, Christ is in you a Fountain of living water. Cease your sadness, dry your tears, arise! and "with joy draw water out of this Well of salvation."

Be very honest and diligent in ascertaining the cause of your soul's dryness. The correct knowledge of this is necessary to its removal; and its removal is essential to the effectual recovery of the inner life from its sad relapse. Is it indulged sin? Is it the neglect of private prayer? Is it the forsaking of the means of grace? Is it worldliness, carnality, unwatchfulness? Anyone of these would so grieve the Spirit of God within you, as to dry up the spirituality of your soul. Do not be beguiled with the belief that the real recovery has taken place, simply because that, conscious of your state, in common-place, meaningless regrets, you acknowledge and deplore it. "The sluggard *desires, and has nothing.*" Observe, he has his desires, but nothing more, because with them he is satisfied. There is no effectual rousing from his sleep, no earnest attempts are made to shake off the spirit of slumber, no resolute putting away of the narcotic which produced and which protracts it. There is no drawing near to God, no looking

to Christ, no seeking of the Spirit, no thorough mortification of sin, no coming out of the world, no pressing forward. It is the mere *desire* of the sluggard, and nothing more. Let not this be your state.

Receive with gladness any awakening to a consciousness of your spiritual relapse, and cherish with prayer any real desire for a better state; but do not rest here. Seek earnestly, importunately, believingly, until you possess more abundantly life from Christ. Seek a gracious revival of the inner life—the life of God in your soul. Seek a clearer manifestation of Christ, a renewed baptism of the Spirit, a more undoubted evidence of your conversion, a surer, brighter hope of heaven. Thus seeking, you will find it; and finding it, your "peace will flow like a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea."

O the joy of a revived state of the inner life of God! It is the joy of spring, which follows the gloom and chill of winter. It is the joy of the sunlight, after a cloudy and dark day. Jesus, walking in the midst of the grace which his own Spirit has thus revived, gently addresses the soul: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in the land; the fig-tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Give all diligence in the use of the means of grace, if you desire a flourishing state of soul. They are the Divinely appointed channels of conveyance from the Fountain. They are the tributary streams from the Great Ocean. You cannot possibly maintain a healthy, vigorous state of the inner life, without them. You cannot neglect, with impunity, private prayer, meditation, and self-examination; or public ordinances—the ministry of the Word, the services of the sanctuary, the assemblies of the saints. A slight thrown upon these must entail a severe loss to your soul. Some professors can go from Sabbath to Sabbath, plunged in worldliness, or eager in the pursuit of gain, in total neglect of the prayer-meeting, or of the weekly Bible lecture—those needed rests and hallowed pauses in the way—as if there were no such appointments. These are among the things which weaken the hands, and discourage the heart, and hinder the usefulness of the faithful pastor.

But a more painful calamity even than this, is the *dryness, deadness, and barrenness which this neglect brings into their own souls*. It would seem as if this were the punishment of their sin. *They turn their backs upon God, and God turns his back upon them*. They neglect to make the pool, and he withholds the rain that fills it. But, Christian professor, this must not be! The wells must be dug, the water must be searched for. We are told that "Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found there a well of springing water"—or, as the margin renders it—"a well of living water." And he is pronounced a blessed man "who, passing through the valley of Baca, makes it a well; the rain also fills the pools." It is in this way of diligent, prayerful waiting upon the means, that "he goes from strength to strength, until he appears before God." O, dig for this precious water! Search, O search, for this living grace! Make the pool, and trust the faithfulness and loving-kindness of God to fill it with "the early and the latter rain."

No man shall wait upon the Lord in vain. "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." They who plough deeply the fallow ground, and in its furrows sow the precious seed, shall not lack the Holy Spirit's descending influence, in silent dew by night, and in copious showers by day, to quicken and to fructify it. Only honor the God of grace in all the means of grace, and God will honor you by imparting to you all grace through the means. "The diligent soul shall be made fat." Return, O return to the forsaken Christ, to the neglected sanctuary, to the despised means, and you shall then no longer have reason to exclaim, "My leanness! my leanness!"

What a truly appalling character it has been the endeavor of these pages to portray—an empty, graceless professor of Christ! Reader, is this your state? Examine yourself, prove your own self, and ascertain truly if you have "Christ in you the hope of glory." Satisfy not yourself with external ceremonies, with the observance of days, of matins, and vespers, and frequent communions—with almsgiving and charities. *Are you a well with water?* This, this is the great and momentous question which, in the near prospect of death, and of the judgment that follows death, it behooves you to decide. Is Christ dwelling in your heart by his Spirit? Is your religion more than a mere outward profession? O, it is an awful thing to go into eternity with your Bible, and your Psalm-book, or your Prayer-book in your hand, but without Christ living in your soul; with the elements of the Savior's love melting upon your *lips*, but

without the experience of the Savior's love glowing in your *heart*; to go reposing in false dependence upon Church privileges, and to have come short of the only true foundation upon which the sinner can build his hope of heaven—the sliding sand substituted for the Eternal Rock.

How exactly has the Lord Jesus met such a case! In one of his striking parabolical discourses, he has furnished us with a description of certain people who in the day of judgment will be found to have put in the plea of Church union, and Church ordinances, and Church privileges, as justifying their claim to admission into heaven; but who will be rejected on that very ground, to their shame and everlasting contempt. Listen to his description; "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door, and you begin to stand outside, and to knock at the door, 'saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I don't know you. Then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in your presence, and you have taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I don't know you; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity."

And who, my reader, are these? Do not be deceived! They are not the profane, and the profligate, and the neglecter of means, and the despiser of ordinances; far otherwise. They are professors of religion, nominal Christians—"almost Christians;" individuals who had been baptized, who frequented the house of God, who were regular in their attendance upon ordinances, and who believed that, by their zealous labors, and their amiable qualities, and their charities and good-will to men, they would at last be saved. But, alas! they are deceived. *With all this outward profession, they were unregenerated by the Spirit*, were uncircumcised in heart, were unjustified by Christ, and had never become "a habitation of God through the Spirit." Baptism could not regenerate them, the Lord's Supper could not sanctify them, their own works could not justify them; and when with confidence they went up to the very gate of heaven, and knocked for admission, lo! they were met with the stern rebuke, "I don't know you: depart from me, all you workers of iniquity." O beware, we beseech you, of those public teachers who tell you that you were regenerated in baptism, and that the Lord's Supper is the instrument of maintaining you in that state of salvation into which, as they teach, baptism introduced you. Give not place to such false instructors, such blind guides, such perverters of the truth, such soul-destroyers; no, not for one moment. Let not their eloquence entice you, let

not their reasoning ensnare you, let not their show of sanctity beguile you. You have interests at stake too dear and precious to peril on such terms as these.

I leave these solemn, searching considerations to your prayerful reflection, passing on to another figurative representation of the Inner Life—in its relapse and recovery.

"The Inner Life in its Relapsed Influence" (The Unsavory Salt)

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness (savor), how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men." Matthew 5:13

The more deeply the subject now engaging our attention—*the spiritual life, its decay and recovery*—unfolds itself to the mind, the more irresistible and overwhelming must be the conviction of its measureless importance and solemnity. All other considerations, in comparison, having their relation to the present, however important, interesting, and absorbing for the moment, dwindle into insignificance. The personal interests of an individual must, to that individual, be of greater moment and more precious than all other interests. It is a law of nature that we should love ourselves; and it is the law of revelation that we should love our neighbor as ourselves; thus, the word of God, while recognizing the law of self-love, divests it at the same time of its selfishness. Nowhere does this law find such proper and ample scope for its exercise, and in nothing is it more affectingly and strongly appealed to, than in the matter of personal salvation. "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"

The law of self-preservation, the law of his being, is here addressed in its most solemn relation—*its relation to eternity*. To this eternity we are hastening. We are passing from shadows to realities—from things that are seen and temporal, to things that are unseen and eternal. The inevitable and awful crisis is near, when all that now awakens so much interest, and creates so much excitement, and absorbs so much time, will be as the arrow winged through the air—leaving no impression and no trace. One moment's personal, actual contact

with eternity, one drop of the cold moisture of death trembling upon the brow, one dim glimpse within the parting veil of the invisible world, will dissipate the false, and invest with its true character everything that is real.

We are as much convinced of the truth, as we are conscious of the solemnity of the fact, that if the mind is not then beclouded, and the conscience is not then seared, and the heart is not then abandoned by God to the wedded idol, and the whole soul is not given over to judicial impenitence and unbelief—if indeed there be any spiritual sensibility, or the faintest apprehension of the awfulness of the position—the one question of that tremendous moment will be—"Is my soul in a prepared state to meet God? Am I safe for eternity?"

And yet will it be considered discrepant with this statement to affirm of individuals in general, that men die much as they have lived? It would seem to be the cherished delusion of many, that a kind of spiritual transformation transpires in death; that because death itself is a change of relation, around which gather new sensations, new feelings, new thoughts, new solemnities, new prospects, that therefore *the soul passes through a kind of spiritual preparedness to meet its approaching destiny*. But such is not the case. The character which time has for years been shaping, it yields to the demands of eternity in the precise mold in which it was formed. Death hands over the soul to the scrutiny and the decisions of the judgment, exactly as life relinquished it. The 'king of terrors' has received no commission and possesses no power to effect a spiritual change in the transit of the spirit to the God who gave it. Its office is to unlock the cell, and conduct the prisoner into court. It can furnish no plea, it can suggest no argument, it can correct no error, it can whisper no hope, to the pale and trembling being on his way to the bar. The jailer must present the criminal to the Judge, precisely as the officer delivered him to the jailer—with all the marks and evidences of criminality and guilt clinging to him as at the moment of arrest.

The supposition of multitudes seems to be, just what we have stated, that when the strange and mysterious, but unmistakable signs of death, are stealing upon them—when the summons to appear before the Judge admits of not a doubt, and allows of no delay, that then what has been held as truth, and now, in the mighty illumination of an unveiling eternity, is found to be error, may be with ease abandoned; and that, however negligent they who have lived all their

lifetime without God, may have been of religion, while the last day appeared distant—and however careless they who had made a Christian profession, may have been of the ground of their confidence, and the reason of their hope, under an indefinite expectation of appearing in the presence of God—yet now that the footfall of death is heard approaching, and the invisible world becomes visible through the opening chinks of the earthly house of their tabernacle, they will be enabled to summon all the remainder of strength, and with the utmost strenuousness turn their undivided attention to the business of saving the soul.

But is it really so? Is not the whole course of experience against a supposition so false as this? Do not men die mostly as they have lived? The infidel dies in infidelity, the profligate dies in profligacy, the atheist dies in atheism, the careless die in indifference, and the formalist dies in formality. There are *exceptions* to this, undoubtedly, but the exceptions confirm rather than disprove the general fact, that men die as they lived. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."

In view, then, of this solemn statement, deeply affecting it must be to the Christian professor—we now turn to the great subject immediately before us. If it be thus that our death will derive much of its character and complexion from the present tenor of our life—that in proportion to the lack of spirituality and the undue influence which the world has had upon the mind—to the habitual distance of the walk with God, and the gradual separation from us of those holy, sanctifying influences which go to form the matured, influential, and useful Christian—will be the lack of that bright evidence, and full assured hope in death, which will give to the departing soul an "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom,"—then, of what great moment is it that every individual professing godliness, should know the exact state of his soul before God! We have endeavored to aid you in this examination by stating *the nature of the inner spiritual life*, by exhibiting some of *the indications and evidences of a state of relapse*, and then by portraying *the character of the sincere and the false professor of religion*.

The decay of Christian influence, under the figure of the unsavory salt, is a topic which seems naturally to follow. The words which suggest the state are taken from one of our Lord's graphic and awakening discourses, in which, with a skill he only was master of, he so dissects and individualizes human character and responsibility, in their relations to the high and paramount claims of God and eternity, as to turn the eye of each believer within upon himself. Addressing professing Christians, he says, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness (savor), how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men." *The world—the salt—the unsavory salt*, are the topics which these words suggest.

THE WORLD.

Our first remark bears upon **THE WORLD AS CONSTITUTING THE PARTICULAR SPHERE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S INFLUENCE**. "You are the salt *of the earth*." We bestow but little observation, it is feared, upon the spiritual state of the world at large, and upon that portion in particular where our influence is the most concentrated and felt. It is true we admire its beauty, can paint its scenery, are absorbed in its history, are excited by its antiquities, and are astonished by its wonders—but in its momentous relation to eternity, O how little interest does it awaken! I am not about to descant upon the unsatisfying nature of the world, nor upon its passing away. Your own experience of what the world really is—of how much it promises and of how little it performs—will compile a better volume for your study than that which any human pen could compose.

But I refer you to *its deep, universal ungodliness*. I speak of it as a world full of moral pollution, of anarchy, and of rebellion against God. A world crowded with all the present consequences of sin, poverty and suffering, disease and death. Who can read its statistics of crime, or glance at the journals which chronicle its daily history, and not feel the full force of the truth, that Satan is the supreme god of this world, and that "the whole world lies in wickedness"—literally, 'in the wicked one.' But how insensible are we of this! How faintly and imperfectly do we realize it! How little affected by the hatred—the bloodshed—the intemperance—the debauchery—the fraud—the grinding oppression—the gross injustice—the suffering—the misery—the death—which confront us at every step, and lift their wail of agony and cry of vengeance to

heaven! How few of us sigh and cry for all these abominations that are done!

Nor yet of this alone, awful as it is. Equally insensible are we of *the existence and progress of error in the world*—truth-denying, God-dishonoring, Christ-supplanting, and soul-destroying error. We know and believe that no fallen child of Adam can be saved apart from the knowledge and experience of Divine and revealed truth—that the truth is the instrument of his renewal, and of his sanctification. Believing, then, that men are saved only by the truth, and are made holy only through the truth, how little concerned and alarmed are we by the fearful inroads of doctrinal errors, and popish practices, tending to mislead, and imperil the best interests of the multitudes, to whose blind understanding and sin-loving hearts, the error that rocks the cradle of their soul's deep slumber, is ever more welcome than the truth that disturbs their carnal security, and arouses them from their false repose, by portraying their present sinfulness, and testifying of the "judgment to come."

Such is the world in which Christ has placed his Church as the sphere of its influence, as the theater of its grace, and as the school of its graces. Such is the world of which all sincere believers in Jesus are declared by him to be, individually and collectively, "the salt of the earth."

We now proceed to *illustrate and apply* this interesting and important truth.

The metaphor of 'salt', from its frequent use in the word of God, has come to be a holy and expressive one. In the sacrifices offered under the Levitical law, God commanded the use of salt; "And every oblation of your meat-offering shall you season with salt; neither shall you allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your meat-offering: with all your offerings you shall offer salt." Salt was used in this relation as *a symbol of holy sincerity in their service, and as expressive of communion in their worship*. We find, too, that God employs salt as *an emblem of his everlasting covenant*: "All the heave-offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord, have I given you, and your sons and your daughters with you, by a statute forever: it is *a covenant of salt* forever before the Lord unto you and to your seed with you." When the prophet Elisha was desired to purify the waters of the corrupt fountain of Jericho, he cast salt into them, saying, "Thus says the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed."

But it is under the gospel dispensation we find the richest and most expressive meaning of the figure. When our Lord reminds his people that they are "the salt of the earth," he describes *the gracious state of all real believers*. The grace of God is that "salt," apart from which all is moral corruption and spiritual decay. Where Divine grace exists not, there is nothing to stunt the growth, or to check the progress, or to restrain the power of the soul's depravity. The fountain pours out its streams of corruption and death, bidding defiance to all human efforts either to purify or restrain. Education cannot, public sentiment cannot, human law cannot, moral persuasion cannot, self-love cannot; all these instruments fail in the attempt. There is going on in the soul a process of moral decay, which, if not averted by grace, must terminate in the intolerable and interminable pangs of the second death—the soul departing into eternity, one mass of moral corruption.

What a spectacle for the eye of a holy God to behold! With all his natural loveliness and amiable instincts—admired, lauded, caressed by man—the being is yet an object of the Divine loathing and abhorrence. If God loves himself, if he delights in his own holiness, he must hate sin, while yet enduring with all patience the sinner, not willing that he should perish. But let one grain of the salt of God's grace fall into this corrupt fountain, and there is deposited a counteracting and transforming element, which at once commences a healing, purifying, and saving process. And, what parental restraint, and the long years of study, and human law, had failed to do, one hour's deep repentance of sin, one believing glance at a crucified Savior, one moment's realization of the love of God, have effectually accomplished.

O the intrinsic preciousness, the priceless value, the sovereign efficacy of this Divine salt—God's converting, sanctifying grace! Effecting a lodgement in the most debased and corrupt heart, it revolutionizes the whole soul, changing its principles, purifying its affections, ennobling its sentiments, and assimilating it to the Divine holiness. Be assured of this, my reader, that nothing short of the grace of God can renew and sanctify your nature, and fit you for the abodes of infinite holiness and bliss. You must become a subject of grace, before you can become an heir of glory.

Thus all true believers in Jesus, from their gracious character, are denominated the "salt of the earth." And why so? Because all that is Divine, and holy, and sanctifying, and precious, exists in them, and in them only. It is found in that nature which the Holy Spirit has renewed, in that heart which Divine grace has changed, in that soul humbled in the dust before God for sin, and now, in the exercise of faith which he has given, reposing on the atoning work of Jesus, exclaiming,

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on you."

There, where God's love is felt—there, where the Holy Spirit is possessed—there, where the Savior's atonement is received, and his image is reflected—there is found the precious "salt of the earth." The world does not know it, and even the lowly grace may be veiled from the eye of the church—few mark the silent tear, or see the deep prostration of the spirit before the Lord, or are cognizant of its hidden joy, or measure the extent of the holy influence, noiselessly, yet effectually exerted; but God, looking from his throne of glory through the ranks of pure intelligences that encircle him, beholds it; and in that humble mind, and in that believing heart, he sees the Divine and precious 'salt,' which beautifies, sanctifies, and preserves the world. He sees true holiness nowhere else; he recognizes his own moral image in no other. The Christian is emphatically, "the salt of the earth."

THE SAVORY SALT.

But here a view of the subject presents itself of a deeply interesting character. We allude to the moral and spiritual influence of the Christian as it is exerted. This undoubtedly was the leading thought in the mind of our Lord when he employed the metaphor in its application to his people, "You are the salt of the earth." But in describing this influence, where shall I commence, and where shall I terminate? I can easier place my hand upon its commencement than upon its termination, because it never terminates! Christian influence begins with the first grain of grace, the first throb of life, the first beam of light, the first tear of godly sorrow, the first glance of faith—but its impressions and its results are as lasting as eternity. Solemn thought! The holy, gracious influence of a good man, stretches far away into the invisible world.

But consider his present influence; his sphere, be it what it may, is just what

God has made it, but in that sphere, be it limited or boundless, *he is God's salt, designed to preserve and to transform, by the holy influence which he exerts, the community in which he dwells.* What a blessing is that Christian! Be the relation what it may which binds him to society—a husband, a wife, a parent, a child, a brother, a sister, a friend—*he is the salt of the circle in which he moves.* That little spark which glows in his bosom, may light the steps of some benighted wanderer to eternity; that measure of grace, diffusing its fragrance through his soul, may cheer and invigorate some tried and drooping spirit; that degree of spiritual knowledge which he possesses, may confirm some waverer, or guide some anxious and perplexed seeker after truth. The holy and commanding influence which God has given him, may, with its power, awe and subdue the mightiest agent of evil; or with its smile, cheer and encourage the weakest and lowliest effort of good. Blessed of God, he is a blessing to man.

Of course it is understood that we are now speaking of the *salt that has not lost its savor*—the *savory salt*; we are describing the character and influence of a spiritually-minded Christian—of *the influence exerted by one in whom the inner life is in a healthy, vigorous, active state.* Such a believer is an incalculable blessing in any sphere in which he may move—he is truly "the salt of the earth:" there is a savoriness about him which reveals his inward grace; his *example* is savory, his *prayers* are savory, his *conversation* is savory; we feel, when we converse with him, that he has the Divine salt in his soul, that we are in the presence of a true Christian, that we are holding communion with one who is wont to hold communion with God, one who dwells near the cross, who lives beneath the anointing, who walks humbly with God, who lives as "beholding Him who is invisible."

There is that in him which bespeaks the gracious man—there is an echo to your voice, a response to your thought, a vibration to your touch, which rebounds upon your own soul with thrilling effect. You feel yourself, as it were, salted afresh by the salt that is in your brother; you have caught the contagion of his holiness—his example has rebuked you, his zeal has quickened you, his love has melted you, his faith has invigorated you, his grace has refreshed you, his smile has gilded the dark cloud that perhaps hung around your spirit, his word has fallen balmy and healing upon your sorrowing, bleeding heart—and the secret of all is, he is "a sweet savor of Christ" to your soul.

The same interpretation of the figure will equally apply to *the church of God in its collective capacity*. As the conservator of the truth, what a blessing is the Church to the world—the only depository of this Divine and precious treasure—the sole living, practical exhibition of it upon earth—the only Divinely appointed and proper agent for its propagation throughout the world! How solemn and responsible her position, how commanding and far-reaching her influence! The counteracting agent of error is, undoubtedly, its opposite—TRUTH. And who *possesses* the truth, and who *experiences* the truth, and who *loves* the truth, and who *guards* and *disseminates* the truth, but the "Church of God, *the pillar and ground of the truth?*"

And what a preservative of the world has been the truth of God, thus defended and diffused by the influence of the Christian Church! What but the truth, as held and maintained by the different sections of the Church of Christ, has arrested those fearful errors, the inroads of which have already worked such disasters in the world, and the unchecked progress of which must have proved its total destruction? Systems rose, flourished, and fell; schools existed, influenced, and died. Infidelity, popery, semi-popery, anti-Christian, Christ-denying errors, have in their turns, and in different ages, had their day; but the truth, for whose overthrow and destruction they all leagued, confederated, combined, and labored; still lives, and lives to bless and save its enemies.

When false doctrine has come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord has lifted up the standard of the gospel, and rolled it back. The pulpit and the press—those powerful agents in the hands of the Church of God—have scattered and broad-cast the salt of truth, and those precious grains have counteracted the influence and stayed the progress of schisms and of errors. What but *the salt of truth cast into the fountain of public opinion*, by the labors of the Christian Church, has on many occasions so purified and changed its character, that on great questions deeply involving the welfare of individuals, of communities, and of nations—it has sent abroad an influence so healthy, vigorous, and commanding, as to effect a complete revolution in the decisions of cabinets and in the histories of states?

THE UNSAVORY SALT.

But we proceed to speak of *the decay of the inner life*, as manifest in the impaired vigor of Christian influence, figuratively set forth by "the salt that

has *lost its savor*," and its consequent unprofitableness. The indestructibility of the divine life in the soul of man, the imperishable nature of real grace, is a truth so deeply involving the holiness and happiness of the Christian—and what is of still greater moment—the glory of God, that we would place it in the foreground of the statement we are about to advance. In the most searching investigation we would make into the state of religion in the soul, we would never forget that *where there exists real grace, that grace is as imperishable as the God who implanted it*; that where true faith has led your trembling footsteps to Jesus, to receive him as all your salvation, that faith is as deathless as its Author.

But with this broad and emphatic statement of a great and holy truth, we must proceed to justify the affecting declaration of the Savior's words, that *the salt may lose its savor!* In what sense will this apply to the inner, spiritual life of the believer? Most clearly and indisputably in the sense of *a declining state of grace, and of its consequent loss of vigorous influence*. The first symptom of this state which appears, may be a change which the individual detects in his own soul as to his actual, personal enjoyment of religion. Propose to him the question—With all your observance of external religious duties and activities, what amount of spiritual enjoyment have you of vital religion in your soul? In other words, What real power does the spiritual life within you possess? Have you a heartfelt realization of the actuality and heavenliness of the divine things embodied in your creed, and avowed in your Christian profession? Do spiritual truths have that holy savor and sweetness to your taste which indicate a healthy state of soul? Do you know habitually what close, filial, and confidential communion with God is?—the purifying power of confession?—the frequent sprinkling of the atoning blood?—the meek, submissive temper of mind in trials sent by God, or under provocation received from man?

Were he to reply to these close, searching interrogations, as a man honest with himself and to his God, he would perhaps unhesitatingly answer—"Alas! the salt has lost its savor! There was a period when all this *was* the happy experience of my soul. There was then a savor in the very name of Jesus—but it is gone! There was a reality in divine truth—but it is gone! There was an attraction in the throne of grace—but it is gone! There was a bright ascending flame upon the altar of my heart, of love to Jesus, of communion with God—but it is gone! I once walked filially with my heavenly Father; I felt the power

of godliness in my soul; I knew what heart-religion was, what secret, closet religion was—but alas! the salt has lost its savor!"

Trace another symptom of this 'unsavory religion' in the deterioration through which his graces have passed. His love has lost its fervor, his faith its vigor, his zeal its fire, his spirit its lowliness, his carriage and deportment its gentleness and simplicity. There seems not a grace of the Holy Spirit in his soul to have escaped the blighting influence which has swept over him—not one that has not lost something of its heavenly savor.

The feeble, if not the injurious influence which his religion exerts upon others is not the least marked and affecting evidence of the decay of spiritual life in his soul. *His Christianity is of so sickly* and doubtful a character, it produces no favorable impression. The world, keen-eyed, eager to discern the mote in the eye, and ever ready to detect the slightest discrepancy of principle and practice—knows him to be a professor of religion, and that is all of his Christianity that it does know. It is aware that he has passed through the solemn ritual of a Christian profession, that he is enrolled among the saints, and mingles in their hallowed services; but such are the *glaring inconsistencies of his Christian walk, such is his worldliness, his lust of power, his thirst for wealth, his love of pleasure, the lightness of his spirit*, his religion has become a proverb and a by-word among the immoral and profane, and produces no more winning, sanctifying effect upon others, than the salt that has lost its savor.

What is the *church* holier for his union with her? What is the world better for his religion? What *moral darkness* does he illumine? What *evil* does he correct? What *misery* does he alleviate? What *raging vice* does he check? What healthy impetus in the career of spiritual progress does his Christian profession give to society? Alas! in all these things he is but as the *salt that has lost its savor*. Melancholy spectacle!—to witness a professing man, who seemed for a time to run well, and whose Christian example was powerful and commanding, now faltering and pausing in his course, waning and deteriorating in his influence, his religion becoming tasteless and insipid. Yet such is the individual whose affecting character is portrayed by the expressive figure of the Savior.

But a solemn question is proposed—"How can it be made salty again?" In

other words, *how can such a relapsed state of the spiritual life be recovered?* The question of the Savior would seem to imply an utter impossibility in the thing; and we admit that at first sight it would so appear. The case is indeed a trying and a desperate one. *Spiritual relapse is easy; but spiritual recovery is difficult.* It is easier, we all know, to imbibe a disease, than to counteract and arrest it—to plunge into difficulties than to escape from them. It is thus with the concerns of the soul. A case of 'conversion' would seem to demand less power than a case of 're-conversion'—to enkindle love in a rebel's heart, than to re-kindle it in the heart of a child—to bring a poor sinner to ground his arms, and prostrate himself a penitent suppliant before the cross, than to reclaim a wanderer to the feet of the Savior he had forsaken. *Truths, motives, arguments, pleas, once so effective, have now lost their attraction and their power; and pride, shame, and hardness of heart, seem to have gained the ascendancy.* The ashes of extinguished affection smother in the heart every fresh spark which each effort to bring back has re-kindled. "How can it be made salty again?"

But THE RECOVERY is not impossible, and the case, therefore, is not hopeless. The salt may again be salted; the inner life may be revived; the waning strength may be restored; and the salt of grace, now apparently worthless and lost, may yet again be recovered, and prove as sweet and savory as before. Let it be observed, that Jesus speaks of the salt being re-salted. Impossible as this may be to man, with God it is possible. By infusing a new life into the renewed nature, a *fresh impartation* of grace to the heart; by rekindling the smouldering embers in the soul; and thus by putting his hand again to the entire work of resuscitating, restoring, and reviving the whole inner man, the salt, re-salted, may regain its former sweetness and power.

The means by which this great and gracious recovery may be effected, are such as his wisdom will suggest and his sovereignty will adopt. But of this we may rest assured—all will be under the direction of unchangeable love. Whether it may be by the *gentle gales of the Spirit*, or by the *severe tempest of trial*, is but of little moment in comparison of the happy and glorious result. If the salt that has lost its savor be but re-salted, the mysterious process by which it is effected we will calmly and submissively leave in his hands. "This also comes forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

We would suggest, in concluding this chapter, the Savior's injunction as

supplying an effectual check to this tendency to relapsed influence in the spiritual life—"Have salt in yourselves." Adding to this the apostle's exhortation—"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Repair constantly to Christ, where a sufficiency of grace for each day, and for each circumstance of each day, will keep your soul supplied and nourished; so that while restraining and upholding, sanctifying and comforting grace is abundantly vouchsafed for yourself, the influence of that same grace will make you a far-reaching and an untold blessing to others.

**"The Re-quickening of the Inner Life"
"David in the Dust, Breathing after God"**

"My soul cleaves unto the dust; quicken me according to your word."—Psalm 119:25.

We have more than once in this work adverted to *the indestructible nature of true grace, the deathlessness of God's life in man's soul*. But we may associate with this truth another idea. Not only cannot the spiritual life be destroyed—but it cannot even, for any great length of time, be depressed. Such is its divine elasticity—so to speak—such its vital energy, whatever the superincumbent weight sinking it to the earth, whatever the fetters that would confine it to the dust—it succeeds eventually in throwing off its pressure, in bursting its bonds, and in soaring again to its native skies. Thus in the lowest spiritual frame of the child of God, though cleaving even to the dust, there is a divine, ascending power in the soul, which ever lifts it in holy breathings and aspirations after God. Not merely is the principle of spiritual life secured, but its power cannot be destroyed.

How striking the confirmation of this truth afforded by the experience of David—two or three features of whose spiritual history we propose, in the present and succeeding chapters, to review, as illustrative of a relapsed and recovered state of the inner life. We can scarcely imagine a lower depth of sorrow and humiliation to a heavenly mind than that set forth by the words, "My soul cleaves to the dust,"—prostrated, groveling in the very earth. And yet, behold the indestructible principle of grace!—his soul mounts heavenward, in the holiest and most spiritual breathings that ever rose from

human lips—"Quicken me according to your word." May the Spirit of God now be our teacher, and impart to each reader a personal application of his truth, while from these instructive and striking words we consider the **RE-QUICKENING OF THE INNER LIFE OF THE SOUL.**

We must not, however, entirely overlook **DAVID'S PAINFUL AND HUMILIATING POSTURE AND CONFESSION**—"My soul cleaves to the dust." There is a profound signification in this sentence. Were we to restrict its meaning to the unconverted state of man, what words, or what image, could more forcibly and vividly describe and portray that fearful condition? No principle is more true and palpable than that the center of the soul's moral gravity is earth. It *originally* was heaven: "God made man upright." The center of his soul's repose was God. Standing erect in conscious innocence, his countenance, the index of his soul, was elevated, beholding the countenance of his Father and his God.

"While other creatures towards the earth look down,
God gave to man a front sublime, and raised
His noble view to scope the starry heavens."

But falling from that elevation, his soul wandering away from God, *earth then became the center of its gravitation*. All his moral and intellectual tendencies are now downward and earthly. It is an awful view to take of a rational and immortal being, and yet from its truthfulness we dare not shrink. "The first man is of the earth, earthy." He is described as "minding earthly things." Earth is the center to which all the faculties and powers of his soul tend, the point where all his schemes terminate, the boundary by which all his desires and expectations are limited. This little planet of ours circumscribes all the powers and tendencies, tastes and pursuits, of his rational and deathless mind. Select the most intellectual pursuits, the most refined enjoyments, the most reasonable schemes that ever awoke a thought or inspired a feeling in the natural man, and the utmost we can say of it is—It is of the earth, earthy. His soul cleaves to the dust; his mind clings to, and grovels upon, the earth. There is nothing of God in his thoughts, of Christ in his affections, or of eternity in his plans. There is no looking beyond this little speck of matter, which, like the insect crawling upon its leaf, seems all the universe to him. As that insect knows nothing of, and cares nothing for, a world teeming with life beyond its microscopic boundary, so the carnal mind—alas that an irrational creature

should be our comparison!—groveling upon the ground, sees not what a world, thinks not what a universe, stretches far away beyond it, of which it soon itself is to be an inhabitant.

For this flight of the soul to eternity, for this its solemn appearing in the presence of God—its scrutiny, its judgment, and its destiny—is there any adequate care, or thought, or preparation? None whatever! Everything else is cared for, prepared for, and thought of, except the soul's departure to the other world. Is not this folly? is it not madness? is it not a crime of the deepest dye? "Earthly, sensual, devilish," he cleaves to the dust. All his enterprises, pleasures, aggrandizements—magnificent, refined, noble as they are—spring from the dust, are restricted to the dust, and with the dust they perish forever. What an awful, yet unexaggerated description, is this of the natural man! Reader, if not a subject of the converting grace of God, you are the original of this dark, gloomy, repulsive picture!

But the words upon which we are now commenting are those of a living, heaven-born, heaven-breathing, and heaven-destined soul. They admit us into one of the secrets of the inner and divine life, with which, alas! we are, the most of us, but too familiar. Shall we attempt an analysis of this peculiar state of spiritual mind, of which David's language is so expressive? It presents *a mournful acknowledgment of the influence of an evil nature*. David deeply felt this. *Flesh in the child of God is as really flesh as in the child of Satan*. The old man, the Adamic nature, is precisely the same that it always was. *Regeneration does not transform 'flesh' into 'spirit'*. It proposes not to eradicate and expel the deep-seated root of our degenerate nature; but *it imparts another and a supernatural nature*—it implants a new and an antagonistic principle. This new nature is divine; this new principle is holy; and thus the believer becomes the subject of *two natures*, and his soul a battle-field, upon which a perpetual conflict is going on between the law of the members and the law of the mind; often resulting in his temporary captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. Thus every spiritual mind is painfully conscious of *the earthly tendency of his evil nature, and that from the flesh he can derive no sympathy or help, but rather everything that discourages, encumbers, and retards his spirit in its breathings and strugglings after holiness*. His "soul cleaves to the dust."

A mournful sense of the seductive power of earthly things enters deeply into

this state of mind. As we bear about with us, in every step, an earthly nature, it is not surprising that its affinities and sympathies should be earthly; that earthly objects should possess a magnetic influence, perpetually attracting to themselves whatever was congenial with their own nature in the soul of the renewed man. Our homeward path lies through a captivating and ensnaring world. The world, chameleon-like, can assume any color, and Proteus-like, any shape, suitable to its purpose, and answerable to its end. There is not a mind, a conscience, or a taste, to which it cannot accommodate itself. For the gross, it has sensual pleasures; for the refined, it has polished enjoyments; for the thoughtful, it has intellectual delights; for the enterprising, it has bold, magnificent schemes. The child of God feels this engrossing power; he is conscious of this seductive influence. Worldly applause—who is entirely proof against its power? Human adulation—who can resist its incense? Creature power—who is free from its captivation? Love of worldly ease and respectability, influence and position; a liking to glide smoothly along the sunny tide of the world's good opinion—who is clad in a coat of armor so impervious as to resist these attacks? Have not the mightiest fallen before them? Such are some only of the many ensnaring influences which weave themselves around the path of the celestial traveler, often extorting from him the humiliating acknowledgment—"My soul cleaves to the dust."

In this category we may include things which, though they are in themselves of a lawful nature, are yet of an earthly tendency, deteriorative of the life of God in the soul. What heavenly mind is not sadly sensible of this? Our ever-foremost, sleepless, subtle foe, stands by and says, "This is lawful, and you may freely and unrestrictedly indulge in it." But another and a solemn voice is heard issuing from the sacred oracle of truth, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." And yet, how often are we forced to learn the lesson, that lawful things may, in their wrong indulgence and influence, become unlawful, through the spiritual leanness which they engender in the soul! Oh, it is a narrow path which conducts us back to paradise! But our Lord and Master made it so; he himself has trodden it, "leaving us an example that we should follow his steps;" and he, too, is sufficient for its narrowness. Yes; such is the gravitating tendency to earth of the carnal nature within us, we are ever prone and ever ready, at each bland smile of the world, and at each verdant, sunny spot of the wilderness, to retire into the circle of self-complaisance and self-indulgence, and take up our rest where, from the

polluted and unsatisfying nature of all earthly things, real rest can never be found. Thus may even lawful affections, and lawful enjoyments, and lawful pursuits and pleasures, wring the confession from the lips of a heavenly-minded man—"My soul cleaves unto the dust."

But there is sometimes a casting down to the dust which springs immediately from the mighty hand of God himself. The Lord occasionally brings his people very low. He may lay upon them heavy trial, sore affliction, causing them to 'be low in a low place.' This is often done to take off the rough edge of their too free indulgences, to humble them in the midst of their too fond enjoyments; and thus to prove their grace, and to exercise their graces, God brings them down even to the dust. *Because we cannot keep our hearts low, therefore God makes our condition low.*

Such, reader, was the low estate of David when he exclaimed, "My soul cleaves to the dust!" Ah! how many whose eye scans this page may take up and breathe his words! You feel a deadness, a dullness, and an earthliness, in enjoyments, and duties, and privileges, in which your whole soul should be all life, all fervor, all love. You are low where you ought to be elevated; you grovel where you ought to soar; you cleave to the earth where you ought to be embracing the heavens. Your thoughts are low; your affections are low; your feelings are low; your spirits are low; and you seem almost ready to question the existence of the life of God in your soul. But even in this sad and depressed state, may there not be something cheering, encouraging, hopeful?

There was evidently in David's—"My soul cleaves unto the dust; quicken me." This was the cheering, encouraging, hopeful feature in the psalmist's case—his breathing after the re-quickening of the Divine life of his soul. Here was that which marked him a man of God. It was a living man complaining of his deadness, and breathing after more life. It was a heaven-born soul lamenting its earthliness, and panting after more of heaven. It was a spiritual man mourning over his carnality, and praying for more spirituality. It is not the prayer of one conscious of the low state of his soul, and yet satisfied with that state. Perhaps no expression is more familiar to the ear, and no acknowledgment is more frequently on the lips of religious professors, than this. And yet, where is the accompanying effort to rise above it? Where is the putting on of the armor? Where is the conflict? Where is the effort to *emerge*

from the dust, to break away from the enthrallment, and soar into a higher and purer region?

Alas! many from whose lips smoothly glides the humiliating confession, *still embrace the dust, and seem to love the dust, and never stretch their pinions to rise above it.* But let us study closely this lesson of David's experience, that while deep lamentation filled his heart, and an honest confession breathed from his lips, there was also a breathing, a panting of soul, after a higher and a better state. He seemed to say—"Lord, I am prostrate, but I long to rise; I am fettered, but I struggle to be free; my soul cleaves to the dust, but, quicken me!" Similar to this was the state of the Church so graphically depicted by Solomon in his Song—"I sleep, but my heart wakes."

But what does the petition, thus breathed, imply? What does the blessing, thus craved, involve? First, a restoration of soul from past backslidings. Let the spiritual believer but take the history of a single week as the gauge of the general tenor of his life, and what a lesson does it read to him of the downward, earthly tendency of his soul! Yes, in one short week how have the wheels lessened in their revolutions—how has the timepiece of his soul lost its power—how have the chords of his heart become unstrung! But his prayer is for Divine quickening. What a petition! and what a blessing! "Quicken me." Blessed is that soul that can echo these words. The Lord quickens the longing souls of his people. "He restores my soul," is the testimony not of David only. What do we rank among our most prized mercies?—what do we count our sweetest joys?—what constitutes our most hallowed seasons? Are they not the fresh gales of grace from heaven, blowing softly over our souls? and "lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell." What a *spring-time of soul* is it then! It is a 'little reviving' from the Lord—a quickening of the soul in its dead, wintry state.

This prayer also implies what, alas! is so needful in many, a re-conversion of soul. It is a putting of the Lord's hand a second time to the work of grace in the heart. "When you are *converted*," said our Lord to Peter, "strengthen your brethren." What! had not Peter already been converted? Most truly. But although a regenerate man, he had so relapsed in grace as to need a re-

conversion. Our Lord's meaning, then, obviously is, "When you are restored, recovered, re-quickened, then strengthen your brethren." How many religious professors stand in need of a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit! You, perhaps, my reader, are one. Where is the spiritual vigor you once displayed? where the spiritual joy you once possessed? where the unclouded hope you once indulged? where the humble walk with God you once maintained? where the fragrance that once breathed around you? Alas! your soul cleaves to the dust; and you need the reconverting grace, the renewed baptism of the Spirit. "Quicken me!" is your prayer.

A clearer manifestation of Divine life in the soul is not the least blessing contained in this prayer for quickening. How little realization enters into the religion of many! There is the full credence of the judgment to the truth; a conversing about religion, the ministry, and the church. But where is felt the realizing power, *the earth-fading, heaven-attracting power, of vital godliness in the soul?* Dear reader, the hour that will bring your religious profession, your religious creed, your religious notions, to the test, is at hand; and the great question in that awful moment will be, "Am I fit to die?—have I in my soul the life of God?—am I born of the Spirit?—have I a living Christ in my now failing, dying heart?"

But what a prayer is this in view of a scene and a scrutiny so solemn: "Quicken me! Lord, quicken your work in my soul, and strengthen that which you have wrought in me. The love that congeals, the faith that trembles, the hope that fluctuates, the joy that droops; may you inspire with new life, new energy, new power! It is of little moment what others think of me; Lord, you know my soul cleaves to the dust. There is in my heart more of *earth* than of heaven; more of *self* than of Christ; more of the *creature* than of God. You know me in secret—how my grace wanes, how my affections chill, how seldom my closet is visited, how much my Bible is neglected, how insipid to my taste the means of grace, and how irksome and vapid are all spiritual duties and privileges. Lord, stir up yourself to the revivifying of my soul; quicken, O quicken you me in your ways. Enlarge my heart, that I may run the way of your commandments."

THE ARGUMENT with which this holy petition is urged is most powerful and prevalent—"According to your word." According to the promise of the word, and the instrumentality of the word. Both are engaged to quicken the soul. The

promise is most precious: "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely; for my anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine." This precious promise to quicken and revive you, to shed the dews of his grace upon your soul, thus moistening and nourishing the roots and stems, and fruits of the new and heavenly life within you, God stands ready to fulfil in your holy and happy experience: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." Christ is our dew—the dew of his love, the dew of his grace, the dew of his Spirit, is prepared—silent and unseen, but effectual and vivifying—to fall upon the renewed powers of your nature—reviving the work of God in your soul.

But by the instrumentality of the word, the Lord quickens the soul. The word of Christ is "spirit and life;" therefore it is a quickening word. "This is my comfort in my affliction; for *your word has quickened me.*" Again, "I will never forget your precepts; for with them you have quickened me." Therefore did Jesus pray to his Father in behalf of his Church, "Sanctify them *through your truth.*" Thus does the word quicken.

We are here constrained to suggest an inquiry—May not the prevalent decay of spiritual life in the church of God—the low standard of spirituality, the alarming growth of soul-destroying error—the startling discovery which some modern teachers appear to have stumbled upon, that doctrines which the church of Christ has ever received as revealed truth, which councils have authorised, and which creeds have embodied, and which the sanctified intellects of master spirits—the Anakims and the Shamgars of polemic divinity and divine philosophy of past ages—have contended for and maintained, are not found in the Bible, but are the visionary dogma of a bygone age—we say, may not these prevalent evils be mainly attributable to the contempt thrown upon the word of God?

We verily and solemnly believe it to be so. We need to be constantly reminded that the great regenerator and emancipator of the world is the Bible—that nothing short of this will disturb the spiritual death which universally prevails, and that nothing short of this will free the human mind from the shackles of error and superstition which enslave at this moment nearly two-thirds of the human race. This "Sword of the Spirit,"—like that of Goliath, "there is none

like it"—has overcome popery and infidelity, and, unimpaired by the conflict, it is ready to overcome them yet again. Give me the circulation of the Bible, and with this mighty engine I will overthrow the tyranny of Antichrist, and establish the fair and original form of Christianity. O that in this day of sad departure from the word of God, we may rally round the Bible in closer and more united phalanx! Firm in the belief of its divinity, strong in the conviction of its potency, may we go forth in the great conflict of truth and error, wielding no weapon but the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." In all our spiritual relapses, too, may the word of the Lord quicken us: may it, like a mighty lever, raise our soul from the dust to which it so much cleaves!

And what will be some of the EFFECTS of a revived, re-quickened state of the inner life? Oh, many and blessed! Then will follow a clearer perception of Divine truth, the meaning and beauty of which, now so much obscured by reason of the dust which adheres to the soul, will appear in clearer and richer luster. The public means of grace will be seen to be Divinely appointed and indispensably needful. Vain excuse for their neglect will be laid aside, and the Sabbath and the week-day services will find you at your "well," waiting for Him who stands by it, to draw the water and give you to drink. Private duties will be sought more eagerly, and will be found more precious. The dust will be swept from your Bible, and the smouldering embers be rekindled upon your altar, and you will be found "watching daily at the Lord's gates, waiting at the posts of his door."

The seal of adoption more deeply impressed upon your heart, you will have a more vivid sense of your sonship, and "Abba, Father," will oftener breathe from your lips. Tribulation and suffering—the cup which your Heavenly Father may give you to drink—will then be received without a question, and be drunk without a murmur. Your spiritual influence, now so greatly impaired, will then, in the exhibition of a more healthy profession of Christianity, of a more holy and consistent example, be felt, acknowledged, and honored. These are but a mere tithe of the blessings which will result from your re-quickening.

We may here meet a question which has often been asked by those who are conscious of a relapsed state of soul. "Am I still to be found in spiritual duties and enjoyments while sensible of a backsliding state of heart from God?" To this we reply—*The warrant of a Christian's duty is not the measure of his grace,*

but the command of his God. If this be so—and we have no reason to question its truth—then be your state of soul low as it may, you are bound to meet all those obligations and to discharge all those duties which a profession of Christ enjoins, irrespective of the spiritual and mental fluctuations to which the soul is always exposed.

Unless you are aware of his design, Satan will here attain a great advantage over you. Assuming the form of an angel of light, and with angelic gentleness and plausibility, he will suggest that your frame of soul is too torpid and lifeless and dull to draw near to God. That your affections are too frigid, your love too congealed, your heart too carnal, your mind too groveling, your pursuits too earthly, your backslidings too great, your neglects too many to take to Christ. He will hold up to view the folly and the hypocrisy and the inconsistency of being found in the employment and use of holy and spiritual duties, while your soul thus cleaves to the dust. But listen not to his false suggestions, and heed not his sophistical reasoning, no not for a moment. It is only in the way of waiting upon God that you will be recovered from the lapsed state of your soul. In the way of meditation, of confession, of tears, of prayer, you may yet rise from the dust, and with bolder pinion, and richer plumage, and sweeter song, soar to the gate of heaven, and return again, scattering around you its blessings, and reflecting its glory. Oh! go to Jesus, then, however low and discouraging your spiritual state may be, and relax not a single mean of grace.

Allow a **CLOSING EXHORTATION.** Beware how you clog yourself needlessly with the dust; there is no necessity why you should cling to it. It is most true, that in the dust of self-abasement you cannot lie too deeply. "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," says the repentant Job. "He puts his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope," says the weeping Jeremiah. But the dust of earthly pursuits and pleasures are not suited to you as a heaven-born soul. *The dust is the serpent's food,* not the bread of a renewed mind. You were born again—not to dig into the earth with the mole, but to soar to the heavens with the eagle. Your God is in heaven, your Savior is in heaven, the glorified saints are in heaven; and in faith, and in hope, and in conversation, you should be in heaven also.

Then do not clog yourself needlessly with dust. Do not be in haste to be rich.

Do not be anxious after great worldly enterprises, magnificent schemes, with a view merely of accumulating wealth. "Those who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Be content with God's disposal of you, and with his allotment to you. Walking uprightly and in his fear, you shall lack no good thing. "He will never leave you, nor forsake you, so that you may boldly say, The Lord is my helper." Let the world, and worldly things, sit lightly upon you. Its smiles and its frowns, its caresses and its woundings, are but for a moment—and then all will forever have fled.

"Now let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short, so husbands should not let marriage be their major concern. Happiness or sadness or wealth should not keep anyone from doing God's work. Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them, for this world and all it contains will pass away." Arise, then, and shake yourself from the dust, and put on your beautiful garments, and array yourself in your costly ornaments—the righteousness of the incarnate God, and the graces of the sanctifying Spirit. Thus quickened and revived, thus rising from the dust to which your soul has so long been cleaving, O how sweetly will you sing as heavenward you soar! "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

Go to Jesus just as you are. Take your deadness to Christ—take your barrenness to Christ—take your decay to Christ—take to Christ your frame of mind just as it is. Jesus stands between you and God, prepared to present to God every sigh, and groan, and desire, and tear, and request; and to convey from God every blessing, covenant, blood-purchased blessing, which it is possible for him to give, or needful for you to receive. Exult in the prospect of soon reaching heaven, where there are no frosts to congeal, where there is no blight to wither, and where no earthly tendencies will ever weigh down to the dust the life of God in your soul.

"The Broken and Contrite Heart"

"The Penitence and Prayer of the Inner Life"

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."—Psalm 51:17.

It has been the lowly but the earnest attempt of the preceding pages to stir up the grace of God in the living, believing soul. There is not a moment in the history of the child of God—even those moments that would appear the most favorable to the progress of the Divine life—but there is *a tendency in that grace to descend*. We have seen how affluent the Word of God is in its metaphorical elucidation of this important subject. And if the figure of 'gray hairs'—of 'wells without water'—of the 'salt that has lost its savor,' can at all depict this melancholy condition of the soul's spiritual deterioration, then is the sad portrait presented to our view in its most vivid coloring, as drawn by the hand of a Divine master.

Although we might have dwelt much longer on this part of our general subject—for we have by no means exhausted all the metaphors of the Bible illustrative of a relapsed state of the spiritual life—but anxious to *apply* to the disease we have been probing—we hope with not too rude a hand—*the Divine balm* which the Great Healer has mercifully provided, we leave at this stage of our work the consideration of the *relapse*, and pass on to that of the recovery—praying, that if to the mind of the reader there is any real discovery of the low state of his soul, if any true and powerful concern as to that state, if any secret contrition, any lowly repentance, and any breathing after a better and a revived condition of the inner life, the words of the royal penitent, which we are about to open up, may fall upon his wounded spirit like balsam from the *bleeding tree*—with an influence soothing, cheering, and healing.

How sweet and expressive are the words—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise!" In further prosecution of our design, let us direct our attention to this broken heart, as unfolding the certain evidence of a recovered state of spiritual relapse—and then, to God's especial regard for it, as constituting the great encouragement to our return.

THE BROKEN HEART.

The subject enters deeply into the very soul of real, vital religion. All other religion that excludes as its basis the state of mind portrayed in these words, is as the shell without the pearl, the body without the spirit. It has ever been a leading and favorite scheme of Satan to persuade men to substitute the 'religion of man' for the 'religion of God'. The religion of man has assumed various forms and modifications, always accommodating itself to the peculiar age and history of the world. Sometimes it has been the religion of intellect—and men have prostrated themselves before the goddess of reason. Sometimes it has been the religion of creeds—and men have prided themselves upon the bulwarks of a well-balanced and accurate orthodoxy. At other times it has been the religion of the ascetic and the recluse—and men have fled from the dwellings, of the living, and have entombed themselves in caves and dungeons of the earth. Yet again, it has been the religion of forms and ceremonies—and men have strutted forth in the fancied apparel of superior sanctity. And thus we might proceed almost ad infinitum. All these are human religions, invented by Satan, and palmed upon the world as the religion of God.

We have observed that the religion of man—be its form what it may—has ever kept at the remotest distance from the *spiritual*; every thing that brought the mind in contact with truth, and the conscience and the heart into close converse with itself and with God, it has studiously and carefully avoided—and thus it has evaded that state and condition of the moral man which constitutes the very soul of the religion of God—"the broken and contrite heart."

There is a sense in which the history of the world is the history of broken hearts. Were the epitaph of many over whose graves—those "mountain-peaks of a new and distant world" we thoughtlessly pass, faithfully inscribed upon the marble tablet that rears above them so proudly its beautifully chiseled form, it would be this—"Died of a Broken Heart." Worldly adversity, blighted hope, the iron heel of oppression, or the keen tongue of slander, crushed the sensitive spirit, and it fled where the rude winds blow not, and "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Passing beyond the limit of time, we visit in imagination the gloomy precincts of the lost, and lo! we find that the abodes of the finally impenitent are crowded with weeping, mourning, despairing souls. Yes! there are broken hearts there—and there are tears there—and there is repentance there, such as the betrayer of his Lord felt, before he "went to his own place,"—but, alas! it is the "sorrow of the

world, which works death."

In all this worldly grief, there enters nothing of that element which gives its character and complexion to the sorrow of David—the broken and contrite heart, the sacrifice of God which he despises not. A man may weep, and a lost soul may despair, from the *consequences* of sin; but in that sorrow and in that despair there shall be no real heartfelt grief *for sin itself*, as a thing against a holy and a righteous God. But we are now to contemplate, not the broken spirit merely, but the contrite heart also—the sorrow of sincere repentance and deep contrition springing up in the soul for sin—its exceeding sinfulness and abomination in the sight of God.

The state which we have now in contemplation defines the first stage in conversion. The repentance which is enkindled in the heart at the commencement of the Divine life, may be legal and tending to bondage; nevertheless it is a spiritual, godly sorrow for sin, and is 'unto life.' The newly awakened and aroused sinner may at first see nothing of Christ, he may see nothing of the blood of atonement, and of God's great method of reconciliation with him, he may know nothing of faith in Jesus as the way of peace to his soul—yet, he is a true and sincere spiritual penitent. The tear of holy grief is in his eye—ah! we forget not with what ease some can weep; there are those the fountain of whose sensibility lies near the surface—an arousing discourse, an affecting book, a thrilling story, will quickly moisten the eye,—but still we must acknowledge that the religion of Jesus is the religion of sensibility; that there is no godly repentance without feeling, and no spiritual contrition apart from deep emotion.

Yes! the tear of holy grief is in his eye; and if ever it is manly to weep, surely it is now, when for the first time the soul that had long resisted every appeal to its moral consciousness, is now smitten to the dust, the heart of adamant broken, and the lofty spirit laid low before the cross of Jesus. O it is a holy and a lovely spectacle, upon which angels, and the Lord of angels himself, must look with ineffable delight. Reader, have you reached this the primary stage in the great change of conversion? Have you taken this the first step in the soul's travel towards heaven? It is *the knowledge of the disease* which precedes *the application to the remedy*; it is *the consciousness of the wound* which brings you into contact with *the Healer and the healing*. O who, once having experienced

the truth, would wish to escape this painful and humiliating process? who would refuse to drink the wormwood and the gall, if only along this path he could reach the sunlight spot where the smiles of a sin-pardoning God fall in focal glory and power? Who would not bare his bosom to the stroke, when the hand that plucks the dart and heals the wound, is the hand through whose palm the rough nail was driven—"wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities?" Who would not endure the uneasiness of sin, but to feel the rest that Jesus gives to the weary? and who would not experience the mourning for transgression, but to know the comfort which flows from the loving heart of Christ?

Again the question is put—has the Spirit of God revealed to you the inward plague, has he brought you just as you are to Jesus, to take your stand upon the doctrine of his unmerited, unpurchased mercy—asking for pardon as a *beggar*, praying for your discharge as a *bankrupt*, and beseeching him to take you as a homeless wanderer into the refuge of his loving and parental heart?

THE DIVINE RESTORING.

But the state of holy contrition which we are describing marks also a more advanced stage in the experience of the spiritual man; a stage which defines one of the most interesting periods of the Christian's life—the Divine restoring. David was a backslider. Deeply and grievously had he departed from God. But he was a restored backslider, and, in the portion we are now considering, we have the unfoldings of his sorrow-stricken, penitent, and broken heart, forming, perhaps, to some who read this page, the sweetest portion of God's word. But of the truth of this we are quite assured, that in proportion as we are brought into the condition of godly sorrow for sin, deep humiliation for our backslidings from God, our relapses, and declensions in grace, there is no portion of the sacred word that will so truly express the deep emotions of our hearts, no language so fitted to clothe the feelings of our souls, as this psalm of the royal penitent: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight: that you might be justified when you speak, and be clear when you judge."

Thus upon the altar of God he lays the sacrifice of a broken heart, and seems to exclaim, "Wretch that I am to have forsaken such a God, to have left such a Father, Savior and Friend. Has he ever been unto me a wilderness, a barren land? Never! Have I ever found him a broken cistern? Never! Has he ever proved to me unkind, unfaithful, untrue? Never! What! did not God satisfy me, had not Jesus enough for me, did not a throne of grace make me happy, that I should have turned my back upon such a God, should have forsaken such a bosom as Christ's, and slighted the spot where my heavenly Father had been so often wont to meet and commune with me? Lord! great has been my departure, grievous my sin, and now most bitter is my sorrow; here at your feet, upon your altar, red with the blood of your own sin-atonement sacrifice, I lay my poor, broken, contrite heart, and beseech you to accept and heal it."

"Behold, I fall before your face;
My only refuge is your grace.
No outward forms can make me clean,
The leprosy lies deep within."

Such is the holy contrition which the Spirit of God works in the heart of the restored believer. Such is the recovery of the soul from its spiritual and mournful relapse. *Brought beneath the cross and in the sight of the crucified Savior, the heart is broken, the spirit is melted, the eye weeps, the tongue confesses, the bones that were broken rejoice, and the contrite child is once more clasped in his Father's forgiving, reconciled embrace.* "He restores my soul," is his grateful and adoring exclamation. O what a glorious God is ours, and what vile wretches are we!

But there is one declaration of the royal penitent which enunciates a most precious truth—the Lord's especial regard for the broken and the contrite heart. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, *you will not despise.*" There are those by whom it is despised. Satan despises it—though he trembles at it. The world despises it—though it stands in awe of it. The Pharisee despises it—though he attempts its counterfeit. But there is one who despises it not. "YOU will not despise it," exclaims this penitent child, with his eye upon the loving heart of his God and Father. But why does God not only not despise it, but *delights in and accepts it*? Because he sees in it a holy and a fragrant sacrifice. It is a sacrifice, because it is offered to God, and not to man.

It is *an oblation* laid upon his altar. Moses never presented such an oblation—Aaron never offered such a sacrifice in all the gifts which he offered, in all the victims which he slew. And while some have cast their rich and splendid gifts into the treasury, or have laid them ostentatiously upon the altar of Christian benevolence, God has stood by the spot to which some poor penitent has brought his broken heart for sin, the incense of which has gone up before Him as a most precious and fragrant sacrifice. Upon that oblation, upon that gift, his eye has been fixed, as if one object, and one only, had arrested and absorbed his gaze—it was a poor, broken heart that lay bleeding and quivering upon His altar.

It is a sacrifice, too, offered upon the basis of the atoning sacrifice of his dear Son—the only sacrifice that satisfies Divine justice—and this makes it precious to God. So infinitely glorious is the atonement of Jesus, so divine, so complete, and so honoring to every claim of his moral government, that he accepts each sacrifice of prayer, of praise, of penitence, and of personal consecration, laid in faith by the side and upon that one infinite Sacrifice for sin.

He recognizes in it, too, the work of his own Spirit. When the Spirit of God moved upon the face of unformed nature, and a new world sprang into life, light, and beauty, he pronounced it very good. But what must be his estimate of that new creation which his Spirit has wrought in the soul, whose moral chaos he has reduced to life, light, and order! If God so delighted in the material and the perishable creation, how deep and ineffable must be his delight in the spiritual and the imperishable creation! If such his satisfaction at a new-born world, destined so soon to be marred by sin, and smitten by the curse, and consumed by the flames—what do you think must be his satisfaction in beholding a world springing from its ruins, whose purity sin shall never deface, whose loveliness no curse shall ever blight, and whose duration shall survive in ever-growing and imperishable beauty and grandeur the destruction of all worlds!

But in what way does God evince his satisfaction with, and his delight in, the broken and contrite heart? We answer—first, by the manifestation of his power in healing it. There are two portions of God's word in which this truth is strikingly brought out. "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." The office of Jesus as a Divine healer is with signal beauty set

forth—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." Never did a physician more delight to display his skill, or exercise the benevolent feelings of his nature in the alleviation of suffering, than does Jesus in his work of binding up, soothing and healing the heart broken for sin, by speaking a sense of pardon, and applying to it the balsam of his own most precious blood. But our Lord *not only heals the contrite heart*, but as if heaven had not sufficient attraction as his dwelling-place, he comes down to earth and *makes that heart his abode*: "Thus says the Lord, To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." And again, "Thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

What, dear, humble penitent, could give you such a view of the interest which Christ takes in your case—the *delight* with which he contemplates your contrition, and the *welcome* and the *blessing* which he is prepared to bestow upon you, on your *casting yourself down at his feet, no, in throwing yourself in his very arms*, wide expanded to receive you, than this fact, that he waits to make that sorrow-stricken heart of yours his chief and loved abode—reviving it, healing it, and enshrining himself forever within its renewed and sanctified affections.

Thus we have attempted to describe *the twofold process by which the lapsed state of the inner life is arrested and restored*—this process, as we have shown, consisting in the *knowledge which the believer entertains of the real state of the spiritual life in his soul*, and then in the *godly sorrow, the holy contrition, which that discovery produces*. What more shall we say? One thing only. Be your state what it may, *seek, cherish, and cultivate constantly and habitually, a broken heart for sin*. Think not that it is a work which once done is to be done no more. Deem it not a primary stage in your spiritual journey, which once reached, never again occurs in your celestial progress. O no! As in the natural life we enter the world weeping and leave it weeping, so in the spiritual life—we begin it in tears of godly sorrow for sin, and we terminate it in tears of godly sorrow for sin—passing away to that blessed state of sinlessness where God will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

The indwelling of all evil—the polluting nature of the world along which we journey—our constant exposure to temptations of every kind—the many occasions on which we yield to those temptations—the perpetual developments of sin unseen, unknown, even unsuspected by others—the defilement which attaches itself to all that we put our hands to, even the most spiritual and holy and heavenly—the consciousness of what a holy God must every moment see in us—all, all these considerations should lead us to cherish that spirit of lowliness and contrition, self-abhorrence and self-renunciation, inward mortification and outward humility of deportment, which belong to, and which truly prove the existence of, the life of God in our souls.

And what, too, prompts a constant traveling to the atoning blood—what endears the Savior who shed that blood? What is it that makes his flesh food indeed, and his blood drink indeed? What is it that keeps the conscience tender and clean? What enables the believer to walk with God as a dear child? O it is the *secret contrition of the lowly spirit, springing from a view of the cross of Jesus, and through the cross leading to the heart of God.*

Your religion, dear reader, is a vain religion, if there enters not into it the essential element of a broken and a contrite heart for sin. With Job you may have heard of Jesus, "with the hearing of the ear," but not with him, have "abhorred yourself, and repented in dust and in ashes." Oh! with all your gettings, get, I beseech you, a broken heart for sin. God can have no transactions with you in the great matter of your soul's salvation, but as he sees you prostrate at his feet in repentance, humiliation, and confession. He will only deal with you for the stupendous blessings of pardon, justification, and adoption, in the character and posture of a broken-hearted sinner, urging your suit through the mediation of a broken-hearted Savior. He can negotiate only on those terms which justify and magnify the stupendous sacrifice of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

If, then, you value your eternal interests, if you cherish any proper regard for the final happiness of your soul—if you wish to escape the wrath to come—the undying worm, the quenchless flame, the unutterable, interminable torments of the lost—if you shrink from the risk, the almost certain risk, involved in the

circumstances of your final sickness, and a dying hour—then repent, repent sincerely, repent deeply, repent evangelically, repent—NOW! For, "God NOW commands all men everywhere to REPENT, because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness."

Backsliding Christian! Do you feel within your heart the kindlings of godly sorrow? Are you mourning over your wandering, loathing the sin that drew you from Christ, that grieved his Spirit, and wounded your own peace? Are you longing to feed again in the green pastures of the flock, and by the side of the Shepherd of the flock, assured once more that you are a true sheep, belonging to the one fold, known by, and precious to, the heart of Him who laid down his life for the sheep? Then approach the altar of Calvary, and upon it lay the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart, and your God will accept it. The *door* of your return stands open—the pierced heart of Jesus. The *golden scepter* that bids you approach is extended—the outstretched hand of a pacified Father. The banquet is ready, and the minstrels are tuning their harps to celebrate the return from your wanderings to your Father's heart and home, with the gladness of feasting, and with the voice of thanksgiving and of melody!

**"Return, O wanderer, return!
And seek an injured Father's face;
Those warm desires that in you burn
Were kindled by recovering grace.
"Return, O wanderer, return!
Your Savior bids your spirit live;
Go to his bleeding side, and learn
How freely Jesus can forgive.
"Return, O wanderer, return!
Regain your lost lamented rest;
Jehovah's melting affections yearn
To clasp his Ephraim to his breast."**

"The Fresh Oil"

"The Renewed Anointing of the Inner Life"

"I shall be anointed with fresh oil."—Psalm 92:10.

David, the evidence of whose spiritual restoration we have just been contemplating, in the deep, lowly contrition of his penitent heart—presents to our view, in the present subject, another and *a deeply interesting phase of the recovered life of God in the soul*. As a personal type of Christ, he, like his Divine and glorious Prototype, was an anointed "priest upon his throne." Upon his head the holy oil had been poured, setting him apart as king of Israel; and, as one of the "royal priesthood," he shared in that divine and holy anointing, by which all the "kings and priests of God" are consecrated, and of which they all alike partake.

But was this single act of anointing sufficient for David? No, conscious of *the perpetual tendency of the grace within to decay*, sensible of those spiritual relapses to which the inner life is ever exposed, he felt the necessity, and earnestly sought the application, of the renewed anointing, by which alone he could be "strengthened with all might in the inner man." Nothing could more clearly betray the present state of David's soul than the words, the precious meaning of which we propose endeavoring to unfold—"I shall be anointed with fresh oil." There is *an evident consciousness of loss, a sense of deterioration, a conviction of relapse*. The fragrance and the power of the former anointing were felt in a measure to have gone; and, painfully alive to the loss, the anointed of the Lord breathes *the deep desire for, and expresses the full expectation of, the renewed anointing of the Holy Spirit in the inner life of his soul*. The subject must be deeply interesting to the true Christian. Let us consider the anointing—the decay of the anointing—and the renewal of the anointing.

THE ANOINTING—

"The Lord's anointed" is the expressive and appropriate designation of all the Lord's people. This anointing it is that marks them as a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." It is the Lord's peculiar mark upon them, which distinguishes and designates them as his own. All who are strangers to this anointing are strangers to the grace of God, and the calling of the Holy Spirit. There may be much spiritual light in the judgment, and even an open profession of religion before the world, added to which there shall be something of Jehu's "zeal for the Lord;" and yet that anointing of the Holy Spirit be still lacking, apart from which all intellectual illumination, and

outward profession, and party zeal, pass for nothing with a heart-searching God.

As the proper signification of the endeared name 'Christ', is 'anointed', so the true signification of the honored appellation 'Christian', points us to the anointing, of which all who have union with Christ personally share. I believe the remark to be as solemn as it is true, that eternity will only fully unfold the amount of evil that has sprung from calling those Christians who call themselves Christians, without any valid title to the high, holy, and distinguished appellation. How imperfectly are men in general aware of the deep, the awful, the spiritual import of the term! They think not, they know not, that *a Christian is one who partakes, in his renewing, sanctifying grace, of that same Divine Holy Spirit with which Christ was anointed of the Father for his great work.*

Our first inquiry relates to THE ANOINTING OIL ITSELF. What is its nature? Of what is it composed? Truly it is most costly, precious, and fragrant. Let the type explain: "Then the Lord said to Moses, Collect choice spices—12 1/2 pounds of pure myrrh, 6 1/4 pounds each of cinnamon and of sweet cane, 12 1/2 pounds of cassia, and one gallon of olive oil. Blend these ingredients into *a holy anointing oil.*" Exodus 30:22-25. Then observe *the use* to which Moses was to appropriate this anointing oil: "Use this oil also to anoint Aaron and his sons, sanctifying them so they can minister before me as priests. And say to the people of Israel, This will always be my holy anointing oil." Exodus 30:30-31. Another reference to this anointing oil occurs in a deeply interesting connection. We allude to this same anointing of Aaron, the nature of which is used to symbolize the beauty and fragrance of brotherly love: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garment," Psalm 133:1, 2. Thus valuable and cheering is the communion of saints! and they who partake the most richly of the anointing of Christ's Spirit in their hearts, feel the most deeply, and exemplify the most fully, on all occasions, sweet and holy love to all who bear the image of the Father, and who breathe the spirit of the Savior, whatever be their creed or name. O let it not be forgotten, that one of the strongest evidences of our personal possession of this anointing, one of the most indubitable marks of our union to the kingdom of priests, is, our love to

the brethren! How valuable and costly must true Christian unity be, when it is compared by the Holy Spirit to the precious unguent poured over the person of God's High Priest. "By this shall all men know," says our spiritual Aaron, "that you are my disciples, because you have love one to another."

But the type sets forth the anointing oil, or, in other words, the true spiritual anointing of every believer in Jesus, in three of its essential features. Its costliness. It is costly oil, because it is Divine. The Holy Spirit renews, sanctifies, and inhabits the believer as a Divine person. It is not the common light of nature, nor the ordinary teaching of man, nor the moral persuasion of truth, which has made him what he is—an experimental Christian; all his real grace, his true teaching, flows from the Divine Spirit. His light is divine, his renewing is divine, his comfort is divine, his sanctification is divine, and must, therefore, be essentially most costly. Oh, there is more real value in one ray of the Spirit's light, beaming in upon a man's soul, than in all the teaching which books can ever impart! The Divine Spirit, loosing the seals of the written Word, and unfolding to him the mysteries of the kingdom, the glories of Christ's person, the perfection of Christ's work, the fulness of Christ's grace, the revealed mind and will of God, has in it more worth and glory than all the teaching the schools ever imparted. This oil is costly, then, because it is Divine.

What shall we say of its preciousness? How precious the grace of the Holy Spirit, what tongue is sufficiently gifted to describe? How precious is his indwelling—an ever-ascending, heaven-panting, God-thirsting, Christ-desiring Spirit! How precious are all the revelations he makes of Christ! How precious are the consolations he brings, the promises he seals, the teachings he imparts; all the emotions he awakens, the breathings he inspires, and the affections he creates; how precious are those graces in the soul of which he is the Author—the faith that leads to a precious Savior, the love that rises to a gracious God, and the holy affections which flow forth to all the saints!

And how shall we speak of its fragrance? No art of the apothecary can imitate it. One drop of this holy oil, falling upon the soul, breathes around it a perfume like that of heaven. There is a fragrance in the man's spirit, in his conversation, in his example, in his very look, that speaks of the holy anointing: "The ointment of the right hand betrays him." There is a savor of Christ, a heavenliness of temper, a kind of divinity of soul, which mark him as belonging

to the "royal priesthood." One drop of this costly, precious anointing oil, fills the whole house with its perfume. There is a peace in that abode, a light in that dwelling, an order, and regularity, and affection in that family, which distinguish it as *the residence of a royal priest*. And travel where he may, sojourn with whom he will, that anointed believer carries the conviction to the heart, and awakens the exclamation from the lip, "By this I know that you are a man of God, for the anointing of the Holy One is upon you." Thus fragrant is this anointing oil.

But THROUGH WHAT CHANNEL DOES THIS ANOINTING COME? Only through the union of the believer to Christ, the Anointed One. All the saving operations of the Spirit upon the mind are connected with Jesus. If he convinces of sin, it is to lead to the blood of Jesus; if he reveals the corruptions of the heart, it is to lead to the grace of Jesus; if he teaches the soul's ignorance, it is to conduct it to the feet of Jesus—thus all his operations in the soul are associated with Jesus. Now, in conducting this holy anointing into the soul, he brings it through the channel of our union with the Anointed Head. By making us one with Christ, he makes us partakers of the anointing of Christ. And truly is the weakest, lowliest believer, one with this anointed Savior. His fitness, as the Anointed of God, to impart of the plenitude of his anointing to *all* the members of his body, is a truth clearly and beautifully set forth. Thus is he revealed as the Anointed Head of the Church, the great High Priest of the royal priesthood: "You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows." "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." In the Acts of the Apostles, a distinct reference is made to this truth; "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit, and with power." It was this anointing that was upon Christ that led the Church of old to exclaim, in the fervor of her love, "Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, your name is as perfume poured forth; therefore do the virgins love you." Song Sol. 1:3. His human soul, filled with the measureless influence of the Divine Spirit, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily, he became the true Aaron, of whose anointing all the priests were alike to partake. One, then, with Jesus, through the channel of his union to the Head, the lowest member is anointed with this precious oil.

The effects of this anointing are what might be expected from a cause so glorious. It beauties the soul. It is that anointing spoken of by the Psalmist: "And oil to make his face to shine." Therefore is it called the "beauties of holiness." How does a man's face shine—how is his countenance lighted up—when the joy of the Lord is his strength, when the Spirit of adoption is in his soul, when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart!

It gladdens, too. Therefore it is called the "oil of joy," and "the oil of gladness." It causes the heart to sing in its deep sorrows, imparts the "garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," and fills the soul with the glory of that "kingdom which consists not in foods and in drinks, but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Another effect springing from this anointing is the deep teaching it imparts: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth." "As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him." Such are some of the effects of this holy anointing. It beautifies, gladdens, and teaches.

THE DECAY OF THE ANOINTING—

And is there a possibility of the decay of this anointing? May its power lessen, and its fragrance evaporate? We fear the possibility of this melancholy change is but too true. That the true priesthood of the Lord can *entirely lose* this Divine anointing, we do not for one moment assert. Never more will God withdraw his Spirit, where he has once implanted the precious gift. We speak it solemnly for the glory of God, we utter it confidently for the comfort of the weak-minded, those who are of a fearful heart—that when once God has poured this anointing upon a soul, that soul shall never utterly and forever lose it. To every foe that seeks its destruction, to all the hostile influences opposed to its well-being, God will utter his solemn words of warning: "Do my anointed no harm." Yes, there is that in the very anointing itself that forms a shield around the royal priest.

But, sad truth—there is not a stronger evidence of the lessening of a man's

grace, of the declension of the inner life, of the backsliding of his heart, of the spiritual leanness of his soul, than is found in *the decay of this anointing*. It may lose its freshness, shed no fragrance, impart no power, and scarcely be discernible in the character and tone of the believer's piety. How may we trace this melancholy state—this evaporation of the anointing oil? Various: in the matter of real, close transaction with God—where there is the decay of the Divine anointing, there is but little dealing between God and the soul, the walk is distant—the spirit is shy; searching of heart, and confession of sin, and dealing with the blood, are things laid aside for a more convenient season. The lack of real power in *prayer* betrays the loss; perhaps in nothing is it more evident. The *habit* of prayer may not be suspended; the *form* of prayer is still observed; *but there is no life, nor power, nor unction in prayer*; no taking of heaven with holy violence; no wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant; no taking hold of God's strength; no grasping the promise of God, or leaning upon God in the promise; no real faith to believe that God will perform what he has engaged to do.

And why? Because there is a decay of the anointing, and with it a decay of the spirit and power of prayer. We listen to his voice in supplication, but we feel his loss in our own soul. There is nothing in his prayer that breaks our heart, that embitters sin, that leads us to Christ, that lifts our soul from the dust into the sweet sunshine of communion with God; and we are forced to trace it to the lack of that Divine and holy oil which makes the face to shine, and which, in its reflected luster, throws a radiance over the countenance of others.

In Christian fellowship, too, we are sensible of the lack. The little sparks that we strike, fall upon no kindling material. In vain we endeavor to light up his soul; dampness, coldness, and deathliness seem to extinguish every effort. We can extract nothing that imparts an elevation to our own, perhaps, depressed minds. There is no savor in his salt, no water in his well, no rays of warmth radiating from his soul; but a dryness, a deadness, a deteriorating influence, of which every spiritual mind brought in contact with him is sensible. We speak to him of Jesus, but the echo is faint; we talk of the blessedness of holding communion with God, and we advance the sentiment that the throne of grace is the sweetest, loveliest, holiest spot on earth—but there is no cordial response. Indeed, there is nothing that lifts us up, but everything, rather, that depresses and that sinks us. We are painfully conscious that we have spent an hour in the

society of one whose communion has occasioned us a serious loss. We feel as if we had been in the company of an iceberg, the influence of which has sunk the spiritual thermometer of our souls well near to its lowest point. And *what is the cause?* Our brother has lost the power and freshness of the anointing oil in his soul.

In another, this decay may be traced in his *low views of Christ*, with the invariable accompaniment of *high thoughts of himself*. He has low views of the personal glory of the Savior, the sight of which ought to fill his soul with adoring transport. He has depreciating views of the atoning blood of the Savior, the thought of which should fill his mouth with the highest praise. He seldom contemplates that glory; he rarely travels to that blood; and the mournful consequence is, his little love to Christ. And what is the cause? His distance from the Anointed One. He has left the feet of the true Aaron, like Peter, and has mixed himself up with the world, like Ephraim; and so has lost the Christ-endearing, Christ-exalting, self-abasing influence of the Divine anointing.

In yet others it may be traced in an uncertain state of mind as to their personal acceptance. Inquire what they know of the Spirit's witness—of a well-founded hope of heaven—of the joy of pardoned sin? Nothing! Lacking that inward anointing which enlightens, confirms, and strengthens the soul in the joyous consciousness of its acceptance, they seem to dwell forever in the region of doubt and uncertainty, of agitation and fear, as to their personal salvation.

What are some of the CAUSES to the operation of which we are to trace an effect so sad? Many are THE DETERIORATING INFLUENCES to which the anointing of the Christian is exposed. The influence of the world is injurious. There are few who can have much transaction with it, even in a lawful way, and not be conscious of real spiritual loss. But few Christians can bear up against it. There are but few Thorntons, we fear, in the commercial world—men who build their sacred oratories by the side of their banking and their counting-houses—and who, from the world's turmoil, are wont to retire and hold communion with God. Anointed Christian, the world in which you live, through which you journey, is the great foe to that sacred anointing that is upon you! Therefore would we say—beware of it! Give it no advantage over you; mix not unnecessarily with it; float not down with its tide; do not be eager

for its wealth. Grind not the faces of the poor; oppress not the needy; withhold not from the hireling his wages. Conform not to its pleasures; countenance not its public amusements. Bear not the sacred unction into the world's light, earthly, polluted, God-disowning, and Christ-dishonoring atmosphere. The opera, and the semi-theatrical oratorio—even though the passion and the agonies of the Divine Messiah are set to the gamut-and the ballroom, are not appropriate places for him upon whose head the sacred anointing oil has been shed.

To this power of the world, may be added those unfavorable influences arising from unmortified sin, from known neglects of duty, and from communion with cold, lifeless professors of religion—all of which tend to absorb the sacred fluid.

THE RENEWAL OF THE ANOINTING-

But let us turn to a more pleasing theme—the renewal of this Divine anointing: "I shall be anointed with *fresh* oil." That David felt conscious of the evaporation of the oil, there can be no question. But with this conviction he was not content to remain. He panted for more life; he longed for more quickening; he lifted up his soul for the renewed anointing—"I shall be anointed with fresh oil." That the Lord re-anoints his people, who can doubt? Alas for them, if He did not! The ample provision which he has made for the exigency proves it. There is more of the precious oil in the sacred Vessel! O blessed, holy, comforting truth to those who, mournfully conscious of their loss, are earnestly desirous for their recovery. In the Lord Jesus Christ all fulness of anointing dwells. "With him is the residue of the Spirit." He is prepared to impart more grace to those who have lost grace, or, who to their present state desire to add an increase.

In the renewed quickening of the Spirit, the re-anointing is received. "Quicken me!" was the reiterated prayer of David. What! was he not already a quickened soul? Undoubtedly. Yet, feeling the need of a renewed quickening, he earnestly importunes for it: "Quicken me in your truth, through your judgments, by your precepts: only quicken me—for this my soul pants." And while the world was asking, "Who will show us any good?" the fervent breathing of this anointed priest of God was, "Quicken me, O Lord, for your name's sake." O seek this renewed quickening!

New supplies of grace from Christ are implied in this fresh anointing. *New grace*—to subdue new corruptions, perpetually rising to the surface; to meet new temptations, through the ever-shifting ways of the subtle enemy; to overcome new difficulties, perpetually occurring in the path to heaven; and to bear up under new trials, ever transpiring in a world of tribulation.

The renewed joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit are also found in the fresh anointing. The joys which had evaporated, are replaced by others; the peace which had been interrupted, flows back again; consolations which had fled, are restored; and confidence in God, which seemed shaken, is once more established in the soul.

In view of a blessing so needed and so precious, is it necessary that, in closing this chapter, we exhort the spiritual reader that he set himself earnestly, believingly, expectantly, to be re-anointed with fresh oil? And yet there are some who need to be stirred up to this their great privilege. To them we would say—Do not be content with the old anointing. It is essential to a more holy and happy life, it is essential to a peaceful and cloudless death, that you seek to be anointed with fresh oil. Do not be satisfied with past experiences. You may at one time have possessed the clear witness of the Spirit; you may have enjoyed the love of God in your heart; you may have lived so near to Christ, as to have found "Wisdom's ways, ways of pleasantness, and her paths, paths of peace," but the old anointing ceases to afford you now the high delight which you once experienced. Seek, then, the fresh anointing of the Spirit. Seek to have a new revelation of Christ to your soul. Seek the renewed application of his precious blood to your conscience. O seek the fresh oil! There is a fresh supply in Christ; a fresh supply in the Spirit; a fresh supply in the heart of God; a fresh supply in the covenant of grace. Jesus is prepared to pour it upon your soul more abundantly. The Holy Spirit is prepared to lead you to the source where this costly treasure dwells. A vessel of clay though you are—your capacity small, your unworthiness great—yet is the Triune God ready to recognize your exalted dignity and rank as a king and a priest, by shedding more copiously than ever the oil of gladness upon your head.

Let *aged Christians*, especially, look to the state of their souls, and seek this renewed anointing. In nearing the end of their journey, in looking into their

graves, and beyond them, to the meeting with their God and Savior, they will need to be anointed with fresh oil. One drop—O how will it insinuate itself through the whole inner life, diffusing energy and might!—the soul thus renewing its strength, and composing its ruffled pinions for its heavenly flight. Come, pilgrim of many a weary stage! Come, soldier of many a hard-fought battle! Come, voyager of many a storm and tempest, and sit down at the Savior's feet, and receive of the fresh oil! Come, gather up the trailing garments, shake off the gathered dust from your sandals, wipe the sweat from your brow, and rest awhile upon the bosom of your Lord, while with fresh oil he anoints you for your burial. Is it not time for you to give up this poor world's pursuit, and lay aside, in some measure, its needless anxiety and cares, and allow a holy pause, a solemn calm, to intervene—before you unclasp your helmet, lay down your staff, and are gathered to your fathers?

As ministers of Christ, as stewards of the great mysteries of the gospel, let us not be satisfied without this renewed anointing. We stand perpetually in need, beloved, of the FRESH oil. The power we are incessantly exhausting, the grace we are constantly using, the multiform duties, the numerous labors in which we are continually engaging, demand that we keep our eye intently fixed upon the state of our own anointing. The *past* application of the holy oil will not meet our *present* exigencies. We need an ever-overshadowing, ever-teaching, ever-anointing Spirit. Going to our work relying upon former communications of grace, upon old stores of knowledge—the present teaching and anointing of the Holy Spirit unsought—that work must of necessity be performed in a cold and insipid, in a perfunctory and powerless manner, to the great detriment of the truths we preach, of the souls we instruct, and of the Master we serve. In the absence of the fresh anointing, we shall be tempted, either to substitute old performances for new, or else to serve the sanctuary with *unbeaten* oil. In order to come before our people with new treasures, or to exhibit truths, already known and familiar, with such unction and vigor as will impart to their presentation all the freshness and power of newly-discovered revelations, we must be anointed with fresh oil.

Why is it that we sow so much, and reap so little? Why, after our studious preparation, and exhausting toil, there is so little real power in our preaching, and from that preaching so little immediate result? Why is it that our words, instead of burning upon our lips, and thrown like glowing embers into the

bosoms of our hearers, enkindling holy fires, alas! do but drop like icicles, congealing before they reach a solitary heart? Is it not, verily, because we lack the fresh oil? Necessary as is education—valuable as is learning—useful auxiliaries as are all the treasures we can draw from science—enriching as is intellect—and entrancing as is eloquence, these alone constitute not the able minister of the New Testament. Other and far more important requisites are needed to compose and perfect this high and holy character. Without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, what spiritually enlightening, sanctifying, saving power has the most erudite, and eloquent, and convincing ministry? None whatever! O how greatly we overlook this!

Why is it deemed almost a crime to declare fully and broadly the distinguishing doctrines of grace? Why is it that the preaching of other days—the clear, bold enunciation of the great fundamental truths of the gospel—would be sufficient to imperil the popularity of almost any minister in some of the high places of the Christian Church? The answer is—the formation of a distaste for such preaching, by a ministry, in many instances, possessing much intellectual power, but *lacking the power of the Holy Spirit*. It is to be feared that much of the ministry of the day is creating a taste and forming a character sadly opposed to preaching thoroughly evangelical, deeply spiritual, and possessing, in a large degree, the anointing of the Spirit of God. We do not hesitate to affirm of the generality of the preaching of our times, that it is too intellectual and recondite. Men are aiming to throw off magnificent sermons, the result of the most exhausting mental toil. Hence the constant rotation in the Christian ministry, the perpetual change in the pastoral relation. It is utterly impossible that any physical or mental constitution, the most robust, can long endure such close study, such severe thinking, such incessant application, such overtasked powers, without either an utter prostration, or else seeking repose in another and a new sphere of labor, where old material is made to supply the place of fresh. That there are some holy and honorable exceptions to this statement, both within and outside of the Established Church, we rejoice to believe—men of God who preach not themselves, but with beautiful simplicity, and holy fervor, and fresh anointing, preach Jesus in all his personal glories, and in all the fulness and perfection of his atoning work—men who do not shun to declare the whole counsel of God—upon them we depend as the conservators of the truth, and to them we look as the spiritual regenerators of the prevailing style of pulpit labor.

We would venture upon one more exhortation. Remember your priesthood—it comes through a royal line, and it proceeds from the Anointed One. Let the thought be ever present with you, "I am a king! I am a priest! I bear about me the anointing of the Lord!" The abiding, solemn reflection, the awful consciousness of the fact, will arm you against those influences which tend to wither the life of your soul. You will especially watch and pray against whatever is known to be injurious to your anointing, to produce a dryness and deadness in your spirit.

See well to the character of your reading. Avoid the writings that drain the sweet, holy oil from your soul. Can you peruse a chapter of a novel, or a light romance, or a tale of fiction, and not be conscious of violence, in some measure, done to this Divine anointing? Impossible! Beware, then, of the drying, absorbing tendency and effects of worldly literature.

Guard, too, against the influence of worldly associations—the deadening, carnalizing influence of the society of the ungodly. We bid you not separate yourself entirely from them, for this were to go out of the world. The gospel of Jesus is not reclusive nor selfish. The religion of Christ is not the religion of convents, and monasteries, and hermit's cells. It bids, and it constrains, a Christian to love the souls of men, to live for the world's good, to labor for the world's blessing, to purify it with his grace, and to illumine it with his Christianity. But, we beseech you, avoid its intimacies, its friendships, its alliances, and a needless exposure to its society, if you would keep fresh upon your soul the sweet holy oil.

If, then, upon an honest examination of the circle in which you move, of the profession you have assumed, of the business you pursue, of the pleasures you indulge, of the connections you are forming, of the friendships you are cultivating, you discover that which is injurious to the life of God in your soul, which despoils you of the fragrance of your grace, which impairs your spiritual power, and lessens your usefulness in the church and in the world—beneath the cross, and under the renewed anointing of the Holy Spirit, *abandon it at once and forever. Surrendering it heartily, solemnly, for Christ's sake, you shall suffer no loss but the loss of that which robbed you of the costliest, sweetest, holiest blessing this side the sunny land of heaven.*

Loss! O no! You shall be a rich gainer. He in whose name you did it—whose love constrained you, whose grace strengthened you, whose glory guided you, whose eye watched you, whose smile beamed upon you, and whose ministering spirits, invisibly but closely, clustered around you, will pour a tide of blessing so rich into your soul, as shall compel you, in wondering, adoring gratitude and praise to exclaim—"You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over."

"The Influence of Sanctified Trial upon the Inner Life"

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me." Psalm 138:7.

Partial and imperfect as the present endeavor to lay before the Christian Church some views of spiritual life must be considered, a more marked deficiency, and one of still greater moment, would exist, were we to allow an occasional allusion only to a period in the believer's history, which, of all others, has frequently proved most favorable to the matured advancement of the indwelling life—the period of sanctified trial. It would not be difficult, were the correctness of the fact disputed, to, summon a cloud of witnesses to testify, that seasons of trouble have invariably proved, in the experience of the spiritual mind, seasons of soul-quickenings; that *times of Divine chastening have ever been times of heart-recovery*; and that, consequently, we may regard the hour of affliction as bearing upon its somber wings, concealed indeed beneath their dark plumage, some of the golden blessings of the Christian life. The raven carrying food to the languid prophet, and the lion yielding honey to the mighty Samson, are symbols of the mode which God sometimes adopts of transmitting nourishment and reviving to the inner life of his people. Truly in their case it may be said—and the enigma admits of easy solution "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

We have been studying in the preceding pages several illustrations of spiritual life, gleaned from the experience of David. Deeply instructive as each must have been, we cannot regard them as surpassed in tender, touching, and holy interest, by that one upon which we now propose to fix the attention of the spiritual reader—*David in deep trouble, yet assured of Divine reviving*; "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me." And yet how difficult it

often is to win an assent to the truth taught in these words; to bring the sentiment they contain to a practical bearing upon the judgment and feelings of the tried Christian, while yet in the midst of the furnace! How hard, especially under the first stunning effects of his affliction, to reason him into the belief that those very circumstances which are now weaving their web of difficulty around his path, may yet possess a power and a buoyancy so great, as to lift his soul from the region of coldness, despondency, and gloom, into that of life, light, and joy. Nor should this slowness to admit a statement so apparently contradictory surprise us. Affliction wears neither a pleasant nor a promising aspect. Frowning and foreboding, there is at first view something before which the stoutest heart quails, and from which the sternest spirit shrinks—whose tincture of wormwood and gall, the lips would sincerely allow to pass, untasted and untouched. And although that darkening cloud embosoms a heaven-sent message, and although that rod, dotted with buds and blossoms, is prepared to burst into fruit and beauty, and although the "Man of sorrows" left the perfume of his own lips lingering upon the brim of that cup, *we would yet willingly forego the experience of the blessing which it conveys, to escape the present pain of the discipline which it enjoins.* But let us turn our attention to the deeply instructive and precious truth before us—the relation which sanctified trial has to the reviving of the inner life of the soul.

Contemplate the Psalmist's circumstances "Walking in the midst of trouble." It was no new and untrodden path along which he was pursuing his way to God. The footprint sometimes stained with blood, always moistened with tears—of many a suffering pilgrim might be described in that way, from the time that Abel, the earliest martyr, laid the first bleeding brow that ever reposed upon the bosom of Jesus. And yet how often does trial overtake the believer, as 'though some strange thing had happened to him!' That at the peculiar nature of an affliction a Christian man should be startled and alarmed, would create no surprise; but that he should be startled at the trial itself, as if he alone—the only one of the family—were exempted from the discipline of the covenant, and had no interest in the Savior's declaration, "In the world you shall have tribulation"—might well astonish us.

But David's experience is that of many of the spiritual seed of David. His words seem to imply *continuous* trial: "I *walk* in the midst of trouble." With how many travelers to the celestial city it is thus! They seem never to be without trial. They know no cessation, they obtain no repose, they experience no rest.

The foam of one mountain billow has scarcely broken and died upon the shore, before another follows in its wake; "Deep calls unto deep." Is it the trial of sickness?—the darkened chamber, scarcely ever illumined with one cheering ray of light—the bed of suffering, seldom offering one moment's real repose—the couch of weariness, rarely left, are vivid pictures of trial, drawn from real life, needing no coloring of the fancy to heighten or exaggerate. Is it domestic trial?—what scenes of incessant chafings, and anxieties, and turmoils, and sources of bitterness, do some families present; trouble seems never to absent itself from the little circle. Yes, it is through a series of trials that many of Christ's followers are called to travel. The loss of earthly substance may be followed by the decay of health, and this succeeded, perhaps, by that which, of all afflictions, the most deeply pierces and lacerates the heart, and for a season covers every scene with the dark pall of woe—the desolation of death. Thus *the believer ever journeys along a path paved with sorrow, and hemmed in by trial*. Well, be it so! We do not speak of it complainingly. God forbid! We arraign not the *wisdom*, nor doubt the *mercy*, nor impeach the *truth* of Him who has drawn every line of that path, who has paved every step of that way, and who knows its history from the end to the beginning. Why should our heart fret against the Lord? Why should we weary at the way? It is the ordained way—it is the right way—it is the Lord's way; and it is the way to a city of habitation, where the soul and body—the companions of the weary pilgrimage—will together sweetly and eternally rest. Then all trouble ceases—then all conflict terminates. Emerging from the gloom and labyrinth of the wilderness, the released spirit finds itself at home, the inhabitant of a world of which it is said—"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

But the spiritual troubles which encompass the Christian walk are the deepest and the severest of all his trials. What in comparison are others? Our Lord keenly felt this when he uttered that affecting exclamation: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour." What to him—galling and agonizing as they were—what to him the smiting, and the scourging, and the spitting, and the excruciating torture, compared with the sword which was now entering his soul—the mental conflict and spiritual sorrow which, in the hour of atonement, amazed, staggered, and overwhelmed him? Listen again to his

affecting cry: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Then, withdrawing himself from his disciples—for the human sympathy upon which he had relied in anticipation of the hour of suffering failed him now—retiring from man, he flung himself upon the bosom of God, and kneeling down, he prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" Such, my soul, was the conflict which your Savior endured for you!

Partakers of Christ's sufferings, all true believers are in a measure acquainted with some of those soul troubles which thus overwhelmed the Son of God. The suspensions of Divine consolation—the hidings of God's countenance—the assaults of Satan—the contact and conflict with sin—are bitter ingredients in that cup of spiritual sorrow of which they are sometimes called deeply to drink. But the subject more immediately before us is, *the influence of all sanctified trial upon the life of God in the soul*—"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me."

That there was a consciousness in David's mind of spiritual relapse is clearly evident. It would appear that in the process of trial through which he was now passing, the discovery of this relapse was made. *O what a detector of the secret state of our souls does the season of trial often prove!* We are not aware of our impaired strength, of our weak faith, of our powerless grace—how feeble our hold on Christ is; how legal our views of the gospel are; how beclouded our minds may be; how partial our acquaintance with God is—until we are led into the path of trouble. *The season of prosperity veils the real state of our souls from our view. No Christian can form an accurate estimate of his spiritual condition who has not been brought into a state of trial.* We faint in the day of adversity, because we then find—what, perhaps, was not even suspected in the day of prosperity—that our strength is small.

But seasons of *trial* are emphatically what the word expresses—they *try* the work in the souls of the righteous. The inner life derives immense advantage from them. The deeper discovery that is then made of the evil of the heart is not the least important result: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." What folly still dwells in the hearts of the wise—bound up and half concealed—who can tell? Who would have suspected such developments in the life of Abraham, of David, of Solomon, of Peter? And so is it with all who yet are the possessors of that

wisdom which will guide their souls to eternal glory. *Folly is bound up in their hearts; but the sanctified rod of correction reveals it, and the discovery proves one of the costliest blessings in the experience of the disciplined child.* Listen to the language of Moses, addressed to the children of Israel—"You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not." And O, what a discovery that forty years' marching and countermarching in the wilderness was to them of the *pride, and impatience, and unbelief, and ingratitude, and distrust, that were bound up in their heart!* And yet, *though all this evil was deep-seated in their nature, they knew it not, and suspected it not, until trial brought it to the surface.* Thus, beloved, is it with us. The latent evil is brought to light. God leaves us to try what is in our heart, and this may be the first step in the reviving of his gracious work in our souls. *O let us not, then, shrink from the probing, nor startle at its discovery, if it but lead us nearer to holiness, nearer to Christ, nearer to God, nearer to heaven!*

The time of trouble is often, too, a time of remembrance, and so becomes a time of reviving. Past backslidings—unthought of, unsuspected, and unconfessed—are recalled to memory, in the season that God is dealing with us. David had forgotten his transgression, and the brethren of Joseph their sin, until trouble summoned it back to memory. *Times of trial are searching times, remembering times.* Then it is we turn in upon ourselves, and "bethink ourselves in the land where we are carried captive;" and then with David we exclaim, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto your testimonies." And thus it is that the Lord revives us in trouble.

By bringing us into a closer acquaintance with the word, trial stimulates the inner life. We flee to the word for counsel or for comfort, and the word proves a quickening word. Divine correction not only teaches, but *it stimulates our relish for the spiritual parts of God's truth.* In times of prosperity we are tempted to neglect the word. The *world* abates the keenness of the soul's appetite. We taste no sweetness in its promises, and cannot receive its admonitions and rebukes. "The full soul loathes a honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Replenished with created good, and surfeited with earthly comfort, the soul, in its pride and self-sufficiency, loathes the Divine honey of God's word. But when the Lord removes the creature, and embitters the world—both proving cisterns that can hold no water—then how precious becomes the word

of Jesus!—not its doctrines and its consolations only, but even its deepest searchings and its severest rebukes—that which lays us the lowest in the dust of shame and self-abhorrence—are then sweet as the honey and the honeycomb to our renewed taste. Then in truth we exclaim—"How sweet are your words to my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

And from where flows our true comfort in the hour of deep heart-sorrow? David, in his trouble, shall answer: "This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has quickened me." O how many a deeply-tried Christian has set his seal to this truth! What is the comfort sought by the *worldling* in his affliction? Alas! he seeks to drown his sorrow by plunging yet deeper into that which has created it. He goes to the world for his comfort—that world that has already deceived him, betrayed him, and stung and wounded him more keenly and deeply than the adder. The creature is his idol, money is his god, and pleasure his only resource.

But turn to the man of God. What was the Psalmist's comfort in his sorrow? Was it the lightness of his affliction? was it the love of Jonathan? was it the soothing tenderness and sympathy of the saints? Ah no!—it was none of these. It was the spiritual quickening his soul received through the truth of God! This healed his sorrow-stricken heart; this poured a tide of richer comfort into his deeply afflicted soul than the sweetest human balm, or even the entire removal of his trial, could have done. O favored soul, who, when in deep and dark waters—when passing through the fiery furnace—are led to desire spiritual quickening above all other comforts beside—sweetly testifying, "This is my comfort in my affliction, your word has quickened me." *That word, unfolding to us Jesus, leading us to Jesus, and transforming us into the image of Jesus,* proves a reviving word in the hour of trial: "I should have perished in my affliction, unless your law had been my delight."

The grace that is brought into exercise in the particular season of affliction, must necessarily tend greatly to promote the revival of the inner life. In a time of prosperity, grace is apt from stagnation, to become feeble and torpid. And yet, were the believer but keenly alive to the perils of his path, he would feel as deeply the necessity of especial grace to hold him up in the smooth as in the rough way. "Hold me up in your paths," was a prayer replete with holy, heavenly wisdom. Thus walking in the very ways of God, the believer requires

the sustaining power of God. And yet how sadly does grace often decay, and the inner life go back, in the time when all things smile, and the path is smooth. A spiritual paralysis seems to steal over the whole spiritual man. But blessed is he who, learning this truth, in the midst of his most active and spiritual and holy duties—when laying himself out the most for God, and treading with all uprightness in the Lord's path—is led to distrust his own wisdom, strength and truthfulness, and breathe the prayer, "Hold up my goings in your paths, that my footsteps slip not."

And yet how liable is grace to decay, and the inner life to lose ground, when all things smile upon a path smooth and unruffled! But God sends affliction, and the grace that lay concealed is brought to view, and the grace that remained dormant is summoned to arms; the whole soul is awakened, energized and inspired as with new life. "The trial of faith works patience." Thus one tried grace stirs up another grace, until all the links in the golden chain feel the electric influence and are set in motion. O blessed trouble, that so stirs up the life of God in the soul as to make each grace of the Spirit a "new sharp threshing instrument having teeth;" a weapon re-cast, and newly furbished in the furnace, and so coming forth with keener edge and more polished blade, to "fight the good fight of faith," with mightier power and success.

But the influence of sanctified affliction upon the inner life is, perhaps, the most evident and powerful in the revival of the spirit of prayer. Truly, in reference to this happy result, may the believer exclaim, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me." *Nothing more effectually quickens us to communion with God than the trial that flows from his love, and is sanctified by his Spirit.* Strange that to this, the highest, holiest, and sweetest privilege prepared for the Christian, he is often the most indifferent, and in its observance his feelings are the most chilled and sluggish. What an evidence—one more melancholy there cannot be—of the spiritual deadness of the soul by nature, that even after it is quickened with a life that brings it into union with the life of God, after the Spirit of God has entered and made his abode there, ever dwelling and reigning and working in it, there should still remain so much deadness to that which is spiritual, especially the most spiritual of all duties and the most precious of all privileges—communion with God!

But in the time of trouble we stir ourselves up to calling upon God; we awake

to the conviction—perhaps it is as new and as novel as though it were for the first time felt—we awake to the conviction that we are in possession of a mighty instrument, which when exerted brings all heaven, and the God of heaven, into our soul. We wake as from a dream; and just at the identical moment when all creature assistance droops, and all earthly resources fail, and leave us like a dismantled wreck drifting upon the billows, we discover that we are furnished with a power of relief mightier than the mightiest angel's—a power which, when exerted, (we speak it with reverence,) overcomes, like the wrestling patriarch, Omnipotence itself—the power of PRAYER!

And what is prayer but God's power in the soul of a poor, feeble worm of the dust, over Himself? It was no human might of Abraham which enabled him to wrestle with, and prevail with, the Angel of the covenant: it was the power of the Holy Spirit in his soul; and when the Divine Angel yielded, he yielded but to himself, and so God had all the glory—and shall have, of all that he has wrought for us, and of all that we have wrought by him, through eternity.

It is in the time of trouble, then, that we learn to pray with new power. We become more thoroughly acquainted with the Divine nature and the omnipotent energy of prayer. We learn what our resources, as the true sons of Israel, are. Many are then led to pray, who never prayed before. "Lord, in trouble have they visited you, they poured out a prayer when your chastening was upon them." Then it is the proud spirit yields; the knee that never bent before, bends now, and the terrified soul cries out unto Him whose chastening is upon it.

The slumbering Christian, too, is awakened to call upon God. Then it is he finds at what a distance he had been living from God. Then he discovers his true position—the real state of his soul, touching prayer. Thus aroused, like the slumbering prophet, by a voice, and startled by a rebuke issuing from a quarter he would least have suspected—"What are you doing, O sleeper? arise and call upon your God!"—he awakes, and finds himself in a storm threatening instant destruction. To what does he then betake himself? David shall answer: "I give myself unto prayer." And oh, *how eloquent is then the voice of the wrestling believer!* Never did the fugitive prophet "pray unto the Lord his God" as when walking in the midst of trouble. "I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I,

and you heard my voice. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto you, into your holy temple." In this way the Lord revives the spirit of prayer within us.

And oh, what words can describe the blessedness of prayer in trial!—the preciousness of the privilege of having a God to go to, a Father to flee to in trouble! To bring you more deeply and personally into the experience of this, dear tried Christian, the Lord your God is dealing with you now. Oh, beloved, betake yourself unto prayer! You shall indeed find it the outlet of all sorrow, and the inlet of all joy. Welcome the trouble that thus revives you. Receive with meekness of spirit, yes with gladness of heart, the discipline, however humbling, that throws you upon God—yes, that severs you from all creatures, and that shuts you up to Him alone. That discipline, painful as it is, springs from love. In love that trouble is sent, in love that cross is permitted, in love that cup is given, in love that rod is used—it is to set you upon the work of prayer. What are these frowns of your Father, what these hidings of your Savior, what these withholdings of the Spirit, but to allure you within the holiest, there to find the throne of grace? "I will go," says the Lord, "and return to my place until they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." Hosea 5:15.

And what, too, the chastening beneath which your tender, sensitive spirit is now smarting, but to bring you into Ephraim's state of revived prayer—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; You have chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn me, and I shall be turned; for you are the Lord my God," Jer. 31:18. Then, beloved, "despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him," for he only seeks to draw you closer within his bosom. Give your troubled spirit unto prayer. Yield it to the reposing, soothing influence, of communion with God. Withhold not from your bleeding wound this healing balsam, rob not your sick heart of *this precious panacea*. Give yourself unto prayer. You hold in your hands a power which God cannot resist. Approaching him in the name of Jesus, you may *embosom your tried and weary spirit in the very heart of Jehovah*. Take the praying saints of old for your example and encouragement, "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among those who call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he answered them. He spoke unto them in the cloudy pillar." The Lord who

"makes the clouds his chariots," is prepared to speak to you in love from your 'cloudy pillar.'

**"O wondrous power of faithful prayer!
What tongue can tell the Almighty grace?
God's hands or bound or open are,
As Moses or Elijah prays;
Let Moses in the Spirit groan,
And God cries out—Let me alone!
"Let me alone, that all my wrath
May rise the wicked to consume!
While justice hears your praying faith,
It cannot seal the sinner's doom:
My Son is in my servant's prayer,
And Jesus forces me to spare."**

Are you, beloved, walking in the midst of trouble? Think not that you are alone. May your eye of faith be "anointed with fresh eye-salve," to see One walking side by side with you, the same who walked with the three children through the fiery furnace: "whose form is like the Son of God." Yes! Jesus is with you in your trial. Christ is with you in your trouble. The path, however difficult, is not so narrow that your Lord cannot tread it with you, side by side. Your way is not so intricate that he cannot enable you to thread your steps through the labyrinth. There is room enough for you and Christ to walk together. He is with you: though like the two disciples journeying, in mournful communion one with the other, to Emmaus, your eyes may be so closed that you see him not, yet is he journeying with you along that sad and mournful, that lone and pensive path. Christ is in your adversity—Christ is in your cross—Christ is in your dilemma—Christ is in your suffering—Christ is in your persecution—Christ is in your sickness—yes, Christ is at your side every step you take, and he will conduct you safely to your Father's house. Though you walk in the midst of trouble, he will revive you.

The Resurrection of Christ in its Relation to the Inner Life of the Christian

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." Phil. 3:10.

The real value of any truth to a child of God is the conscious power of that truth in his own soul. The Bible is designed to be an experimental and a practical book. It deals not in abstract truth, in mere theoretical teaching, but in revelations intended by its Divine Author to address themselves to the judgment, thus finding an inlet to the conscience and the heart, and becoming a leaven of holiness in the soul, diffusing its influence through the entire moral and intellectual man. We repeat the observation, that any one truth is valuable to the Christian in proportion to his personal and experimental acquaintance with its nature and, effects. And here it is impossible to resist the solemn remark—how far an individual may go in an intellectual subscription to, and a theoretical reception of, vital and essential truth, and yet be utterly ignorant of its renewing and sanctifying power in his soul!

It is another characteristic of the true believer in Jesus, that he places no limit to his knowledge and experience of Divine truth. Take the apostle, whose words are now under consideration, for an example of this. Did he not already know something of Christ? Assuredly! And yet he panted to know more—"That I may know him." Had he not already felt in his soul—and in no common degree, too the power of the Lord's resurrection? Undoubtedly! And yet behold how he desires to know more: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." Thus placing no bound to the extent of his knowledge of Christ, and his experience of the truth, but defining for himself a scope worthy the objects of his study, and placing his eager and fixed gaze upon the loftiest standard of Christian attainment, he forgot the things that were behind, and pressed forward to those things which were before, never regarding himself as having attained, so long as the goal was yet unreachd, and the "mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" was still before him. O that there were more of this Christianity in the Church of God! Everything in creation and providence is advancing to its given point of perfection; why should the believer alone be stationary?—why should he, possessing already the germ of a perfection so glorious, and destined to a development so great, be content with a dwarfish stature, rather than the "stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus?" O Lord, stir us up to greater advances in the Divine life!

The resurrection of Christ is a vital doctrine of Christianity. It sustains an

essential relation to the spiritual life of the believer. Viewing it in connection with the union of Christ and his people, the two facts become identical—standing in the relation of cause and effect. Our Lord, in his great atoning work, acted in a public, or representative character. He represented in his person the whole elect of God, who virtually were in him each step that he took in working out their redemption. In his resurrection from the grave this was preeminently so. The Head could not be resuscitated apart from the Body. Christ could not rise without the Church. To have left the Church, which he represented, and in whose place and behalf he acted, still in the grave, would have been, to say nothing of the impossibility of such a thing, her eternal destruction. Thus, then, the new, or the resurrection life of Christ, and the inner, or spiritual life of the believer, are one and indivisible. Now, when the resurrection of the Head is spiritually realized, when it is fully received into the heart by faith, it becomes a quickening, energizing, sanctifying truth to each member of his body. It transmits a power to the inmost soul, felt in all the actings and manifestations of the spiritual life; "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." Blessed are they who feel, and who feel daily, that they are indeed "risen with Christ," and who find every new perception of this great truth to act like a mighty lever to their souls—lifting them above this "present evil world"—a world passing away. I propose in the present chapter to adduce a few observations upon the authenticity of this great doctrine, and then proceed to illustrate its relation to the inner life of the believer.

How truly has the "Stone which the builders rejected become the head stone of the corner!" The single doctrine upon the truth of which Christianity rests; and which, for the same reason, is, of all the truths of the Bible, the most impugned and rejected by the unbeliever, is the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Both the Jew and the infidel have sagacity enough to perceive that, if this fact be proved, all is proved that appertains to Christianity. The great question of the divinity of our holy religion is at once and forever set at rest. Christ is then declared to be the true Messiah, and Christianity the true religion. But come we to the argument. Quietly and reverently his disciples composed his mangled limbs, and laid them to rest in the new-made sepulcher. Up to this touching and eventful moment the chain of evidence had been powerful and complete. Event had succeeded event, and miracle had followed miracle—each one fulfilling some new prediction, and supplying some still more convincing demonstration of his Messiahship. But suppose that at this

crisis the chain were broken! Suppose the last link were lacking to complete the mighty proofs of his divinity! What if he had not come back again to life—death and the grave prolonging beyond the predicted moment their boasted victory? Who does not see that the whole case would have fallen to the ground—that the entire testimony would have been overthrown—that the great volume of prophecy would have proved a fiction—the hopes of past ages a dream—salvation a stupendous lie—redemption a splendid delusion—and Christ the prince of impostors? But eternal love and omnipotent power were pledged for the certain and glorious issue.

Were we disputing with an objector, we should probably pursue a line of argument somewhat like this—The great question is, Was the tomb of Christ emptied or not? If it was, what became of its sacred deposit—the body of Jesus? The first and leading point is conceded by all—namely, that the grave was vacated. Then, what became of the body? Was it retained by the Jews? Then let them produce it, and the question is fairly and forever set at rest, and decided in their favor. Was it true, as affirmed by his enemies, that his disciples, who but three days before clustered a feeble weeping band around that tomb, had, in the quietude of night, and in the face of a Roman guard, armed to the teeth, and wakeful to every breath, sacrilegiously invaded its sanctity, and robbed it of its precious treasure? Still the act would not have aided their cause, while it must have furthered the design of the Jews. But mark the perfect agreement of the witnesses who testified that he was risen from the dead. Five hundred of them declare and affirm that Christ was alive. They were all examined, and cross-examined apart, and still nothing could shake their testimony that he was alive. And where did they publish the fact? Did they travel to some remote place, where the evidence could not be examined, and where they might succeed in palming their story upon the ignorance and credulity of strangers? No! but in Jerusalem—in the synagogues—upon the very spot where he had asserted his Messiahship, foretold his death, and predicted his resurrection, they affirmed that he was alive. And when did they publish the doctrine? Did they wait until the epoch of his resurrection had passed, and the circumstance of its novelty and interest had subsided?

No; but from the moment that the celestial sentinels, who still lingered within the tomb, announced that he was not there, but was risen—pointing to the

vacant spot where he had lain, as an affirmation of the truth—they went forth and published the fact; and while the whole city was in a tempest of excitement, and the eyes of his enemies were still sparkling with rage, and the storm that had laid low the Savior threatened to crush his followers, they fearlessly and boldly affirmed everywhere that Jesus was alive. Is it likely, we ask, that these men, timid and unlearned as they were, and confronted, too, with the sternest tribunal of the world, could have invented such an imposture, or if so, could have succeeded in winning such multitudes over to its belief? We think it impossible.

The circumstances of the Savior's resurrection were in harmony with its lonely and solemn grandeur. No human witness was privileged to behold it. The mysterious re-union of the human soul with the body of Christ was an illustrious event, upon which no mortal eye was permitted to gaze. There is a moral grandeur of surpassing character in the resurrection of Christ unseen. The fact is not an object with which sense has to do so much as faith. And that no human eye was permitted to witness the stupendous event, doubtless was designed to teach man that it was with the spiritual and not with the fleshly apprehension of this truth that he had especially to do. *What eye but that of faith could see the illustrious Conqueror come forth, binding, with adamant chains, hell, death, and the grave?* What principle but the spiritual and mighty principle of faith could enter into the revealed mind of God, sympathize with the design of the Savior, and interpret the sublime mystery of this stupendous event? It was proper, therefore, no it was worthy of God and in harmony with the character and the design of the resurrection of our Lord, that a veil should conceal its actual accomplishment from the eye of his Church, and that *the great evidence they should have of the truth of the fact should be, the power of his resurrection felt and experienced in their souls.* O yes! the only power of the Savior's resurrection which we desire to know is that which comes to us through the energy of an all-seeing, all-conquering, all-believing faith. O give me this, rather than to have witnessed with these eyes the celestial attendants clustering around the tomb—the rolling away of the stone that was upon the sepulcher—the breaking of the seal—and the emerging form of the Son of God, bearing in his hands the emblems and the tokens of his victory. The spiritual so infinitely transcends the carnal—the eye of faith is so much more glorious than the eye of sense, that our Lord himself has sanctified and sealed it with his own precious blessing— "Jesus with unto him, Thomas, because you

have seen me you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed." Blessed Jesus! in faith would I then follow you each step of your journey through this vale of tears—in faith would I visit the manger, the cross, and the tomb—for you have pronounced him blessed above all, who, though he sees not, yet believes in you. Lord, I believe, help you mine unbelief.

Perhaps no circumstance connected with the resurrection of Christ conveys to the mind a clearer idea of its bearings upon the happiness of the Church than the part which *the Divine Father* is represented as having taken in the illustrious event. His having committed himself to the fact, at once stamps it with all its saving interest. Thus is it ascribed to him—"Whom *God* has raised"—"Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father"—"If the Spirit of *him* who raised up Jesus from the dead." *By this act of raising up his Son from the grave, the Father manifested his infinite delight in, and his full acceptance of, the sacrifice of Christ, as a finished and satisfactory expiation for the sins of his people.* So long as Jesus remained in the grave, there was lacking the evidence of the acceptance of his death—the great seal of heaven, the signature of God, was needed to authenticate the fact. But when the Father released the Surety from the dominion of death, he annihilated, by that act, all legal claim against his Church, declaring the ransom accepted and the debt cancelled. "He was taken from prison,"—as the prisoner of justice—and the prisoner of death—and the prisoner of the grave: the Father, in the exercise of his glorious power, opens the prison door and delivers the illustrious captive—and by that door through which he emerges again to life, enters the full justification of his whole Church—for it is written: "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Such is the doctrine, whose relation to the inner life is so essential, interesting, and influential, as to be worthy of our especial and deepest consideration.

A more important truth—where all are of infinite significance to the happiness of man—is not found in the word of God. As it forms the keystone to the mighty arch of Christianity—essential therefore to the stability and beauty of the whole fabric—so it constitutes the groundwork of spiritual life upon the basis of which the Holy Spirit of God quickens the souls of all who are the "called according to his purpose." The relation of the Lord's resurrection to the life of his people springs from the union which subsists between them. The Lord Jesus acted not, as we have just intimated, in his private or individual

capacity, in any step which he took in the accomplishment of our salvation. He lived and labored, died and rose again, as a public man, and standing in a federal relation to the Church. He needed not to obey for himself, for he was holy. He needed not to die for himself, for he had no sin to atone. He needed not to rise from the dead for himself, for he was Essential Life. But when he lived and died, rose and revived again, he acted in behalf of, and in union with, a people who were one and indivisible with himself. Hence the influence of the great truth of Christ's resurrection upon the state of the inner life. It was a knowledge of this truth which awoke the ardent desire of the Apostle's soul, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection."

Trace this power as it first appears in the spiritual resurrection of the child of God. The Apostle Paul, in behalf of the Ephesian saints, prays that, "the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." Thus *the same resurrection power which brought back to life again the Head of the Church, is exerted in effecting the spiritual resurrection of the Church itself.* The true believer is already risen. He was once dead in sin, and entombed in the grave of his iniquities. But a power—the same which awoke the death-slumber of Lazarus, has darted from the tomb of Jesus, and has quickened him to a new and a deathless life. Oh, were we more directly to trace the mighty energy of the Eternal Spirit in our souls, raising us from the region of death, to life and immortality, to that stupendous fact of redemption—the resurrection of Christ from the dead—how would it exalt our views of its importance, and fill our souls with its glory! What must be the power of our Lord's resurrection, that can even now awake the profoundest sleep of spiritual death! When the Spirit of God puts forth his own grace to raise a soul from the grave of sin, oh, forget not it is in virtue of a risen, living Savior. Despair not of the spiritual life of any, though they may have laid in the grave so long as well near to have quenched all hope of their conversion, since Christ has risen from the dead, and is alive, to give life in answer to the prayer of faith: "The Second Adam is a quickening Spirit."

The power which the resurrection of Christ possesses in opening up to view the doctrine of Divine reconciliation is great. The moment faith can look up to God through the medium of a risen Christ, all its views of his character instantly become kind and soothing. How beautifully the Apostle associates the two

blessings: "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus!" He is now truly the 'God of peace'—the pacified God, the reconciled Father; and the evidence of it is, his raising up his dear Son from the grave. Thus what a bright view does this truth unfold to us of God! When we retire within ourselves we see much to engender dark views of, and distrustful feelings towards, him. But when faith travels to the grave of Jesus, and we see it empty, we have such an overwhelming evidence of the perfect reconciliation of God, of his thoughts of peace towards us, that instantly faith triumphs, and all our gloomy, trembling apprehensions of his character vanish and disappear. He is the "God of peace," because Jesus is a risen Savior. And in proportion as you lay hold by faith of the resurrection-life of Christ, you will have that pillar to sustain you upon which rests the whole fabric of salvation. The peace of God will fill your heart, as you know from experience the power of the Lord's resurrection in your soul. The power of Christ's resurrection, in fact, lies in a sense of *pardoned sin*, in our apprehension of *complete justification*, in the living hope of eternal glory. Jesus saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, because he is a risen and a living Savior, and ever lives to make intercession in behalf of all his people. O deal believingly with a risen Christ!

But I wish to lay before the Christian reader an illustration of the practical power which this great and precious truth exerts in the healthy actings of the inner life. It quickens and strengthens the Divine life against the influence of worldly things. Of the earthward tendency of our hearts we are, alas! but too conscious. We need an antagonistic principle, something to counteract the ever-working influence of an ungodly world. Where shall we meet with it? We answer, in the power of Christ's resurrection, felt, realized, and experienced in the soul. How beautifully and forcibly does the apostle place this truth before us; "If you, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." This is the argument of Paul—"You are a risen people, risen in union with Christ. If this be so, then seek after heavenly-mindedness, setting your affections on things above." What a heaven-attracting power, then, has this glorious truth! What is Christ? he is alive. Where is Christ? he is in heaven, at the right hand of God, as my Head, my Representative, my Forerunner, my Treasure, my all. Then, let me rise! Shall not my affections soar to their best Beloved? Shall not my heart be where its

treasure is? Shall I set my mind upon things on the earth, when my Lord rose out of the earth, and ascended above the earth, and bids me rise and follow him in faith, in spirit, and in love, until he calls me to come away to him entirely, that I might be ever with him, and behold his glory? If I am indeed risen with Christ, then let me evidence it by my increasing spiritual-mindedness. Christ, who is my life, is in heaven, why should I needlessly be buried in the earth? Why allow, as I appear to do—that there is an object upon earth whose claims to my love are paramount, whose beauty to my eye is greater, whose attraction to my soul is stronger than my risen, ascended, and gloried Lord? Is there upon earth one who loves me as Jesus loves me? Is there one who has done for me what Jesus has done? Is there one who is doing for me now what Jesus is doing? Is there one who is to me such a friend, such a brother, such a counselor, as Jesus? No, not one! Then why should not my thoughts be more with him? Why should not my heart cling closer to him? Why this vagrancy of mind, this truancy of affection, this wandering of desire; why this forgetfulness, coldness, and cleaving to earth; when my Lord is risen, and I am professedly risen with him? O to feel more sensibly, more deeply, more constantly, the power of his resurrection! Lord! I detect my heart settling down on creature things; objects of sense and sin. My business is a snare; my domestic blessings are a snare; my friendships are a snare; my position is a snare; the too fond opinion which others entertain of me, is a snare; my grace, my gifts, my usefulness, through the corruption of my heart, are snares. Lord, place beneath my soul the mighty lever of your resurrection, and lift me towards yourself! *O let me feel the earth-severing, the heaven-attracting power of your resurrection-life!* Having been buried with you by baptism into death, sincerely would I now rise with you, like as you were raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, that I might walk with you in newness of life, until I reach you in the realms of glory.

But not only is this a *quickening*, it is also a most COMFORTING truth; and thus there is a power which is felt in the very consolation which it conveys. What a blessed declaration is that—"Where Christ sits at the right hand of God!" The words are inexpressibly sweet—"sitting at the right hand of God." Having finished his work, having made an end of sin; having brought in an everlasting righteousness, having risen from the grave, having ascended up on high, he has sat down at the right hand of God, reposing in the full satisfaction, glory, and expectancy of his redeeming work. And for what object is he there

seated? Why is he thus presented to the eye of faith? That the Church of God might have visibly and constantly before its view—a risen, living Christ. O how constantly is the Lord teaching us that *there is but one Being who can meet our case, and but one Object on which our soul's affections ought to be supremely placed—even a risen Savior*. We have temptations various, trials the world knows nothing of, crosses of which those who know and love us the most, never suspect—for often the heart's acutest sorrow is the least discoverable upon the surface.

But here is our great mercy—Christ is alive. What if we are unknown, tried, tempted, and sad, we yet have a risen Savior to go to; who, as Rutherford says, "sighs when I sigh, mourns when I mourn, and when I look up he rejoices." How can I lack for sympathy when I have a risen Christ? How can I feel alone and sad, when I have the society and the soothing of a living and an ever-present Jesus—a Jesus who loves me, who knows all my circumstances, all my feelings, and has his finger upon my every pulse—who sees all my tears, hears all my sighs, and records all my thoughts—who, go to him when I will, and with what I will, will never say to me no, nor bid me depart unblest—who is risen, exalted, and has sat down at the right hand of his Father and my Father, his God and my God, to administer to me all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, and to mete out, as I need them, all the riches of his grace, and the supplies of his salvation? Why, then, should I despond at any circumstance, why despair at any emergency, or sink beneath any trial, when I have a risen, a living Christ to go to? "When we are enabled to look at things above, to set our affections upon them, remembering that Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, that he has blotted out sin and made an end of it; and when his precious blood is sprinkled on our hearts, we can then say with ardent desire, 'Lord God, give me every grace, make me like yourself, make me conformed in body, soul, and Spirit to you, dead to the world and alive to you, thirsting for you and loving you supremely, willing to do and suffer your will, so that at last I may be able to finish my course with joy, and that which the Lord has committed unto me.' It is a sweet, and quiet, and happy posture of soul, to look at Christ sitting at the right hand, of God, and to know that he is there with the breastplate upon his heart, and with the ephod upon his shoulder, interceding every moment for each individual member of his body. O the amazing power of the Lord's resurrection! O the preciousness of the fruit that springs from it! "Communion with our heavenly Father, near walking with

God, a life of faith in Christ, living on high, living not only on Christ's fulness but on Christ himself; not only on what he has, but on what he is, in his Godhead, in his humanity, in the tenderness of his heart as well as the fulness of his salvation; living in the blessed anticipation of glory, and honor, and immortality; rising in the morning and saying, This day, and every day, I would consecrate to my God,"—these are some of the fadeless flowers and precious fruits that grow around the grave of Jesus, when faith, listening to the voice that issues from the vacant sepulcher, "He is not here, but is risen"—looks up and beholds him alive, "seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Then, O then, it exclaims in a transport of joy, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you," you risen, living, and glorious Redeemer!

**"You are my all—to you I flee;
Take me, oh, take me to your keeping!
Make me your branch, your husbandry;
Be yours the seed-time, yours the reaping.
For what on earth but tells your power?
And what but makes your love its theme?
I read it in the vernal shower,
it cheers me in the summer beam:
"It glows while memory lingers yet,
Over hours a mother's love beguiled;
For ah! a mother may forget,
But you will not forget your child.
I had a friend—nor false his love,
But him on earth no more I see:
Oh, you unchanging Friend above,
What is an earthly friend to Thee?
Give me no bright behest of care,
No groveling boon of envied sod;
No hopes that lead but to despair;
Ease, honors, wealth, are not my God.
"Nor anything in heaven; for, angels, say,
And saints escaped earth's guilt and sadness,
What makes your everlasting day?
What tunes your heart to joy and gladness?"**

**"Oh, there is nothing in yon bright sky,
Worthy this worthless heart to own;
On earth there's nothing; friends, creatures, fly;
I pant, my Lord, for you alone."**

But a signal and glorious illustration of the power of our Lord's resurrection is yet to appear—the *first resurrection and glory of all the saints*. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of those who slept." All who in this and in other places are described as sleeping, are the saints of God; the ungodly die, but the righteous only sleep. This distinction the Holy Spirit observes. Now Jesus, in his resurrection, is the first-fruit of those who slept; that is, in virtue and in consequence of his resurrection from the grave, all who sleep in him shall have a part in "the first resurrection." This period will distinguish the saints from the ungodly. It is distinctly affirmed by the inspired apostle, that "the dead in Christ shall rise first," while "we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Now to this prior, or, first resurrection, there are some pointed and remarkable allusions. Our Lord distinctly refers to it in the words, "They who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead." It was to this first resurrection the apostle Paul was anxious to arrive—"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." To this, too, the saints and martyrs of the Old Testament looked as the crown of their sufferings, and the recompense of their reward. "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." And this is the resurrection—and the only one—which God has pronounced blessed. "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection; of such, the second death has no power, but they shall be priests' of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." How important that we should give to the prophetic events with which the resurrection of the saints stands connected, and which, indeed, are but preparatory to the ushering in of that great event, our most profound and prayerful consideration and study!

There is so much scriptural clearness and power in the following excellent remarks of an unknown, but evidently a deeply taught and spiritual writer, that I am induced to quote them in connection with our present interesting and important subject. "It is desirable for us to know, what are the peculiar glories and advantages of the first resurrection; and also at what time we may expect

it to take place. It is to the first resurrection saints, that the promise is made of reigning with Christ, and partaking with him of his millennial glory, and it shall be the privilege of those who are alive, when the event happens, to be 'clothed upon,' and not 'unclothed'; that is, to be given glorified bodies, without having seen death and corruption; and to escape those pre-millennial troubles, which, in the great day of the Lord, will come on the earth. We read that the living saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This must be for some purpose. They would not be caught up to descend again immediately; and accordingly, we find repeated promises of their being thus kept in safety from the destruction of the earth, as Noah from the flood, and Lot from Sodom. At the close of the pre-millennial troubles, when, at the battle of Armageddon, our Lord descends, his feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, and he completes the destruction of his enemies—'he brings his saints with him,' including those who had been caught up alive previously. 'A man' had been their hiding place from the wind, their covert from the tempest. From what portion of the final troubles we know not, or how long they had been hid; but we know that Noah and Lot escaped entirely. And Peter says that from these types it is manifest, that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations (trials). Our Savior refers to the same events, saying, 'Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.' For until the day Noah entered the ark, the world went on as usual; and the 'same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone.' Paul also declares, people are to be saying, 'Peace and safety,' just before the sudden destruction or, day of the Lord's revealing, when his saints are taken. It is from this sudden destruction Christ teaches us to pray that we may escape, and that when these things shall come to pass, we may be able to stand before him. Habakkuk hoped to 'rest in the day of trouble,' and Zephaniah says, 'It may be we shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.' We read, 'Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you; hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.' The Prophets and Psalms abound with promises of this safety from trouble, which are only partially fulfilled if we take them metaphorically, since believers are more in trouble than other men; but will be literally fulfilled when the time arrives. Seeing, then, that a literal safety is promised during a time of trouble, such as 'never was,'—and that things are prepared for those who escape, such as

'could not have entered into the heart of man,' had they not been revealed by the Spirit—no wonder that John says, 'Those who have this hope, purify themselves.' No wonder Peter says, 'Seeing you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot'; for if not, we lose all the glory of the new heavens and the new earth. No wonder that the whole creation groans, waiting for the redemption of the body, and that the earnest expectation of the creature waits for this manifestation of the sons of God. Then, when the merciful men are taken from the evil to come, and 'the godly men cease,' 'then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked.' For it is expressly said, that when one is taken, another is left—while the one who loves his Lord's appearing, and expects it, shall meet him in the air, (as naturally as an eagle is attracted by a body,) the other is left, because of unbelief, to go through the time of the desolation of the earth.

"We next consider when these things may be; and if it should appear only probable that they may be at hand, we shall find sufficient cause for watchfulness. People in general suppose that they will not take place until our Lord descends to the earth at the end of the troubles; and as many events must happen first, namely, the restoration of the Jews, the battle of Armageddon, &c., they have a snare in their hearts to put off daily expectation. But let those who desire to be partakers of a 'better resurrection,' observe, that the re-establishment of the Jews in Jerusalem, marks the time when the church will have been removed.

"By comparing Matt. 24 with Luke 21, we see that 'the tribulation' began with the dispersion of the tribe of Judah, and ends with it; and that afterwards, 'immediately after,' are the signs in sun, moon, and stars; or that period of trouble commences from which the Church is saved. This is the period mentioned by Daniel, as the last end of the indignation to the Jewish nation, and which they will have to go through, with the exception of that remnant 'according to the election of grace,' which, having been converted to the faith of Jesus, will be raptured with the Church. This last end of indignation is the time of the final development and overthrow of antichrist, and does not begin until the 'times of the Gentiles' are over; which times are commensurate with the treading down of Jerusalem. Thus, at the re-establishment of Judah, the Lord must have gathered his people out of all nations; have made up the number of his elect; and have secured them from the judgments coming on the

earth.

"From hence we may perceive how very near that appearing of our Lord may be, which will either begin our blessedness or leave us to be partakers of the destruction which comes upon the earth. The Jews are now in a remarkable state of excitement, and expecting an immediate restoration. Nothing seems to be more likely than their speedy re-establishment in their own land. If, then, their restoration be near, the Lord's appearing to meet his saints must be near also.

"The sign which the Papacy affords, is one of the most striking and conclusive. Its destruction takes place during the final troubles, and after the dispersion of the Jews is over; for in Daniel we read, 'When he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.' Turning to Rev. 10:7, we see written, that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and pouring out of the seventh vial, the mystery of God shall be finished. The seventh trumpet includes the seventh vial; and when this vial is poured out, we read, 'There came a great voice, saying, It is done.' Just before this vial it is written, 'Behold, I come as a thief.' The midnight cry is made, and then the great earthquake takes place, in which Babylon is destroyed by a sudden and unexpected destruction.

"Let us now observe, that at the French Revolution, when, the 1260 years being over, the seventh trumpet began to sound, the Papacy was, according to the prophecy, hated, and made desolate; or, as Daniel expresses it, the judgment sat, and they took away her dominion, 'to consume and to destroy unto the end.' "Her state, at the end, we find from Rev. 18, to be one of exultation; for having risen again from depression, she cries, 'I sit a queen! and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow;' alluding to her late widowhood and sorrow, from which she now believes herself to be delivered. But what follows? Her sudden and eternal destruction! In one hour is she made desolate; with violence is she thrown down, and is never to be found again. Universal lamentation succeeds; all on earth lament over her; for the Church, having been previously translated, praises God in heaven for the judgment, 'Much people in heaven said, Alleluia!' "We certainly have abundant evidence that Popery is now on the very brink of the destruction denounced; but it is clear

that this cannot take place before the restoration of the Jews and the rapture of the Church—may we, then, lift up our heads, for our redemption draws near! The 14th of Rev. affords such corroborative evidence, it must not be omitted. We have in this chapter the cry of three missionary angels in our own time, after the termination of the 1260 years. First an angel preaches the everlasting gospel (ver. 6); and never did prophecy meet with more complete fulfilment. It will be enough to state, that the Bible Society alone has circulated fifteen million Bibles; and ten million have been circulated by foreign Bible Societies. Of these societies, there are now more than 7000; and of these, nearly 4000 are in Great Britain. The number of versions of the Holy Scriptures is 159. The Tract Society has since its institution (at the time of the angel's flight) circulated three hundred and seventy billion publications; and its works are published in eighty-eight different languages. These two societies alone show in what manner the prophecy has been accomplished; and if we take the most superficial glance at the work of other missionary societies during this period, we shall find the evidence overwhelming.

The second angel declares the corruptions and impending fall of the Papacy; and the third angel warns men against worshiping the Beast, and receiving his mark. What do we see?—the people of the Lord everywhere obeying the voice, and coming out of the Papacy. In France, whole communities renouncing the faith of Rome; and at this moment 800 converts in Ireland, suffering persecution and starvation, rather than receive the mark of the Beast. Then immediately follows the blessedness of the raptured church. From henceforth will they be blessed, by having their glorified bodies, and receiving the reward of their works. The destruction of the Papacy succeeds. This is symbolized by a harvest of the earth. In Jer. 51:33, where the type, or literal Babylon, is spoken of, we read, 'The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor, it is time to thresh her; yet a little while, and the tune of her harvest shall come. And when the dried harvest of the anti-type (Rome) shall have been reaped, the vintage takes place, or that final battle of Armageddon, in which the Lord appears personally, and treads down his enemies.

"Let us also observe that the cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom comes,' has been long and universally raised. This is a most remarkable sign, and sufficiently convincing that midnight was come when it began. The cry has been raised before at different periods, but never so widely, or combined with those other

signs for which we are commanded to watch. For now is the gospel preached as a witness in all lands.

Now is Jerusalem no longer despised, but sought out, and the Lord's servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof, Psalm. 102:13, 14. Now, many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased. Now, we see that word of Paul fulfilled to the very letter, 'A form of godliness, denying the power thereof,' which was to characterize the last of the latter days.

"Now, also, the prophetic dates clearly point to the present moment; and now is there universal peace, while wars and commotions are confessedly looked for, by those who discern the political signs of the times. These men see that a great crisis is at hand; they see that the world cannot go on in its present state, and they announce the coming storm! and does not the eye of faith perceive the same, with greater certainty and assurance? are the children of this world always to be wiser than the children of light? shall they wake, and the Church sleep? Oh, let not the day overtake us as a thief! let not the cry be unheeded, 'Behold, He comes!' but let us prepare for His appearing.

"What will be the nature of that appearing, we know not; but it is distinct from our Lord's standing on the earth, at the end of the troubles. He has himself told us that we need not fear mistaking it. Whatever the appearance may be, it will be universally seen, and the saints will be immediately caught up. And remember, 'When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door,' it will be too late to prepare for this event—either you will be found ready or unready—either you will be taken, or left; and the Lord has said, if we will not watch, we shall not know the hour when the Son of man comes upon us. But if we keep the word of his patience, he will keep us 'from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try those who dwell upon the earth."

In view of such glorious predictions—living in times so momentous—encircled by events so spirit-stirring—by signs so significant—and in the anticipation of a glory so resplendent and of a rapture so great, who would not desire, and pray, and labor to have "part in the first resurrection?" Would you, my reader? Then seek to know in your soul the power of Christ's resurrection! And, if sensible of this power, quickening you with the inner life—raising you

above sin, above the world, above the bondage of the law, above self, above all earthly, carnal attractions—then labor on, and toil on, and fight on, and suffer on a while longer—for soon you shall spring from the dust, and bathing your quickened spiritual body in the beams of the resurrection morn, you shall unite with all the risen saints in singing, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"

Heaven, the Consummation of the Inner Life

"Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." Col. 1:12

It is necessary that we should now conduct our subject to a close. What more appropriate and pleasing termination of a theme so heavenly than a brief contemplation of the heaven itself, to whose ultimate perfection the inner life of the Christian is tending—of which it is the germ and the pledge—and in whose deathless splendors it will soon be enshrined! *The spiritual life which God has breathed into our souls will never rest until it reaches its full and perfect development.* It is now but in its *embryo* state. Deep as are its pulsations, powerful as are its actings, mighty as are its achievements, holy as are its breathings, it is yet but in its *infancy*, compared with that state of perfection to which it is destined to arrive. The most complete impress of the Divine image upon the renewed soul of man in this present world, is but an *outline* of the picture. The highest state of sanctification to which the believer can arrive here, is but the first dawn of day, contrasted with the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which will burst upon him in a world of perfect holiness. *Heaven will complete the work which sovereign grace has begun upon earth.* Heaven is the consummation of the spiritual life of the believer. We have selected, as an illustration of this thought, the deeply interesting words addressed by the apostle to the Colossian saints: "Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." There are in this passage some points of the deepest significance, all bearing a close relation to the great subject which, in the preceding pages, has been occupying our attention.

Our first inquiry relates to THE 'FITNESS' OR 'QUALIFICATIONS' FOR

HEAVEN here spoken of. And with regard to this point, let me observe, it forms the very basis of our subject—the groundwork of the whole. There are those, perhaps, who would make the consideration of heaven their starting-point; but of what real value are mere notions of heaven? Magnificent, poetic, and even accurate, though they may be, yet if a man has no scriptural, no real fitness for heaven, his notion of it is but the dream of a Mohammedan—the vision of a Turkish paradise; it is not that bright, that holy, that Divine conception of heaven, which a mind, renewed by the Spirit, and sanctified by grace, forms. It is an earthly picture of heaven, conceived by an earthly mind.

In what, then, consists this 'fitness' for heaven, to which the apostle refers? Need I say, that it excludes all idea of any personal, natural, or original fitness in the sinner himself?—the destructive doctrine of the Popish church, and may I not add, the wretched figment of many who falsely call themselves Protestants! The only spiritual fitness there is in the natural man—do not be alarmed, my reader—is *a fitness for hell!* There are already in the natural man the elements of hell, even as there are in the spiritual man the elements of heaven. The smouldering embers of eternal destruction are there, a fitness only for the 'abodes where, in regions of darkness and woe, the sinner is banished forever from God. And before man can have a spiritual fitness for heaven, he must pass through a spiritual change, assimilating him to the nature of heaven. "Enter not into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight shall no man living be justified."

Our first observation, then, with regard to this 'fitness,' refers to *the renewal of the Holy Spirit*, through which the believer passes. Heaven is the abode of a renewed people; it is a holy place, and the home of the holy; and before the sinner can have any real fitness for heaven, any well-grounded hope of glory, he must be a partaker of a nature harmonizing with the purity, and corresponding with the enjoyments, of heaven. Heaven would be no heaven to a carnal mind, to an unsanctified heart. Were it possible to translate an unconverted individual from this world to the abodes of eternal glory, overwhelmed with the effulgence of the place, and having no fellowship of feeling with the purity of its enjoyments, and the blessedness of its society, he would exclaim—"Take me away from here! It is not the place for me. I have no sympathy with it. I have no fitness for it. I have no pleasure in it." Solemn thought!

Here let me remind the reader of those searching words of God's Holy Spirit, in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the apostle says, in the fifth verse—"You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world." In the twenty-first chapter of the book of the Revelation, and the twenty-seventh verse—"Nothing evil will be allowed to enter—no one who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." And what were the words of the Savior to Nicodemus? In the third chapter of the Gospel by John, and the third verse, we have them: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." These are Divine and awful verities. Reader! You must be born again of the Spirit, or heaven will be to you a distant, an unknown, and unapproachable region. You must "be renewed in the spirit of your mind," and become "a new creature in Christ Jesus;"—or, be it known unto you, heaven will never be your eternal dwelling-place.

This 'fitness,' then, to which the apostle refers, implies a spiritual change in the inward man, the begetting of an inner life. The Christian is a renewed creature—he is a partaker of the Divine nature: he has sympathies, affections, and desires imparted to him by the Spirit, which assimilate him to the happiness and purity of heaven. It is impossible but that he must be there. He possesses a nature unfit for earth, and congenial only with heaven. He is the subject of a spiritual life that came from, and now ascends to, heaven. All its aspirations are heavenly—all its breathings are heavenly—all its longings are heavenly—and thus it is perpetually soaring towards that world of glory from where it came, and for which God is preparing it. So that it would seem utterly impossible but that a renewed man must be in heaven, since he is the partaker of a nature fitted only for the regions of eternal purity and bliss.

The second step in this preparation, or fitness for heaven, introduces to us the work of Jesus—the great atoning, finished work of the Son of God. And here we are referred to the fitness of title which the believer possesses to this "inheritance." And what is his title, beloved? What is it that gives the Christian a valid deed, a right of possession to eternal glory? It is his justification by faith through the imputed righteousness of Christ. This is the

only valid title to eternal glory which God will admit—the righteousness of His dear Son, imputed to him that believes. Here is the grand fitness of a poor, lost, polluted, undone sinner—the fitness that springs from the spotless righteousness of the Lord Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Behold, then, beloved, the high vantage-ground on which a saint of God stands, with regard to his hope of heaven. He stands 'outside' of his own righteousness, in the righteousness of another. He stands accepted in the Accepted One, he stands justified in the Justified One, and justified, too, by God, the great Justifier. As we spoke of the necessity of the new birth—of the spiritual renewal of the mind, as supplying a spiritual change necessary for the enjoyment of heaven, so we speak of the necessity of an interest in this justifying righteousness, as supplying a spiritual title necessary for the possession of heaven; and we say to every man who has not fled out of the ruin of his own righteousness, and taken up his rest in the righteousness of Christ, that he has no valid title to glory. If the great divorce has not taken place—the separation of himself from himself—and if he has not been brought to the grand trust of a poor sinner—the righteousness of the incarnate God—then, all his 'hope of heaven' is as unsubstantial as a dream—a vision that passes away.

We must connect with this statement the atoning blood which cleanses us from all sin the blood which purifies—the blood which washes—the blood in which are drowned all the believer's iniquities—the blood which has cancelled all his transgressions, and which presents him before God, washed whiter than virgin snow.

Nor must we overlook, in this consideration of the fitness for heaven, the adoption of the believer. God having made him His son, has adopted him as His child, has taken him into His family, so that he becomes "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ;" and standing in this filial relation to God he has a fitness for the Father's house, which belongs only to the children of adoption.

And what, let me ask—as entering very essentially into this fitness for glory—*what is the great end of all God's afflictive dealings with his people?* For what

purpose is the Lord's furnace in Zion, and his fire in Jerusalem? It is to purify, and sanctify, and 'fit' the believer for "the inheritance of the saints in light." All your heaven-blessed trials, all your sanctified temptations, all the covenant transactions of God with you, beloved, in the way of afflictive providences, are designed but to 'fit' you more thoroughly for "the inheritance of the saints in light." All the disentwining of your affections from around creatures and created things, all the disappointments you meet with—the cisterns He breaks, and the beautiful gourds He withers—yes, all the steps of God with you, beloved, are but to detach you from earth, and earthly things; and thus the more perfectly to 'fit' you for "the inheritance of the saints in light." In this point of view, who would not welcome the severest chastisement? who would not drink willingly the bitterest cup? who would not take joyfully the spoiling of all that is dear and fond? who would not be willing to have the fetter unbound, the chain snapped, the bond severed, that gives liberty to his struggling and ascending spirit, and brings him, in a state of holy fitness, nearer and still nearer heaven?

The second inquiry relates to **THE INHERITANCE ITSELF**, for which this 'fitness' is given—"the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." Our first remark refers to heaven as an "inheritance;" under this figure it is here presented to the mind. Nor is this the only passage in which the same similitude occurs. In the first of Ephesians, and the eleventh verse, we read, "In whom also we have obtained *an inheritance*, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the fifteenth verse—"And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first testimony, they which are called might receive the promise of *eternal inheritance*." In the first epistle of Peter, the first chapter and the fourth verse, we have a striking unfolding of our inheritance: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively (or a living) hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven* for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last day." And if we will turn to the first chapter of Ephesians, and the thirteenth verse, it will be observed we have a pledge or an earnest of this inheritance: "In whom, also,

after you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest of our inheritance*, unto the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory."

And if it be inquired what the saints of God do thus inherit? the answer will be found in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation by John, and the seventh verse; "He who overcomes shall inherit *all things*, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." How vast, how illimitable, then, the inheritance of the saints—inheriting "all things!" It is a beautiful idea of heaven; it is a lovely picture, on which the eye of faith delights to dwell. The 'earthly heir' looks at his inheritance, surveys it, walks through it, luxuriates amid its beauties, and anticipates its full possession. The 'heir of glory' has his inheritance too. It is heaven he looks to it, he longs for it, and soon the Savior will come in personal glory, and institute him into its full and eternal possession. But observe whose is this inheritance. It is the "inheritance of *the saints*." And who are "the saints?" Ask the world, and it will answer, "They are the fanatics, the enthusiasts, the deluded of society." Ask others, and they reply, "The baptized—all who have been baptized are saints." And ask many who profess not to be of the world, and who laugh to scorn the dogmas of the Papacy, and the semi-Popish doctrines of the Tractarian, and even they are at a loss for a better answer. But who are "the saints," beloved? They are the Lord's people—the Lord's holy ones of every name, and from every fold. They form the whole election of grace; the chosen, ransomed, called people of God, be their outward name among men what it may—whether they belong to your section of the Church or to mine—all who are sanctified by God the Father—all who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb—all who are renewed by the Holy Spirit—all who are partakers of the inner life—all who have "the white stone," and "the new name" in that white stone—all who are living holy, godly lives—all belong to the family of the "saints." Is it yet asked, Who are the "saints?" They are God's sanctified ones, in whom dwells the Holy Spirit, and by whose grace the Lord is, day by day, step by step, carrying on that blessed kingdom of grace in their hearts which will soon fit them for the full possession of eternal glory.

You may think it, my reader, a light matter to be a "saint"—an epithet of scorn by an ungodly world; but, oh! let me tell you, the day will come when you would gladly lick the very dust of the saints' feet—gladly take hold of the

skirts of their garments, as they ascend up into everlasting glory. But as you loathed them, and scorned them, and persecuted them, and separated yourselves from them when upon earth—so, when they enter the abodes of bliss, you will be separated from them, banished into everlasting woe, to mingle and to herd throughout eternity with those with whose unrenewed natures, and carnal minds, and earthly pursuits, you now sympathize and assimilate. *Awful thought!*

But observe, they are "the saints *in light*." Shall we refer this to their character? They are indeed "the children of the light, and of the day." They have "passed from death unto life," and "from darkness into marvellous light." The light of the Spirit is in them—the light of truth is in them—the light of holiness is in them. They, and they alone, possess real light; all others are in darkness—the darkness of death. With all a man's deep, erudite, beautiful philosophy, his pure ethics, his splendid attainments in human science—yet, apart from the indwelling of the Spirit of grace, the indwelling of Jesus, "the Sun of Righteousness," he is the "child of the night and of darkness." But the "child of the day" is the true believer in Jesus, who has been "translated out of darkness into his marvellous light," by the powerful act of his sovereign mercy. What a beautiful image of the true Christian is 'light'. The child of the light! "The saints in light!" Walking in the light of a Father's reconciled face—walking in the light that beams from the cross of Jesus—walking in the light of an indwelling, teaching, sanctifying Spirit—walking in that bright, luminous path, which "shines more and more unto the perfect day."

Or shall we refer this description of the glorified saints to their present place of abode? Emphatically and truly, they are "the saints in light." They are in heaven, the abode of Him who is "Light," essential light, in whom is "no darkness at all," "dwelling in light which no man has seen, nor can see." They are in the abodes of perfect purity, of which light is the expressive symbol; they are in the regions of perfect knowledge, of which light is the magnificent metaphor; they are in heaven, the place of perfect light, in which is no more darkness. How beautifully is this description of heaven placed before us in the holy Word! Thus in the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, and nineteenth verse—oh, what words are these! "The sun shall be no more your light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you; but the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. 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." "The inheritance of the saints in light!"

We find the same beautiful figure, setting forth heaven, in the twenty-second chapter of Revelation, the fifth verse; "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light, and they shall reign forever and ever." And if we refer back to the twenty-first chapter and the twenty-third verse, we read—"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did light it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there." The glorified saints are "the saints in light." No more veilings of the Father's countenance—no more "walking in darkness, having no light"—no more mourning over Divine desertions, the suspensions of the Father's experienced love—no more tears to dim the eye—no more clouds of unbelief to darken the mind—no more mental despondency to enshroud the spirit—they leave the gloom, and the mist, and the fog, and the darkness of ignorance, error, and pollution behind them, and they flee to the regions of light, to "the inheritance of the saints," of which "the Lamb is the light thereof."

But it will be observed, that these glorified saints are said to be "partakers of the inheritance." "Who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." There is something very emphatic in the word. We are "partakers" of it now, in Christ our Head. In consequence of our union to Christ, the exalted Head of the church, we are at present "partakers" of this inheritance. We have the first dawnings of it in our soul; the foretaste and the antepast—and, what is best of all, the indwelling of the Spirit, who is the pledge of its possession. Beloved, we warn you against the doctrine held by some, which teaches, that after passing through the great changes which we have just specified, and while standing upon the very borders of heaven, the believer may miss the goal and never enter "the inheritance of the saints in light;" that he may be a partaker of the renewing, sanctifying grace of the Spirit, and stand accepted in the righteousness of Christ, and yet, after all, may fall away and be lost forever! We speak of this—not to wound the feelings of those who hold it—whom we would love—but to warn you against a doctrine

so contrary to God's Word. We speak of it to the glory of God and of his truth, which teaches us that we have the pledge of that inheritance in the indwelling of the Spirit; and if we have the "earnest" of the inheritance in the possession of the Spirit, we must, and shall assuredly, have the inheritance itself.

"Partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"—"partakers" with all the saints of God—"partakers" with the whole family of the elect—"partakers" with all the children of adoption—"partakers" with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with David, and Solomon, and with all who have gone before us, with all who have entered heaven a little in advance; and partakers with all the "ransomed of the Lord, who shall yet come to Zion with everlasting songs upon their head, obtaining joy and gladness, their sorrow and their sighing fleeing away!" Oh, who would not be a "partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Reader, if you are a humble possessor of the inner life, you shall be a happy partaker of this glorious inheritance—the life which is to come.

A few words only, upon THE PRECEPT based upon this subject. "*Giving thanks* unto the Father, who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Beautiful is the order of the Holy Spirit here. Observe to whom this grateful acknowledgment is made, "unto *the Father*." Then the sweet truth stands revealed—luminous in its own celestial light—that *heaven is a Father's gift*. And oh, how sweet, to trace all our mercies to a Father's love, to a parent's heart—to look to *Jesus*, whose righteousness gives us a title—to look to the *Holy Spirit*, whose sanctifying grace gives us a fitness, *as the precious gifts of a Father's love*; then to rise through these up to the Father himself, and trace the gift of heaven—the consummation of the inner life—to the heart of the First Person of the glorious Trinity. Who, after reading this passage, will any longer rest entirely and exclusively in Jesus—precious as he is? Who will not, through Jesus as the Mediator, rise to the Father, and trace up all the blessings of redemption, and all his hope of glory, to the part which the Father took in the great and wondrous work? Oh, how unutterably blessed is it to see the Father engaged, equally with the Son and the Spirit, in preparing for us, and in preparing us for, "the inheritance of the saints in light!" "*Giving thanks unto the Father*." Upon what grounds, beloved? Oh! it was the Father who provided the Savior, his beloved Son. It is from the Father that the Spirit emanates who renews and sanctifies. It is the Father who has prepared the

inheritance, and who, by his upholding power, will at last bring us safely there. All thanks, then, all adoration and praise unto the Father, "who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

In closing, let me affectionately ask you, my reader—in what does your fitness for heaven consist? Put not the question from you—transfer it not to another; let it come home to your own conscience—for in a little while your destiny will be fixed—eternally, irrevocably fixed; and *one half-second of hell's torment will fill your soul with remorse, terror, and unavailing regret*, that in the land of hope, and in the day of grace, you turned your back upon both, refused the mercy of God in Christ, rejected his dear Son, and died in your sins. In what does your fitness for heaven, then, consist? If it is only the fitness of a 'mere profession'—if it is but the fitness of a 'mere notional reception of truth'—if it is the fitness merely of an external waiting upon the sanctuary, the public means of grace, it is a fitness not for heaven, but for banishment from heaven! Are you born-again of the Spirit of God? Have you fled to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? Have you the "earnest," the pledge of heaven, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God—in the life of God in your soul? Have you the first sheaf of the harvest bound up in your bosom? Have you been sealed by God's Spirit as an heir of glory?

To God's saints I would say—cultivate a habitual, a growing fitness for heaven. Do not be satisfied with past attainments, with your present measure of grace and standard of holiness; but, beloved, since heaven is a holy place, cultivate holiness—a habitual growing fitness for "the inheritance of the saints in light." Be advancing, be progressing, be pressing onwards; "putting on the whole armor of God," "casting aside the weight that so easily besets you," the garment that trails upon the earth, and pressing onward and heavenward, until you reach the confines of bliss, and enter within the portals of glory!

And I would say—look upon all the Lord's covenant dealings with you as but preparatory to your approaching emancipation from all sin, suffering, and sorrow. Welcome your trials; they are sent by your Father. Welcome the stroke of his rod—it is a parent smiting. Welcome, oh! welcome, beloved, whatever detaches you from earth, and wings your spirit heavenward. Oh! welcome the furnace that consumes the dross and the tin, and brings out the precious gold and silver, to reflect in your soul, even now, the dawnings of "the

inheritance of the saints in light." Oh! be submissive, meek, and quiet, under God's chastening and afflicting hand, and receive all his dispensations as only tending to 'fit' you more perfectly for "the inheritance of the saints in light."

Let this subject cheer and comfort *the bereaved* of the Lord, from whose hearts have fled the loved and sanctified ones of earth, to the eternal heaven. Oh! how full of consolation to the bereaved heart is this subject! Where have the departed fled, who sleep in Jesus? They have but exchanged the region of darkness and shadow, for the regions of light and glory. They have gone from the scene of impurity, defilement, and sin, to the place of perfect holiness, complete sanctification, and of eternal love. Then dry your tears—then press the consolations of the Gospel to your sorrowing heart, and look up with that eye of faith that pierces and penetrates the dark clouds that intervene between there and you, and behold them now "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

And oh! yourselves anticipate the blessed moment, when the Savior shall send, not an enemy, but a friend—for such is death to the Christian—to open the cage that imprisons your spirit, and let you escape to the abodes of eternal glory. Oh! anticipate, and by anticipating, be preparing, day by day, for its realization; anticipate the happy moment which releases you from "the body of sin and death," and ushers you into the full and eternal blaze of "the inheritance of the saints in light."

Such is heaven, and such is the consummation of the Inner Life. As that life descended from God, so to God it shall ultimately and finally return. It shall never, never die. Not a spark shall be quenched, nor shall a pulse cease to beat—not a thought that it has conceived, nor a desire it has cherished, nor a prayer it has breathed, nor a work it has accomplished, nor a victory it has won, shall die; all, all shall survive in ever-verdant, ever-growing; ever-enduring glory. The babe in grace shall be there! The young man, strong in overcoming the wicked one, shall be there! The father, matured in experience, and laden with the golden fruits of age, shall be there! All, all shall reach *heaven* at last—the end and the consummation of the life of God in their souls. Oh, to have this heaven in our hearts now! Heaven is love—the place of love—the perfection of love. And what is God's love in our hearts but the foretaste of heaven—the prelibation of heaven—the first-gatherings of the vintage—the

pledge and earnest of all that is to come?

**"Oh, hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth unfathomed, no man knows;
I see from far your beauteous light,
And I sigh for your repose:
My heart is pained, nor can it be
At rest, until it find rest in thee.**

**"It is mercy all, that you have brought
My mind to seek her peace in thee!
Yet while I seek, and find you not,
No peace my wandering soul shall see.
Oh, when shall all my wanderings end,
And all my steps to Jesus tend?**

**"Is there a thing beneath the sun
That strives with you my heart to share?
Oh! take it thence, and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there!
Then shall my heart from earth be free,
When it has found repose in thee.**

**"O hide this 'self' from me, that I
No more, but Christ in me, may live;
My vile affections crucify,
Nor let one darling lust survive.
In all things nothing may I see,
Nothing desire or seek, but thee.**

**"O Lord, your sovereign aid impart,
To save me from low-thoughted care;
Chase this self-will through all my heart,
Through all its latent mazes there.
Make me your duteous child, that I
Ceaseless may Abba, Father, cry.**

**"Each moment draw from earth away
My heart, that lowly waits your call;
Speak to my inmost soul, and say,
I am your Love, your God, your all!
To feel your power, to hear your voice,
To taste your love, be all my choice."**