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## Considerations for Young Men (Part 2)

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religion. By every possible mode of attack, by persuasion and ridicule, by professions of friendship and sneers of contempt, will they assail the principles and conduct of their victim, until reason and conscience give way, and like the bird lured on by the fowler, he goes directly into the fatal snare.

The indulgence, at first, will be only such as causes a twinge of conscience or a secret misgiving of soul. The tempted youth will feel a sort of shame and self-contempt, and in the cool moment of reflection will fix his resolution against all future attacks. But, alas, the first step in a retrograde course has been taken. Like the first step in the retreat of an army, it is as dispiriting to the vanquished as it is invigorating to his foe. The next attack is less likely to be resisted, for the ability to resist decreases with every successful temptation. The first sacrifice of conscience and principle is like Samson giving up his locks. It is in vain then to go out and shake yourself in the consciousness of your strength. The seducer will be upon you. He will no longer fear either the force of principle or the vigor of resolution. He has carried his point; and one breach of obligation, he well knows, will make way for another, until your character and your destiny become identified with his own. How many a young man has fallen a victim to this process of temptation. How many, with prospects of

usefulness and success, and with a character which might have insured respect, have, by listening to the voice of the seducer, forfeited the confidence, and fallen under the pity and contempt of the community. Yes, and with the wreck of his own character and prospects he has become a source of mortification to his friends, and perhaps "brought down the grey hairs of a parent with sorrow to the grave."

These remarks apply with equal force to the dangers and temptations of a college life. Human nature is the same in both circumstances. Instances of successful temptation are very common in our literary institutions. There is there the absence of parental watchfulness, and the presentation of powerful inducements to ruin. There is there a class of youth whose progress in dissipation is incredibly great. It is in inverse proportion to their years. Idle themselves, their study is to make others so. Lost to morality and decency themselves, they watch for opportunities to reduce their companions to the same degraded level. They endeavor not only to copy the manners, but to ape the vices of older profligates; and the rapidity with which they make shipwreck of health, character, and conscience, is a most melancholy proof of the force of temptation and the prevalence of youthful depravity.

Oh, ye reckless young men, let me reach your



ear, and pour into it a note of friendly warning. If there be left in your heart any feeling; if the rapid abandonment of all that is sacred and honorable have not carried away every vestige of remorse, let me remind you of the claims of your relatives, your country, and your God. Your course will give a death-blow to a father's hopes, and a death-pang to a mother's heart. It will deprive your country of services which might adorn her annals. It will draw down upon you the displeasure of heaven, and, if persisted in, will cover you with ignominy; and ultimately consign you to the prison of despair. With such certain consequences of your dissipation staring you in the face, can you, *dare* you rush on to the issue? Is it not time to pause, to repent, to break from the grasp of the destroyer?

If these pages meet the eye of one who is still on comparatively safe ground, who has not yet made a plunge into sensual and forbidden pleasures, I would bid him beware of the destroyer. For *you* there is hope. If a freedom from gross vice, and an avoidance of the occasions of temptation, yet sustain you in the confidence of your friends, and in justifiable hopes of respectability and influence, again I say, beware of the destroyer. Place yourself in an attitude of defence. Insidious foes lurk around your path. A dangerous enemy lies in ambush. Avoid a vicious companion as you would



avoid the fascination and the fang of a serpent  
His eye may attract, and his movements may seem  
graceful, but his intentions are deadly and his  
venom fatal. "He that walketh with wise men  
shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be  
destroyed"

## LETTER XXI.

FATAL INFLUENCE OF THE THEATRE, GAMING-  
TABLE, ETC.

It cannot be denied that a residence in one of our cities is attended with more danger to a youth of inexperience, than where the population is less and the temptations proportionably fewer. The seducer does not work without his appropriate tools, nor hope to compass his end without the aid of intermediate agents.

The theatre, appealing to that curiosity and fondness for excitement which strongly characterize the young, throws upon his eye at every post and corner of the streets the announcement of some splendid tragedy, or some popular performer. The comparative respectability of this amusement is plausibly urged, and the pittance for which it can be enjoyed is so trifling, that in the opinion of the tempter it would be a disgrace never to have enjoyed the gratifications of the drama. While respectable names are brought forward as the warrant for an innocent attendance upon this species of amusement, the deadly concomitants are cautiously kept out of view. It is not suggested that licentiousness appropriates to herself a large part of the ground, and rallies there her sons and daughters,



who throw out their lures for the unsuspecting. The unwary youth is not informed how many appendages of ruin are hung around the place, nor how easy is the transition to the revels of vice and the haunts of her dissolute train.

It will not do to talk of inculcating virtue from the stage, when even decency is often made to blush, and when some of the most acceptable pieces are fraught with immorality. Instead of being a "school of virtue," it is a school of vice, a hot-bed of iniquity, a pander to pollution and death. This is not idle declamation against a popular amusement. I speak a sentiment, to the truth of which the consciences, if not the lives of theatre-going men will bear me witness. Many a youth has found, by lamentable experience, that in passing the threshold of a theatre he bade adieu for ever to hope, reputation, and happiness.

The auxiliary next in influence, which comes to aid the tempter in his malignant projects, is the gaming-table. This is an appendage to some of those houses of refreshment, whose ostensible object is to afford an occasional meal, and offer to the social club the means of social enjoyment. But it is scarcely necessary to enter these depraved dwellings to understand that *this* is not their *only* object. Even in passing you may hear the jarring strife, the intimidating threat, and the eager and malicious note of triumph, mingled with rattling balls and



the bedlam roar of merriment. The sickly light that twinkles, evening after evening, over the porch of this saturnalian abode, conducts the unwary feet first to the revel and then to the gaming-table.

The gambling-room is generally thrown in the background, and sometimes shut out even from the light of day, thus indicating that designs so base require for their perpetration appropriate darkness. There, in that artificial night, and around that fatal table, dwell the maddened sons of strife, practised in the arts of deception, and copartners in the stakes which their adroitness enables them to seize. There they hover like so many vultures, circling and scanning their prey, until an opportunity enables them to swoop upon it with the certainty of its destruction. From these men, all soul, all sympathy is gone. They have an eye that measures the possessions of their victim, and a hand that can feel its way, unobserved, to the last coin in the pocket. Many of our young men are drawn into these scenes, and once initiated, become permanent occupants of the card-table or the billiard-room.

There is still another dark porch which leads to certain ruin, and he whose feet crosses the threshold will discover the truth of the inspired declaration, "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." I would willingly pass over this unwelcome subject; I would gladly indulge the hope that no young man who shall have had

decision enough to peruse these desultory remarks up to this point, possesses the hardihood which is requisite to the indulgence of so base and destructive a crime. I would gladly presume that it is necessary only to allude to it to fill the soul of my youthful reader with horror. But, alas, how many have gone to this fatal ground; how many have found themselves bound by a fascination which nothing could break; how many have felt an invisible influence chaining them to a spot where they have sacrificed every hope for this world and for that which is to come. Poor, infatuated, ruined youth, you have nothing left but unceasing remorse, and nothing in reserve but irretrievable misery.

I cannot but hope that the pictures I have drawn of the dangers to which young men are exposed, may serve to deter those from vice who are comparatively moral. To recover those whose habits of vicious indulgence are confirmed, is almost beyond my expectations. The intemperate are seldom reclaimed. It has generally been found a hopeless effort to attempt to bring back the drunkard to the respectability he has forfeited. As much as it may wring the heart of benevolence, we are often obliged to leave him to his destiny. All that we can do for him is to commend him to the mercy of God. So also is it with the confirmed profligate. Passion has so long domineered over reason and conscience, that we hardly dare hope for his res-



toration. We cannot convince him, for his mind is brutalized. We cannot alarm him, for he acknowledges that even hell itself has less misery than is contained in his own bosom. We cannot rouse his sensibilities, for they have been drowned in the frequent and infamous debauch. He is an unhappy, devoted sensualist, over whom affectionate kindred must weep, and in whose behalf a virtuous community can do little more than pray.

But our hope is to hold up to the minds of all yet uncorrupted, the danger to which they are exposed. I would take my stand between you, my youthful reader, and these scenes of horror and wretchedness, and by all that is sacred in religion and desirable in the "life that now is," warn you to avoid them. I would post a sentinel at every passage of death, to cry in your ears, Beware, beware! I would throw in the pathway to these haunts of pollution every obstacle to impede your course, and hang upon their door-posts the skeleton vestiges of those who have died within their precincts. I would invoke the spirits of those unhappy wretches who have gone, to come back and hover around the scenes of their profligacy, to admonish you not to be allured to the same degradation and ruin. I would, were it possible, give them a voice that should curdle your blood and dismay your soul, and save you from the misery and anguish which they have gone to inherit.



## PREJUDICES AGAINST RELIGION.

## LETTER XXII.

PREJUDICES OF THE YOUNG AGAINST RELIGION  
UNJUSTIFIABLE.

THERE are, in some young men, a stability of character and a power of conscience, connected with strong desires for respectability and influence, which operate as a safeguard from some of the temptations to which we have alluded. Such cases, however, are few, compared with those who become an easy prey to their seducing influence. Where there is not the fear of God, founded on a thorough change of moral character—where religion does not interpose her shield and gird the soul with her invincible armor, there are always strong grounds for fear, even when other considerations have for years operated as a protection.

Religion, by giving a distaste to such scenes, affords the surest protection against their influence; and by implanting a relish for spiritual enjoyments, fills up that aching void to which sensual pleasure makes her most powerful appeal. But religion is a subject at which young persons are accustomed

to shrink, as if we had introduced a monster whose aspect and demeanor were calculated to produce only aversion and terror. A prejudice against the subject early gets hold of the mind, and proves one of the greatest obstacles in the way of instruction.

This prejudice, however, is altogether unwarrantable. Piety has nothing in her appearance so repulsive, nothing in her claims so unreasonable, that you should start at her name or be frightened by her aspect. She comes from heaven, the purest of regions. She originates with God, the most glorious of beings. "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Her aspect, instead of being repulsive, is benignant as the mild blush of morning. If her restrictions seem to be severe, it is because they are viewed apart from the pleasures that attend them. If her commands appear unreasonable, it is because they are not listened to with an impartial ear. If her service is thought to demand too many sacrifices, it is when the reward is overlooked, and the crown of glory kept out of view. True, she *does* impose restrictions, but they are only such as procure respectability, foreclose the heart against vice, and preserve the conscience pure. She also demands sacrifices; but they only subject the sensual to the rational man, and keep the body in due subordination to the soul. While she interdicts unlaw-



ful pleasure, she substitutes pure and spiritual joy. If she calls off the supreme affection from a world that is transient and unsatisfying, she fixes it upon one that is fraught with high and permanent delight.

In all this you perceive nothing that is unreasonable, nothing that should prejudice your mind against religion. It is not perhaps always exhibited by its professors in its most lovely and attractive form; but a moment's reflection will convince you that the fault is not in religion, but in the want of it. Your prejudice proceeds originally from the depravity of your heart. That strong susceptibility to the pleasures and prospects of earth which we have already considered, is the groundwork of this opposition. You are accustomed to identify happiness with the indulgence of such susceptibility. But religion moderates earthly desires, and requires that the current of your affections should be directed upward. Thus you early begin to consider it as an unwelcome intruder upon your joys. As you have not felt the dissatisfaction and disappointment experienced by older and more practised votaries of the world, your fancy is busy with its airy creations, and your heart is indulging anticipations which you are destined never to realize.

You do not wish to be restrained in your pursuits by the sacrifices and self-denial which the gospel enjoins. Hence, you begin to feel towards religion



and its teachers a secret hostility, as if it were their design to destroy your peace and mar your innocent enjoyments. You stand aloof from their influence. You avoid, as far as possible, coming in direct contact with them. The wider the separation the more comfortable your feelings. If circumstances narrow down the distance, and you are unexpectedly brought into their presence, you feel a restraint that is irksome, and a dread of their influence which makes you unhappy. These feelings are a sure indication that you are indulging an opposition of heart against piety and its professors. That opposition will increase with the increase of years, unless a transforming power from on high shall eradicate it. Should any happy occasion introduce you to some of the friends of religion whose deportment reciprocally graces and is graced by their principles, you would then discover that you had cherished a deep-rooted and unwarrantable prejudice. This often occurs to those whose early education was obtained apart from any influence of religion.

There is another cause of prejudice to which you may not be insensible. Piety is not always exhibited under the most agreeable aspects. It is professed by persons of all classes and conditions. Of course, many who take upon them the responsibilities of a Christian profession, must, from circumstances not under their control, appear in a light calculated not to attract, but possibly to prejudice

the young. Some of them are in the humblest walks of life. Their language is unpolished, and their garb plain. Their homely phraseology is no indication that religion is coarse; it only proves that they, having been excluded from the advantages of a refined education, have no better medium of conveying their ideas or of expressing their feelings. Others, again, are so unnatural in the expression of their piety, and assume, perhaps unconsciously, such a demure and inflexible gravity, accompanied with such a drawling and sanctimonious tone, that the light-hearted youth is disposed to turn away in disgust. He is in danger of identifying religion with these outward expressions of voice and countenance.

There is no religion in whining and cant. Piety produces cheerfulness without levity, and sobriety without sanctimoniousness. Where it has an unrestrained flow upon the soul, it causes a pleasing adjustment of all that is graceful and expressive. The unpleasant, and perhaps to some disgusting, expressions alluded to, should be viewed as the legitimate fruits of ignorance or eccentricity. They form no part of religion. Many of the ardently pious are among the most dignified, polite, and pleasing of mankind. You must ever separate religion from vulgarity, and make due allowance for those incidental anomalies which are sometimes observed in the humblest orders of society.



## LETTER XXIII.

## RELIGION NOT ADVERSE TO YOUTHFUL HAPPINESS.

BESIDES the prejudice entertained by many of the young against religion, there are also gross misconceptions in relation to particular features of it. It is a very prevalent idea that Christianity is another name for monkish austerity, and that practical piety is incompatible with any of the pleasures of life. This idea is probably derived from the fact, that religious men are restrained from that extravagance of worldly pleasure which characterizes the mass of mankind. Those places of public resort where undue excitement and hilarity are principally aimed at, are not frequented by the pious. Their almost uniform absence from such scenes, together with their moderate indulgence in lawful pleasures, give rise to this misconception.

Those who identify happiness with a perpetual round of amusements, who live upon artificial excitement as the aliment of existence, are apt to impute a kind of monastic severity and wretchedness to that tenor of life which the pious feel it their duty and their privilege to pursue. Ask the sons and daughters of pleasure whether the scenes they frequent give satisfaction to the soul, and they will



acknowledge, if they are honest in their reply, that they do not realize the happiness they anticipated ; and yet they ascribe to a life of piety the absence of that enjoyment which they themselves are striving in vain to possess. If you need any proof of the erroneous estimate that the irreligious make on this subject, you can find it in the testimony of those whose experience has enabled them to judge of both sides of the question.

If the pleasures of this world are the avenue to preëminent bliss, how happens it that those who were once the foremost in effort and the fleetest in pursuit, do not, after trying the efficacy of religion, turn away from it in disgust? Why is it that they do not break from its restraints and go back to the world? Why is it that they express the highest satisfaction with their present, and the deepest abhorrence of their former course? They adhere to their present course without compulsion or restraint. There is no inquisition, with its gloomy walls, to affright them into the observance of religion, or to bar up their retreat from her territories.

Many a votary of this world, with every possible facility for sensual enjoyment, has deliberately made choice of religion, has abandoned for ever his former pursuits, and embraced the principles and obeyed the commands of the gospel. What will you say of such men? Will you charge them with cowardice

or folly? Take, for example, the case of the celebrated colonel Gardiner, a man of respectable intellect, and of high and undoubted courage. He feared nothing but God and his own conscience, and he was a Christian. Yes, and he had tried the pleasures of the world to a very great extent. His person was attractive, his manners were courtly and insinuating, and he possessed the means and opportunities of displaying both, to the envy of one sex and the admiration of the other. To him the cup of merriment was filled to the brim. All that could charm the eye he saw, all that could please the ear he heard, all that could fascinate the soul he experienced. Yet this favored gentleman, this man of pleasure, was miserable amidst it all. While the gay and festive scene was waiting to be graced by his presence, while the eye of beauty watched his approach, and the ear listened to catch his sparkling wit, he was but a gilded wretch, who, according to his own confession, would gladly have exchanged places with a brute. He at length became a Christian. He abandoned the pursuits of earthly pleasure, and yielded up his affections and desires to God. If religion's ways are gloomy, and her employments spiritless, why, let me ask, did he whose experience so well qualified him to judge, deliberately prefer them to all the gay and glittering scenes of pleasure and luxury?

This example is too well known, and too much in



point, to admit of mistake or misapplication. It is a full and satisfactory refutation of the sentiment, that the ways of religion, even on the score of present enjoyment, are less productive of happiness or less worthy of our preference than those of worldly vanity. Men who thus misjudge, do not give religion the credit which she deserves. She neither enjoins monkish austerity nor interdicts any rational or honorable gratification. If there have been men who dressed in hair shirts, walked upon their naked feet, and fed upon the roots of the desert, it only proves how ignorant they were of that religion which requires not the torturing of the body, but the subduing of the desires which render that body the instrument of pollution. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink"—not merely external observances—"but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

He who gave us our religion, and graced it by his own illustrious example, prayed not that his followers should be "taken out of the world," but that they should be "kept from the evil." We may "use the world," but we may not "abuse it." It is emphatically the Christian who relishes the world. Its scenery is for *his* eye and its music for *his* ear. To *him* the landscape smiles the more lovely, because it is an emblem of Paradise; the ocean rolls the more majestically, because it is an image of eternity; the mountains tower the more



sublimely, because they point his thoughts upward to heaven.

“He looks abroad into the varied field  
Of nature; and though poor, perhaps, compared  
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,  
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.  
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,  
And the resplendent rivers; his t’ enjoy,  
With a propriety that none can feel,  
But who, with filial confidence inspired,  
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,  
And smiling, say, ‘My Father made them all.’”

How tasteless, compared with the calm delights of religion, are the sickly enjoyments of the sensualist, or even the high excitements of successful ambition. If hitherto you have entertained a different opinion, let me assure you it is founded in prejudice and error. Religion has the promise of “the life that now is;” and if you make the experiment, if you yield yourself up to her influence, you will find by happy experience that her promises never fail. “She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her.”

## LETTER XXIV.

THE PREJUDICE THAT RELIGION IS ADAPTED TO  
THE IGNORANT CONSIDERED.

THE idea that piety interdicts the pleasures and enjoyments of life, is not the only error into which young men are likely to fall. They sometimes entertain the notion that religion is adapted only to weak minds, to females, and to the aged. Not suspecting, that according to this very opinion, it might possibly find, in some of them at least, an appropriate theatre for its exercise, they have endeavored to transfer its obligations from themselves to those whom they considered their inferiors. They have identified feminine weakness and humility of soul, and ascribed to penitence the relinquishment of a manly spirit. The active duties of the gospel they have associated with vulgarity, and its passive virtues they have attributed to pusillanimity. Such are the views which some of your dashing, superficial, reckless young men have imbibed on the subject of religion.

I admit, that if the professors of religion were to be polled, the result would probably show that a majority are females. But does this prove that they have minds inferior to ours? It is a strange sort of logic that would deduce such an inference.



It would be taking for granted what such men might attempt in vain to prove, that religion is a silly and senseless subject. If it be, as it purports, a message from heaven, indispensable to happiness in this world, and the only passport to immortal glory—if *this* be conceded, I would, as the advocate of the other sex, turn the tables upon these gentlemen, and ask, Who is chargeable with the greater weakness; *she* who receives, or *he* who rejects it?

I rejoice, that in mercy to those soothing, sympathizing companions of man, He who has meted out to them the larger measure of suffering, has also mingled with their sorrow the hope that cheers and the consolations that sustain them. It seems a blessed award, that the very sufferings they endure should become the rough pathway to heaven. Such indeed is often the result. While thoughtless man is absorbed in the strife and toil of earth, and apparently unconscious that there is any existence beyond the boundary of time, the partner of his life, sequestered from tumultuous scenes, “is setting her house in order,” “trimming her lamp,” and awaiting the summons to a brighter world.

Nor should we less rejoice, when the evening of life begins to throw its shadows around, and objects once so bright are becoming dim to the eye, that we may look forward with clear vision to that cloudless region where every thing is blissful and permanent.

It is a gross misapprehension to suppose that religion is adapted exclusively to weak minds. Allowing that those who entertain this opinion are as great and as gifted as their sentiments would seem to imply, would they not concede some sort of intellectual equality to the heroes, statesmen, and philosophers who, while serving their country and mankind, have sustained by their Christian virtues an honorable profession of religion? Perhaps it will be replied, that the number of such is very small. This is all that we assert. The number *is* small, or we should almost doubt the truth of that religion which has declared, that "not many wise men after the flesh are called." Still, it seems as if the Author of the gospel, anticipating this objection, has in every age selected a few of rare endowments, whose example should silence the caviller.

"To the poor the gospel is preached," and generally by the poor it is embraced. But it is not confined to them. It steps up occasionally into the ranks of nobility and greatness, and hallows for its service some of the brightest talents of earth.

But religion needs no adventitious distinctions. Like its Author, its grandeur is inherent. The mind that falls under its influence, be its powers ever so vigorous, or its genius ever so bright, adds not to the honor of religion, but acquires new glory by embracing it. Its effulgence, like that of the sun, can be neither increased nor diminished by



possessing a few luminaries to receive and reflect its radiance.

It appears to me evident, that a misapprehension which supposes religion to be adapted merely to weak minds, must have its origin in an obliquity of character that leaves no hope of correction. It is a sort of desperate plunge after absurdities, which indicates the very weakness it would palm upon the pious. If religion has claims for the feeble intellect, it is equally obligatory upon the strong. If there is no salvation without it, the haughtiest neck must bow to its yoke, or be broken under its insulted power. Neither the wealthy, nor the gifted, nor the great can escape its claim. It takes upon *them* even a firmer hold. It measures the accountability of man by the talents committed to his charge. It weighs out his condemnation in proportion to the wealth he has squandered or hoarded, and the talents he has neglected or perverted. It makes the amount of crime to tally with the amount of abused privileges. There is no getting clear of its omnipotent grasp. You may turn over its claims to the poor, the aged, and the weak. This will exhibit a show of indifference, and an air of pretended superiority to its demands. But rest assured, the obligations of religion are not so easily set aside. He who binds them upon you will not relinquish his authority.

## LETTER XXV.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PIETY AS RESPECTS THE  
PRESENT OR FUTURE STATE.

It is the object of the last three letters to remove, if possible, some of the prejudices and misconceptions which the young are prone to entertain on the subject of religion. If I have succeeded, I may indulge the hope of obtaining your attention, while I speak of its claims upon your conscience and your heart.

I might have argued for a wise and moderate pursuit of the world's pleasures, even on the principle of securing the greatest amount of present enjoyment. The most sage philosophers of ancient and modern times have taken this ground, and recommended to their disciples to chasten their desires and to circumscribe the indulgence of sensual pleasure. But we take higher ground. We call upon you, as an immortal being, to regard, in your principles and conduct, the immortality to which you are destined. We do not consider you merely as a denizen of earth, but as a candidate for eternity.

It is unnecessary for me to prove to you that you cannot live here always. You need no arguments to convince you that you must die. You can



scarcely direct your attention to any point of the visible horizon, where the admonitions of death will not strike your eye or fall upon your ear. Nor do you question the fact that the hour of your departure is uncertain. You cannot tell in what moment the mortal agony shall come. Now, have you never pondered these points of personal peril, and contemplated the scenes that shall succeed? You cannot imagine that death is the termination of your being. There have been sceptics who have promulgated such an opinion, and endeavored to support it by a plausible species of sophistry. The sentiment, however, is not common at the present day. The doctrine of immortality is too deeply founded in the constitution of man to be easily subverted. Infidelity may for a season infuse doubts into your mind, but the truth will come back upon you with a force that you cannot resist. It is so interwoven with your consciousness, that however unwelcome, it will cling with a pertinacious grasp to your thoughts and feelings. You cannot annihilate it by sophistry, or drown it by sensual indulgence. You cannot keep back your anticipations from piercing beyond the grave. Your reflections, overleaping every barrier, *will* fasten upon eternity.

Regarding you, therefore, as a rational and contemplative being, I ask, whether the thought that you are immortal does not awaken in your bosom

some strange and affecting apprehensions? Whether the consideration, that death, come when it may, shall introduce your spirit into another sphere of existence, does not bring along with it some fearful premonitions? Perhaps you seldom permit the current of your thoughts to take this direction. Perhaps you watch against the first intimations of serious reflection, and endeavor to dissipate them by plunging into business or pleasures. Carrying in your bosom a consciousness of unfitness for such a change as death will produce, and having in common with all men an instinctive dread of the gloomy subject, you put away from you as far as possible the evil day, and determine that the gay scenes of life shall not be shaded by such considerations.

I admit, that to us all the thought of dying is at times unwelcome. Even the Christian cannot always look forward to a future state with undisturbed feelings. Though possessing a hope of God's favor and an expectation of the rewards of heaven, yet darkness and doubt will occasionally arise and in some measure obscure his spiritual vision. How much more unwelcome then must be the thought, to a youth teeming with worldly hopes and alive to every earthly pleasure. To him, it conveys not only the painful apprehension of being sundered from every companion, severed from every amusement, and cut down amid the most joyous prospects and



anticipations, but also the agonizing assurance of meeting a Being, whose purity and justice are arrayed against a life of sensual indulgences, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and "who will by no means clear the guilty."

The necessity of relinquishing present happiness and the fear of enduring future misery, cannot fail to excite anguish and dismay whenever he reflects upon death and eternity. If he does not at present enjoy so much earthly felicity as he once anticipated, he at least entertains the hope that it is yet in reserve. If he cannot say, in the honesty of his heart, that he has *now* a hope of God's favor, founded on a scriptural basis, he looks forward to the time when such a support shall be thrown under his soul; and he cannot bear the idea of being hurried prematurely and unprepared into the fearful scenes of futurity.

It is natural for young men of this character to fly from the consideration of a subject so gloomy and painful. Hence we find, that in order to crowd it out of their thoughts, they will resort to every species of gayety, and often rush with a sort of determined recklessness into the grossest sensual indulgences. The hours in which business does not press, especially the sacred hours allotted to the soul's reformation, are a season of intolerable reflection. The immortal spirit brings forward her claims and inquiries, and the man of business or pleasure

must answer or suppress them. How often, alas, he prefers the latter. The gayety and dissipation of the world hasten to his assistance, and he chooses to smother his reflections in a round of amusements or in jovial company. It is in this way he endeavors to elude the enemies of his present peace, and to secure a temporary relief from the harassing convictions of conscience. It is a sort of truce to which his soul reluctantly submits, but it is not a final surrender. It is only giving sharper weapons to conscience and severer poignancy to her stings.

You cannot keep up such a perpetual recurrence of dissipating employments as not to allow the conscience any interval for her claims. She *will* be heard. If you drown her voice through the day—if business, with its pressure and perplexities, aid you in stifling her reflections, rest assured she will present her account in a dark and sleepless hour of the night. She will make the couch on which you anticipated repose as uneasy as a bed of thorns. Perhaps she will take advantage of the insensibility of the body to make you feel and fear her power. Your dreams may savor of her terrific visitations. You may awake and find the cold sweat standing on your brow, as the indication of her presence and the mark of her authority. You may carry a sadness through the day, an unaccountable sinking of spirits, which shall be proof enough that she has presented her account. If you go to the haunts of



dissipation, she will follow you with a whisper which shall shade your countenance and writhe your frame. She will often make the heart heavy where it anticipated buoyancy, and clothe with gloom those scenes which promised nothing but sunshine. Such is the power of conscience; so fearful are her visitations. Why will you not listen to her call? Why will you not obey her voice? How can you hope to elude her warnings?

## LETTER XXVI.

THE REPROOFS OF CONSCIENCE NOT CONFINED TO  
THE OPENLY VICIOUS.

I WOULD guard my reader against the inference that the vicious alone are the subject of such pangs of conscience as I have described. It is true, that other things being equal, remorse is more pungent in proportion to the magnitude of crimes. But still, where there is an apparent freedom from gross sensual indulgence—where the character is naturally amiable, and the conduct, to the eye of an observer, at least free from immorality, the soul is not altogether at ease about its condition in a future world. Amiableness and morality are often assumed by their possessor as a ground of hope. Presenting as they do a striking contrast to the conduct and character of the abandoned sinner, they may excite an expectation of future happiness. It is, however, a feeble and undefined expectation, which cannot erase entirely all solicitude, or suppress the voice of a reproving conscience.

There are two classes of duties obligatory upon man. The one relates to his deportment towards his fellow-men and his influence on society; the other binds him by solemn obligations to God and to futurity. He who expects security from the



doom of the wicked because he regulates his conduct towards his fellow-men by the principles of honesty and justice, and puts a rein upon his appetites and passions, cannot but be conscious, at the same time, that there are positive duties which he owes to his Maker. He might present this external deportment if he regarded his reputation merely. He might restrain his passions if there were no future state. He might find a sufficient reward in the act of self-government, in the health of his body and the composure of his spirits. The love of power or the thirst of riches might displace or keep under the grosser passions. We can suppose many reasons not of a religious character to operate upon the mind, and to prevent it from running into excessive wickedness. We can suppose, too, that such a restraint is attended with a satisfaction, and procures a respect and influence which, independent altogether of another world, are, to the character we are contemplating, a sufficient reward.

But how can a man who believes the Bible base a hope towards God upon such grounds? He may attempt to do it, but if the other class of duties which relate to the claims of his Maker are neglected; if he gives not God his supreme affections, and glorifies him not by an entire consecration of soul and body to his service, he cannot be free from painful apprehension. There is a principle in man which tells him in fearful terms of such neglect.

This principle not only accuses of intemperance in sensual pleasure, but is equally loud in its upbraidings when it speaks of obligations violated and of duties neglected.

You may take the most upright man, upright on mere worldly principles, and examine him on this point. You will soon find that while honesty, sobriety, and the good effects which flow from them, are the foundation of a comfortable self-satisfaction, he is agitated and distressed if you press him on the subject of neglecting the duties which he owes to God. You will touch his conscience at once. He cannot bear to have his character estimated by the devotion he has paid to his God, and the sacred reverence with which he has observed the divine commands. It is not possible, then, that any but a sinless being can be free from terrors of conscience. I say not that the fears of all men are equally strong, nor that the stings of remorse are in all equally pungent; but I cannot believe that any are entirely free from them. If they have not committed one sin, they have been guilty of another. If they have not neglected one duty, they have omitted another. They may be free from intemperance, but addicted to covetousness. They may be not sensual, but ambitious. They may give to every man his due, but withhold the glory which is due to God. Instead of loving their Creator supremely, they may "love the creature more than



the Creator." If free from gross immorality, they may not have improved their talents, nor made the attainments which their superior education and privileges demanded. If they maintain correct exterior deportment, He who searches the heart may discern discontent, envy, or lust.

A fair reputation among men is no certain index of the state of the heart towards God. It is therefore clear, that unless a man be as sinless as an unfallen angel, he must be more or less the subject of compunction. He must entertain some apprehensions about his future state, and have at least some solicitude on the subject of salvation. If our allotment in a future world were to be measured and modified by merely external conduct; if a freedom from gross and disreputable sins were the only requisition which our Maker had made, then indeed there would be, in the man who had thus regulated his conduct, no room for remorse or self-condemnation.

But, besides this exterior propriety of conduct, there is required also purity of heart. Besides "doing justice and loving mercy," we are required "to walk humbly with God." We are directed not only to be honest and sober, and "temperate in all things," but also to love Jehovah with all our hearts, and to serve him with all our powers. This rule of feeling and conduct must gauge our pretensions when we talk of a hope of future happiness

grounded on the contrast between ourselves and others. I state this point clearly, not only because it is important, but because it is so often overlooked by those who, like the Pharisee, are in danger of a pride that is offensive to heaven, and which, unless eradicated, must prove fatal.

If you, my reader, are amiable in your deportment and moral in your habits of life, I would not be so indiscriminate or unreasonable as to class you with the vicious or the worthless ; but I ask, Have you never transgressed or disobeyed the divine law ? Has your conscience never reproved you for neglecting the duties which you owe to your God ? If you are constrained to admit these facts, surely you will not, on the principles of strict justice, set up a claim upon God's favor, nor build a hope of eternal life upon your undeviating purity. If you had never committed any sin, you might come forward with such a claim ; but one sin is a forfeiture of the divine favor, and one transgression of the law of God subjects the transgressor to eternal death. This I say on the authority of the Scriptures : " The soul that sinneth, it shall die." " The wages of sin is death." It is clear, therefore, that *you*, in common with all mankind, have strong ground for your fears respecting another world. It is evident that you have urgent and unanswerable reasons for inquiring " what you must do to be saved."



## LETTER XXVII.

## ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURED BY THE LAW OF GOD.

THE foregoing letter implies that you are not only a sinful, but an accountable creature. You will not, I presume, deny either of these propositions. Your accountability grows out of your constitution as a rational and immortal being, and the connection which subsists between you and your Maker. This connection is indissoluble. Nothing can destroy it. You have begun an existence which shall never end. He who gave you being will perpetuate it. He has declared that you must exist for ever, in a state either of enjoyment or of misery. He has, moreover, made that enjoyment or misery to depend on the character you sustain in this life. He has so constructed your mind, and so arranged your circumstances, that you cannot act on any subject without incurring responsibility. This is a thought full of terror to a reflecting mind.

He to whom we are accountable, has not left us in uncertainty as to the requisitions he makes upon us. He has given us "a light to our feet and a lamp to our path." He has disclosed to us his will, and sent along with it the most solemn sanctions. According to his word, we are accountable for our

secret thoughts as well as our overt acts, and are judged by the exercises of the heart as well as the tenor of the life. It enjoins purity of feeling as strongly as propriety of outward conduct. It condemns for a lustful desire as well as for an impure action, and reprobates covetousness as severely as sensuality. It commands supreme love to God as well as love towards our neighbor. It enters into the whole man, searches every corner of his heart, and condemns for the least deviation from entire purity and uprightness. Even He who came to cancel, by his sacrifice, the sins of men, has declared that it was no part of his mission to destroy the divine law. It is obligatory now, and it will continue its obligations through eternity. Your daily actions and feelings are all to be judged and tried by this unbending rule of duty. Though you may not have heeded the fact, yet, depend upon it, they are duly registered on high; and they will be thoroughly examined and adjudicated by the divine law. Not a day or an hour passes by but you are swelling the items of that dread account, which you, as a rational and responsible creature, will be constrained to render at the bar of God.

If you are disposed to pronounce it hard that you should be judged by so severe a standard, I would appeal to yourself whether Jehovah could have required less without marring his glorious and immutable perfections. There was then a neces-



sity arising out of his nature for adopting these high requisitions, and if you have not given to them your full and entire obedience, you must look for deliverance from the penalty to some other source than the very law by which it was denounced.

Let me therefore caution you against supposing that an estimate may be made of character in the same manner as of property, by adding up the good deeds in one column and the bad deeds in another, and making the one to balance or cancel the other. Were you to measure what you consider good deeds by the law of God, and to take into the account the motive with which they were performed, you would soon be convinced that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." You would soon discover that you have violated your obligations to love God supremely, and to regard his will as the great incentive to action, and the leading motive to restrain you from vice.

The law of God is of such a nature, that if you have ever committed sin, it brings the charge of guilt upon your soul; and this charge it would neither revoke nor remit, were all your subsequent life devoted to contrition and obedience. To violate that law, it is not necessary that you should be grossly vicious. If you have ever broken the least of its provisions, there is *only one way* by which you can escape its penalty, "the new and living

way" revealed in the gospel: "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Around the base of mount Sinai is drawn a line which seems to say, Within this circle there is nothing but death. On its summit there are the demonstrations of wrath. There the lightnings flash and the thunders roll, as if the voice of incensed justice demanded its victim. Will you venture within that circle? Will you dare to climb that mountain? Oh, if you are a sinner, that mountain, be assured, speaks to you of death. It warns you of your doom. It declares, in most fearful language, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." It holds out but one condition of life, "Do this, and live." It admits no extenuation. It receives no equivalent at your hands. If you have *ever* sinned, it seals your death-warrant. It will lay aside its terrors only when you are covered with the "garments of salvation."

Seek no longer, then, to obtain favor with God, or to calm the restlessness of conscience, by approaching the brow of this fearful precipice. Attempt not to palliate your sin, but ingenuously confess and deeply lament it before God. Trust not to your own efforts for eternal life, but place your reliance on One "who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." There is no way of securing the divine favor, unless you obtain him as your Advocate whom the "Father



always heareth." There is nothing that *can* cancel your guilt, but the "blood which cleanseth from all sin." There is no avenue of escape from the penalty of God's broken law, but that which leads to Jesus Christ, who is the "city of refuge," the "stronghold" to "prisoners of hope."

## LETTER XXVIII.

## THE WAY OF SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST STATED.

You are, I would hope, convinced, that instead of goodness or purity, there is in your heart and conduct "only evil, and that continually." You at least discern the sentence of condemnation which a violated law pronounces upon you. Do you feel the force of that sentence in your conscience? Do you fear the penalty of that law in your destiny? Are you, in one word, ready to inquire with the conscience-smitten jailer, "What must I do to be saved?"

This is an important question. It is an inquiry at once pertinent and pressing. It is one which you must make, sooner or later. If you defer it now, you will institute it in your dying hour. Beyond that point it will be silenced for ever. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave, whither thou goest."

I will suppose you sufficiently convinced of your sin and danger to propose the question now. I will assume that what you have read has opened your eyes upon the actual existence of sin in your heart and conduct. I will consider you in the attitude of an inquirer. Such being the state of your feel-



ings, it gives me pleasure to follow up the closing remarks of the last letter, by urging upon you more at length to have recourse to Him "who came into the world to save sinners."

The plan of salvation is simple, and the cardinal points of the gospel are few. A man who is disposed to cavil, can find materials enough in the Bible for the gratification of his propensity. Many persons are in the habit of overlooking points which are clear and obvious, and of raising objections to those which they consider as hard and mysterious. They seek an apology for sin and impenitence in the abstruseness of certain doctrines, while they are obliged to pass by unheeded many a page which plainly teaches their obligations in terms the most perspicuous and impressive. But the sincere inquirer after truth will not be so disturbed with difficulties. If you are really convinced that you are a sinner, and in need of salvation; if you feel that you have violated God's law, and that you must be pardoned or punished; if you come to ask with a trembling, broken heart for the way of deliverance, it will be as easy for you to hear as for me to speak. It becomes us, however, to speak on this point "according to the oracles of God."

The sacred record, in alluding to the Lord Jesus Christ, declares, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Now suppose, that overlooking this direction, I should tell you that you need not give way to anxiety and distress, that you had led a decent moral life, and that although you had committed some sins, yet if you would endeavor to do better for the future, all would be well enough with you at last—suppose I should endeavor to calm your anxiety and remove your fears by such advice; what would you think of it? If you were really convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit, it might produce no fatal effect. You might still feel the pressure of guilt, and go to some better qualified instructor to learn the way of life and salvation. Were you to place your confidence in counsel so acceptable to the sinful heart, and permit it to govern your course of life, it would ruin you for ever.

The awakened conscience, in frequent, and perhaps in most instances, resorts to external efforts, or what is termed good works, as a substitute for contrition and submission. This course is the result of pride, not of humility. It is to confide in self-righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ. He who wraps himself in such a robe, will find it, like the poisoned garment of Hercules, a covering and a shroud. I have no other direction to give to you than that which the apostle gave to the jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is a short but comprehensive direction. You doubtless believe that there



was such a person as Christ; you admit the divinity of his mission and the performance of his miracles. But this is not complying with the direction given to the jailer. So far as it goes, it is well; but the devils have as much faith as this. They believe in the mission of Christ. Some of his miracles were wrought upon themselves, and they, of course, believed in their existence. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to put your trust in him for salvation. It implies that you are deeply convinced of sin; that you discover no method of escape but through a crucified Saviour; and that you go with your load of guilt and anguish and cast yourself down at his feet. It implies that you renounce all self-dependence, abandon every earthly stay, and fly to Jesus as your only hope. It implies that you place your entire reliance upon his atoning blood and his spotless righteousness; that you unreservedly surrender your soul, with its immortal interests, into his hands; and that, believing all his promises and obeying his commands, you look forward through *him alone* to the rewards of eternity.

If, then, you are convinced of your sinfulness, and are inquiring "what you must do," I would again say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." I would not tell you to go and do as well as you can and leave all the rest with God, because the Bible does not warrant such a direction. It must therefore be dangerous to give it. But I assume no such respon-

sibility when I bid you to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." I am sure that I am on safe ground; and I can assure you, that if you comply, *you* also will be safe. Your soul will find a foundation that shall never give way. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." If you listen to any other direction, or settle down upon any other hope, you do it at your peril. There is no other hope. Your own righteousness is but filthy rags. Your reformation can never cancel your past sins. There is but one avenue from death, one road to life eternal, and that is emphatically styled, "the way, the truth, and the life."

I am the more particular in this caution, because there is a strong propensity in the heart of man to lean upon his doings as a ground of hope, to believe that a mere external reformation will be a sufficient passport to heaven. Overlooking the great highway thrown up by the mercy of God, setting aside the righteousness of a Saviour, man is prone to make a provision for himself. But this is taking ground which death will undermine. It is building upon the sand. It is adding to your catalogue of crimes the condemning sin of unbelief. It is casting contempt upon the cross. It will subject the soul to the penalty of a broken law; to the doom of those "who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."



## LETTER XXIX.

THE DUTY OF IMMEDIATELY SUBMITTING TO THE  
CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL.

I KNOW not that I have been successful in my attempts to convince you that on Bible principles you are a sinful creature, and exposed to the punishment which awaits the impenitent and the guilty. Nor, if you feel such a conviction, am I sure that I have explained to your satisfaction the way of salvation through faith in the Redeemer. I shall regret it if I have failed on either of these points. The former is necessary to teach you the need of salvation; the latter is indispensable to a clear apprehension of God's mercy, and of the impossibility of being saved in any other way. I might go on to explain more fully how the intervention and death of Christ become the medium of mercy to him who repents of sin and believes the message of the gospel. These points, however, are so often and so fully discussed, they are spread before you in so many discourses, both preached and printed, that it may not be necessary to give to them here a distinct consideration.

The intention, in presenting to you these sheets, was not to instruct you in theology, but to correct prejudices which you may have cherished against

religion, to throw light upon your duty, and to lead you, if possible, to renounce the ways of sin, and embrace the offer of forgiveness through a Mediator. If I have opened the wounds which sin has inflicted, I have at the same time presented the healing balm. If I have carried the trembling soul to Sinai, I have not overlooked the peace-speaking summit of Calvary. I reserved the subject of religion and its claims upon you as an accountable creature, that I might close these pages by an affectionate appeal on a subject the most important and momentous. I have not for once lost sight of it. While speaking of the pleasures and prospects of the young, or depicting their dangers and temptations, I have considered it as the guiding star amid life's checkered and tumultuous scenes. But it is important to bring its claims home upon the conscience. It is necessary not only that we view it as gilding with additional beauty what nature has made bright, and distilling sweetness into the cup of earthly pleasure; but, that we ask ourselves whether we are the subjects of its influence—whether we have submitted to its claims.

Many a man will admit the general utility of religion, will eulogize its character, and speak well of its professors, who would feel indignant were you to press its obligations personally upon him. Now, I ask you, my reader, Will such general commendations of religion save the soul? Will such admis-



sions in its favor wash away one sin, or place your foot one step on the road to heaven? May not such a course be pursued by one who gives his highest affections to the world? Depend upon it you must let its claims come home upon your own soul, and submit yourself to its dictates. Perhaps you admit the justice of these conclusions, and agree, that if ever saved, you must bow to the requisitions of the gospel.

The tempter will whisper in your soul, There is time enough yet. Why should you, he will suggest, abandon all your pleasures, and settle down while so young, into the sobrieties of a religious character? Be cautious in admitting such a thought. You do *not* abandon pleasure by becoming a Christian. There is fallacy in this suggestion. Pleasures, pursued as the supreme object of the soul, never have afforded, never can afford satisfaction. Religion interdicts only those habits and pursuits which corrupt and debase the soul. Instead of being an impediment, she is therefore a pathway to happiness. Instead of requiring you to relinquish your pleasures, she calls upon you only to abandon your sins. She holds in her hands a felicity at once ennobling and permanent.

One of the most successful points in which the young are assailed, is undoubtedly that of representing religion as curtailing their pleasures. There never was a greater mistake, nor one more success-

ful in its operation. But suppose it were true that religion cuts us off from the essentials of earthly felicity; suppose it were a subject as gloomy as the young are apt to imagine, would it not be wise to weigh the question, whether a few fleeting pleasures are worth purchasing at so dear a rate as that of forfeiting your eternal interests, and placing yourself in peril of endless misery? If a pursuit of earthly gratifications cannot be carried on consistently with the soul's safety; if the one or the other must be surrendered, it is certainly worth your while to weigh the question, *which* you would relinquish. It would be wise to calculate that fearful problem propounded by our Lord, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Is it wise or safe to cast this subject aside? Is it not putting in jeopardy interests too important?

That apology to conscience, which consists in admitting the importance of her claims, but deferring an attention to them until a future time, is one of the most common and fatal snares of the soul. This spirit of procrastination is the subtle poison that secretly works death in its unsuspecting victim. Why should you defer the subject even for a day? Is it because it will prove more easy or acceptable than at present? Every hour that you defer it, sin is gathering strength, and conscience is losing her



power. The patience of God is waning, and the justice of God is waxing hot.

This spirit of procrastination accelerates your downward course. The soul, like the moving body in its way down the declivity, continually increases its momentum, and renders its arrest every moment more hopeless. Why should you defer it? You are not certain that the next hour may not launch you into eternity. While your eyes are running along these pages, they may rest upon the last warning, the last affectionate appeal that shall ever be made to you. Now, let the warning be received. Let the appeal reach your heart. Throw it not aside. It is a friendly voice, that would waken you to the reality of your danger, and press you to an immediate escape. By the brevity and uncertainty of life, by all that is joyous in heaven and dreadful in hell, I entreat you, immortal man, immediately to submit to the claims of the gospel. Procrastination is ruin. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

## LETTER XXX.

THE CREATIVE GOODNESS OF GOD A MOTIVE TO  
REPENTANCE.

In urging you to submit to the claims of the gospel, it is proper that I should not only present inducements, drawn from your exposure to future misery, but insist upon your obligations to Him who made, who preserves you, and who has sent his Son to redeem you.

You have doubtless reflected on the creative power of God. You see it in the sublime heavens, in the majestic ocean, in the towering mountains; and you discern its finer traces in the spreading foliage and the blooming flower. The eye and the ear are hourly impressed with the wondrous works of the Creator, furnishing to the soul inlets of grandeur, sublimity, and beauty. Survey yourself. Is there in nature a more complicated structure, a more concentrated evidence of creative skill? Your body is a perpetual and undisputed argument of the existence, power, goodness, and wisdom of its Maker. Your soul, connected by a mysterious union to that body, is given by "the inspiration of the Almighty."

He who created you holds you as his property by a right which none can dispute. He has a claim upon you which nothing in heaven, on earth, or in



hell, can set aside. You call, by common consent, *that* yours which you have earned by your industry, although it may have been the property of ten thousand before you. You consider *that* as your own which your ingenuity has fashioned out of materials provided at your hand. But upon you God has a higher claim than these. He created the materials of which you are composed, and "breathed into your nostrils the breath of life." Never were you the property of another. You may say to any claim which your fellow-men may set up, "I am my own master;" but you cannot say the same in reference to God. He will consider and treat you as his property, whatever may be the principles or conduct which you profess or exhibit.

Since God has given you being, does not that gift, I would ask, place you under obligations to love and obey him? Does it not imply that you are bound to serve him "with your body and your spirit, which are his?" The whole visible creation serves him. The brute animals and inanimate nature all fulfil the end of their existence. The birds sing and warble to his praise. They obey the instinct which he has given them. The spring smiles, and the summer-fruits grow at his bidding. Yes, all but man seem delighted to obey his commands. Man, the noblest of his works, rebels. Is it not strange that he who is the most highly gifted,

should be the most ungrateful? Is it not wonderful that he who alone is capable of understanding his Maker's will and enjoying his Maker's gracious smile, that *he* should withhold from God his due? What more can we need to prove "that all are gone out of the way, that they are together become unprofitable, that there is none that doeth good, no, not one?"

Has it never occurred to you, my reader, that the goodness of God is manifest in creating you a being superior in capacity to brutes or insects? Perhaps the thought has crossed your mind. Certainly you are made capable of a higher species of enjoyment than the inferior orders of creation. You have a mind that may be cultivated to an unlimited extent. You may go on improving beyond any assignable limit. This power of acquiring will enlarge with the increase of information. The possession of such a capacity for improvement, and the means of gratifying it, are all from God. You are therefore bound to serve him with that mind.

You are also made capable of high delight from social intercourse and the contemplation of nature. The interchange of friendship and sympathy in the social relations, is a source of exquisite enjoyment. When properly regulated, much of our happiness depends upon it. But who gave you this capacity for social enjoyment? Why are you not one of the gregarious animals, who, having neither the power



of speech nor the capacity for rational intercourse, herd together from the mere force of instinct? Do these blessings impose upon you no obligations to your Creator?

You can look out upon creation with delight. You have an eye for its scenery, and a soul to relish it. You love to muse on objects of grandeur or of beauty. You can revel on the fancy sketches delineated by the painter or the poet. He who fashioned the world, framed the intellect with its elevated powers of perception and fruition.

Reflect then on the diversified means of intellectual enjoyment, and let me ask, Do they not furnish an argument sufficient to constrain you to reverence your exalted and beneficent Benefactor?

You may have been created free from those deformities which render some of our race objects of disgust, and which deprive them of many sources of happiness. Did this never strike your mind? Have you not, when the eye has lighted upon some poor idiot or some ill-shaped and pitiable cripple, asked yourself why you were born with an intelligent mind and a perfect set of limbs and features? Surely such a reflection becomes you. The contrast should fill your soul with gratitude to Him who has made you to differ. It should lead you deeply to feel that your obligations are proportionable to your superior capacity. It is to God your Creator that you are indebted for the mental and

bodily structure which is so finely adjusted in all its points, and so happily adapted to the objects of creation by which you are surrounded.

This Creator calls upon you, as his creature, to consecrate all your faculties to his service. He demands a voluntary surrender of yourself to him and to the principles of the gospel. Your reluctance or refusal to make this surrender is most unreasonable. It will aggravate the amount of those neglected duties and those violated obligations which already swell to a most fearful catalogue. You can never cease to be the property of your Creator. His hand is around you. He will conduct you to the closing scene of your mortal existence, and when death shall open to you its gloomy portals, you must meet him as your final Judge.



## LETTER XXXI.

THE PRESERVING MERCY OF GOD A MOTIVE TO  
REPENTANCE.

THE goodness of God in preserving us, is another motive for consecrating to him that life which has ever been the object of his care. From the cradle to the grave, man is a dependent creature. In the days of helpless infancy, the care of a protecting Providence is strikingly manifest. One's wants cannot then be made known; but there is implanted in a mother's heart that wakeful attention to apparently unintelligible signals of distress, which becomes a sufficient substitute for the power of speech. It seems almost a miracle that so tender and so helpless a being should escape the ten thousand incidents and diseases which threaten the period of childhood. Indeed, the proportion of the human race who die in infancy is very great.

During the reckless years of boyhood, the care and protection of Providence is equally manifest. Thoughtless of consequences, and impelled by curiosity or young ambition, how have we delighted to signalize our youth by feats of agility or fearful exposures to danger. We sported presumptuously with existence, as if possessing a talisman against injury and death. We scaled the precipice, climbed

the dizzy mast, or, forsaking our natural element, courted danger and death on the threatening waves, or in the deep and rapid current. The more perilous the scene the more powerful was its attraction, and the glory of having surmounted the difficulty was sufficient to overcome the fears of destruction.

Is it not an astonishing fact, that amid such scenes of peril, and when exposed to so many casualties, you should have been protected and preserved? You cannot warrantably refer it to chance, to good-luck, or to fate. If "not a sparrow falleth to the ground" without the intervention or direction of an overruling Providence, is it probable that *your* hairbreadth escapes can be attributed to any other cause?

I am well aware of the loose and irreverent manner in which some speak of such occurrences; but a reflecting mind accustomed to trace the invisible hand of God in the various events of life, cannot ascribe to good fortune what legitimately belongs to a good and gracious Providence. Often has the beautiful hymn of Addison on the care and protection of God occurred to me with an application so forcible, that the writer seems almost to have foreseen and depicted my early history.

"When in the slippery paths of youth,  
With heedless steps I ran,  
Thine arm, unseen, conveyed me safe,  
And led me up to man.



“Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,  
It gently cleared my way;  
And through the pleasing snares of vice,  
More to be feared than they.”

No man can look back upon his boyhood without discovering *some* instances of the manifest care of Providence towards him. Have you not, my reader, experienced this protection and deliverance? If so, I would inquire whether you have devoted to God that life which he has so mercifully preserved? Have you ever asked yourself the question, Why have my days been lengthened out? Was it to become indifferent to Him, whose care and kindness have so repeatedly been extended over me? Was it to waste upon forbidden and unprofitable pleasures those powers which might have been employed in benefiting society and glorifying Him from whom I received them? Send back your thoughts to early scenes, and mark the finger of Providence. Is there no obligation arising from this source? Might you not have been left to perish in your presumptuous career? Oh, be mindful of that Being who watched your faltering step, and guided you safe along your perilous path.

In sickness, also, you have been encircled by that unseen hand which has smoothed your pillow and supported your head. Who was it that cooled the burning fever of the brain? Who gave efficacy to

the medicines which healed you? Who bade the disorder to cease its ravages; and when death seemed ready to point his fatal dart, who interposed and averted the shaft?

Few, I believe, who arrive at years of maturity, can fail to be impressed with the almost miraculous continuance of their lives. Hundreds who started into being with them, have found an early grave. Youth and beauty have perished by their side. Many who gave early promise of a long life, who entered their pilgrimage flushed with health and full of hope, have disappeared suddenly and for ever from this changeful scene. As young as you may be, you can find the solemn mementos of your contemporaries strewed along your path, indicating the ruin of youthful hopes, and evincing that your own preservation is to be traced to Him, "with whom are the issues of life." Do you never reflect on such instances of the care of your heavenly Preserver? Have you never been raised from the bed of sickness, under circumstances so peculiar as to leave no room for doubt, that had not God interposed, you must have gone into the shades of death? And suppose you *had* gone, where would you have been at this moment? Perhaps you were totally unprepared. Perhaps to your mind death was "the king of terrors." You recoiled with horror at the thought of giving up the ghost. You were ready, even under the apprehension, to make a surrender



of yourself to God, if he would but spare you a little longer.

Surely, then, you are bound to give those powers rescued from impending destruction to the service of your Maker. You are bound to improve, to the promotion of his glory and the advancement of your eternal interests, that little span of life which has thus been lengthened out. Perhaps you are, at this very moment, placed in the situation of the "barren fig-tree," which was spared for a limited time, but which, should no fruit then appear, was doomed to destruction. Be warned by its fate. Be persuaded to obey the obligations which arise from the preserving mercy of God.

## LETTER XXXII.

THE DYING LOVE OF CHRIST A MOTIVE TO  
REPENTANCE.

THE creative goodness of God and his preserving mercy should have led you to devote yourself to his service; but we present another motive, which should move your heart and induce you to submit to the claims of the gospel. It is the love of Him who came to seek and to save you.

You form a link in the vast chain of accountable beings, which stretches back to our original progenitors. This connection marks you as a sinner, and obliges you to feel all the miseries and fear all the evils which flow from transgression. They are evils not only incident to the present life, but extending to the life which is to come. What a miserable assemblage of beings should we have been, had no adequate mediator appeared for our relief. There could have been no hope of happiness, either here or hereafter. "But thanks be unto God for his unspeakable-gift." Thanks to the almighty Saviour for his condescending love.

You have read the history of those sufferings which met your Lord at the manger, and attended him to the cross. It would ill become me, by any attempt at description, to detract from the touching



narrative which inspiration has given. Those who saw his agony and heard his dying groans, have left a picture which no coloring of mine could heighten. Remember, that these sufferings were endured to take away sin and to raise the soul to heaven. Remember, that to accomplish our salvation, "He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Without this sacrifice, *I* could never have tendered to you, nor *you* have received forgiveness. Without the intervention of this compassionate Mediator, no avenue of escape would have opened on our despairing eyes. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." "He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Let me for a moment direct your view to Calvary. Survey that Sufferer who is nailed to the bloody tree. As you gaze on the scene of agony, tell me, do not those death-groans speak to your heart? Do they not tell you of a doom to which you are exposed? Do they not speak of a love that bleeds and dies for your rescue? Does not the Sufferer say to you from the cross, Come *hither*, Oh sinner, and see, in the wounds which I bear, what was due to thy transgressions; come and learn the height and depth of that compassion to which thou art insensible, and the preciousness of that blood which thou tramplest under foot

I shall leave you, my reader, to pursue this subject for yourself. With the Bible in your hand, go to some retired spot and think of the dying love of Christ. Bring home the subject to your soul. You have an interest in it, and it has a claim upon you. It says, "To you, Oh men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

Avoid considering the sufferings and death of Christ as a mere exhibition of sympathy and moral grandeur. Poets have so often touched this plaintive theme, and painters so frequently made it the medium of their fame, that you are in danger of viewing it apart from its personal bearing. A shade of sadness may pass over your mind when you hear the sufferings of the cross rehearsed in pensive numbers, or when you see on the canvas the vivid touches of the Redeemer's agony; but the solemn feeling should ripen into reverence, and the sympathetic tear should be accompanied by the gush of penitence. It was your sins which assisted to erect the cross, and to nail upon it the mysterious victim. Yes, it was *your* sins; and until they shall be repented of and abandoned, you have in your heart no sentiment towards the sufferer but that of indifference or hatred.

Have you ever seriously meditated on the cross? Or is it a subject which you desire not to bring



under consideration? Are you in the habit of viewing it as appropriate to those only who are numbered among his visible followers? Ah, my young friend, that it is a subject of personal interest, you will discover when a death-bed shall dissipate your idle dreams, and compel you to look back upon life and forward to an opening eternity. When you lie trembling on the brink of your mortal existence, you will admit the accounts which conscience shall present. You will then acknowledge crimes which you are now ready to conceal or extenuate. You will then wish for that blood which was "shed for the remission of sins." You would then give worlds for such a look as fell upon the dying thief, who sought and obtained the mercy of his Saviour. You would then barter your dearest earthly interests for a safe passport through the gloomy portals of death.

As you cast your eye forward, it falls upon that certain and terrific interview which must take place between you and the Redeemer whom you have slighted. The vision of the future turns you back upon the past. The insupportable view of the past drives you forward to the future. Oh, what would you then give to know that He who died on Calvary was your friend; to ascertain that his blood was shed for you; to feel beneath you his arms of mercy, and to see above you his smile of welcome?

The day must come when the question shall be

tried; the hour must arrive when it will be determined. Let me entreat you now to secure his friendship. Let me urge you to bathe your guilty soul in his atoning blood. Listen to his invitations while they greet your ear. Throw yourself into his arms while they are extended to receive you. If the recurrence of God's goodness, which daily makes your cup to overflow—if his continued patience and persevering mercy have failed to fill your heart with penitence, let not the appeal from Calvary, the dying love of a compassionate Saviour, fall unheeded on your ear. Aggravate not the catalogue of sins, already long, dark, and fearful, by rejecting the only hope set before you, and thus crucifying afresh the Son of God. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."



## CONCLUSION.

IN drawing my discursive remarks to a close, I would express a hope that both he who has written, and he who shall read them, though strangers in this, may be friends and fellow-citizens in a better world. If these thoughts shall have been the means of awaking desires for that brighter scene, and of turning the youthful feet into the path which leads to eternal life, the pleasure of recognition, even in a single instance, shall sweeten the joys of heaven, and be to the writer an abundant reward.

In perusing these pages, you may occasionally discern a current of remark which appears to savor of severity; but remember, that no severity was intended. You must attribute the point and the earnestness with which the claims of religion are pressed upon your attention, to that deep sense of its importance which the writer entertains, together with a faint, though awful perception of the value and the danger of the soul. If it were a subject of minor importance, or if a neglect of it were not attended with consequences so enduring and tremendous, I should have avoided animadversion, and have courted your approbation rather than incurred your censure.

When I touch the momentous subject of religion,

and speak of its bearing on the interests of the soul, it becomes me, as I fear my Maker, and feel anxious for your eternal welfare, to address you in terms at once affectionate, pungent, and solemn. Such has been my aim.

I have also endeavored to give to worldly pleasures all the power of contributing to our felicity which their votaries can honestly demand. You will bear me witness that these pages are not marked by a system of proscription which condemns sublunary good, and tolerates nothing but monastic strictness and austerity. While I have graduated earthly pleasures on a scale which will permit you to enjoy them with moderation and with gratitude, I have endeavored to allure you on to joys more permanent and satisfactory. It has been my object to detach you from earth, and to fix your hopes and anticipations on heaven.

Religion has not been represented as withering the flowers in your path, as spreading the frost of death upon the beauties of creation, or covering all nature with funereal gloom. On the contrary, I have endeavored to convince you that her presence is the signal for nature to deck herself in richer robes, and present to the eye of her admirer a diviner aspect. Yes; it is religion that unseals the eye, and opens upon it from every visible object new wonders which had hitherto been concealed. It is her mighty power that infuses into the glories



of creation a life and glow which make inanimate things eloquent with beauty. Believe it or not, the fact is certain, that the highest relish for nature can be his alone, who, with a glowing fancy and a feeling heart, possesses the piety which acknowledges and adores his God in all.

You will perceive, that in depicting the dangers and temptations to which the young are exposed, I speak in a strain of deep-toned warning. It is because I have so often witnessed the wreck of youthful character and parental hope. It is because I would oppose a barrier between you and a similar destruction.

I have been encouraged in the prosecution of this little work, by the consideration that I am addressing those whose character may not have taken a fixed and unalterable mould. Those who have advanced far into the vale of life, whose powers are always concentrated upon earth, seem to have acquired a tenacity of purpose which the strongest arguments of religion cannot shake. Like some species of tendrils which encircle the pine or the oak, and in time become incorporated with the very trunk which they clasp, these earthly minds, clinging to the world, appear at last riveted and irreclaimable. But I would fondly believe that your heart is not yet so callous, and that you have not yet passed into evil habits from which it were hopeless to attempt your reformation. I would

persuade myself that these pages may speak to many a conscience not yet benumbed by vice, and to many a bosom not yet steeled against conviction.

If you are young, you may yet be impressed by the motives which I have presented. Your character is yet susceptible of a change that would render you an ornament to the community and the candidate for a brighter world. If you have begun a course of vicious pleasures, and by each successive indulgence found yourself more hardened and reckless in your career, may these pages be blessed of God to arrest your progress and redeem you from destruction. If you are satisfied with your own goodness, and are indifferent to the claims of the gospel, may these warnings, through divine mercy, startle and reclaim you. If prejudice against religion has preoccupied your mind ; if, instead of reverencing her institutions and respecting her advocates, you have been casting contempt upon them, God grant that these friendly communications may correct the error and draw you to the sacred temple by the glories of the divinity who inhabits it.

Whatever may be your feelings in relation to these sentiments, certain I am that your own conscience must pass upon them a favorable verdict. While reading them, your conscience will approve, perhaps your heart will resolve ; but if, when you rise from the perusal, and mingle in the busy scenes of life, you carry them not into practice ; if you



disregard the warnings and reject the invitations which are here given, rest assured, my reader, you make your destruction the more probable, and erect another formidable barrier to your salvation.

Here we must part. I present you these letters as the pledge of my interest in your welfare. I have written them for your benefit. It is my ardent wish, that as you survey the brief span which God has given you on earth, they may whisper in your ear the truth, that life is "a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." As you anticipate with exulting feelings the prospects and pleasures of life, may you learn to moderate your expectations from earth, and to seek a better and more enduring substance in heaven.

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