The Spring-Time of Life
or, Advice to Youth

by David Magie
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David Magie (1795-1865) was a Presbyterian minister.
He became director of the Theological Seminary at Princeton.

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"Listen, my child, to what your father teaches you.
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THE SEASON OF YOUTH.

"Solomon my son is young and tender," was the remark of one of the best of men and kindest of fathers. There is nothing striking in language like this, viewed simply by itself; and yet it can scarcely be uttered without awakening a train of emotions in every generous bosom. No other period of life affects so deeply human character and destiny, and none other calls forth so many solicitudes and prayers.

Three classes of people range themselves around us—the aged, the middle-aged, and the young. To each belong hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, peculiar to itself. As men of gray hairs have trials and comforts which may very properly be denominated their own, so it is also with those in the meridian of life, and with bright and buoyant youth. At every different period, existence assumes a new phase, and requires to be addressed in new and appropriate terms. None of these groups of human beings must be overlooked; but if it be right to discriminate, we can easily see where our chief interest should be concentrated. To be useful to the young is to be useful for the longest time, and on the largest scale.

But who is sufficient to assume the office of guide to a company of immortal beings, in the morning of life! I feel my inability, beloved youth, in the burden of responsibility which I take upon myself in attempting barely to sketch the path in which it will be safe for you to walk. Yet one thing encourages me—your dearest and best friends and parents, will all afford me their countenance.

The plan to be developed in the chapters before us, will be found to have a compass somewhat large. Many topics are to come under review, suited to improve your character and advance your respectability, which are not made the basis of public instruction as often as their importance demands. My wish is that you should be thoroughly equipped for the great work of life. Religion is indeed to give shape to each distinct theme; but it is to be religion as connected with every-day duties and enjoyments, and affording every-day strength and consolation. Making one's "calling and election sure," is not the only thing required—you must "do justly and love mercy," as well as "walk humbly with God."

Let me begin by calling your attention to some remarks on the season of youth, considered in its bearing upon the whole after-life.

1. At no subsequent time are such valuable acquisitions made. Now it is, that the affections are most ardent, the heart most susceptible, the memory most retentive, and all the mental, moral, and physical faculties most susceptible of improvement. Everything leaves its impress on the young—the faces they look at, the voices they hear, the places they visit, the company they keep, and the books they read. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance, for this world and the next, which attaches to a few of the earlier years of one's existence. The first quarter of life is worth more, as a period of acquisition, than all the rest.

Consider what attainments are made by a child within twenty or thirty months from its birth. Even while a helpless infant, it learns to read inward feelings as expressed in the changes which the countenance assumes, and can readily distinguish between a smile and a frown. Approach it with caresses, and its eyes sparkle and its features brighten. Put on a forbidding aspect, use angry words, and its bosom heaves, its tears fall. This is the time for the feeble one to become acquainted with the difficult art of poising itself, and standing erect. Before it has reached a fourth of its size, its step is often as regular as if it understood all the laws of gravitation, and its motions as graceful as if it had been trained by the most skillful hand. And stranger still, during this very period *the weak and apparently inattentive creature masters a new language!* That which adults never acquire without long and patient study, a child gains without Grammar or Dictionary, and with scarcely a single painful exertion.

Deem not such thoughts as these to be trivial and unimportant. You will not judge so, be assured, if you ever live to become parents yourselves, and are permitted to enjoy the exquisite pleasure of marking how a little son or daughter looks up and tries to read your heart in your face, or of noticing the first efforts which a sweet child makes to walk alone, or of hearing the busy prattler utter words until they become easy, and join syllables until they become intelligible.

But I have higher reasons than all these, for thus pausing at the threshold of human existence, and fixing your attention on the future man in his earliest days. Much may be learned of the fathomless purposes of the Divine mind, and the unraveled mysteries of Providence, in such a sight as this. That child just beginning to fix its gaze upon its father's features, to make trial of the strength of its own limbs, and to lisp the name of mother, may have a destiny more glorious than yonder sun shining in his strength. What we as yet behold is only the first bursting of the bud, that the flower may emit its fragrance and disclose its tints. The putting forth of such efforts by one so frail and tender, is but breaking the shell, so that the living thing within may find its exit, and open its wings, and plume its feathers, and prepare for its lofty flight. Now, another immortal being is started on its marvelous and hitherto unwritten course. A commencement is made, and it is such a commencement as foretells a rapid and glorious progress.

Premature development, mental or physical, is not desirable. Plants that are so forced in their growth as to come forward before their proper time, seldom have much strength of stem, width of leaf, or richness of odor. That which grows up in a night, not infrequently perishes in a night. But without undue pressure, and under the influence of the mildest and gentlest methods, surprising advances will often be made.

These are the incipient efforts, and they prepare the way for subsequent and longer steps.

Few things are more interesting than to consider what an amount of valuable knowledge—knowledge of God and man, of time and eternity, of earth and heaven—may be gained in the first twelve or fifteen years of one's life. During this period the science of numbers and distances, opening the door to mathematics, geography and astronomy, may be fairly entered upon and its grand principles mastered. Nature, too, begins now to unlock her mysterious treasure-house, and the mere stripling of a student often finds himself able to comprehend the operation of a thousand of those laws on which life and happiness depend. Especially is this the season to have the mind stored with the great events, which fill for us the pages of ancient and modern history. Acquisitions which cannot be gotten for gold, and for the price of which silver cannot be weighed, may be made, and often are made, while one is still young and tender.

Permit me to remark here, that this is especially the period of life for adding to the compass and retentiveness of the memory. To reason logically and arrive at wise and safe results, requires a sound judgment; and such a judgment is usually the fruit of deep experience, and large opportunities of comparing one thing with another. But to collect the materials with which a riper understanding can work out its conclusions, is the special province of youth. Every one who expects to make his mark high in the world, should begin early to form a collection of valuable facts, and not a day should pass without adding to their number.

This, let me add for your encouragement, is a work in which you may make a degree of progress that will surprise yourselves. It is not necessary that a young man, in order to become intelligent and well-informed, should enjoy the instructions of erudite professors, and have access to universities and richly endowed colleges. Many a man has contrived to engrave his name very legibly in the Temple of Fame, with fewer opportunities for improvement than often in our day fall to the lot of the humblest laborer. But this is a thought which, though deeply interesting, I cannot pursue at present. It is sufficient here to say, that no youth, who feels the workings of a single noble aspiration, need be disheartened at any apparent difficulties that lie in his path. The highest idea of education is the training of the mind to surmount obstacles.

Volume upon volume, bringing the richest secrets of art and science within your reach, lie open before you; a very few shillings, easily saved from not going to the bar-room or the saloon, will put you in possession of a fund of information, to which many of your parents and older friends had no early access. Above all, the book of God is on your table, and in it you are sure to meet with the truest history, the best prudential maxims, and the purest devotion. Only use well your advantages, and you may make acquisitions in comparison with which houses and lands are as nothing.

2. Youth is the season in which impressions prove most abiding. It is the time for keeping as well as getting, for remembering as well as learning, for retaining as well as acquiring. To bring truth into contact with the mind of an open, ingenuous youth, is like applying a seal to the newly melted wax, so that you are sure of getting not only a correct, but a permanent likeness. The lines are drawn deeply on the tender heart, and no waves of subsequent business or care can entirely obliterate them. Years may pass away, and the head blossom for the grave, and the eye grow dim, and the hand tremble; but the scenes of early life reappear with the freshness of yesterday.

Youth and old age, in more senses than one, seem to be closely connected. If you visit a man who, like a venerable oak, stands while every tree around it has fallen, you will find that his mind, though almost a perfect blank as to recent transactions and events, is alive to those of childhood and youth. This is a deeply interesting fact, and it deserves to be well and carefully pondered by such as are laying up a store for time to come. Forget what else he may, the patriarch of many days is not likely to forget the tree under which he played, the brook by which he strolled, or the hill which he climbed when a boy. Half of both his waking and sleeping hours are employed in living that sunny and halcyon period of his life over again. Two thirds of a century may have gone, never to return, but still his thoughts linger around the paternal fireside, the bed in which he slept, and the room where he joined in his mother's prayers. Let me ask those advanced in life, if this be not so. You remember the very form of groves long since cut down, of books long since read, of classmates long since gone, and of ministers long since in the grave. It is of your memory of the occurrences of last week and yesterday that you complain, and not of your memory of events a generation ago. These are all vivid and fresh.

Whatever may be said of the latter stages of life, its commencement will leave traces never to be worn out. The **intellect** is now taking a shape, and the **affections** receiving a texture, and the individual acts turning into **habits**, which, if somewhat modified by after-scenes and impressions, are seldom very essentially changed. This is the point from which men start, and it generally determines their whole future course. Here the path is entered upon, which leads to virtue or vice, honor or infamy, heaven or hell. Let the mother of John Newton take her little son to her closet for prayer, let Doddridge be taught Scripture history when a child, by the pictures on the chimney-tiles, and let Buchanan, when a boy, wander into a church where Jesus is preached—and the effects remain. All the agents in these tender transactions—parents, friends, ministers—may be sleeping in the grave, but their work endures.

What a precious fact is this, and how full of encouragement! Give me the successful shaping of a child's character in all its earlier stages, until eighteen or twenty years are gone by, and I shall never, under God, despair of him afterwards. Go astray he may, be forgetful he may, become wayward he may, for a time; but by and by the arm of Divine mercy will be extended, and the stream which had sunk in the sand will rise again to the surface, more limpid and life-imparting than ever. The disappointment in such cases, we have every reason to conclude, will be but partial and temporary.

I grant that radical changes of character do occasionally occur, after the most promising part of life is gone. We sometimes see females, who, during the whole of their earlier years, seemed to be given to vanity and frivolity, becoming patterns of everything excellent and of good report, when translated into a new sphere and invested with new responsibilities. So, too, we now and then find a wicked, dissolute young man, who like Cecil or Gardiner, lives to repent of his folly, and leads a new life. Such reformations, blessed be God, are not altogether strange in the history of the world and the Church; and when they do occur, we are to regard them as illustrious instances of the power of Divine grace.

Nor do we hesitate to admit, that here and there a child, who once gave promise of better things, is left to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. But I am speaking of what is common, and what we have a right in ordinary circumstances to expect; for the grace of God, though mysterious in its nature and sovereign in its operations, was not intended to supersede the influence of motives, or counteract the ordinary laws of the human mind.

Depend upon it, beloved youth, the impressions of early life will remain. Only fill your minds at this tender period, with images of truth, purity and goodness, and they will stay there to enliven the solitude and brighten the anticipations of your latest years. But habituate your thoughts to scenes of vice and deeds of infamy, and the taint will stick by you like a leprosy, until death comes. Oh, could you look at this subject as those look at it who have traveled the path, we should oftener hear you cry, "My Father, be the guide of my youth!"

Examine this subject—the permanency of early impressions—I entreat you, in the light of testimony and observation. Have you ever known a good mechanic, who did not gain the elements of success in his youth; a kind, considerate master who did not serve a virtuous apprenticeship; an eminent lawyer, physician, or pastor, who was not a diligent student? This is true of those qualities which come into play in active, business life; and it is still more true of the quiet and passive virtues. I question whether you have ever heard of a placid, serene, tranquil and contented old man happy in God and in fulfilling the various responsibilities of life, who was noted in his youth for noise, recklessness, impatience, or lack of self-control. This is a kind of wild-oats, which, if sown at all, is sure to produce a crop. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." *Jer 13:23*

Could my voice reach every young man and woman in the land, I would warn them not to yield their hearts to injurious impressions. Little, ah little, do they think, while listening to some slur on the profession of piety, or opening their ears to some sly objection to the truth of the Bible, or poring over the pages of some novel filled with tales of lust and blood—what havoc all this is making with the peace of their own minds, or how it is adapted to cut up by the very roots those principles of virtue which enter essentially into the formation of a good character. This is like poison, taken into the physical system, and will be sure, sooner or later, to reveal its bitter results. The mark is made, not on the sand, but on enduring rock.

3. Associations are now formed, which go far to mold the whole after-life. Man is so made for friendship and for social communion, that his joys have a double relish, and his sorrows lose half their weight, when shared by others. Even a child cannot bear to keep either his pleasures or his pains to himself. There is, from the first, a felt necessity for the affections to go out and fasten upon some external object. This is the reason why most men are so much the creatures of circumstances, and why the weaving of early ties so powerfully controls every subsequent step. The first things not infrequently deter mine the last.

Look at men of eminence in the world, and you will generally find that much of the foundation of that eminence was laid in the associations of early life. Joseph, David, and Daniel are examples in sacred volume, not only of providential leadings and indications, but of voluntary choice and preferences having an influence, in preparing them for the lofty position which they eventually reached. Luther was only twenty-nine years old, when he gave the Papal Hierarchy his first deadly blow; and Calvin but twenty-five, when he wrote the immortal Institutes. Bonaparte was a mere stripling when he accomplished his glorious campaign in Italy; and the dew of youth was still on the brow of our beloved Washington, when he distinguished himself on the day of Braddock's defeat. Who can say how much of all that these men accomplished, depended, under God, on the course adopted at the commencement of life?

No wonder that good men feel such an interest in the associations which their young friends form. They see that the company which you now keep, the principles you now adopt, and the habits you now form, are likely to settle the question of the future with a certainty which is well-near infallible. Full well do they know, that in the minds, and manners, and character of the young, we have an index to the state of society, for many years to come. Give us a favorable spring, that the precious seed may be safely sown, and we shall the more confidently anticipate a fruitful summer, an abundant autumn, and a plentiful winter. The connection is so close between the present and the future, that every step taken now will show itself in outcomes and results, for years to come. An unfortunate relationship may wed a man to misery of the most poignant kind, until his dying day; and a happy one may shed a sweet and reviving light all along his pathway, until it opens into glory. It would be true, had the Bible never asserted it—that "whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

I am but asserting what all know to be a fact, when I say that the hearts of the young are full of high anticipations. After the sun has passed the meridian, there are few who have the resolution to embark in new enterprises, and who feel like trying to accommodate themselves to new circumstances. Old people cry out, like Barzillai, "Can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women? Let your servant, I pray you, turn back again, that I may die in my own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother." Very proper is this feeling for the aged; but it ought not to be thus with those who feel the life-blood coursing warm and rapid through their veins. God forbid that they should pause and stand still, as men who would gladly take off the armor.

No, beloved youth, you could not be inactive, if you would; and you would not if you could. Your hearts throb with impulses, which, like an eagle beating against the bars of its cage, must express themselves in plans and purposes and high resolves, or turn back upon their fountain to make it stagnant and corrupt. Can the full-fed war-horse be restrained from chomping the bit and pawing the earth, without breaking his very nature? We blame you not, ardent and aspiring youth, for being all alive to those stirring inmovings, which are a part of that mental and moral constitution conferred upon you by your Maker. Go on, we rather say, with firm and earnest steps in the path to which God and duty call you. But while we thus give you large liberty and a clear field, deem it not unkind in us, if we feel constrained to whisper words of caution in your ears.

Only apply the principles of Solomon's Proverbs, of Christ's Sermon on the mount, and of Paul's epistles, to every movement you make, and we have no fear for the consequences. Let all the associations you form in business operations, in companionship for leisure hours, and in alliances for life, be begun, continued, and ended with God, and you may calculate upon their bringing a blessing along with them. This will realize the fulfillment of the prayer—"May our sons flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants. May our daughters be like graceful pillars, carved to beautify a palace." *Psa 144:12*.

But discard these counsels of heavenly wisdom, and give yourselves over to a friendship with the irreligious, the impure and the skeptical, and you fix thorns in your pillow never to be extracted. We all know who has said, "He who walks with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

I look forward a few years, and find children become youth, and youth men and women in active life. The seeds sown in infancy by some fond mother have swelled and grown, and become trees of righteousness, and the lessons given by a kind father are yielding their appropriate fruit. One comes out and joins himself to the industrious, the prudent and the pious; while another associates with the indolent, the dissipated and the profane. From this point you may trace their destiny for two worlds. Let me see how youth assort themselves in the school, the workshop and the college, and I need no prophet's vision to predict what they will be and what they will do when they become men. Viciously inclined as a young man may be, a virtuous companionship is often the means of his salvation. Virtuously disposed as he may be, an ungodly friendship may work his ruin.

Reflect, then, my young friend, seriously and prayerfully, on the importance of the season through which you are now passing. Little do you think how deep an interest is felt for your welfare. There is the man that begat you, and the woman that bore you, each crying out, "My son, if your heart shall be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." Kind friends draw near and ask for blessings on your heads, which shall reach to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. Your minister prays that you may become his joy and the crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Above all, God himself looks down, and blending his claims with your highest welfare, speaks out, "My son, give me your heart." Oh, shall all this interest be felt for you, in heaven and on earth, in vain! Will you not at this early hour on the dial of human life, realize the grandeur and glory of the destiny that awaits you!

Be faithful to yourselves, to your fellow-men, and to God for ten, fifteen, or twenty years, and I almost dare promise you a useful life, a happy death, and a blissful immortality!

YOUNG MEN IN DANGER.

Not many days ago, a gentleman of one of our large cities wrote thus to a friend—"When I first came to this place, I was a young man, with nothing on earth in the way of property, but the small bundle which I carried in my hand. But a kind Providence has smiled upon me, and I have become what the world calls rich. Still, as a family—we are far from being happy."

And what is it that is breaking the peace of that father's bosom, and chasing away the joys of that favored fireside? Wealth is there, spacious rooms are there, costly furniture is there, and both intelligence and refinement are there. No more, the parents of that household are professors of Christ's name, and are in the habit, we may hope, of sanctifying all their enjoyments by the word of God and prayer. Such is the confluence of good things in this case, that the cup seems to run over. Why, then, you will naturally ask, is not that a happy dwelling? The answer is short. Those parents have just heard of the improper conduct of a favorite son—a son on whom they had bestowed many advantages, and of whom they had indulged fond anticipations—and their hearts are sad within them. All feel the blow, but it falls heaviest on the mother. "My poor wife"—it is the language of the husband and father—"my poor wife never slept a wink the first night after the mournful news reached us."

This is a sorrowful tale, too sorrowful to be dwelt upon without tears, and yet where can you find any considerable group of families, which does not furnish material for a tale equally sorrowful. No strange thing has happened in that particular domestic circle. The sobs which were heard under the roof are often heard elsewhere. It is affecting to mark how much of the grief to be met with in our disordered world, has its origin in the bad behavior of some misguided son, who refuses to hearken to the instructions of his father, and forsakes the law of his mother. The enemy of God and man never shoots an arrow which pierces more deeply, or makes a sorer wound. Every sort of trouble seems conjoined here; and if you will only dam off this single stream, you will turn away a bitter tide from many a peaceful dwelling.

Say not, in the words of a man who imagined himself to be better than he was, "What! is your servant a dog that he should do such a thing?" Feel not indignant at the suggestion of a possibility, that you may be left to pursue a course which shall fill the home of your childhood and early days with lamentation and woe! This is being strong in your own strength, and trusting to your own hearts. Dream not that your mountain stands so strong that you can never be moved. Avenues leading off from the right path open on every side, and none are more exposed than those who think of no peril, and are impatient at such words of caution and counsel as may be addressed to them. It is here that the maxim, "to be forewarned is to be forearmed," has its fullest application.

1. You are in danger from YOURSELVES!

This may seem strange language, but the longer you live, the more deeply will you be convinced of its truth. One of the most obvious effects of the original apostasy was, to subvert man's government over his own heart, and undermine his power of self-control. By this fatal step, he not only broke those bonds in sunder which bound him in holy and happy allegiance to his Maker, but he subverted all the laws of his own moral constitution. From that moment passion obtained the ascendency over reason, and impulse over principle. So disloyal did his feelings become to his better judgment, that he needs now to be restored to himself, almost as much as to his God. Both of these changes, the one scarcely less than the other, are effected by true conversion.

Young men are necessarily inexperienced. The road they have to travel is to them a new road. It is their lot to be encompassed with difficulties with which they can have no previous acquaintance, and to mingle in scenes with which they are not familiar. Everything is novel, and because of its novelty it affects them all the more deeply—for good or evil. Parents may tremble for their safety, and friends may be anxious lest they should be led astray; but they are likely to feel little solicitude on their own account. Warnings are not heeded, because they are not seen to be applicable. Advice is not taken, because it is not felt to be appropriate. So skillfully is the hook baited, that the first intimation of its being a hook is found in the pricking of the barb! Some fatal step is taken before the person suspects the presence of danger. The homely adage, "those who know nothing—fear nothing," finds its illustration in thousands who set out with warm hearts and high hopes.

Could you realize, at the beginning of your journey, that you are to pass through an enemy's country, where foes lurk behind every bush and conceal themselves under the corner of every jutting rock, you would be on your guard. It could hardly fail to make you watchful, to be assured that a snare was concealed on one side of your path, and a pit on the other. Any proper appreciation of your danger would send you to the mercy-seat with an importunity that would take no denial, and clothe your sense of peril in the prayer, "My Father, be the guide of my youth." But thousands learn too late, that "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life."

I cannot but fear for inexperienced youth, sent abroad into a world all inviting in its promises—but all deceitful in delivering those promises. Could they know beforehand what perils beset the way, how they must encounter a enchanting song at one corner, and a deceiving peril at another, with what false hopes they will be assailed today, and with what discouragements tomorrow; we would not see them bounding forth with such wild and heedless alacrity. A fraction of the real danger, anticipated at the beginning, could not fail to impart a degree of sobriety to the most careless.

Not a few young men are so yielding in their temperament, as to be in perpetual danger. Having no fixed principles, it is hard for them to resist temptation, come from what quarter and in what form it may. So long as a father's eye is upon them, or a mother's voice is sounding in their ears, there is something to hold them up. But let them be separated from all such influences and associations, and be brought into a condition, when, under God, they can be steadfast only as the result of inward rectitude and self-sustaining power, and they feel at once that their bark has not sufficient ballast for so rough a sea. Like Reuben, they are "unstable as water;" and no wonder if, like him, they never excel.

It is not 'obstinacy' that I recommend, or that sort of dogged adherence to one's own opinions, which shuts the eyes upon every opposing reason, however clear and strong. This is a very unhappy trait of character, especially in the young. But be careful in avoiding "Scylla," not to fall into "Charybdis." The young man who commences life with such an irresolute heart, as not to be able to reject decidedly any proposal to do wrong, has a source of danger in himself which will be almost sure to work his overthrow. *Yet, a rough refusal is incomparably better than a reluctant compliance!*

That kind of easy good-nature, which can never nerve itself sufficiently to put a decided denial upon any proposal, however injurious, is a most dangerous possession. It is no exaggeration to say, that the history of thousands of ruined youth, the untimely graves of thousands of broken-hearted parents, and the heavy woes of thousands of dishonored families, all join their solemn attestations to the evils which spring from that sort of pliant, accommodating disposition, which is unable to pronounce the monosyllable–"No!" Such a one is led like an ox to the slaughter, and like a fool to the correction of the stocks. If invited to take a glass with the merry, sit down at the table of the gambler, or profane the Sabbath with the impious, you can foretell what will be the result. There is no inner strength to rely upon. No falling back upon principle and duty.

Young men are often proudly self-confident. Too wise to be taught, and too secure to need caution—it is no matter of surprise if they speedily make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. We are not surprised at the mistakes they make, when we see how impatient they are of control, and how confidently they rely upon their own wisdom and prudence. Glad that the hour has come, which allows them more liberty than they once enjoyed, they begin to put on an air of importance, and to act as if nobody's judgment of men and things was so good as their own. But this, be assured, is an unfailing prognostic of evil. Even had we never read in the Scriptures that "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," we would feel assured that such a state of mind must be a bar to everything like real respectability or permanent success.

Nobody loves pomposity and self-inflation in others. Much as genuine modesty and unaffected humility may be at a discount, in an age when learners think themselves better than teachers, pride and pomposity are not the road to eminence in any line of life.

When I see a youth, no matter what his talents or fortune, impatient of the counsels of experience, and disposed to lean to his own understanding, I always fear for the result. One thing is certain; before such an one is prepared for anything great and good in the world, he has many a hard lesson to learn; and the sooner he begins to learn these lessons the better. Previous to his being fitted for any post of trust and respectability, he must have the stern teaching of bitter rebuffs and cruel disappointments.

We have the highest authority for saying, "he who trusts to his own heart is a fool." Let the young judge as they may; the sober good sense of the world at large will join its verdict in favor of allowing the experienced to speak, and multitude of years to teach wisdom. It will still be considered fit and proper to pay some deference to the opinions of hoary hairs, and not to reject the advice of old men.

Now pause for a moment, and look at the dangers to which you are exposed, arising directly from yourselves! That moral derangement which we call depravity, finds an occasion for its working and an outlet for its influence, in your lack of acquaintance with the ways of the world, in your lack of firmness to reject the approach of temptation, and your proneness to rely unduly on your own resources. But this is not all.

2. You are in danger from the CIRCUMSTANCES in which you are placed.

What is defective and wrong within, is aggravated by what is bad and injurious without! It is the meeting of these two streams, the one internal and the other external, that causes the banks to overflow, and spreads devastation among the fairest fields and gardens of human life. As there must be both fire and powder to produce an explosion, so the heart must be acted upon by the world, in order that its corruptions may be manifested. Take away either, and so far as visible result is concerned, the other would be harmless; but let both come together, and an explosion must ensue! Let me name a few of the perils to which you are exposed from the circumstances which surround you.

Many young men have no kind friend at hand to take an interest in their welfare. Nobody, from one week to another, or one month to another, drops a word of either caution or encouragement in their ears. If the clerk is in his place at the appointed time, and the apprentice fulfils his allotted task, and the student masters his assigned lesson, nothing further is inquired. From the very necessity of the case, they are separated from the refining, soothing, and elevating influence of the domestic circle. It is their hard lot to be separated from home, at the very time when they most need its scenes and associations. Who is to look after them, all buoyant and full of life as they are; to watch where they spend their evenings, and what resources for amusement or pleasure are within their reach?

It is enough to make one's heart bleed to see multitudes of ardent, aspiring youth cast upon the world, with its ten thousand allurements and snares, in a state, so far as any real affection or friendship is concerned, of complete orphanage. Ah! what is to hold them back from evil! How are they to be kept from the paths of the destroyer? If God does not interpose, it would seem as if they must inevitably perish.

No one can think of the circumstances in which young men are generally placed, without concern. During much of that pregnant interval, which lies between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one, most of them are so situated that they can seldom hear a father's prayer, or listen to a mother's counsels, or witness a sister's smiles. Oh! is it any marvel under such circumstances, if they should now and then find the way to the theater, the saloon, or the dwelling of infamy? One faithful friend at this juncture might save them from ruin. Were I to offer a prayer for you, beloved youth, as you pack your trunk, and leave for the city of business or the seat of learning, to spend five or seven years there in almost entire separation from the joys of home, it would be to ask that, next to the guardianship of the Watchman of Israel, you might never lack at least one wise, kind, faithful friend, to whisper to you words of reproof or consolation, as the case should be. This would relieve my anxieties, as nothing else would, short of real, living, Christian principle, ruling the heart and controlling the conduct.

But the evil is more than negative—it is positive and obtrusive!

Ten thousands of young men are surrounded by vicious and unprincipled associates. Besides having no one to take a real, outgoing interest in their welfare, they are thrown of necessity into a species of direct companionship, during the hours of toil and study—in the dining-room and dormitory, with those who have no fear of God before their eyes. This is a danger which they have to encounter at every onward step. Fear as they may, contact with evil is impossible to avoid. If they walk the streets of the city, or tread the floors of the dormitory, it is to see sights, and hear sounds, and be subjected to influences, all of which, gradually and imperceptibly, but surely and permanently, are drawing the 'lines of deformity' on their hearts. This is the grand peril which alarms the pious parent, and wakes him up to pray in the silence of the night, when he thinks of placing a son in school, sending him to college, or locating him in one of our towns for purposes of trade. No wonder that the father cries out, "God bless and keep our dear son!" No wonder that the mother betakes herself to her closet, and begs God to take care of her darling boy!

In multitudes of cases, it seems really almost a miracle if they do escape. The heart, by itself, is inclined to evil—irrespective of any external drawing; and if this native sinful tendency be aided, as it is too often, by the well-planned arts of the seducer, no wonder if ruin ensues! An unprincipled companion is often an unmitigated curse. If the fruit do not appear very fully, at once, the seed is sown, and sooner or later we may expect a foul harvest.

Alas! how often have I known youth, who, only a short time before, left the paternal roof amiable in their dispositions and pure in their morals, soon turn into ringleaders of vice, and from *being* tempted—become tempters themselves! We look around with astonishment at such downfalls, and inquire what enemy has done this! But should we search out the matter, it would generally be found, that the dreadful evil could be traced to the skepticism, the poisonous habits, or the licentiousness of some pleasant, jovial companion.

Then, to add to the danger, **books** of a certain kind are a fruitful source of injury to the young. Ours, we love to say, is a reading age; and few are the parents who do not feel gratified to have their children imbibe a fondness for this employment. But we would make a great blunder, if we conclude that all must be well because they subscribe for a magazine, and are often seen with a book in their hands. What tales of crime in its worst possible form have been told, the last few years, in some of the high places of our own land, as the known and recognized result of pernicious reading! Again and again have both adultery and blood been traced to this single source! As it regards the books with which the country is fairly inundated, it may well be said, "all is not gold that glitters." If one contains the bread of life—another is filled with deadly poison. To say the least, there is a kind of sickly sentimentalism pervading many of the fashionable volumes of the day, which scarcely less really unfits the reader for the duties of earth, than for communion with heaven.

"Such reading," as Hannah More well remarks, "relaxes the mind which needs hardening, dissolves the heart which needs fortifying, stirs the imagination which needs quieting, irritates the passions which need calming, and, above all, disinclines and disqualifies for active virtues and spiritual exercises." Young men must take heed what they **read**, as well as how they **hear**. The eye is as fruitful an inlet of evil as the ear!

It is my deliberate opinion, that thoughtful, studious youth are exposed to few greater perils than are to be found in books. So fully am I convinced of this, that I would like to see a large majority of all the publications which come in such crowds from the press, consigned to one enormous conflagration! The ability to read and the love of reading, like a thousand other things good in themselves, have their attendant evils. A bad book must exert a bad influence, and the more touching it is in incident, and the more captivating in style—the worse of necessity this influence will be!

The heaviest censures upon such works have fallen sometimes from the authors themselves. Goldsmith, though a very popular novelist and writer of plays, gave this advice in respect to the education of a nephew—"Above all things, never let him touch a novel or romance." He had good sense and right feeling enough to keep his voluptuous lines from his own daughters, though not enough to prevent his sending them abroad into the world. It is affirmed too of a celebrated stage-actor, that he never allowed his children to see the inside of a theater. There is meaning in such opinions, coming from such men.

Such are the circumstances, my young friends, in which you are placed, and it is idle to complain of them. The present state would be no probation to you, if you were already so confirmed in good principles, and so free from temptations—as to have nothing to fear either from yourselves or the position you occupy. **That is the highest virtue that consists in overcoming the blandishments of vice.** No crown is so bright as that which the victor will wear. Instead then of unavailing regrets at trials, arise whence they will, and come as they may, be it your determination by the help of God to surmount them all.

Deem it not unkind that I take so much pains to apprize you of your perils. If they exist, it is important that you should know them. The difference between being conscious of danger, and unconscious of it, is like that between two travelers passing over the same rough road, one of whom has his eyes open, and the other has his eyes shut. Both may stumble. Both may fall; but the advantage is immensely on the side of him who looks at the obstacles which lie in his way.

Yes, you are in danger, in danger from inward corruption and outward temptation; in danger from your own native bias to evil, and from the traps which are set for your feet; and it is proper for me to raise the voice of alarm. I believe in the doctrine of human depravity—I know what the Bible says of the difficulty of leading a godly life—I have been over the ground which you now occupy; and to me it is no marvel that ministers, teachers, friends and parents all unite in asking for you the preserving mercy and the sanctifying grace of God. There is reason for this solicitude. It is not without a cause.

I do not charge it upon you as a fault, that you are inexperienced. I do not blame you in all cases for working in the same room with the vile, the foolish and the profane. I do not mention it as a crime that bad books are sometimes put in your way. These things are a part of your allotment. They are difficulties which you cannot always avoid. But what will you do? My heart yearns over you. And I long to see you betaking yourselves to the only sure and unfailing protection. Ask God for Christ's sake to watch over and bless you. Seek for help in the might of his outstretched arm!

But trying as your case may be, let me beg you to guard against despondency. This will give you over at once into the power of the destroyer. I would say to the student sad and downcast over his books, to the clerk jaded and worn by his often-repeated duty, and to the apprentice exhausted by his monotonous task—Be not disheartened. Though you have no father's fireside to return to, when the long day's service is over, and no kind sister to throw her arms around you and kiss away your griefs, and no circle of sympathizing friends to whom you may tell your troubles—despair not! A brighter morning will yet arrive. "Patient continuance in well-doing" will lead to "glory, and honor, and eternal life." "Heart within and God overhead," and you have nothing to fear. You will work for yourselves a way to the esteem of the wise and good, and secure a godly name and place.

There is in God as revealed in the Gospel, in Christ as exhibited in his own life, death and sacrifice, in the Spirit as a Comforter and a guide, in the Bible as a light to those who sit in darkness, and in the prospect of a blissful immortality, held out to such as endure to the end, all the strength which you need to resist evil. Be steadfast in the hour of trial, and you will gain at last a crown which will never fade away!

THE POWER OF HABIT.

You all know the meaning of the word habit. When we say of a young man, that he is *habitually* studious, amiable, and respectful, or that he is habitually indolent, negligent and morose, everybody understands us. No language could be more explicit.

Nor need I say that **you will probably be for time and eternity what your habits make you.** "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are *accustomed* to doing evil." Form correct and virtuous habits, and a light sweet as the morning dawn may be expected to gild all your future pathway! But let your habits be vicious and depraved, and a cloud darker than midnight will settle on your prospects forever!

To you this is a topic of vast importance. Your **principles** and **practices** are now just beginning to take root, and should they grow into **habits**, you will be likely to carry them to the grave with you. A volume might be written on **the power of habit**, but I must content myself with suggesting a few thoughts.

1. Let us inquire into the FORMATION of habits.

This is a gradual work, an advancing process, in which the preceding steps always influence those which follow. A habit is formed by the recurrence again and again of the same internal, or the same external acts. Such is human nature, that no one settles down suddenly into fixed opinions, or an established way of life. Men may do wrong, and they may do right; they may exhibit a holy temper or a sinful one, in a moment; but the habit is induced by repetition. It takes time for a person to become so accustomed to a given course, as to be easy and happy in such a course. Neither occasional good deeds, nor occasional bad deeds constitute character—or form what in common language we denominate habit.

You will do well to treasure these thoughts in your minds. Never forget that any one act performed, or any one feeling indulged, necessarily prepares the way for other acts and feelings of the same kind. This remark is equally true, whether applied to mental or manual pursuits; to the movements of the body, or the operations of the mind. A single glass of wine may be the beginning of a habit which shall lead to intoxication—and a single vindictive feeling may be the precursor of a train of feelings which shall lead to murder. What we do once, we more readily and naturally do a second time, and to continue in a certain path, be it reputable or disreputable, is more easy than to start.

Such is the connection of things, as constituted by God himself, and no one can disregard it with impunity. If life is to be spent in the practice of piety, special care and effort will be required at the outset; and if it is to be clouded with vice, the farther a person goes the more rapid will be his descent into evil. The hindrances in the first case, and the restraints in the second, invariably lose their power as progress is made.

Let it be noted here, that right *feelings* are more to be considered, often, than correct *doings*. For example, humility is less an overt act of self-denial, or any number of such acts, than a habit of watching against the indulgence of pride. Of meekness also we may say it is not so much an ostensible deed standing prominently forth, as it is a state of mind contrary to anger and resentment. The same observation may be made of a habit of sobriety, a habit of self-control, a habit of industry, a habit of patience, or a habit of kindness. *These virtues are all best reached, by simply keeping aloof from the opposing vices;* not to do evil is often to do well.

But remember that **bad habits are more easily formed than good ones, and are given up with more difficulty.** The native depravity of the heart accounts for this well-known fact—a depravity which inheres in man and operates with a force which none can fully estimate. It is for this reason that far less time and pains are requisite to corrupt an unwary youth, than to engraft upon his character the enduring habits of righteousness and truth.

Men are self-indulgent and covetous, revengeful and proud—naturally and spontaneously—without example or teaching. In the present fallen state, wrong and misery are the result of giving up things to their own native tendencies. In the natural world, you have only to leave a field to itself, and you will see it covered with briers and thorns. But if you would have it filled with beautiful and waving wheat, you must apply care and toil. It is easy to float down the stream—but to resist the current and reach the fountain requires effort.

Such statements are full of instruction, and you will do well to think them over again and again. There are but few things which it more concerns you to understand than the way in which habits are formed, so as to become a part of one's abiding character. The value of sound principles—firm, unwavering, truth-evincing principles—can never be over-estimated, and no efforts to make them yours can be too great. They are as necessary to the development of a good and useful character, as the circulation of the blood in the body, or the rising of the sap in a tree.

2. We shall do well to consider the AMAZING STRENGTH of habit.

Habit is said to be a second nature. What a man gets accustomed to, let its influence be good or bad, he finds it very difficult to abandon. We can bend or twist a 'twig' to whatever shape we please, but let that twig become a 'tree', and it requires the force of a whirlwind to uproot it. It is one thing for a child to form the habit of prayer and reading the Scriptures, and quite another thing for the man of gray hairs to do so. The son may keep from the inebriating cup; but no one can tell what dreadful struggles it will cost his father to dash it to the ground.

Few are thoroughly aware of the controlling power of habit. It is possible to train the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, in habits entirely foreign to their nature; and yet these habits when thus superinduced can scarcely be broken. The process is tedious, before a dog and a cat can be made to live together in the same cage. But it can be done, and done so completely that what was previously strange and unnatural, becomes by habit a part as it were of their very being.

The novice in the use of opium, must lay his account with nausea, headache, and languor; but let indulgence grow into a habit, and he finds it almost like parting with life itself, to break it off. As often as the hour returns, be it morning or noon, or night, the appetite is aroused and demands gratification. There is something within, which like the horseleech cries, give, give. The demand becomes imperative beyond that for daily food.

Could you see this matter in its true light, you would tremble at the thought of being addicted to a bad habit. Why the doing of a particular act, especially when it is so unpleasant at first, should beget a disposition to repeat it and even render it agreeable, we need not inquire. It is sufficient for all practical and useful purposes, to know that such is unquestionably the fact. It is in recognition of this general and uniform law of the human constitution, that the Bible utters its most energetic warnings and gives forth its loudest notes of alarm. "Sudden destruction," "destruction without remedy" is to come upon such as have acquired the habit of hardening their necks in the midst of reproof. An old man's bones are represented as being "full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust."

If examples of **the iron force of habit** are called for, we have them in abundance. All are aware what adamantine chains encircle the man, who has unhappily become accustomed to the stimulating influence of **intoxicating drinks**. It was not always with him, as it is now. At first he took a glass not to appear singular, or to nerve his arm for his daily task, or to help him bear some physical pain, or drive away a cloud of trouble. There was then no love of intoxicating drink for its own sake. But soon drinking became a habit; and how strong the habit, let broken-hearted parents, a weeping wife and children, and an undone eternity reveal! Resistance seems out of the question. "If," said such a one, "a glass of wine stood before me, and I knew that endless misery must be the consequence of drinking it, I could not refrain."

Equally overpowering perhaps is the habit of **gambling**. Tales sufficient, one would think, to melt any heart not made of rock, are told of the effects of this vice, on character, fortune and domestic peace; and yet its thraldom is unbroken! To give a single case—A man in one of our large cities had become opulent, and made his fortune by the unrighteous avails of the gaming table. For a time, all appeared well. But at length he met with a villain more adroit than himself, played deeply, and was unsuccessful. With a heavy heart he went home, and was found the next morning, hanging on one of the timbers of his own bed-chamber—a blackened and frightful corpse!

These, beloved youth, are alarming illustrations, but they are not of unusual occurrence. Mark how the habit of **falsehood** grows upon a man, until from simple exaggeration in little things, he comes to be so notorious a liar that his word is not worth a straw. One may be long in reaching this sad eminence; but when it is reached, all is lost. The plainest truths passing through such a man's lips, are almost as surely falsified, as rays of light passing through water are refracted. Much the same thing may be said of theft and profaneness, Sabbath-breaking and infidelity. **When the habit of these vices is formed, it is a miracle of mercy if they are ever abandoned!**

Yet, blessed be God, there is a bright side to this picture. If **bad** habits acquire at length a giant hold upon the mind and heart, it is encouraging that there is some degree at least of the same force in **good** ones. Men do not easily turn aside, after walking for years in the right path. "Oh," said a profligate descendant of pious ancestors, upon retiring after an evening of jest and merriment, "I wish I could forget the prayers which my mother taught me." You may all recollect the confession of the late John Randolph of Roanoke. "I would have been a French atheist, had it not been that my mother used to call me to her, when a little boy, to repeat the Lord's prayer." This saved him from the evil vortex.

Such facts are instructive to parents, but they make a special demand upon the attention of youth. **You, who are now in the bloom of life, are every day weaving for yourselves a web of habits, and when formed, it will have strength beyond all your power to break it!** Could you see this subject in its true light, how carefully would you avoid the very first fatal step! Be careless, be indolent, be skeptical, be irreligious, be intemperate now—and you will find where you are, and what you are—when recovery is hopeless! Or be early thoughtful, sober-minded and pious—and you will lay up for time to come, blessings untold. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as walk in them."

3. Mark for a moment the EFFECTS which habit produces.

These are apparent every day, and not to take them into account is unwise indeed. Break up a man's habits, even by improving what you call his comforts, and you often make him miserable. It is usually no kindness to the aged, to take them from their cottage, their frugal fare and their early meals, and place them in the mansions and surround them with the ceremonies of fashionable life. Changes of this sort, make them with whatever kind intentions you please, are irksome, and seldom fail to produce discontent. Men who have become opulent by habits of strict attention to business, always perhaps run some risk when they retire from the throng and bustle of life. The quiet and the shade of the country cannot keep the thoughts away from the counting-room and the exchange.

Be careful then to *start* aright—and afterwards be satisfied to *keep* quietly on in the path of rectitude. Once learn to master the difficulties of your allotment, to resist the temptations that lie in your path, and to rise superior to the ridicule of the world, and you will, almost as a matter of course, find your bosom filled with happy emotions. The chief struggle is at the outset. The individual who rises early to his study or his trade, soon acquires a habit of looking out upon 'the beauties of the morning', which renders him cheerful and contented. Life to such a one has a brightness and buoyancy which the indolent and listless never enjoy. **Even duties that are at first trying and difficult, become such sources of real pleasure**, that we often hear the laborer singing merrily at his anvil and the loom.

Only be sure that the course is right and just, and as soon as it becomes habitual it will produce positive enjoyment. God thus intermingles comforts with the trials, crosses and burdens of life—and so arranges things, as one happily says, that the purest water is filtered through *charcoal.*

I can scarcely be too earnest in impressing these thoughts on your attention. If considerate and observing at all, you cannot help seeing how habits of order and temperance and industry—promote health, peace of mind, and prosperity. Not only is the noonday of such a morning warm and genial, but its evening-tide is calm and serene. It is pleasant to mark the fresh countenance, the firm step, and the green old age of one, whose habits of sleep, labor, food and recreation have all been good. A bright and cheerful light is almost sure to shine upon such a path to its very close. What a contrast this to the haggard looks and trembling limbs of the man, whose bad habits have fixed a brand upon him which he must carry to the grave! Do what he may afterwards, traces of the old evil will remain and stick to him until the end.

Good habits are everything to a young man. Point me to a boy in the community, who is growing up thoughtful, industrious, and discreet, no matter how humble his circumstances—and I venture to predict that his future course in the world will be useful and honorable. Rare indeed are the instances in which such a one is beguiled in later life from the paths of uprightness. The good habits he has formed, in addition to their own intrinsic power, will be sure to draw around him a thousand kindly influences, all strengthening the bonds of virtue. But what can be anticipated for an idle, intemperate, disorderly young man? In some lucid moment of after-life, he may resolve upon reformation—but his habits, like so many strong ropes, fasten him to the ways in which he has long been walking. It seems impossible for him now to be anything different from what he has been.

The **mind**, also, suffers from bad habits as well as the body. Let a person once lose his delicacy of feeling, and a wound is inflicted which many a day of sorrow cannot heal. The bad book that he allows himself to read, the obscene talk in which he indulges, and the impure objects on which he fastens his thoughts, will be sure to make blots hard to be effaced. Even true repentance has no power to wash away the stain. Regret it as he may, the unhallowed imaginations once loved and cherished, will not now depart at his bidding.

Hear what strong and emphatic language the celebrated Lord Brougham uses on this point—"I trust everything under God to habit, upon which in all ages the Lawgiver as well as the Schoolmaster has mainly to place his reliance. It is habit which makes every duty easy, and casts the difficulties upon a deviation from the customary course. Make sobriety a habit—and intemperance will be hateful. Make prudence a habit—and prodigality will seem like a crime. Make honesty a habit—and fraud will be abhorred. Give a child the habit of sacredly regarding truth, and he will as soon think of rushing into a hurricane, as of telling a falsehood." These are broad declarations, and yet they are evidently founded on a deep acquaintance with human nature.

May I not hope then, that you will lay all this seriously to heart. There are instances, blessed be God, in which the idle become industrious; the drunkard abandons his cups; the swearer learns to fear an oath; and the dissolute embrace a life of purity. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. But these cases are so rare as not to be expected in the ordinary course of Providence. What you desire to be, five, ten, twenty, or forty years hence—that strive to be and pray to be at once. Pluck up the sapling before it grows into a tree! Check the disease before it seizes upon the vitals. Meet the enemy on the borders, and allow him not to penetrate the country.

If you would ever love the Bible, begin to read it carefully and prayerfully now. If you would ever put your trust in Christ, begin to study the beauties of the cross now. If you would ever live a holy life, begin to fear and obey God now. Now you have a tablet of wax on which to inscribe characters of loveliness, and peace and salvation. A few years hence this wax will be granite. Be chaste like Joseph, be humble like Moses, be temperate like Daniel—and the habit will remain until your heads are laid on their last pillow. Trials will come, when we shall see what you are, and what you will do. It is a storm that gives a sight of the depths of the sea; and **it is a season of temptation, that gives us a glimpse of one's real character.**

Go out into the world with bad habits, and I tremble for the result. With good habits, and God's blessing, you will be safe everywhere, in city or country, counting-house or mechanic's shop, student's room or clerk's office.

THE INFLUENCE OF FRIENDSHIP.

Someone remarked to the celebrated John Wesley, as he was entering upon his religious course, "You must either find companions—or make them." This is true of every one. It is not good for man to be alone. Even the bliss of Paradise was not deemed complete, until Adam had a companion to unite with him in his labors, and share with him his joys.

This is a law of our nature, operating upon all, but felt with most force in early life. Young people are formed for communion and companionship. It would make them wretched to immure them in a hermit's cell. But just in proportion to the strength with which their feelings fasten upon those whom they call their friends—will be the power of these friends to be either a blessing or a curse to them.

Scarcely anything else is so pregnant of weal or woe. Solomon has said, "He who walks with wise men shall be wise—but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

You will have friends—and you will feel their influence. The link is mysterious which binds human beings together, so that the heart of one answers to the heart of another, like the return of an echo; but such a link exists. There seems to be a sort of welding process, by which the feelings and principles of two individuals, before entire strangers, are soon reduced to a complete identity. *One catches the spirit, and copies the manner of the other, so that in a short time the same character belongs to both!* Wax does not more certainly retain the figure of the seal, than does the mind retain the impression produced by communion and association. The influence is often silent and unperceived, like the rolling in of a wave in a quiet sea; but like that same wave it is mighty and resistless.

On the one hand, make wise and good men your chosen companions, and you put yourselves in the direct way of becoming wise and good. Intimacies of this sort are invaluable in the formation of character. A network of virtuous associations will thus be woven around you, through which you will find it difficult to break, even should you desire so to do. The operation is secret and imperceptible, but the effects are striking. Could we only persuade the youth among us to mix with the pure, the considerate, and the amiable—they would feel the happy influence. Strongly inclined to evil as is the heart of man—godly friendship never fails to be a check. Let them once become the companions of such as fear the Lord, and they will rarely be found disbelieving his word and profaning his name, or trampling his Sabbath in the dust. The power of a truly consistent godly example, bad as the world is, is immense. Even when it does not reach so far as to be saving, it proves salutary; and when it does not prevent eventual ruin, it has the effect of putting far off the evil day.

But, on the other hand, become the associate of men of bad principles and practices, and you are in danger of walking in the same path. Example, always influential, is peculiarly so, when it sets in the wrong direction. The reason is that in every such case the 'depraved model' finds something in the bosom congenial to itself—and the 'wicked pattern' finds its agreement in the existing state of the heart. On this account it is, that a single improper friendship often works the most fatal results. All that parents, teachers, and pious friends have been doing for years, disappears as the refreshing dew before the rising sun. Associate with the vile, and you will most assuredly become vile. To *"walk* in the counsel of the ungodly," is the first step towards *"standing* in the place of sinners," and *"sitting* in the seat of the scornful."

All this is well understood by those who have children to educate, or sons to send out into the world. There is always a sense of security, when it is certain that the roommate is studious and sober-minded, and the fellow-apprentice and clerk are steady and church-going. Men who have no real religion themselves, are often desirous to place their sons and daughters in circumstances where God is honored, and the Bible is treated as a book from heaven. This is a kind of homage, which truth and goodness exact of thousands whose hearts after all continue wedded to the paths of iniquity.

Remember, in this connection, that whatever is good or bad, lofty or degrading, virtuous or vicious—in the human bosom—will be most fully developed in society. Lot, no doubt, would have been a better man than he was, had he been surrounded with examples of piety; and Esau would have been a worse man than he was, had he lived in a wicked family. Encouragement is thus given to those who are struggling upward, and obstacles are put in the way of those who are going downward. No one, unsustained by companionship and associates, ever rises to the fullest measure of excellence; and no one, who is not urged on by others, ever sinks to the lowest depths of depravity. The pious are more decidedly pious—and the wicked are more decidedly wicked—as the result of union, concert, and cooperation.

It is a well-ascertained fact, that a company of bad men will generally be more openly and boldly vile than any one of that company would dare to be alone. In this case, the first stimulates and draws on the second, the second the third, until the voice of conscience is drowned, and every feeling of shame is eradicated from the heart. If a person really wishes to rid himself of all virtuous restraint, he has only to go with the multitude to do evil, and the end is gained. In the confusion and bustle of noisy associates, sin has no such sting as it has in private. What opportunity is there here for those serious reflections and painful misgivings, which come thronging upon the mind in the stillness of the bed-chamber and the solitary walk. Instead of asking what God and conscience approve, the only question now is—What will gratify the company? If this point can be secured, there seems to be no thought of the remorse thus stored up for a sick chamber, or a dying bed.

In a large majority of cases, pre-eminence in evil results from the abuse of that social principle, which God has implanted in our bosoms as a help to the development of piety. Where is it, let me ask, that the profane jest is uttered against the Scriptures, the Lord's-day, and the ministry of the Sanctuary? Under what circumstances is it, that the song of the drunkard is heard, and the silence of midnight is disturbed by the mutterings and curses of the gambler? How does it come to pass that here one, and there another, is enticed to the house of infamy and the vortex of damnation? These are not vices which spring up in retirement and are connected with thinking on one's ways. They have their origin in noise and bustle and excitement—and not in stillness or solitude.

This is the point at which the road starts which leads to profaneness, intemperance, and debauchery. Festive seasons and days of mirth, afford a fruitful soil for the growth of sin. The mind is thus unbent; pleasurable sensations are excited, and one gives countenance to another, until the most disgusting impiety and inebriation ensue.

There is more of weight and importance in these truths than is always supposed. A solitary Deist or Universalist living in a neighborhood of consistent Christians, is not likely to hold his errors very firmly, or broach them with a very confident air. Infidelity is a plant which does not thrive well by itself. It grows up more rankly and bears its more noxious fruit amid the noise and smoke and fumes of the bar-room, and puts on its deepest hues while the drunken cup is passing around. Who ever heard of a man's railing against the Bible, or the final doom of the wicked, in his solitary chamber? Perhaps such a thing is sometimes done, but impiety like this loves publicity and show. Clairvoyants would not "mutter and peep" if there were none to hear.

It is well, too, to remark that young men of amiable dispositions are often most in danger from bad company. Owing to that great catastrophe which so utterly deranged man's whole moral nature, some of those very traits of character which are denominated virtues—seem really to open the door to vice. This is but too true of thousands who are blessed with a soft, mild and yielding disposition. Like some plants which change the color of their blossoms as often as you change the soil in which they stand, these people take their tone of feeling from surrounding circumstances. While at home, where the Bible was read, prayer offered, the sanctuary visited and God worshiped—everything apparently went well with them. But after receiving the farewell blessing of a kind father, and the parting embrace of a fond mother—new scenes soon opened and new impressions were made.

We are pleased to see a soft and kindly temper in early life; but it is not to be concealed that such a temper exposes one to peculiar peril. A person of such a disposition, usually lacks firmness and independence of character. Hence we frequently see him falling in with the opinions and practices of his companions, even in opposition to his own convictions of right and wrong. He has not internal strength to resist evil, provided it puts on an inviting aspect. Often is he drawn into fellowship with the wicked in scenes of dissipation and vice, simply because he has not the courage to resist. Sooner than turn his back upon some unprincipled associate, he will sacrifice conscience, peace of mind, and the favor of God.

Sad is it for such a one, when he falls into the snares of those who, under a gentle and deceitful appearance, hide a heart of deadly opposition to the ways of piety. The fly in the web of the spider, or the fish on the hook of the angler, is a fit emblem of a victim like this.

Sir Matthew Hale, one of the most learned and upright judges who ever sat on the bench in England or any other country, came near being ruined in this very way. When quite young he was amiable and studious, and great hopes were entertained of his future eminence. But some strolling theatrical players came to the town where he lived, and he was induced by his own yielding disposition, to become a witness of their performances. This so completely captivated his heart, that he lost all relish for study, and gave himself up to dissipated company. Happily, however, for his prospective usefulness and peace of mind, as he was one day surrounded by vile associates, it pleased God to put a stop to their folly, by smiting one of their number with a sudden disease, which soon sent him to the grave. This broke the bonds which tied the heart of young Hale to a life of dissipation, and drove him to his closet, his Bible, and his God.

Instances of the like wandering are common—alas that instances of like return are so few. Let one of an easy complying disposition, and with little fixedness of principle, come into contact with educated and refined iniquity—and the work of ruin is speedily done. The politeness of the exterior renders him unsuspicious of the sink of corruption within. At first he only listens, then he begins to imitate, and soon he goes as an "ox to the slaughter and as a fool to the correction of the stocks!"

All this is confirmed by the fact, that **young men are sure to be estimated by the character of their companions.** Not only do a man's familiar friends exert an influence over him, but what is more, they constitute the sure and ready test by which others judge of his worth. There is an old proverb, and all experience verifies it—"every man is known by the company he keeps." On this account it is that shrewd and intelligent observers of human nature seldom put themselves to the trouble of looking any further in order to decide upon a person's reputation. Tell them where the clerk or apprentice spends his evenings, and with whom he takes his walks, and it is enough. Nothing would seem stranger to them than to look for a sober, considerate, trustworthy young man—in the midst of the idle, the profane, and the licentious. Never do they expect to find one that is temperate, industrious and correct—among a noisy, dissipated and drunken crew. So certain is it, that every individual will be what his companions are—in character, habits, and way of life—that in nine cases out of ten, no further testimony is required.

REPUTATION is a delicate plant, which will not bear the touch of violence, or the breath of pollution. Though it advance by slow and almost imperceptible degrees, it often, like the Prophet's gourd, withers in a night. It is possible for you to lose in an hour—what it costs years of care and prudence to gain. A little lack of consideration—a little forgetfulness of what is due to yourselves—a little yielding to the blandishments of vice—may inflict an injury never to be repaired! But take another course. Seek the society of the good—cast in your lot among the virtuous and faithful—and your standing will become reputable at once. Everybody will see that you respect yourselves, and this will secure the respect of others.

I charge you, ponder well these remarks. If you are seen to associate freely with such as are known to have no respect for the Scriptures, and no reverence for the Sabbath, especially if it should once come to be understood that you can cast in your lot with those who have gone so far in the ways of transgression as to glory in their shame, you must not deem it a hardship to be treated as if you maintained the very same character. This is perfectly natural, and not at all to be complained of. You might as well visit a district infected with the plague, and expect to be welcomed at once to the bosom of families where health prevails; as to associate with the workers of iniquity, and hope to pass along without having a mark fixed upon you, by men of every name and place.

What a penalty to pay for going astray in this one particular; and yet it must be paid, if the false step be taken. Such are the legitimate fruits of friendships formed without regard to the high interests of morality and virtue; and they open the way to a miserable life—as well as an undone eternity. A young man of good character may hope to gather around his dwelling the blessings of peace, and the comforts of plenty. But with no safe and reliable passport like this, he enters upon life only to end it in grief to himself and disappointment to his friends. Ah! who would be willing to purchase the friendship of the wicked at so dear a rate? Who can consent to pay such a price for the privilege of filling his own cup with wormwood and gall?

As united fires send up the tallest and fiercest flames, so in the case before us, the wickedness of the entire group seems to concentrate upon each individual. Shun then, as you would pestilence and death—all such as have contracted wicked habits. No matter what gay clothing they wear, how flippant their conversation, or how respectable their friends—they are not the companions for you. It is impossible to join affinity with them, without exposing yourself to be dragged into the same gulf, in which they are fast sinking.

If you will take the advice of one older than yourselves—do not be ambitious of having a multitude of bosom friends. Far be it from me to utter a syllable, which might by any possibility be construed into an encouragement of those misanthropic feelings, which sometimes struggle for ascendency, even in the youthful bosom. But still let me tell you, that to open your arms to everyone's embrace, and to form friendships with every newcomer, is to sow the seeds of sorrow for yourselves. My advice is—be polite, be kind, be courteous to all. But for your own sakes, be close friends with very few. Make companions of parents, brothers and sisters, and you need never feel lonely.

Let me say further—in choosing friends, learn to set a much higher value on virtue and religion—than on any outward distinctions. Surely, you need not wonder at the multiplied sorrows which too often embitter life, if you but call to mind on what principle it is, that some of its most sacred ties are formed. The inquiry is not—Has the individual a truly good character; but, has he wealth, is he prosperous in business, and do his connections stand high in the world? Family, fortune, and personal attractions are not infrequently regarded as a tolerably fair offset for serious suspicions against purity of morals. Oh, is it any matter of surprise that this world of ours is to so great an extent a sad and disappointed world. What real happiness can a young person, male or female, expect from a voluntary alliance with that which is low in feeling, debased in taste, and depraved in habits? The hope of after-reformation in such cases, is so fallacious, that you should never dream for a moment of relying upon it. Let the change for the better come first, and let the union, if it ought to take place, follow.

ERROR—its Causes and Consequences.

"I envy no man his learning, his wit, his eloquence, or his imagination, but of all possible possessions, there is none I prize so highly as a firm and well-established religious belief." Who, think you, made this remark? It was not a disappointed and desponding man turning in disgust from a world which had refused him its pleasures, nor was it a minister of the gospel, called by his very office to speak of the Bible and eternity. No! these are the sober and well-considered words of one courted by the great and the gay—a man of high distinction in the scientific world, for years in succession President of the Royal Society of Great Britain, and the inventor of the Safety Lamp, of such inestimable benefit to miners. The language is that of Sir Humphrey Davy—a name of renown. No man in the early part of the present century stood higher as a practical philosopher; and his lectures were attended by brilliant audiences, attracted as well by the results of his experiments, as the eloquence of his manner and the clearness of his expositions. Such a man has a right to speak. From him it is we learn, that a well-established religious faith is to be prized above all other attainments and possessions.

Weighty sentiment this—and happy will it be for us if it exerts its proper influence! The times are full of peril. We see the minds of people wandering through every grade and form of skepticism, from the more dignified and manly infidelity of the last century, down to the lying wonders of Spiritism. Such is its chameleon face that we can scarcely sketch its likeness, before it assumes some new form. The only stability about it is, its contrariety to the simple truths of the Bible—its rejection of the claims of God and divine truth.

But why is it so? The CAUSES of every sort of infidelity are three—Ignorance, Pride of understanding, and a Bad Life.

That **ignorance** is a fruitful source of infidelity, especially in our day, there can be no reasonable doubt. The time seems to have gone by when men of talents and learning, like Hobbes, and Collins, and Bolingbroke, and Shaftesbury, are willing to be ranked among open and avowed unbelievers. One full experiment of what wit and erudition could do to put the Bible down was permitted, but it is not repeated and probably never will be. The thing has been tried and failed, ignominiously and forever. It is seldom now that we find real learning and lofty intellect enlisted in the work of overthrowing the Bible and the ministry of the gospel. The business seems entrusted to feeble and unfledged hands.

Lord Bacon understood the matter well, and he has given us his opinion in language which every school-boy should remember. "A little learning," I quote the words of the distinguished sage and the profound philosopher, "a little learning may incline a man to infidelity—but a good deal is sure to bring him back to the Bible." This remark is well founded, and seldom needs the least qualification. If infidelity is making proselytes, and probably it is in some quarters, I venture to affirm it is not among the well-educated, the deeply-read, the truly intelligent. It is instructive to mark who they are, here and there, that take sides against the Bible. What class of people is it, that rise up and say Christianity is a failure; responsibility to God is a figment of the brain; and suffering in the world to come is a bugbear? Men of respectability and station in society no longer hazard such destructive assertions. The infidels of our cities and larger towns, except foreigners and newcomers, are the young and inexperienced people of little learning and less good sense. These are they, who gather up and retail errors that have been exploded a thousand times before.

I am well aware that in making this statement, I shall be considered as treading on tender ground. Be it so. It is enough for me to know where I stand, when I affirm fearlessly, and beg you to bring the affirmation to the touch-stone of the most rigid scrutiny, that the infidelity of our day is mainly the infidelity of ignorant pretense. What if these people can start inquiries which their humble and pious neighbors are unable to solve? A child of five years may ask questions about himself and his destiny, about this world and the next, about the soul and God, which the best educated men on earth are unable to answer.

Let nothing of this kind move you from your steadfastness. Faith in the Bible, just as it reads, with all its duties and precepts, is but believing in God, as a child believes in a fond father, or a wife believes in a faithful husband, or a patient believes in a skillful physician, or a soldier believes in a brave commander; and is no less reasonable.

Pride of understanding, too, comes in to help on this work of infidelity. **Humility is a hard lesson for sinful men to learn.** There is something in the human heart that rises in opposition to inspired truth, on a variety of subjects connected with God and sin, and law and pardon, and justification and final punishment. These are subjects in relation to which young men, more than any other class, are prone to cavil and object. You would be surprised to hear any such doubts suggested or denials made by those of the other sex. A young lady would lose her respectability at once, if it were known that she could talk lightly about the Scriptures, salvation, or the world to come.

Allow me to illustrate my idea by a reference to the life of the late excellent Dr. Dwight. When he entered upon the presidency of Yale College, no small portion of the students, we are told, were bold and declared infidels. Indeed, so proud were they of this distinction, that they assumed the names of the principal Deists of England and France. Full of confidence in themselves, they resolved to bring the matter to an early issue, and overwhelm the new president at the very outset of his course. Accordingly the first question which they proposed for public debate was, "Are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments the word of God?" They were told to select which side of this inquiry they chose, and bring forward all the facts and arguments which were supposed to bear on the subject. Most, if not all, who were expected to take part in the debate, appeared as the open champions of infidelity. But what was the result? When they had ended, and were congratulating themselves on having gained a victory, the president took up their arguments one by one, and succeeded in showing them that they did not at all understand the subject. From that day skepticism began to go down in the college, until it became universally unpopular.

A story very similar to this is told of the learned and venerable Chief Justice Marshall. Much in the same way did he silence a company of forward and boastful young men at a public inn, who had just been making out to their own satisfaction, that the Bible is not the book of God. That venerable man, in a strain of simple and convincing eloquence, such as he well knew how to employ, went over the whole ground of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, as they all sat together by the fireside, and so clearly did he make out the case, that not one of them had another word to utter. But what is it except pride and self-confidence that makes such people infidels? Instead of being really distinguished for free and liberal thought, these are the men of all others, whose minds are hampered, and whose horizon is narrow. Notice it when and where you will, real superiority is always connected with modesty and self-distrust. The great Sir Isaac Newton was a pattern of modesty.

But, above all, skepticism has its origin in a sinful life. Nothing has such an influence in leading men to break loose from the Bible and the Savior—as the love of sin. Thousands are against religion for no other reason than because it condemns their wicked practices. You never heard of an individual that was humble and holy and prayerful—who rejected the Scriptures, denied an hereafter, and called in question the being of a God. This is the fruit which grows only on the brambles and thorns of vicious indulgences. A person must have a reason for wishing there were no final account and no eternal retribution, before he can believe that there is none.

The principles and practices of men will exert a powerful influence over each other. Those who do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, are never forced to raise an outcry against the doctrine of human depravity, or the judgment of the great day. If this be done at all, it is almost sure to be done by such as cast off fear and restrain prayer before God. The heart is led to adopt some false scheme of religious opinion and practice from a consciousness—a painful consciousness—that the life will not abide the test of the true one. Look around you and see if these things are not so. When you find people rejecting the gospel, decrying the most sacred institutions, and seeking to cut away the cords which bind our country to the throne of God, you may conclude of a certainty, that there is something wrong in themselves. Good men never sow such seeds of bitterness. This is the work of an enemy—an enemy as really to human welfare, as to the government of Jehovah.

The matter is every now and then brought to the decision of actual experiment. Let some skeptical lecturer come along, and what class of the community will be drawn around him? As a general thing, be assured, you will not see the steady, the sober-minded, the church-going part of the people there. If there be open sinners and drunkards in the vicinity, they will be likely to be attracted to the spot; and if there be men of loose habits and unkind to their wives, they will be sure to make a portion of the audience. You may know the man and his message, from the character of his followers.

If anything be established beyond contradiction, it is that a sinful **life** is a fruitful source of wrong **beliefs**. A clergyman of my acquaintance tells of a boy, not over ten years of age, who stood up and looking wise among his associates declared that he did not believe the Bible. I myself have seen a man, but a few degrees removed from idiocy, avowing his belief in universal salvation. What principle was at work here? Why, the very same that led the infamous Rousseau to become an infidel after he had resolved to lead the life of a profligate. We have it from his own lips that the rejection of the Bible made him feel comfortable in his wicked courses. After conscience was thus lulled to sleep, it was easy to "work all uncleanness with greediness."

Ponder this, beloved youth, and you will be prepared to look at some of the CONSEQUENCES of embracing error.

These are numerous, and they have been in part anticipated, but we may go somewhat more into detail. "As truth," to adopt the beautiful language of Jeremy Taylor, "has its origin and dwelling-place in the bosom of God," no one can renounce the truth and embrace error without harming himself. The following effects are sure to be produced by such a course—it bewilders the mind—it affords no support in the day of trial—and it stands in the way of salvation.

There is something in error which has a direct tendency to bewilder and enthrall the mind. We often speak of infidels as "free-thinkers," but if by free-thinking is meant, real, conscious liberty, the term is egregiously misapplied. If there be anything like mental bondage—a bondage servile and degrading, a bondage worse than that imposed by the tyrants of Egypt, it is theirs. What do such men know, and what indeed can they know of thought so emancipated from everything dark and earthly, as to be able to lift itself up to God and commune with eternity? The man who renounces the Bible and its Savior, has descended into a cavern where no light can reach him with its healing beams. All the movements he now makes are the mere groping experiments of one that has not a ray of the Sun of Righteousness to guide his footsteps, or cheer his heart.

All error is downward, and the farther a person advances, the darker does his path become. To go forward seems easy and natural, but if he ever begins to think—and desires to return, he finds that he is involved in a labyrinth, from which there appears to be no escape. This accounts for the fact, that **men so seldom renounce opinions which they have once embraced and avowed before the world.** We have had in our own country an example of a clergyman running the whole round of loose opinions, relinquishing this truth of the Bible and that, until at length he landed in universal skepticism. Such facts should be held up as beacons to warn the inexperienced and unwary. Once come to harbor the idea, that this and the other great doctrines of the Scripture is not to be believed—and the delusion will be very likely to go down to the grave with you. The false notion will fix itself like a gloomy veil on the mind, and prevent your seeing the force of any opposite evidence. What you embrace from ignorance and pride, or a love of sin—will rivet fetters upon your soul never likely to be broken, until death arrests you.

It has been my lot to witness an example of this sort of mental thraldom. The individual referred to, had been in the habit, while a mere youth, of reading infidel books, and what was still worse, had often come under the influence of infidels themselves. In this way the poison had taken effect, and it seemed impossible to expel it from the system. Though he could see the evils of skepticism, and appeared really desirous to exercise faith in Divine salvation, the shackles were too strong for him to break asunder. Little does any one know, who has not made the trial, how tenacious are the cords spun and twisted by infidelity. Nothing short of the all-conquering grace of God can bring such a man to the knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth.

Again, infidelity affords no sure support in the day of trial. Skeptics, as a class, are generally unhappy men—uneasy in themselves, and dissatisfied with everything around them. They act like people treading on yielding and uncertain ground, unable to bear their weight. What indeed can there be to cheer the heart and brighten the prospects of one who has no Bible to rely upon, no God to go to, and no Savior to trust in? If he can manage to be gay and volatile in the season of prosperity, it is far otherwise when health fails, and property disappears, and friends die. Then it is that we see the sadness of such as have no hope, and are without God in the world.

Well may the Christian say, "their rock is not as our rock, our enemies themselves being judges."

You have never heard of an humble and devout believer who, in the day of sickness or on the bed of death, regretted that he had confided too implicitly in the Scriptures. We may challenge the world to produce a solitary case. But who has not heard of multitudes of skeptics, that were filled with anguish as eternity approached, and were ready to curse the hour when they began to forsake the right path? Such instances are familiar in almost every part of the land. Of all the enemies of revealed religion, in days gone by, Hume stands without a rival among those who reason, and Voltaire among those who scoff. But who were these men, what kind of life did they lead, and how did they die? Let these inquiries be answered fairly and truthfully, and there will be found to be nothing encouraging in their example. One of them left the world joking about the boat which was to carry him over the dark river, and the other raving with madness at the companions of his crimes. It is not necessary to dwell on the spectacle of the poor, drunken, bloated Paine. There are people in our country lost enough to self-respect to keep the anniversary of this man's birth—but his death was awfully appalling.

If there be a sight on earth truly distressing, it is that of an aged and feeble skeptic, neglected by men and forsaken of God. While his spirits were joyous and his anticipations bright, he could trifle with the Bible and the Savior. But it is a very different thing now that the frosts of many years are gathered on his head. With health gone, and a mind debilitated, and days and nights devoid of comfort, where is he to look for consolation, and to what refuge is he to betake himself? The heavens are all dark above him, and the earth is all desolation around him. One foot is already in the grave, and he feels himself drawn irresistibly forward toward a judgment for which he is not prepared, and a world where he can hope for no enjoyment. What a picture of despair! In vain does he cry aloud, "Come back! my early days, come back!" Ah, young men, there is no power in error to chase away the sadness of life's dark hours. In the midst of wine and song and merriment, it may do to laugh at the Bible and deny that there is a hell. But this is a poor resort for days of pain and nights of wakefulness. When heart and flesh fail, God alone can be the strength of the heart, and the portion forever.

Then, finally, skepticism of every sort stands directly in the way of salvation. This is the worst effect of all, and it is one, alas, which we have reason to fear is realized in thousands of instances. If it be under God, the truth, the simple truth of the Bible which converts men, how are they ever to be brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of the gospel, while their hearts are full of unbelief? Nothing indeed is too hard for Omnipotence, but such a state seems to me to be hopeless above all others. Let a man once imbibe some favorite system of error, and like a thick cloud it will be sure to shut out the light of heaven from his mind.

This is a point which may be brought to the touch-stone of every one's experience or observation. Tell a person that he is not lost and ruined by sin, that he needs no regeneration to fit him for the kingdom of heaven, that God is too merciful to cast off any of his creatures forever, and that there is no demand for so much prayer and effort, and you are doing all you well can to make his damnation sure. If he believes what you say, each of these opinions will prove like a bar between him and the path of life. How can he flee from the wrath to come, the very existence of which he denies, or how can he fall into the arms of Christ as a Savior, when he has no conviction that he needs such a Savior? Little do men think what consequences a rejection of these doctrines of the Bible is sure to involve. You will never find a man anxious about obtaining a new heart, until he believes that a new heart is necessary, or desirous to be made holy, until he believes that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." In matters of this nature, the conduct is controlled by the creed.

Take heed then how you yield to the beginnings of this evil. If you give up the doctrine of total depravity, or the final condemnation of the ungodly, you may for the very same reason give up any other and every other truth which you happen to dislike. The whole is made up of its several parts, and to blot out one chapter is to impugn the character of the entire book. There is a process in the human mind, in the reception of error, which you will do well to note. The man who begins by doubting in regard to certain specified statements, will generally be found after a while caviling at them; and soon the open and utter rejection of them follows as a matter of course. These things naturally and almost unavoidably follow each other. The steps are usually short which lead men down from incipient skepticism—to bold and unblushing infidelity.

How then can I do otherwise than warn you against listening to the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge. Tell me, my young friend, when or where has infidelity enlightened, purified or blessed a nation, tribe or family? Where has it taken up its abode in the domestic circle to render parents more kind, or children more dutiful, or brothers and sisters more happy in themselves, or in one another?

Where has it entered an individual bosom to soothe its sorrows, establish its hopes, and expel its apprehensions? These are achievements effected by the Bible, and the Bible alone.

I must urge you therefore to hearken to no one, be his reputation or talent what it may, who would lessen your reverence for the word of God. Never allow the beauty of language or the fascination of eloquence to diminish your regard for simple, unadulterated truth. The pill may be gilded, and yet contain arsenic. If the living teacher or the printed page be found to give you diminutive views of sin, or hide the glory of the Savior—you have heard and read enough. Take not another step in this direction. No matter what pretense is set up, your peace of mind is of more significance to you than all besides; and sooner than relinquish this blessing, burn the book that would injure you, and sacrifice the friend who would lead you astray.

But I forbear. There is one safeguard, and you will find it in cherishing an habitual reverence for the Bible as the book of the living and true God. Hold fast here, fail what may, and it will be well with you in life, well with you in death, and well with you in eternity.

CAUTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

I could hardly do any youth a better service, than to recommend to him **the frequent and careful study of the Book of Proverbs**. For pith, and force, and comprehensiveness, Solomon has had no equal, in any age or country. This is the man to whom God gave "wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore."

Among the many sayings of the wise man adapted to those in early life, let me dwell a little upon one of pre-eminent importance. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding." Here is a sovereign antidote to two of the evils to which young men are often exposed—timidity on the one hand, and presumption on the other. Only pursue your course safely between these perils, and we shall see you in due time, reaching the desired haven in peace.

What Solomon would inculcate upon youth, in this striking passage, is a continual dependence on the word and providence of God. You may exert your powers, and put forth your efforts, but you must not rely upon them. An entire submission to the will and ways of the Most High, joined to a deep distrust of your own wisdom and prudence, is what your condition demands.

The words apply to practice, as well as faith—to the course you should pursue, as well as to the creed you should adopt. In both these respects you are in danger either of self-confidence, or despondency. Every youth in the land needs to be stimulated to earnest and persevering exertion, but then he equally needs to know that the way of man is not in himself. If he can be set right, and kept right in these two particulars, eventual success is almost certain.

But why is it unsafe for men to lean unto their own understanding? It is so because of the limited capacities of the human mind. The knowledge, gained by the wisest of men, however diligent and successful they may have been, is confined within a comparatively small compass. How little, after all, do they comprehend of the operations of nature, or the mysteries of Providence? A very few steps take them beyond their depth. Wonderful as were the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton, he seemed to himself merely to have been walking along the shore, and picking up now and then a shining pebble—while the vast treasures of the ocean still lay unexplored before him. Such a sentiment from the lips of such a man, ought to have weight. Let pretenders boast as they may, true science is invariably modest. It is only the superficial thinker, the man with a bare smattering of knowledge, one that has simply tasted of the ethereal spring, that deems himself to be very wise.

Is proof of this demanded? You may find it in the well-established fact, that men of the clearest minds, and most solid attainments, are generally the most ready to admit the weakness of their own understanding. Ripe and thorough scholars are seldom self-confident. **Humility is the constant attendant of true wisdom.** Mark how patiently such people listen to others, with what modesty they give their own opinions, and how slowly they come to fixed and definite conclusions. Especially are they backward to reject that which has the sanction of age, and the recommendation of usefulness. Never do they adopt new notions on any topic of interest for the sake of being singular, or with a view of evincing their superiority to the decisions of days gone by. They have too much good sense to break loose from what is settled, and run after the thousand vagaries afloat in the world. It is of no avail to tell them, that this strange thing and the other strange thing is exciting attention, and making proselytes, unless it coincides with the lessons of the Bible, and of experience. You do not see them "carried about by every wind of doctrine."

Well do they know, that to confide in their own reasonings, on the great questions which relate to God, and pardon, and eternity, would be but to follow a false light. Men of deep reflection, and really logical minds cannot thus become the dupes of their own imbecility. What they have as yet traversed of the vast fields of knowledge, bears so small a proportion to what still lies before them, that they feel more like learning than teaching.

What a contrast this with the conduct of those, who merely skim the surface of things! Never examining any important subject with sufficient care to see its real difficulties, or grapple with them, they naturally enough become talkative and opinionated. There is but little in their minds at all, and that little lies so entirely on the top, that it runs off without an effort. A fuller vessel would be less fluent. The world abounds with such folks, and they are the very people who are ready to overturn the pillars on which society has been resting for centuries. Puffed up with a vain conceit of their own wisdom, they feel themselves equal to any task. It would really seem as if they were wise enough in their own eyes to renounce all the teachings of the past, and cast everything into a new mold. But such a course never ends well. It is that sort of leaning unto one's own understanding which is almost sure, sooner or later, to involve an utter departure from the right path.

Again, men are liable to prejudice. Where can you find an individual whose opinions on the most vital topics are not somewhat influenced by his feelings and wishes? There is, even in the most candid and ingenuous, some sort of bias in the mind, which must be resisted, or it will mislead. Be on your guard as you may, you will not infrequently detect yourselves in pursuing a given course, more because it is pleasing—than because it is right. It is what is felt to be agreeable, rather than what is known to be proper, which decides the case. Opinions are embraced, and courses of conduct persisted in every day, on the simple ground that the heart loves them—and not that the judgment approves of them. How hard it is to see things in a just light, when duty leads in one direction, and inclination in another.

This, allow me to say, is one main reason why the Bible is so often rejected. Could you get behind what is open and palpable, and examine the secret springs of action, you would find that skeptical opinions generally have their origin in inward depravity. The state of the heart determines the decisions of the judgment. Free-thinking, in a great majority of instances, is the result of free-living. So hard is it for men to practice one thing and believe another, that you will by and by see them making shift to suit the articles of their creed to the habits of their life. This is so natural that multitudes do it, almost unconsciously to themselves. What reason is there for surprise in the fact, that men who love sin, soon come to renounce the authority of the book which contains the sentence of their condemnation? It would be strange were it otherwise. Thousands dislike the Bible for the very same reason that Ahab disliked Micaiah—it "prophesies evil" against them. A known and felt unfitness for heaven, is really the grand argument by which sinful men persuade themselves that there is no hell.

An appeal to facts can scarcely fail to set this matter in its true light. Are men of loose opinions on the subject of religion, men of solemn and earnest inquiry; men of a candid and ingenuous temper; men of useful and virtuous lives? Whatever may be said of individuals, there is no difficulty in learning where they stand as a class. Let them pretend what they may as to liberality and openness to conviction, there are no people in the world so completely encased in prejudice, as those who see no truth in the Bible, and no glory in the character of Christ.

Sad as such a statement is, its truth will hardly be called in question. The word of God has to make its way to the human bosom, through a host of prejudices and biases of the most formidable character. A cold assent to it as a valuable document of antiquity, is of no avail, if you go no further. If received to any saving purpose, it must be received to govern the **will**, and purify the **affections**, and regulate the **temper**, and shape the **life**. To dress it up in beautiful binding, and give it a place on the parlor table, will not suffice. Its grand aim is to get possession of the heart, and unless dominion be given to it here, its claims to come from God will probably be rejected.

There is a prejudice in the mind which impels it to lean to its own understanding.

Once more, the sentiments and purposes of multitudes are very unsettled. Not a few pass through the world, without ever becoming rooted or grounded in any well-considered opinion, even on the most vital points. Their course from first to last is shaped altogether by circumstances. As for fixed and firmly established principles, in regard to God, and sin, and Christ, and the life to come—they cannot be said to have any whatever. The ideas they entertain on such subjects float loosely in the mind. Nothing is settled, nothing steadfast. Today they are one thing, tomorrow another; and if any single trait of character is confirmed in them, it is a love of perpetual change. We may liken them to a ship at sea without helm or ballast. When the wind blows from one point of the compass they sail before it, and when it shifts they are sure to shift likewise. Unstable as water, how can they excel?

You have often met with people of this vacillating and wavering state of mind. Though they seem to be ever learning, they are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, or quietly to settle down on any system whatever. A love of novelty keeps them perpetually chasing after this teacher and that, and trying this scheme and that. Instead of believing that arsenic is arsenic, upon the testimony of competent judges, they must needs taste for themselves, though at the hazard of being poisoned. It would be amusing, were not the interests involved so serious, to stand by and witness the thousand chameleon tints which such people assume. One thing only seems certain, and that is, that they are on a declivity, and are descending lower and lower. Jude describes them in truthful, but most alarming language—"they are clouds without water, carried about of winds, trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." What a description of a man, broken loose from truth, and driven about at the mercy of every breeze?

It is the ruin of multitudes, that they have no stability of character. Afraid of the shackles of an early education, they launch forth upon the great and wide sea of human uncertainties, as if there were neither rocks nor shoals. What their fathers and mothers taught them seems tame and lifeless. It pleases them better to turn from the beaten path, though in doing so they are forced out into a wilderness on which no ray of light falls, and where no sure map denotes the course to be pursued. Alas, how much is lost as to peace of mind, and confidence in God, by such a reckless spirit as this! In place of what once seemed fixed, and past dispute, these people find themselves now tormented by a sort of universal uncertainty. It is impossible for them any longer to say what they believe, or where they rest. From leaning unto their own understanding, they have rapidly gone down to the point of having no creed, no hope, no heaven, no God.

Pause here, and consider what has been said in the way of caution. Reflect upon the limited capacities of men, the prejudices which stand in their way, and the instability of their opinions, and you cannot but see reasons why you should not be self-confident.

But there is ENCOURAGEMENT for you as well as caution. This you have in the Divine injunction, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart."

You need guidance from above. If anything is made plain, by the history of the race, and of every individual of that race, it is that a revelation of the will of God is absolutely indispensable. Destitute of the light of the Bible, man has been forever groping in the dark, and must continue forever to grope in the dark. It was on purpose to meet this felt need of the human bosom, that the Most High has condescended to utter his voice, and give forth his oracles. On these blessed pages, all instinct with life, and all luminous with truth, we have a perfect rule of conduct. Instructions are here given, and principles are here laid down, which apply to every variety of case, even though the case itself be not particularly stated. Nothing essential to a complete system of faith, and a correct line of practice, is omitted. This single volume tells us all that we need to believe concerning God, and makes sufficiently obvious every duty that God requires at our hands. No one can wander from the right path, who meekly and honestly takes the Bible as his guide.

It is not pretended that every objection which the wicked heart of man can raise, is answered here in so many words. Men—if determined so to do—may continue to stumble and fall on such questions as—Why was sin permitted to enter our world? Why have the heathen been left in their idolatry? Why are so few who hear the gospel saved by it? They may, if they will, cavil at the incomprehensibility of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the union of divinity and humanity in the one person of Christ. But all this only shows that their proud hearts have never been humbled, and their high looks have never been brought low. On all points which relate to facts, and principles, and actual duties, the Bible is the plainest, and most easily understood book in the world. Only be ready to do the will of God, and you shall know all that need be known of the doctrines which he inculcates.

Will you spurn the light of this lamp of life, merely because you cannot solve every query in regard to the nature and mode of its shining? The book of Creation is in many respects very like the Bible. It is impossible to study them in connection, and not perceive that the pen in both cases was held by the same hand, and that they are equally emanations from the same infinite mind. The two streams flow from one great fountain-head. If the impress of Deity is fixed upon the lofty mountain, and the fruitful valley, and the rolling ocean, it is equally fixed upon the Pentateuch of Moses, the Proverbs of Solomon, and the visions of John. The same Being who formed the earth and clothed it in beauty, has given us the Prophecies, and the Psalms, and the Gospels. But these volumes, though both the product of one all-comprehensive mind, and both intended as the medium through which one undivided power and Godhead should be made known to us, are not equally adapted to inculcate moral duty. It is on the Scriptures, and on the Scriptures alone, that you must rely for direction on all such points. They speak in intelligible and clear terms as to what you should believe, and the course you should pursue.

Only approach them with the humility and simplicity of a little child, and you will find that they shed a most reviving light over all your pathway.

The Bible, to those who feel their need of its guidance, is, for the most part, a very perspicuous and intelligible communication. That difficulties are to be met in this sacred volume, that deep mysteries are brought forward on these inspired pages, is just what might have been expected. The Book would have lacked one proof of its Divine original, had it contained nothing which we cannot "search out unto perfection." But so far as essentials are concerned, its truths are clothed in language of the utmost perspicuity, and brought down to the level of the most untutored intellect. It is emphatically a book for man, consulting his needs, and adapted to his circumstances. Who ever went astray while following its directions? "Only give me," says one, "a Bible and a candle, and though shut up in the deepest dungeon, I can tell you what is going on in the world."

Then too you must depend on God's overruling **Providence**. Everyone has questions to ask respecting the way he shall take, the plans he shall adopt, and the responsibilities he shall assume, which man can never answer. The mind needs something clearer, stronger, surer to lean upon, and that something the world does not afford. If we turn to our dearest and best friends, they are as much at a loss as ourselves. If we consult the history of other men's lives, we find no solution of our doubts. A path opens on this side, but whether it is a path to walk in, or to shun, is more than mortal man can tell us; and it closes on that, but whether it closes, to turn us in another direction, or to try our patience, none are wise enough to say. We need a power above to mark out our way.

The urgency is great, but, thanks to God, it is not unprovided for. There is an all-disposing Providence rising up before us, like the Star in the East; and if we follow its direction, we shall be led safely in the way. What a privilege to be able to observe such a light, while walking in darkness. To a rightly disposed mind, nothing can be more animating than the thought, that the same God, who created the stars, and marshals the hosts of heaven—notices also a sparrow's fall, and numbers the hairs of our head. Who can say, that he has no one to care for him? If the God in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being, takes a deep interest in his welfare, what needs he more? Let him but feel right, and do right, and all will be well. Temporary embarrassments will do him no eventual harm. If his dependence is on the Mighty God of Jacob, ravens shall bring food, and fish furnish tribute money, sooner than his expectations shall be cut off.

Rely upon it, "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." No audible voice reaches his ears, from the high and holy place, saying, "This is the way—walk in it," but he has in the thousand arrangements made without his agency, and oftentimes contrary to his expectations, all the evidence he needs, that one higher than himself is giving complexion to his life. He finds scarcely anything as he once fondly thought it would be. The place he lives in is not the one which in his childish days he dreamed of, nor is he surrounded by such circumstances as once brightened his anticipations; yet he can say–"God has done all things well." Though clouds and darkness have sometimes been about him, he sees the guidance of a Divine hand almost as distinctly as did the Israelites while making their way to the land of promise.

To all this you must add earnest prayer for direction. If men will ask the help of God, they will not ask in vain. To encourage them to do this, he comes near to them by his word and Spirit, and seeks in a thousand ways to win their confidence. In nothing does he take more delight than in the weak coming to him for strength—and the blind depending upon him for sight—and the wandering directing their eyes to him for guidance. If they will find heart and voice to pray—he will be sure to find an ear to hear, and an arm to save. You may read the annals of the Church from beginning to end, and you will not meet with a solitary instance, in which God hid his face from the supplications of his people. When all other resources failed, this was the refuge to which they could betake themselves with confidence.

"The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Difficulties now and then arise in the history of every individual's life, on which the Bible seems to throw no satisfactory light, and in reference to which the responses of Providence appear to admit of no clear solution. This, though a trying case, is distinctly contemplated and provided for in the Scriptures of truth. "If any man lacks wisdom"—so runs the comprehensive direction, the explicit promise—"if any man lacks wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not, and it shall be given him." What more could be desired? Such a declaration has a value which belongs not to silver and gold. On the easy condition of going to God with a humble and believing heart, to seek his guidance in the day of perplexity, the pledge of a gracious answer is made; and heaven and earth may pass away before it shall fail. Why then should any one live or die in doubt. That very Being who alone is able to tell you what is good for man, both as a dweller on earth, and a probationer for eternity, has publicly committed himself in reference to this matter, and he will redeem his bond. The word has gone out of his mouth, and cannot be recalled. From the days of Enoch when men began to call upon his name, to the present hour, the promise stands unbroken.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and you shall never be ashamed or confounded. If you doubt this, look at Jacob on the plains of Penuel, at David in the cave of Adullam, at Ezra by the river Ahava, at Peter in the house of Simon the tanner, and at Paul and Silas in prison at midnight. Think of the prayers of Edwards in the midst of the revivals at Northampton, of Brainerd among the Indians of the wilderness, and of Martyn on the sands of Persia. These cases all proclaim as with trumpet-tongue that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man"—yes, that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." To connect one's cause by prayer with the mercy-seat, is to ensure the best possible success.

Can you then do otherwise, my young friends, than comply with the duty thus enforced? Learn to depend implicitly on the teachings of Divine **truth**; have an eye to the good **providence** of God at all times; and be faithful in pouring out your hearts in **prayer** before him, and you will be led in the right way. God himself invites you to this course, and pursuing it you will never be disappointed.

The bane and antidote are now before you. Lean to your own understanding as you make your way through the world, and nothing but disappointment and sorrow will hang upon your footsteps. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and everything is safe for both earth and heaven. And the one or the other of these things you will certainly do. Counsel you will take of someone, and it will be either of man or God, either of yourselves or your Maker. You need light, and you will seek it from your own candle, or from the Sun of righteousness. Can you hesitate?

O come now, in the bright morning of your being, while the dew of youth is fresh upon you, and put yourselves under the guidance of the word and Spirit of God. Take no step, form no associations, engage in no pursuit, without first turning aside to implore the blessing of the Mighty God of Jacob. Set out in life upon this plan, and follow it steadily from day to day, and I guarantee that the retrospect will occasion you no regret, in the hour when flesh and heart must fail. Put yourselves under the care of a covenant-keeping God, and he will "guide you by his counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory."

TRUTH between man and man.

Before I called to name any one trait of character, which goes farther than another, perhaps than all others, to render a person really worthy of respect, I should say—veracity. The child that will always tell the truth, the youth that will always tell the truth, and the man of business that will always tell the truth, is sure to be relied on. Even in the absence of much that is pleasing in deportment and amiable in disposition—a well-established reputation for simple, straight-forward, undeviating honesty, never fails to secure respect and confidence. A love of truth, like charity, seems to cover a multitude of sins.

To those especially, who are just now forming a character, the habit of stating things precisely as they are, is of more consequence than can be easily estimated. Point me to a young man, in any walk of life, of undeviating veracity—a veracity which knows no forgetfulness, and which no temptation can overcome, and I dare predict for him a safe and honorable career through the world. No danger but that such a one will open for himself an avenue to the confidence of wise and good men. Let it be seen that a love of simple verity is so imbedded in his bosom, that neither fear nor favor can turn him from it—and he will be regarded, confided in, and employed.

There are different kinds of truth; mathematical truth, moral truth, and evangelical truth, and they are all important. So there are different ways of uttering falsehood. It may be done by flattery, it may be done by promise-breaking, and it may be done by perjury. But my object now is to treat of truth in its ordinary acceptance, in the communion of man with man.

We may define truth by saying, it is conformity to fact, and to utter truth, is to utter what we honestly believe to be in accordance with fact. There is in every such case, a faithful correspondence between the heart and the lips, the feelings and the words, the inward consciousness and the outward expression. A really truthful man never intends to produce a conviction in the mind of another, by language or signs, different from that which exists in his own mind. If you could read his very thoughts, as they arise and assume shape, you could frame from them no other conclusions than those which his words are adapted to convey. Innocent himself, he cannot desire to deceive others, or allow them to receive from him as true, what he knows to be false. If he speaks or acts at all, he must speak and act conscientiously.

Be careful to understand this. No man deserves to be called a man of veracity, who does not give utterance to the real meaning of his own heart. The essence of falsehood consists in an intention to deceive, and this may be shown by a look of the eye, a motion of the hand, or a tone of the voice as effectually as by explicitly uttered words. Anything which makes an impression inconsistent with fact, when that impression is purposely made, is a departure from truth. It is either a 'spoken' or an 'acted' falsehood.

But farther. It is possible to state facts and to state them as they actually occurred, and yet so to arrange and put these facts together, as to constitute actual falsehood. Suppose I should say of two boys, William and John, at the same boarding-school, that William left John's room, and five minutes after he left it, John went in and found that his watch was gone. This might convey an untruth, in the worst sense of the term, though the things took place precisely as has been stated. I would not thus charge William with being a thief in so many words, but my way of telling the story would convey that impression. This is a homely illustration, but all the better on this account. It presents the subject in a light in which it is not sufficiently contemplated, and in a form in which it cannot but be understood. If you would avoid sinning against the ninth commandment, it is necessary to know that deception may be practiced even where no words of untruth are used. A lie may be acted—as well as uttered. It may be a lie in reality, though not in appearance.

As you come into closer contact with the world, you will meet with people ready to justify themselves for departing, on some occasions, from the laws of strict veracity. Let me name a few of the more common instances in which this is done. Here is a father trying to get his child to take medicine, and to overcome its reluctance for the bitter dose, he gravely affirms that it does not taste bad. Yonder is a fashionable lady, who wishes her time for other purposes, and sends a servant to the door to say she is not at home. Here is a circle of kind friends, who persist in telling the occupant of the sick couch, that his case is not considered at all dangerous. But are not all these to be put down in the catalogue of deceptions? To make the best of them, they are doing evil that good may come.

Such acts generally defeat their own end. The deception will be detected. Something will occur to make the disguise apparent. How much better to be open and sincere, and if we tell not the whole truth, tell nothing but the truth. Let that father act with decision, and say to the sick child in so many words—This medicine is bitter, but you can take it in a moment, and we believe it will do you good. Let that mistress of the family speak out plainly, and tell her visitors that her time for the present is occupied with other and indispensable duties. Let that group of anxious friends, if they must express an opinion to the afflicted one, express it truly, and endeavor to turn his thoughts to Him, in whose hands are the issues of life. This is the only course consistent with sound morality, and here, as in everything else, it will be found that honesty is the best policy.

But the evil in question assumes a thousand forms. There are lies of sheer malice—pure fabrications of iniquity uttered and circulated to defeat some dangerous rival, and cloud the fair fame of some political aspirant. There are lies too of self-interest, as when the seller of goods extols them beyond what he knows to be their value, or the buyer says of them, "It is nothing, it is nothing." And there are lies of vanity, told by men who love to attract attention, and can never allow a story to pass through their hands without giving it some additional embellishment. But they are all lies, and if not equally malignant in their nature, yet all to be scrupulously avoided.

By what MOTIVES then may truth be enforced? These are so numerous, it is difficult to make a selection. Reasons for speaking the truth, one with another, rise up on every side, and are drawn from time and eternity, from your relations to God and your fellow-men. Let me suggest a few of them.

Falsehood of every name and form is a sin, a sin against the God who made you, in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways. If ever tempted to transgress in this particular, open your Bible and read, as from the mouth of Jehovah himself, "You shall not deal falsely, neither lie one to another." Turn to the passage, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." This is enough. God is a God of truth; the Bible is a book of truth; Jesus is the faithful and true witness; the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, and every precept of the Most High is true and righteous altogether. How then must a lie appear in His sight!

Hence you find the most dreadful judgments inflicted for the commission of this sin. You know how the servant of Elisha was struck with a leprosy, which ended only with death, for his falsehood in reference to the talents of silver and changes of clothing given him by Naaman the Syrian. Your hearts have trembled within you, while reading the terrible catastrophe which befell Ananias and Sapphira, for lying to the Holy Spirit about the price of their land. But these are only individual instances. The history of the world proves that lying is a sin, which in the holy providence of God is seldom allowed to go unpunished.

Even life itself is not to be purchased at the price of falsehood. Had the martyrs consented by a word or a nod, to deny the Lord that bought them—could they have been persuaded to cast a single grain of incense upon the idol's altar—they might have escaped the rack, the scaffold and the stake. But false they could not be in word or in deed, though life was the forfeit of being faithful. In their view it was a thousand times better to go to prison and to death, with a clear conscience, than accept of deliverance on condition of deceiving; and that they judged wisely is proved by the crowns they now wear, and the harps they now tune.

Consider, too, how it elevates and ennobles one, to stand fast by the truth in the greatest emergencies. What else was it than the love of truth, that sustained the three Hebrew children when the fiery furnace was heated to seven-fold intensity; that enabled Daniel to answer the king so tranquilly while sitting among the lions in their den; and that filled the blessed Savior with such composure in the presence of Pilate? Truth has often stood up, unattended and alone, to rebuke the madness of the people, tear off the veil from the designs of despots, and reason of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, in the presence of pomp and power. In whatever else you fail, never, never swerve from the truth. Even a bad man, if known never to tell a lie, will command a measure of respect. But a liar is everywhere despised. To charge a man with falsehood is regarded as the greatest insult which vulgarity and ill-nature are capable of offering.

The whole frame-work of society is upheld and kept in order by truth, and nothing but truth. Let deception become universally prevalent, and communities as such could scarcely exist, much less flourish and be happy. If love is the blood which circulates through the system, imparting to it life and warmth—truth is the joints and ligaments which hold all together. What would be the condition of a family, a school, a church, or a city, in which no one's word could be relied on. In such case, the stream of social enjoyment would be poisoned at its very fountain. Other vices have but a partial and circumscribed influence, but this touches everything and pollutes everything. Suspicion now takes the place of confidence, and the abodes of human beings are turned into so many dens of ravenous beasts. The very thought is appalling. Imagine for a moment what would be the inevitable result, if the husband could no longer trust in the word of his wife—the child in that of his father—the mother in that of her daughter—or the sister in that of her brother. Confidence and happiness could have no place. Even Hope would not be left behind.

No wonder that the liar is regarded as so degraded a character. Long ago did he begin to go astray by not keeping up the distinction between truth and falsehood, so that he soon became not only unable to repeat the same story twice in the same way, but ready to add one circumstance and another, until now he can tell a point-blank lie and not blush. If there be deeper degradation than this, I scarcely know where to find it. What a process has all the while been going on in the man's own mind. That his comfort is destroyed, and the light of heaven shut out from his bosom, is only a part of the evil. One transgression follows another, until by and by he is palpably detected, and known and recognized as a liar. All honest and true men exclude him from their companionship as a nuisance and a plague-spot.

What is he to do and where is he to go in such circumstances? I am not speaking now of the sadness with which the child retires to its pillow, or the gloom with which the student opens his books, or the dread which fills the bosom of the clerk after the commission of the first fault of this kind. This, if it goes no farther, is dreadful. There is already an arrow in the soul, the poison whereof drinks up the spirits. But let the solitary act become a habit, and though the conscience should gradually grow so callous as at length to be past feeling, the public ignominy which must henceforth and forever hang upon his footsteps, is absolutely overwhelming. All, all of real virtue is now gone.

We tell a sad tale of a young man, when we say that he is now and then overcome with wine, or that he sometimes swears profanely. God forbid that I should speak of such practices, in any other terms than those of decided denunciation. But on some accounts, and in relation to certain aspects of character, it is worse and more fraught with every ingredient of utter hopelessness, to be compelled to say of him, that he no longer feels upon his heart the sacred obligations of truth. When this is said, all is said that can be meant by the fearful word 'ruin'.

O, then, give me assurance that you will never conceive or utter words of falsehood, and "my heart shall rejoice, even mine." Let our little children, growing up as olive plants around our tables; our sons and daughters at school; our clerks and apprentices, be truth-loving and truth-speaking, at all times and under all circumstances; and everyone who wishes their welfare, will be filled with gladness. As for being rich, or acquiring great learning, or standing high in the temple of fame—it is more than any one can assure you of. But you can all attain to the dignity and honor of having a perfectly transparent character, and this will be sure to shed a hallowed light over your future pathway, be it what it may, and lead where it will.

You can never be real Christians, without a sacred regard for truth. Men may be sincerely pious, and yet have many errors in their understandings and many corruptions in their hearts, but they cannot be pious if in league with him "who loves and makes a lie." Such a life is one perpetual falsehood—a grand and fatal deception.

No matter what the exigency is, meet it manfully and abide the result. It may be a sore trial to the boy of ten years, to come forward and say, though it be with a beating heart and quivering lip—I did the wrong. It may make a heavy draught upon the courage and constancy of the young man, frankly to say—The evil is upon me, for I am its author. It may require a greater strength of inward principle than many members of the community possess, to say ingenuously—That mistake is mine. But once rise to the elevation of saying so, and a grand victory is gained. A single such open and candid avowal is worth more than tongue can tell.

That strict and undeviating adherence to truth will never cause you temporary inconvenience, is more than I dare promise. But what of that? Should love of truth threaten you with poverty and loss of friends, or should it turn you out cold and comfortless upon the world, mind it not. The gain will be greater than the loss. Sit down in ashes with Job and feed like the prophet on tears, rather than dwell in the palaces and share the banquets of falsehood.

"Buy the truth and sell it not." Be thankful to the parent, who watches over you with sleepless vigilance and marks the slightest aberration from truth. Prize the teacher who, pass by whatever other faults he may, never feels at liberty to let you trifle with truth. Venerate the Minister who stands up in the pulpit and tells you, that none can enter heaven who do not speak the truth.

But yield in this matter to the beginnings of evil, and a weak and cowardly heart will soon feel the necessity of sustaining one false statement by another still more false, until at length the chain becomes so heavy as to break by its own weight, and what was carefully concealed is suddenly brought to light as open, ignominious and never to be forgotten guilt.

Is it not wise and well to offer the prayer, Lord, "cleanse me from secret faults, keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins."

BIBLE HONESTY.

Religion is not, as some take it to be, a system of dry, abstruse doctrines. It comprises practice as well as faith; the regulation of the life as well as the rectification of the heart; a correct conduct in the world, as well as a sound creed in the church. If one page of the Bible tells us what man is to believe concerning God, the next is sure to tell us what duties God requires of man. Thus the way is prepared for uniting good citizenship and true piety, the strictest integrity with the purest devotion.

Doing justly, you will readily see, is no less necessary than loving mercy and walking humbly with God. No system of sound morals or Christian piety can be deemed complete, which does not bring clearly out the principle of perfect honesty between man and man. Something to regulate the complicated business communion of the world, is indispensable to the welfare of individuals, and of society at large. The Catechism of King Edward thus explains the ninth precept of the Decalogue—"It commands us to beguile no man, to occupy no unlawful wares, to envy no man his wealth, and to think nothing profitable that either is not just, or differs from right and honesty." This seems to cover the whole ground.

But we turn to the Savior's Sermon on the Mount, and find something still more full and comprehensive. The injunction of the Great Teacher is, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (*Mat 7:12*) These words are "like apples of gold, in pictures of silver." It is said that one of the Roman Emperors had them inscribed on the walls of his closet, and frequently referred to them in his public acts; and it would be sad if they should receive less respect at Christian hands.

We may regard this as the true and proper definition of the word HONESTY, and I cannot better fill up the present chapter, than by explaining the precept, and specifying some of the cases to which it especially applies.

Much is comprised here in one short and easily remembered sentence. It requires us to deal with our neighbors, in everything which appertains to the commodities of life, just as we should think it proper for them to deal with us in an exchange of circumstances. If we would have others act fairly and righteously towards us, then we are bound for the same reason to act fairly and righteously towards them. The measure of our just expectations from the men with whom we have business communion, is the precise measure of our own duty. Such is the substance of all the teachings both of the law and the prophets, on this important point. Nothing more is required from man to his fellow-man. Nothing more is demanded by the claims of the purest rectitude. For anyone simply to do to others what you would have them do to you, is enough.

The moral beauty of the precept before us cannot fail to be seen at once. Not only does it lay an absolute interdict upon everything in the form of direct theft, but it goes behind the act, and strikes at that desire for the property of others, in which such act originates. An honest man according to the Savior's teachings, is one who always intends to do right, whether it works for him, or against him. Besides regarding the false balance and the deceitful weight as an abomination, he is above all that shuffling and evasion, by which multitudes seek to advance their interests in the world. His intentions are upright in the sight of God, and hence it is natural for his dealings to be upright in the sight of men. In every transaction, which has respect to property, he is what he would be thought to be; his conduct is a fair transcript of his principles. Not intending wrong, he has nothing to conceal, and nothing to gloss over. Try him as often as you please, and let him be exposed as often as he may, his unbending integrity still shines forth, as gold from the heat of the furnace.

Such a man is honest simply because he does to others as he would like that they should do to him. Is he a dealer in those articles which are needed for daily domestic consumption, it is as safe to send a child eight years of age to make the purchase, as to go yourself. Does he employ some laboring man to gather in his harvest, the hard-earned wages are not kept back a moment unnecessarily. Has he money for which he has himself no immediate use, no advantage is taken of the exigency of some less fortunate neighbor. In all matters of this nature, he acts upon one fixed and well-defined plan, and hence his heart does not reproach him for injustice.

A truly honest man will never avail himself of the weakness or incompetency of the purchaser, to fill his own purse. What he gives in articles of food, fuel or clothing, he intends shall be a fair and just equivalent for what he receives in produce or money. If the article has in it any defect, known to him, but unknown to his customer, he feels bound to reveal it, however much it may work to his monetary injury. Never does he sell a damaged yard of cloth, whatever its texture or appearance, for a full price. Never does he put off a horse as sound, when he himself has evidence to the contrary. In such cases, all the loss resulting to one individual through ignorance, is so much unlawful gain to the other. So far as principle is concerned, it would be just as proper to go unobserved into a neighbor's house, and take from it an equal amount of silver or gold. To say that such things are common in the business world, avails nothing, unless you can prove that they are right.

That the deviation from perfect fairness, in the way of trade, is in itself but small, by no means proves that it is proper. The maxim of the blessed Savior is, "He who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much, and he who is unjust in that which is least, is unjust also in much." It is neither the largeness nor the littleness of the thing, that makes it fair or unfair, honest or dishonest. Find a man who will deliberately overreach his neighbor in the smallest item, and that man, if the temptation were increased, would overreach him on the broadest scale. The straight line of duty may as really be passed, by the least departure from rectitude, as by the most palpable injustice.

Never forget, my young friends, that a penny stealthily taken from the drawer, a sixpence belonging to another appropriated to one's own use, a false representation made in regard to a piece of tape, is as real dishonesty, before God, and so far as the state of the heart is concerned, as the changing of the face of a bond from fifty dollars to five hundred. It was not the value of the fruit, which constituted the criminality of our first parents. Their act was criminal because it was disobedient, and the smallness of the thing done, if it affected its blameworthiness at all, only made that blameworthiness the greater, inasmuch as it was proof of a stronger disposition to transgress.

These remarks should be well weighed by such as are just commencing their business career. It is no excuse for the false statement, or the incorrect entry, but a great aggravation of them both, that not much profit is anticipated by such deviations from rectitude. What then are we to think of the thousand little tricks, and petty dishonesties, which so often disfigure the dealings of man with his fellow-man? It seems as if the real dishonesty of the heart, in such cases, must be greater, inasmuch as the temptation is less. Besides, little here leads to much, and to tamper with evil at all, is the first step towards going after it openly and fully. The act which puts a man in the state-prison is not usually the only one of the kind committed. A beginning was made previously, of which this is the natural and appropriate consummation.

Such is the searching nature of the precept in question, and cases to which it especially applies are easily pointed out.

That all fraud, in the common use of the term, is here forbidden, is too plain to require a word of proof. This is a crime so well understood, and so universally infamous, that not a moment need be spent in holding it up to your detestation. Direct theft and outright robbery are not sins into which young men of any respectability are much in danger of falling. At least, this is not the point at which aberration usually commences. It will be more profitable to put you on your guard against the same general evil, in its less palpable and reproachful forms.

But to prevent all misapprehension, let me make a single preliminary remark. You are by no means to conclude that there is anything, in this golden rule of the Savior, to render a man indifferent to the obtaining of what is clearly and justly his due. Some of the most perfectly honest men I have ever known, have been very careful to require, at the precise time and in full measure, what was truly their own. Prompt themselves, they naturally expect promptitude from others, and if they demand what is right, they never demand more than is right. Strict integrity is the law of their own dealings, and the law which they wish to see everywhere enforced. These, too, mark it where you will, are generally the men whose hearts and hands are most open to aid the Christian and benevolent enterprises of the day. With them it is a principle to save, in order that they may give; and careful to keep their outgoes clearly within the limits of their income, they are seldom without something to bestow.

In seeking to incorporate honesty with the daily business of life, the great point is, not to covet any man's "silver, or gold, or apparel." This is checking the evil in its embryo; and when all desire of unlawful gain is thus expelled from the heart, it will be found an easy thing to keep the hands from defilement. A man of true integrity is so on principle, and would be so irrespective of all laws and penalties on the subject. Still it is well to be specific, and see how the general rule of duty is to affect individual cases.

The injunction, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you," has a double application. It addresses those who have hands to labor, as well as those who have property to live on—those who would rise, as well as those who have risen in the world. To the first of these classes, its direction is, deal fairly and equitably with your employers. The capital with which you commence business is your strength and skill and perseverance; and see to it that you use them according to the terms of the specific, or implied contract. For the time being they belong to another, and not thus diligently to appropriate them is fraudulent. Make no promise, which at the moment you do not feel able to perform; but having made it, be as good as your word, though compelled to rise while the stars are still shining. Redeem every pledge of this sort, unless prevented by the providence of God. Better deny yourselves food or sleep, than be guilty of any such keeping from others what belongs to them.

This however is not all. The Savior's precept tells men that build houses, and open stores, and have lands cultivated, that they too have a duty to discharge. Just as soon as the service is rendered, the equivalent for it in money or goods, is no longer yours, and you cannot retain it and be strictly honest. On what principle is it that you have a right to make the journeyman, the clerk, or the day-laborer, wait your convenience? Who authorized you to consume his time—time perhaps which he needs to obtain bread for his children—by requiring him to call again and again? The world may not denominate this fraud, but it is fraud, and fraud which God has promised to avenge.

In process of time, some of you may attain to wealth and distinction, and find it proper to band yourselves with others in carrying forward important enterprises. Should such be the case, be on your guard. It is a common opinion, and no doubt often a correct one, that chartered companies will allow themselves to do what, as individuals, they could never do and retain the least reputation for honesty. The idea seems to be, that though a single man may not take advantage of his neighbor, ten or twenty united may do it with impunity. Each appears to merge his individuality in the collective body, so that the guilt of the wrong transaction, may be diffused over the whole, and thus not be perceived.

Are you ready to say, None but a sadly perverted mind could ever thus impose upon itself? This is true, and yet the iniquity, we have reason to believe, is often practiced, and the evils resulting from it are felt far and wide. Many a widow, and group of fatherless children, have in this way been despoiled of their little all. I charge you spurn every such companionship in iniquity. Never do a disreputable deed, because there is in it a division of responsibility. The dishonesty is personal, though the act is that of a company.

There is still another case, which may try the strength of your uprightness. After rising to the possession of wealth, you may lose that wealth, and be reduced to the hard necessity of putting off your creditors with fifty cents on a dollar. Nothing is more common in the fluctuations of the business world. The rich man of today may become the poor man of tomorrow. But the path will after all be open before you, and the tide of fortune may again set towards your habitation. And what will be your duty, as honest men, under such circumstances? Why, to pay every penny you owe in the world. No matter if you have a legal clearance. No matter if nothing can be demanded of you. It is impossible that any bankrupt law should set aside the enactments of the Savior.

Let me cite an example. A man who was once Franklin's fellow-passenger to England, had been engaged in business in that country, was unsuccessful, compounded with his creditors, and came to the United States. Here by dint of unremitting industry, and careful frugality, he amassed a considerable fortune in a very few years. Upon his return to England, he invited all his old creditors to an entertainment, when after thanking them for their indulgence, he presented to each an order for the full amount of his claim, principal and interest. Noble man! He did as he would be done by. And if ever brought into similar circumstances, go and do likewise.

Fix it then in your minds from this hour, that you will always act upon this rule of the Savior. Be assured "honesty is the best policy." Overtaken by misfortune you may be, but so long as you are conscious that no one can point to a single unfair act, in all your business arrangements, you may sit calmly down in the midst of broken hopes, and darkened prospects. But, as Milton justly says, "God and good men will not allow a fair character to die." The day often arrives when the man of unbending integrity is permitted to come back to the mansion, where he formerly met the smiles of joyous and confiding friendship. Hold on to what is right, and the outcome will be happy. You may die poor, but you will die honest. Your couch may be hard, but your sleep will be sweet.

And so far as the well-being of society is concerned, honesty is of pre-eminent importance. Deprive the world of trade, of this strong bond which now holds all its parts together in harmony, and it would fall to pieces as certainly and as suddenly, as would the world of matter, if deprived of the great law of gravitation. But blessed be God, there is enough of fairness and uprightness, in business transactions, to lay a foundation for general confidence. What else could induce a merchant or manufacturer to allow all he has to depart from under his own eye, and go to the other side of the globe, there to be lodged with people he has never seen? Bad as the world is, it is not so bad as it might be. Here is a man in New York, sleeping soundly on his pillow, while all the gains of years of successful industry, are stowed away in the warehouses of London, or Liverpool. This tells a favorable story for the commercial integrity of the world. Everything is entrusted to factors abroad, with an assurance almost, that it will return with a double tide of opulence to the man's own door.

I charge you, my young friends, do nothing yourselves to break up the foundation of this general confidence. Live in a lowly dwelling, wear a threadbare coat, sit down to a dinner of herbs, sooner than create a temptation to dishonesty, by permitting your expenditures to outrun your income. Distressing tales might be told on this subject. If you begin to go astray, you will find before you are aware of it, that you have woven a web about your steps, from which there is no breaking loose. Determine from the very first, that though you may be poor, you will not fail to be honest. Come what will, rise or fall, have friends or be left alone, resolve, as God shall help you, that no man shall ever say you willfully did him wrong

INDUSTRY, the road to success.

There is running through the whole system of nature, providence and grace, a very close connection between means and ends. Success is not to be gained—the hill is not to be climbed—the crown is not to be won—without an effort. No one need expect to be borne along to the prize, either in religious or secular matters, independently of his own exertions. Though the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, yet he who deals with a slack hand will become poor. The diligent in business may fail, but drowsiness is sure to clothe a man with rags.

This is a wise and kind arrangement, at once blessing men and making them a blessing. It is the flowing brook, and not the stagnant pool, that is pure itself, and spreads health and fertility over the land; and it is the man of persevering industry, who is happy in his own bosom, and who contributes to the happiness of others. Let idleness prevail, and the cheerful hum of business is exchanged for the discordant notes of vice and revelry. Besides, it should never be forgotten, that the use of one's powers, physical and mental, is necessary to their full and proper development. Without bodily exercise, the muscular arm of the laboring man would never have had its present strength. Without activity of mind, Bacon and Locke and Newton would have been weak as other men.

Think of this, as you are now starting for the goal, and gird yourselves for a life-long labor. If you look about in the world at all, you must see that comfort and competency are not ordinarily to be anticipated, except at the price of honest industry. So teaches the inspired volume, and such is the testimony of observation and experience. You wish to rise in the world, and we blame you not for it. The desire is natural and laudable. But remember that the cost of this attainment is steadfast and well-directed effort. Let me tell you,

1. What industry really IMPLIES.

You must engage in some useful calling. Labor is the allotted condition of man. It was so in Paradise, and still more emphatically is it so now. He is to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow. Active exertion is what he was intended for. Every feature of his countenance, every faculty of his mind, every bone of his body, every muscle of his limbs give indication of this. It is said that all are indolent by nature, but indolence is proof of depravity. Savages hate work. Barbarians in every land and climate are lazy. It is only in Christian countries, that habits of industry are found, and these are formed generally while the heart is tender and the character is taking its complexion. You can scarcely find an industrious man, anywhere, the morning of whose days was spent in idleness. So well was this understood among the Jews, that it passed into a proverb—he who does not bring up his child to industry, brings him up to be a beggar.

Yet toiling with the hands is not necessary in every case to show that man is fulfilling his allotted condition here on earth. Who works harder than the minister of the gospel, with the cares and responsibilities of a large congregation upon him—or the physician, liable to be called to the sick-bed by day and by night—or the lawyer, surrounded by clients whose interests he is bound to regard as his own—or the judge, dispensing justice from the bench—or the legislator, watching for the welfare of multitudes. Chalmers, and John Mason, and Emmet, and Sir Matthew Hale, and Wilberforce were industrious. It is a great mistake to suppose that labor is confined to farmers, mechanics and merchants. The nature of the service rendered to God and their generation by these several classes of people differs, but there is no harder work than that which tasks the head, the mind and the heart. This often wrinkles the face and turns the hair gray sooner than ploughing and digging.

No exceptions are to be made for such as are in affluent circumstances. In respect to industry, there is no favored class. Parents, who are themselves happy examples of successful industry, must not let their children grow up in idle habits. Sons and daughters should scorn the idea of allowing their fathers and mothers to toil from the rising of the morning until the stars appear, while they themselves have nothing to do. The kind of employment is left very much to your own option, but the duty of being employed is one of divine inculcation. We are to labor six days of the week, as well as rest on the Sabbath.

Besides, you must work energetically and perseveringly. Not that there must be incessant toil, without relaxation or rest. Nature demands due repose, and nothing is lost to mind, body or estate by hearkening to her voice. The man who toils early and late, and hardly takes time to sleep, to visit a friend, or observe the Lord's-day, will find sooner or later, that he is not consulting his own best interests. It is impossible for you to better the divine arrangements. "Poor Castlereagh," cried one of his earliest and best friends, when he heard of the suicide of the great statesman, "Poor Castlereagh! he had no Sabbath." Relaxation is like stopping to sharpen a scythe, a file or saw, or oil the wheels of a carriage. The time thus spent is more than made up by the ease of the after movements.

It is easy to make grievous miscalculations here. Energetic as the student, the clerk, or the apprentice may occasionally be, he will find it impracticable to lay the burden of one period over upon another. What is not done at the proper time, whether in sacred or secular things, is generally never done, and certainly never done well. But it is possible for men to be occupied every day and every hour of the day, with no result that seems to correspond with the effort put forth. Thousands, says the old adage, make greater haste than good speed. This reminds us of the exclamation of a busy man on his death bed, "I have wasted life by laboriously doing nothing." There is such a thing as being in a hurry, and yet not getting forward. The reasons are two—men either occupy themselves with trifles, or they fail to carry through what they undertake. It is not the deep and majestic river, but the shallow brook that makes a noise. What we need, both in the church and in the world, is a calm, steady spirit. To run well for awhile is not sufficient. There must be a holding on and a holding out to the end, or the prize will not be secured.

Again, you must act upon some regular and well-considered plan. System is everything. A distinguished individual was once asked, how it was possible for him to get through with such an amount of labor. His reply is worth remembering. "I do one thing at a time." General Washington was remarkable for the order and regularity with which he attended to the vast affairs entrusted to his care. Every paper had its date and its place. No time was lost in looking up what had been mislaid. The distinction of Henry Martyn, both as a man and a missionary, depended not a little upon his habits of regularity. To such an extent did he carry these, that he was known in the University, as the student who never wasted an hour. No wonder that he rose to such eminence as a scholar and a Christian.

There is more in this than you probably are aware of. How often is it that men carry to their graves a sort of unfixedness and desultoriness of character contracted in early life. They never become in the pulpit, at the bar, or on the bench, what they ought to have been. If they have a shop, everything is out of order; and if they have a farm, it looks as though it had no owner. The inattention of the first fifteen or twenty years of life, hangs about them like a gloomy incubus to the very end. When will it be learned that distinction is not won by fits and starts. A sudden impulse now and then, however noble, is not enough to lift one up to enduring eminence and respectability. "Patient continuance in well-doing," is necessary.

A good plan of life is like the skillful packing of merchandise; you get much more into the same space. What can a man do, who has no regular hours for rising, for prayer, for meals, or for rest. Everything in such a case must of necessity be loose and ineffective. Take for instance the bright and buoyant hours which thousands waste on the morning pillow, and what a vacuum do they make in life. Piety, health, and success, all suffer by such indulgence. Reckoning the day at ten hours of active employment, and one hour lost in bed, out of every twenty-four, makes a difference of six years in sixty. Who of the heavy-headed slumberers among us thinks of this? The celebrated Buffon promised his servant half a crown for every time he should get him up at a certain hour. And to this fact, he tells us the world is indebted for his Natural History.

But it is time we proceeded to the inquiry **how is industry the road to success.**

It is so, partly because it keeps men out of the way of temptation. To be busy, is itself a security against a thousand ills, and a passport to a thousand blessings. If the young Divine has no pastoral charge, let him read, and think, and write, and a call will come in due time. If the young lawyer has but few causes to try, let him attend to his office and his books, and clients will by and by appear. If the young Physician has only now and then a patient, let him keep at work in gaining fitness for duty, and his services will be sought. If the young Merchant or Mechanic has but few customers at first, let him stick to his counter or shop, and they will come by and by. The effect of such a course is two-fold—it preserves him from evil, and it fits him for duty.

We have an affecting description of an idle, sauntering youth, in the seventh chapter of the Book of Proverbs. Much of the detail could not with propriety be given here. But suffice it to say, that a young man void of understanding was seen at the dusk of the evening, wandering about the city, where he was met by an impudent woman, who with her much fine speech caused him to yield, so that he went after her straight-way, as an ox to the slaughter, or a fool to the correction of the stocks. But it proved like a dart striking through his liver, and he found at last, that her house was the way to hell, leading down to the chambers of death. But for King David's leisure, the story of Uriah's murder had never been told. It is a proverbial remark, founded on experience and common sense, that Satan will employ him, who does not find employment for himself. Unoccupied, he is sure to fall into a current which will gradually carry him farther and farther away from God, from hope, and from heaven.

Industry will secure the confidence and encouragement of good men. What is it that we first inquire after, respecting one who is just coming forward on the arena of public life? Brilliant talents may be desirable; respectable connections may have an influence; property may serve as an outfit; but after all, our real judgment of the man, and our readiness to commit important trusts to his keeping, will depend on something more inherent and personal. We must know that he is industrious and faithful. Without these abiding qualities, capacity, and family, and fortune will seem light as air and empty as a bubble.

It is instructive to ask who they are, that rise to the highest distinctions both in church and state. Flashes of genius and outbursts of effort usually accomplish little. We hear much of fair openings and happy beginnings, but in a great majority of instances the men of persevering diligence bear away the palm. The best talent on earth is that of assiduous application. Pharaoh understood this matter well, when he said to Joseph, "If you know any men of activity" among your brethren, "make them rulers over my cattle." We know what to depend upon when we employ such people. But show me a young man, who mingles in every little group gathered at the corners of the street, and is ready to attend to anybody's business but his own, and it requires no prophetic eye to foretell his course. No one puts confidence in him. He dooms himself to the occupancy of an inferior position all the days of his life.

Moreover, persevering industry generally secures a competency of worldly good. God has nowhere bound himself by an absolute promise, to fill the barns of every diligent man with plenty, and cause his presses to burst out with new wine. This would give to the Divine administration a temporary and earthly aspect, unbefitting its high ends. Cases will be found in which the best human exertions and the greatest human prudence fail of success. A wind from the wilderness may beat down the dwelling, fire from heaven may consume the sheep, and robbers from the desert may drive away the cattle. Neither industry nor piety is to be regarded as a protection from sickness and loss and disappointment. Still, as a general remark, it will be found true that "the hand of the diligent" literally "makes rich." This is a law of Providence, and it operates with more force and regularity than many seem aware of. If industry and frugality sometimes stand disconnected with the comforts of life, the instances, it must be admitted, are rare indeed.

Riches may "make themselves wings and fly away;" but who does not know that the poverty and misery which exist in the land, are generally to be traced to indolence and intemperance and improvidence. It is no lack of charity to say, that squalid and oppressive poverty, in our happy country, as a general thing, is criminal, and should be so regarded. Hear in what glowing language Solomon speaks—"I walked by the field of a lazy person, the vineyard of one lacking sense. I saw that it was overgrown with thorns. It was covered with weeds, and its walls were broken down. Then, as I looked and thought about it, I learned this lesson: A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber." (*Pro 24:30-34*). Striking description this, and true to the life.

But who is not gratified to see honest industry conducting to happy results? In every city, town and village of the land, we find men who began the world with nothing, living now in great respectability, and exerting a widespread influence on all around them. Theirs is a favored lot. It is pleasant to see labor thus rewarded. Such people may adopt the language of the grateful patriarch, and say, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." If piety is added to their other mercies, they indeed have all and abound.

Cheer up, then, young men, and let your hands be strong. You live in a land of industry and enterprise. It has been strikingly said, "that here, as nowhere else, we subdue and replenish the earth—we plant corn in the very path lately trod by the buffalo of the wilderness—we gather wheat on the spot where the Indian council-fire but recently burned—we build cities almost as by oriental enchantment—we raise millions of money for the purpose of popular education—we voluntarily support thousands of churches and ministers, and what is more, we send preachers and printing-presses and Bibles to the dwellers in distant lands." What a picture! Yes, and all this by a people that two centuries and a half ago had no existence.

Examples of successful industry are at hand. It would be pleasant to speak of men of every profession, and in every walk of life, from the pioneer of the wilderness, to the Merchant Prince, all of whom, by the blessing of God, became what they were and what they are, by the help of their own strong arm and resolute hearts. But there is one case so exactly in point, and so literally an illustration of our subject, as to merit a distinct notice. Had you been in Philadelphia a hundred and twenty years ago and met a poor boy, friendless and alone, with a roll of bread under his arm, inquiring for work in a printing-office, you could hardly have imagined that a lad so forlorn, would ever come to rank among the Philosophers of the day, be an ambassador to a foreign country, and actually stand before kings. Yet all this was achieved by Benjamin Franklin. What a testimony to the value of diligence in business!

THE VALUE OF GOOD PRINCIPLES.

That there is a vast amount of evil in the world, all admit. Complaints are made on every side of the early development of bad dispositions—as seen in impatience of parental restraint, disregard of the counsels of experience, and contempt of divine institutions. But the question arises, whence this premature impiety. There is doubtless a reason for it; and perhaps the reason may be found partly in the fact, that in our times too much attention is paid to the mere surface of character. We forget that the way to cleanse the outside is to make the inside clean. It is not properly considered that men are never safe, and can never be really happy, until they become a law to themselves. Young men must set out in the world with good principles.

You cannot but be interested to see in what light the Scriptures present this subject.

No book more fully inculcates the value of sound and firmly-established principles. We scarcely go too far when we affirm, that the grand design of this communication from God, in all the lessons it prescribes and in all the duties it enjoins, is to prepare men to be a law to themselves. The demands of the Bible are complied with, really and in truth, only when we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. This covers the entire ground. Let these two short, explicit, easily-remembered requisitions be obeyed, and it would restore our jarring, discordant world to the peace and serenity of Paradise itself.

It is instructive to mark what worth the Bible always attaches to internal rectitude. Take up the volume at what page you please, the Pentateuch of Moses, the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, the Epistles of Paul, or our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and you will see that it proceeds upon the one idea that every man is to be tried by his principles. Appear as he may, unless right in this respect he is no better than a whited sepulcher, beautiful on the outside but within full of all uncleanness. There must be a renewal of the heart, before the life can be correct.

Nothing is sounder in philosophy, or more orthodox in piety, than to make the tree good as the only method of securing good fruit. The whole scheme of revealed religion implies the necessity of an internal renovation. God must first put his Spirit in men and create in them a clean heart, before they will walk in his statutes or keep his commandments to do them. A new moral taste has to be created, a new motive power supplied, a new principle implanted. "Marvel not," cries the Great Teacher in the ears of the astonished Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again." This renders a man, in the highest and best sense of the words, a law to himself.

This is the scriptural way of reforming the world. Make a man a new creature, as the Bible phraseology is, or, which is the same thing, bring him to love God supremely, to trust in Christ sincerely, and to delight in the divine law heartily—and you secure at once his right conduct, in all places and circumstances. No other religion seeks thus to change the principles of the inner life. It is the glory of the great system of truth, embraced between the covers of this venerable book, that it seeks to establish itself in the love and humility and reverence of the heart, as the only true, as it certainly is the only successful method of controlling the life.

These remarks throw light on a variety of modern movements to rectify the evils of society. As a general thing, no real, enduring good is attained by merely taking advantage of the impulse of the moment to induce men to promise that they will avoid this or that pernicious course. The amendment may be very valuable in itself, and very much demanded by the circumstances of the case; but the pledge to amend, which is administered with no instruction, and adopted with no conviction, will be hardly likely to outlive the excitement in which it originated. There is nothing to support it; the seed has no roots, no tendrils reach down into the soil.

Mistake not my meaning. Specific pledges are sometimes useful, but their usefulness must depend upon the intelligent and well-considered motives which prompt to them. While it may be proper to call them in to strengthen actual purposes of reform, they must never be suffered to take the place of such purposes. In the case of the thoughtless, the inconsiderate and the unprincipled, they will, almost as a matter of course, prove like the morning cloud or the early dew, which vanish away.

The divine plan is infinitely better, because it goes on the assumption that the state of the heart regulates the habits of the life. You do comparatively little for a man, when you put the book of the law into his hands, unless you can at the same time secure the putting of the spirit of the law into his mind. In addition to the precepts of an external revelation, written with pen and ink on the page before him, there must be a writing of those same precepts on the tablet of the soul within him. Then the man becomes, by a sort of happy necessity, his own rule of conduct. Were there no other preacher, he would still love his neighbor, be honest in his dealings, and fear God. The Bible regulates the great sources of feeling and of action. Only secure scriptural principles in the heart of the community, and commercial integrity will prevail, prudent habits will be formed, diligence in business will be practiced, and all the gifts of Providence will be put to the wisest use. This book speaks with a voice that hushes into silence the din and tumult of the world. To scatter it everywhere over the land is really to sow the seeds of stability of character and enduring independence, and to secure for all time to come the spectacle of a powerful, thriving, well-ordered society.

This is an essential point, and happy will it be if you fully comprehend it. The world is full of expedients to render individuals, families and communities virtuous and happy. Multitudes are standing at the head of every street, crying, "Lo here!" or "lo there!" Each one has some remedy, some panacea for the numerous ills which embitter life. But when will these self-styled benefactors come to know, that all changes for the better must be the product of inward principle? In no other way is the work to be effected; there is no other hope for the gambler, the drunkard, or the licentious.

Young men, above all others, ought to understand that the book of God is not directed so much against any particular form of evil in the life, as against the indulgence of evil in the heart. Its appliances are less for the spot on the cheek, than for the hidden ulcer on the lungs. It is not so intently occupied with plucking and destroying the fruit when it ripens, as with laying the axe at the root of the great upas-tree. Its aim is to crush the egg before it breaks out into the viper. To correct the deportment of the outer man, it operates at once on the soul.

What you want is to go forth into the world with a firm and well-garrisoned heart. This will fit you by the steadiness it imparts to your feelings, and the correctness it gives to your judgment, and the sobriety it throws over your anticipations, to travel forward safely in the highways and by-paths of life. It will act as a curb on every unruly appetite.

It will cool the raging fire of ambition. It will break the shock of disappointed hope. Only become, after this sort, a law to yourselves, and you will find no difficulty in submitting to the law of God and man.

No, I go farther. Build on this foundation, and you will have the promise of the life to come, as well as of the life that now is; for good principles are in their very nature eternal. Such mere conventional rules as men often adopt to regulate their interaction with others, are not suited to every stage of existence. After a while they become obsolete, wax old, and vanish away. But not so the principles of inspired rectitude. The man who by studying the Bible, communing with God, and relying on the Savior, becomes a law to himself, will act properly in every state and condition. External circumstances do not affect him. Should he change his climate and even his world, he will still be the same man in all the essential elements of his character.

But how is the value of good principles illustrated in actual life.

You need but little acquaintance with men to see how one's external ways depend on his internal feelings. Only let those views which the word of God gives of truth and duty be cordially received, and become the basis of character, and they will produce such steadfastness of purpose, as no fickleness of fashion, opinion or pursuits can very seriously influence. This will enable a man to stand erect in difficulty and danger. A character thus formed and thus supported will abide the day of trial, whatever be the darkness or tribulation such a day may bring.

Only see to it, that conscience is enlightened, and passion restrained, and love of truth and of right embedded in the soul, and you have nothing to fear. Specific rules for the control of every individual feeling and the guidance of every individual act cannot be given; and if they were they would not be read. The world itself could not contain the books which must be written to meet such a demand. Nothing more is necessary, than general principles cordially adopted by the farmer in the field, the mechanic in the shop, the clerk at the counter, and the student at the desk—and applied to cases as they occur. Let the mind be well imbued with them, and you will scarcely feel the need of a direct injunction against the wine-cup, the gaming table, or the house that is on the way to hell. This will extract the moisture from the root of poisonous plants, so that they will die of themselves.

It is refreshing to see how men of like passions with yourselves, feeling the same weaknesses and plied with the same temptations, have maintained their integrity in circumstances of great peril, and kept their garments undefiled. Delightful illustrations of the sustaining power of real, inward principle, appear on every side. Even the fear of death could not make the fainting David drink of the water of Bethlehem, or keep Daniel from his daily prayers, or cause Shadrach and his companions to fall down before the idols. Men so self-supported could eschew pleasure, defy pain, and brave the lions' den and the heated furnace. So long as their own hearts did not condemn them, they had nothing to fear.

Turn aside for a moment and contemplate the character of the beloved Joseph. Few narratives are more instructive, than that of this young man, as he dreams of future advancement, seeks out his brethren on the field of Dothan, is carried into Egypt by the Midianites, becomes the servant of Potiphar, is cast into prison, interprets the vision of Pharaoh, is clothed in princely robes, and rides in the second chariot of the kingdom. What chequered scenes for one to pass through, at his early time of life! Never was virtue more severely tried, and never was its triumph more complete. Mark the noble youth at whatever point you will, you see the same lofty, unbending principle. This was the reason why he did not become dispirited in bondage, or yield to the blandishments of an artful woman, or give up all for lost within the walls of a prison, or feel the intoxication of power when the chain of gold was put upon his neck. The Lord was with him, and in the best sense of the word, he was a law to himself.

Such conduct shines brightest by contrast. Look then a little at the course of an unprincipled man, or which is nearly the same thing, a man without any fixed principle. See how he veers with every change of fortune—today one thing, and tomorrow another. Only let wealth, fame, or office hold out their lure, and there is no sacrifice of feeling or conscience which he will not make to gain the prize. Trust such a one? Never! Never! For a time he may carry himself with so much apparent propriety and move so steadily along, that it seems almost uncharitable to suspect him. But depend upon it, nothing is lacking but opportunity, and he will betray your confidence. In no instance is it safe to rely on one who is unsound at heart. Just when exigencies arise and firmness is most required, you will find him giving way, and if he become not a Judas, it is because he lacks a fit occasion.

To make the case clearer let me select two individuals, known the country over, and within a few years past numbered with the dead. Both of them had a worthy ancestry, both were possessed of fine talents, both were highly educated, and both were called in the Providence of God to act a distinguished part in life. Everything promised an equally useful and honorable course for each. Their fame was wider than the land which gave them birth. Side by side, they rose from one position of honor and trust to another, until no earthly glory which men can desire, seemed beyond their reach. But here the parallel fails. One of these distinguished individuals had good principles, the other was unprincipled.

The first of these men early in life cast off the fear of the God of his fathers, renounced the Bible as a light from heaven, gloried over the spoils of female virtue, killed in a duel a man far better than himself, became suspected of treason against his country, gradually slunk away from all decent society, and when he died was carried to the grave and put under the clods of the valley in silence and sorrow. There was no lamentation over him. No one shed a tear, except in pity that such a sun should set in clouds so dark and troubled.

Not so the other. Living a life of unsuspected purity, cultivating habits of the strictest temperance, making the Scriptures his daily study, never failing to be in his pew on the Sabbath, and devoting himself to duty with an energy that never gave out, he rose from one elevation to another, until he had nothing further to wish, and his country nothing greater to give. For long years did he steadily hold on his way. But at length he died. And when it was told that the old man eloquent—or as it could better be said, the old man honest—had fallen at his post, uttering the significant cry "This is the last of earth," a sensation was produced, which not only reached to his own New England hills, but was felt in all the cities of the sunny South, and over all the prairies of the mighty West. The statesmen of the land vied with each other in paying honors to his memory.

Names have not been given and names are not necessary. Such things cannot be done in a corner. But my young friends, can you look at these men as they pass on step by step, until the day of one terminates in poverty, neglect, and despair—while a halo of more than earthly glory encircles the dying couch of the other, without getting a deeper impression of the importance of being a law to yourselves. Here was indeed a forcible illustration of the value of good principles.

Shall such examples be lost upon the youth of the land? They can here learn what power there is in a good character to carry men safely over the rough voyage of life; while a lack of such character is sure to send the brightest and most brilliant to a dishonored tomb.

What training then can be compared with that of preparing men to be a law to themselves? You may put a Bible into the hands of a young man and charge him to read it, you may lay down rules for the government of his conduct and beg him to observe them, you may set before him the example of good men, and exhort him to follow it; but all will not answer unless the principle of right-doing is imbibed. There will be hours of forgetfulness when that Bible will not be read; there will be assaults of temptation, when those rules will be neglected; and there will be allurements to evil, when the example of others will be powerless. Nothing, nothing, will serve the purpose, short of fixed and settled principles.

The eye of friendship cannot follow you, as you go out to embark in business, toss in ships, and travel in cars, everywhere in danger, everywhere needing protection. If God and your own good principles do not stand you in good stead, fall you will. You must be a law to yourselves, in the mart of trade, the cabin of the steamboat, and the crowded inn, or you will soon make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. No shield less strong can quench the darts of Satan and bad men.

This is the grand safeguard. Thoroughly furnish a man with this resource, and he will go calmly and steadily forward, breasting the storm which would hinder his progress, and beating back the waves which threaten to overwhelm him.

Think of Samuel, old and gray-headed in the service of God and his country. "Behold," says he, "here I am; witness against me before the Lord—whose ox have I taken? or whose donkey have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?" Look at Paul as he stands arraigned before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Lifting himself up in conscious and self-sustaining rectitude, he cries out, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." Contrast these cases with the dreadful lamentation of the degraded Wolsey—"Had I served my God with half the zeal I have served my king, He would not have forsaken me in my old age."

The subject is fully before you, and will you not arise and gird yourselves for duty as best you may?

If I am right in the views now given, what you need above all else is truth in the inward parts. As for having a kind father always near to brace up your minds amid the changes and chances of this mortal life, or a fond mother at hand to watch over you in the "ups and downs" of your course like a guardian angel, or a sweet sister to cheer away your sadness, and encourage you to buffet manfully the billows of the world, it is impossible. The hours hasten on, when you must be alone with nothing but God and good principles for your guide.

No! to some of you this hour has perhaps come already. Affectionate parents, a gladsome fire-side, and a pleasant home, are things of remembrance rather than of present enjoyment. If such be the case, you have my sympathies and my prayers. Who now is to speak words of consolation to you when your cheeks are covered with tears and your eyelids are heavy with pain? But despond not. Only confide in God, and adopt good principles, and you can get forward without other aid.

The great Milton put into the mouth of a fallen spirit a momentous truth—"The mind is its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell in heaven." In other words be right yourselves, and this will make all right.

Do you know who was that signer of the Declaration of Independence, a member of the first Congress, of whom Thomas Jefferson remarked, "He never said a foolish thing in his life?" It was Roger Sherman, a poor youth, brought up to an humble occupation. But he was a man, the superstructure of whose character was laid on the broad principles of the word of God; and this united with native force and energy enabled him to rise higher and higher, until he could cope successfully with the strong and mighty men of the land.

This, be assured, is the hinge on which everything will turn. The difficulty in getting onward in the world is not perhaps where you deem it to be. What if competition be earnest, and every prize hotly contested; this is just as it should be. In this broad land of free institutions, high mountains, deep rivers, and warm hearts, we are not to look for the dead level of Spain and Portugal. It is all the better, that you are forced out upon an arena, where you must try your strength, and measure your weapons with young men as full of life and zeal as yourselves. But only be true-hearted, and some door will open which all the world cannot close. If you cannot be one thing, be another. A man's true self does not depend on the coat he wears, or the house he lives in.

My young friends, if ever brought into such circumstances that losses must be sustained to keep the ship afloat, cut away the masts, cast over the lading, let the entire cargo go, sooner than give up the helm. Or to speak without a figure, **renounce the favor of the rich and powerful, sacrifice health, and even life itself, rather than relinquish one iota of right principle, or yield to a single inroad upon a clear conscience.** Come what will, only hold fast your integrity, and you will never be left without resources. "Getting wisdom is the most important thing you can do! And whatever else you do, get good judgment. If you prize wisdom, she will exalt you. Embrace her and she will honor you." *Pro 4:7-8*

COURTESY

Nothing is more delightful than to see what is pleasant and amiable blended with what is just and true. If the little amenities and everyday proprieties of life are not essential to a virtuous character, they are requisite to give finish and perfection to such a character. Men are to be courteous as well as pure—lovely as well as honest—kind as well as faithful. To be right in the weightier matters of the law, though confessedly the grand point, is no reason for being wrong in things of smaller consequence.

In nature, the tasteful and ornamental are sure to be seen mingling with the useful and the necessary. As we look over the face of creation, we find beauty as well as utility—the honey-suckle as well as the sturdy oak—the lily of the valley as well as the cedar of Lebanon. God does not merely give us trees for fuel, and water to drink, and bread to eat. His bounty adds flowers to send forth their fragrance, landscapes to delight the eye, breezes to fan the cheek, fruits sweet to the taste, and couches to lie upon. **The world was designed to cheer and please us, and not simply to afford us a dwelling-place.**

Why not then group together in human character whatever is amiable in disposition—with whatever is firm in principle? True men, just men, honest men and religious men, we hope you will all be; but this need not hinder you from exhibiting everything pleasing in disposition—and lovely in deportment—and kind in communion—and amiable in manners. Act thus, and you will fulfill the apostolic injunction, "Be courteous." Pursue such a course, and you will be happy yourselves and add to the happiness of others.

What are we to understand by courtesy, as a duty of Bible-responsibility?

The term implies that kindness and civility in social communion on which the enjoyment of life so much depends. We speak of it as an adornment of one's character, because it never fails to render him more pleasing as a companion, more esteemed as a superior, and more engaging as a friend. Cicero has beautifully remarked, "It is the property of justice not to injure men—and of politeness not to offend them." True Christian courtesy unites and perfects both these qualities, and thus constructs a reputation as solid as it is lovely, and as useful as it is charming. There must be minute touches and graceful fillings up—as well as bold and strong outlines—to constitute a good portrait. The fainter shades will not of themselves make a valuable picture, but without them there cannot be completeness and beauty.

You will hardly do wrong to rank courtesy, in its highest and best sense, among the graces of the Holy Spirit. If it be less essential to the existence of genuine piety in the heart, than repentance, or faith, or humility; it nevertheless springs from the same source, and is to be regarded as a sister in the same family. Let the gospel have free course, and it will render men meek and forbearing, and fill their bosoms with kindness and humility. It will be very wide of the mark to suppose that this book of God has to do merely with the grosser vices and the more splendid virtues. On the contrary, its aim is to fashion and mold the whole man, externally as well as internally; by abasing his pride, and thus disposing him to be kind and amiable and humble. We go not a step too far when we call it a system of the truest politeness. It does what nothing else ever does so well; it leads men not to look on their own things supremely and exclusively, but also on the things of others. Seldom are its triumphs more complete than are witnessed in an habitual tenderness of feeling—and kindness of deportment.

Can it be supposed that this is a matter which Christianity overlooks? As for the hollow-hearted courtesy which has its place and its purpose in the fashionable world, I trust you will know how to reckon it at its proper value. Nor are you to imagine that, even in its better form, it can be a substitute for a right spirit and a holy life. But sad will it be for the interests of society, if we weave the meshes of our moral net so wide as to admit the churl and the arrogant. When this is done, be assured, we make the meshes wider than the teachings of Christ and the apostles make them.

I hesitate not to say that the readiest way for a young man to become truly courteous is to drink in the spirit, and act upon the principles of the gospel. Besides teaching the terms of acceptance with God, and thus securing for you an inheritance in the heavens, the aim of this whole scheme of mercy is to soften whatever is harsh in temper, and smooth whatever is rugged in deportment. An external change will in all such cases be arrived at through the influence of a previous internal change. After having worked its hidden and interior renovation, the truth received in love will manifest its transforming power in what is external and palpable. Be assured, the religion of Christ never gains its full conquests while the subject of it continues sour and uncivil. You may be really pious and not have the splendid and hollow politeness of a Chesterfield, but you cannot be pious without having something of the mind of Christ.

Yes, my young friends, courtesy is a Bible virtue, and it is in the Bible that we find the finest examples of its presence and power. Look at Abraham as he gives way to Lot, though his nephew and a man of much fewer years than himself, the choice of all the lands before them, rather than have strife between their respective herdsmen. See him as he welcomes the three travelers in the heat of the day, to the hospitalities of his tent, and hastens to kill for them the fatted calf. Observe his conduct as he bows before the sons of Heth to bargain with them for a cave, in which to deposit the remains of his beloved Sarah. Venerable and lovely man! Was there ever a better exemplification of the true gentleman? Well did the patriarch know what was due from man to his fellow-man.

We see the same thing in the bold, uncompromising apostle to the Gentiles. Though firm as a rock where truth and duty were concerned, it would be easy to note instances in which his courtesy was strikingly apparent. Read his defense before Felix. Study his address in the presence of Agrippa; mark his reply to the interruptions of Festus; or see him in his epistle to Philemon, or in his salutations at the close of his epistle to the Romans. Everything proves that in his zeal for more vital points, he was not inattentive to the graces and proprieties of social communion. The man of God did not absorb the man of humanity.

But a greater than patriarch and apostle is here. To those of you who have not thought of the matter in this light, it may seem almost strange to be told, that there was never so perfect an illustration of genuine courtesy as that given by the blessed Savior. Were I to furnish all the instances in which this virtue appears, I must transcribe his life. What a ray of softness and beauty did his unparalleled condescension shed over all his conduct! Notice him as he takes a towel, girds himself, and washes the disciples' feet, saying, "You call me Master and Lord, and you say rightly—for so I am." Draw near and mark how kindly he restores the young man just raised to life, to his widowed mother. Hear him cry out, in the kindness of his heart, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Was there ever such courtesy as this? No matter how poor and wretched were the applicants for his favors; no matter if the children of affliction besieged his retreat, and broke in upon those hours which he needed for food and rest; no matter if publicans and women that had been sinners thronged around him, the blessed Savior had a kind look and an encouraging word for them all. Wearied and toil-worn as he often was, he was still ready to hearken to the sighing of the prisoner, and to raise the suppliant from the dust.

Such is true courtesy. And can we overestimate its *value to the world?*

I have already told you that you must not exalt courtesy and civility to an equality with the more essential characteristics of truth and integrity. Much less must you for one moment allow any such embellishment of the outer-man, to take the place of genuine, heart-felt piety towards God. Yet while this is admitted, be careful not to conclude that you can be cold, and distant, and overbearing, with impunity. This would not only greatly lessen your influence over friends, and neighbors, and dependents, but would be sure to produce bad effects on your own minds.

You have already seen enough of the world to know that many good and trustworthy men fail sadly at this very point. No one doubts the sincerity of their religious profession. No one feels a lack of confidence in the uprightness of their dealings. But having said this, there is nothing more that we can say. There is such a lack of kindness in their temper, and conciliation in their deportment, that the good which they really have, is in danger of being evil spoken of. Such characters may be likened to a diamond in its rough, unwrought state. It has value even then, but you must give it polish before its intrinsic luster can fully appear. Robert Hall once said of a pious friend, "he cannot know how offensive such conduct is, or as a religious man he would endeavor to correct it." This is the grand defect of multitudes.

No man, whatever his standing in more essential things, can afford to dispense with a courteous behavior. Take away what was manifest of this virtue from Moses and Daniel of the Old Testament—Paul and John of the New—Washington and Wilberforce in the world, and Leighton and Richmond in the church—and what a serious inroad do you make upon their reputation? They might perhaps have been good men and true at heart, without any such embellishment. But think of any of them as stiff or sour or arrogant, and you detract amazingly from their worth, and from the power of being useful which they possessed.

I am confident, my young friends, there is more importance to be attached to these remarks than is commonly supposed. It is not everyone that looks below the surface of things. Demetrius might have had a good report of all men, for the lesser virtues that clustered around his name, though his attachment to the truth, for the truth's sake, could be appreciated by comparatively a very few. Nor is the fact that a man makes no pretensions to piety any excuse for his not being amiable, or kind, or agreeable. We may wish that he was not only almost but altogether a sincere Christian, and yet his failing to be such is no good reason why he should treat his friends and neighbors with disregard. Courtesy is useful even when it has no foundation in the fear and love of God. This it is which renders a superior amiable, an equal agreeable, or an inferior acceptable. It encourages the timid, soothes the turbulent, softens the fierce, and distinguishes a society of civilized men from a horde of barbarians. If we could look into the secret troubles of life, we would find that no small part of them have their origin in frowns and expressions of pride and arrogance.

Let me not be misunderstood. Kindness and courtesy, as they exist in a human bosom, are not an exhaustless spring, but a limited reservoir, which must be replenished from the fountain of Divine grace, or it will frequently dry up. No sufficient motive for the steady and uninterrupted love of others, apart from the principles of the gospel, can be found, either in ourselves or in them. The poet may beautifully compare cordial benevolence to the ripples of a lake stirred by the falling pebble, which is sure to form circles widening and spreading, until they reach the farthest shore, but the question is, what is to ensure the continuance of this healthful motion? In the cold world where friends die, and old-age saddens the spirit, and disappointment benumbs the sensibilities, it is difficult to originate the motion of the surrounding waters. We must love men for Christ's sake, or we shall be in danger of not loving them permanently and effectively.

The exercise of a spirit of courtesy is useful, even though it never rise to the dignity of a Christian grace. Kind words, and pleasant looks, and a condescending demeanor cost but little, and yet no one can estimate their happy effect upon all the relations and conditions of life. A charm is thus thrown around the communion of the fireside, the shop, the exchange and the senate-chamber. This is a cheap way of securing respect, and augmenting the circle of one's usefulness. Let a person be himself rightly disposed, and it can be no hard task for him to give a nod of friendly recognition to the humblest individual that he meets along the street. The outlay here is very small in proportion to the largeness of the return.

Such a course is sure to advance the comfort of those around you. It is cheering often to see how an approving smile, or a word of condolence, goes to the heart of men oppressed by poverty and borne down to the earth by sorrow. Shall such balm be withheld? Did those in the higher walks of life realize how much of light and peace they may thus dispense, we would see them courteous out of pure charity. On every side are to be found those whose lot in life is far from being easy. Incessant toil, scanty fare, and little or no prospect of ever rising to a condition of competency, are a load upon their spirits, which they have hardly strength to bear. Shall those in better circumstances never speak to them in accents of kindness? This would be cruel indeed.

Let anyone envelop himself in an atmosphere of courtesy, and he will in this very way increase his usefulness tenfold. It is not so much the labor he performs—as the temper he exhibits; not so much the money he gives—as the humility he shows; not so much the words he uses—as the tones he employs, that wins for him the honorable title of the poor man's friend.

And as this course does good to others, so it is sure to benefit oneself. No one cherishes a spirit of true courtesy and is careful to demonstrate it, without finding it tributary to his own enjoyment. It did Abraham as much good perhaps as it did his guests to prepare them a meal, and then stand by to see them eat under the shade of the tree. Some feeble old man receives pleasure, when youth and talent and wealth rise up to give him place, but the pleasure is always reciprocal. If a child be comforted by words of kindness, the person uttering those words is scarcely less so. What is thus sent out in the form of condescension is sure to come back in the form of augmented peace and self-respect. But, on the contrary, be arrogant and overbearing, and you as surely plant thorns in your own pillow, as you diminish the comfort of others. Such a man is always and of necessity an unhappy man.

It is said of the father of the late Mr. Lyon, Principal of the Mount Holyoke Seminary, that he was never known to speak an unkind word. No wonder that we find it added; "he was greatly beloved by all his acquaintances, and was frequently sent for to visit the afflicted and sorrowful." Such an one is fitted to move about as an angel of mercy, among the abodes of sickness and the hovels of poverty.

In view of such considerations, will you not *resolve at this early day to be courteous?*

There are two ways for you to pass through the world. You may treat everybody kindly, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, and feel that all are brethren of one common household, though some of them are rough and uncultivated and care-worn; or you may shut up your sympathies in your own bosoms, and live as if you felt no concern in the welfare of two thirds of the race. But what, as it respects comfort and usefulness and a good name, will be the difference between these opposite courses? The first will fill your bosoms with peace and surround you with tokens of regard, while the latter will render you as wretched as you really, though it may be unwittingly, render others.

To a young man just commencing his career, a kind and courteous disposition is worth more than rubies. Some of you will be mechanics, coming into business contact with those who have ships to build and mansions to erect. Some of you will be merchants, seeing hundreds of faces in a day, and among them people of all tempers and constitutions. Some of you will be lawyers, physicians, and ministers, having to do with every grade and walk of life. A uniformly kind and conciliating deportment will open a path before you. It will win confidence and success. The opposite will leave you alone and in poverty.

This matter may not appear to you now precisely as it will, when more years have passed over your heads. But if the experience of those who have lived longer and seen more of the world, is of any value, they can give you testimony which you should highly prize. There is no need of being false-hearted, or of expressing sympathy which you do not really feel. All you have to do is to act upon the large Bible-principles of good-will to all men, and you will be courteous sincerely and of choice. To this you are bound by considerations, which you cannot disregard without wronging yourselves.

There is an incident recorded of Zachariah Fox, one of the princely merchants of Liverpool, which you would do well to lay up in your memory. A friend asked the venerable man one day, by what means he had come to realize so ample a fortune? His simple and sententious reply was, "By one article alone, in which you too may deal if you chose—civility." Do not forget the advice, and while you remember the word, be sure to practice the thing. The young man of uniform civility will be almost sure to outstrip his fellows in the great race of life.

Begin right in this respect. Let the child in his father's house be uniformly kind and pleasant. Let the boy at school be considerate of the rights and feelings of his companions. Let the apprentice, the clerk and the student learn to treat everybody with civility. Let the man just commencing business, have a pleasant look and word for all; and while they thus diffuse happiness on every side, they will be sure to augment their own enjoyment.

But what are the ADVANTAGES which will be likely to result from this kind of self-control? These are many. Let me enumerate a few of them.

The PERSON *RECEIVING INJURY* is sure to be benefited by exercising this self-control. Instead of losing by being slow to anger and ruling his spirit, he gains by it—gains in reputation, in influence, and in peace of mind. This will lift him above the little broils of the world, as the summit of the mountain is lifted above the surrounding clouds. It is impossible for any one to be really and permanently harmed, no matter what insults are heaped upon him, or through what provocations he may be called to pass—if he can be calm and quiet himself. Uneasy men can give us but little disturbance, so long as their uneasiness is not imparted to our feelings. Thorns in the hedge we can generally avoid, but thorns in the flesh are perpetually irritating and annoying us.

What injury can all the malice of an ungoverned tongue do to a self-poised, self-collected man? At most, it is like a mouth full of smoke, blown upon a diamond, which, though it may obscure its brightness for a moment, is easily rubbed off, and then the gem is restored to more than its former luster. But so soon as we begin to give way to excitement, and repay angry looks and harsh words in the same coin, we let ourselves down to the level of anyone who may choose to molest us. **Nobody can degrade our character as we degrade it ourselves, whenever we indulge an uncontrolled temper.**

The actual pain and anguish arising from such a state of mind, are among the chief of its evils. Give me a hard bed and a scanty table—give me sickness and bereavement—give me almost anything in the long catalogue of human ills—rather than make me the victim of an angry temper. A petulant, ill-natured man, really knows not what it is to be happy. Every cup which he puts to his lips seems mingled with wormwood—and every path in which he walks is planted thick with briers. Often is his heart broken, by that which ought not to break his sleep. How different is such a person, as it respects comfort and reputation, from him who has learned the great lesson of bridling his temper and his tongue! There he is, as a noble ship riding safely at anchor in a furious storm; the timbers may creak, and the rigging tremble, under the dreadful force of the tempest, but nothing breaks her from her moorings.

It is the glory of a wise man to overlook a wrongdoing. A celebrated emperor was heard to say, on his dying bed, "Among all my conquests, there is but one which affords me any consolation now, and that is the conquest I have gained over my worst enemy—my own turbulent temper." This is a victory worth celebrating. Alexander and Caesar found it easier to subdue a world than to subdue themselves. After conquering nation after nation, they fell—one of them the victim of beastly intemperance, the other of frenzied ambition.

To keep one's self cool and quiet is also the surest method of benefitting the OFFENDER. Remember, it is the soft answer which has power to turn away wrath. Coals must not have air introduced to them, if we would see them go out, and passion must not be met by passion, if we would have it subdued. The idea of bringing a man who has done me an injury to a right state of mind, by inflicting as large or a larger injury upon him, is preposterous to the very last degree. This argues a childish ignorance of the great principles of human nature. As soon as we demand satisfaction, we put our adversary into a posture of defense, and he is led, almost necessarily—not to think of retracing his steps—but of repelling our attack. Revenge never yet conquered a foe, so as to make a friend of him; but forgiveness has its thousands. The Bible plan is, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; or if he is thirsty, give him a drink—for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire upon his head."

With this accord all observation and all experience. Even Saul himself—the envious, cruel, vindictive Saul—was on more occasions than one, entirely overcome by the unselfish and generous conduct of David. His heart could not but relent, as he listened to the deeply-injured man, who cried out, "God forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed." No wonder that the monarch was disarmed of his fury, and compelled to exclaim, "You are more righteous than I." Mark, too, how Jacob found access to all the better feelings of Esau's bosom, by a meek and conciliating deportment. Had that high-mettled man been met with looks of defiance and words of menace, we would never have heard of his running to his brother and falling on his neck and kissing him. Yielding, in this instance, pacified a great offence, and **wrath was conquered by kindness.**

One thing is to be observed; the person doing wrong is usually much more hesitant to yield, than the person suffering wrong. If ever called to reconcile two men at variance, you will find it much easier to deal with the one who has been injured—than with the one who has inflicted the injury. The difficulty of reconciliation is generally very much in proportion to the amount of guilt. This may seem strange, but nothing is more indisputable as matter of fact. It was he who did his neighbor wrong, who complained of Moses as usurping the authority of a prince and a judge. A sense of being in error, often renders a man impatient of reproof.

The exhibition of a well-regulated temper likewise *exerts a good influence on all around.* When a man controls himself, he gains two conquests—one over his own heart, and another over his opposer—and this will ensure him the respect and confidence of society at large. No possible way of acquiring the good-will of the community is so certain, so safe, and so honorable. He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city which is broken down and without walls—while the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is of great price in the sight both of God and man. The empty, blustering bravado may acquire a short-lived popularity—among others as degraded and worthless as himself. But no one can help feeling a sincere regard for that high-born courage which prefers suffering to sinning, and would sooner be posted as a coward than be guilty of a wrong act.

Such a man is a great public blessing. No possession that can be named is so efficient for good as power over ourselves—power to endure trial, bear reproach, and confront danger—power to follow the convictions of conscience in the midst of taunt and scorn—the power of calm self-command, when made the mark of envy and detraction. This is real nobility—a name inscribed in the very best book of heraldry.

It is impossible to awaken the sympathy of wise and good men, by vehement gestures and boisterous language. If our cause is a just and right one—it needs not the defense of an excited temper; and if it is bad—to defend it with a bad spirit is only to make it tenfold worse. This is the common opinion, and it is not entertained without reason. Let a dispute arise whenever and wherever it may, we naturally, and, I might almost say, instinctively, take the side of the man who is most calm and self-controlled. It is neither the last word nor the loudest word that convinces us.

Such a man carries a pleasant atmosphere with him wherever he goes. As we gaze upon his placid and composed countenance, and see how unmoved he stands in the midst of the jarring elements around him, we can hardly help wishing for the privilege of binding another laurel on his brow. Such victories as he achieves make no wives widows, no children orphans. They bring down no gray hairs of fathers or mothers with sorrow to the grave. No one is called into the field of single combat, to burnish up his tarnished honor and try either his courage or his cowardice, by a man who can govern himself.

On the contrary, no small share of the annoyances of life—its daily heart-burnings, its constant irritations—spring from an unbridled temper. Why is it that the peace of yonder domestic circle is so often broken? What has separated those once bosom friends, so that they pass each other without one smile of pleasure or one word of recognition? Who has been sowing discord here and there, in neighborhoods and villages and churches? Ah! much of all this has come from the lack of a little more meekness, a little more self-control.

Why should this be so? From some trials it is impossible to escape, inasmuch as they come directly from the hand of God himself. Such are often the diseases which flesh is heir to—the disappointments in business—the bereavements of Providence—and the approaches of death. These we cannot avoid, take what course we may. But why give ourselves so much uncalled-for trouble? Why pour fresh bitterness into the cup of life? Why add to the catalogue of ills by indulging a bad temper?

The best government in the world is the government of one's self. Let each individual put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and families will be happy, and congregations happy, and towns happy, and the country happy, and the world happy. It all begins with individuals. The work of general peacemaking must commence in each separate bosom.

Never excuse yourselves by alleging, that your temperament is naturally hasty. This is but a flimsy pretext, which can have no power to repair the injury inflicted by imprudent words and deeds. It will not do to strike a man and then tell him that you are easily excited. Some, no doubt, are quicker and warmer in their feelings than others—but no temper is so irritable as to be beyond the control of reason and religion. The experiment has been made again and again, and with surprising success. Hard as it is to conquer this form of human depravity, remember for your encouragement that nothing is impossible with God. By his assisting grace your temper may become as serene as a summer evening.

Suffer me to give an instance of wonderful self-control, from the life of the great Marshal Turenne. Some young nobleman, conceiving himself affronted by the marshal, adopted the fashionable expedient for retaliating, and sent him a challenge for a duel. This the good man declined, because, as he said, it was contrary to his duty to God, to his country, and to himself. But this only irritated the hot-headed, foolish young man the more, and he resolved, at all hazards, that a duel should be fought. Accordingly, on some public occasion, he deliberately approached the marshal and spit in his face. For a moment the old soldier was excited, and before he had time for reflection, he found his hand clenching the hilt of his sword. The cloud, however, immediately passed away. Pausing, he meekly replied, "Young man, if I could I wash your blood from my conscience as easily as I can wipe my face, I would make you pay for this act of brazenness with your life."

Magnanimous man! His name would have been honorable had he never worn a title. It reminds us of our own beloved Washington. You know how serenely he lifted up his head, amid all the storms and agitations of the Revolution. He was rarely known to be angry in the whole course of his life.

Go, then, my young friends, and learn this noble lesson everywhere. Learn it of Moses, whose meekness in the midst of provocations constitutes the brightest trait in his character. Learn it of Daniel, who, though surrounded by mistrust and suspicion, maintained a serene and cheerful trust in God. Above all, learn it of Christ, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered threatened not. Learn it you must, if you would honor God and do good to men, or be happy yourselves.

÷SELF-CONTROL

Few things are more necessary to the comfort and success of a young man, than the proper government of his own temper. You can take no part whatever in the concerns of the world, without meeting with much to ruffle your feelings and put your disposition to a severe test. But let your trials of this sort be what they will, it may be laid down as a maxim that—**nothing can seriously injure you, if you retain the mastery over yourselves.** Other spots may be covered with clouds and shaken with tempests, but that on which the self-controlled man stands will be visited with sunshine.

Solomon places the control of one's self above the exploits of the bravest and most successful heroes. And the statement is not extravagant. There is a moral beauty and magnanimity in being calm in the midst of tumult, and patient under provocation, which can scarcely be found in any other circumstances. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." Vastly more credit is due to the man who can check the risings of vindictive passion, and preserve at all times the balance of his own mind, than to the most renowned general that ever led an army to battle and to victory. Walls may be scaled and flags unfurled in conquered cities, by men of very little real worth of character; but he who is able to govern himself is fairly entitled to bear away the palm from every other competitor.

My young friends, you cannot but wish to make such honor your own; and the proze, let me tell you, is not beyond your reach. Short as your life has been, you have already seen enough and felt enough of the evils of an excited temper to lead you to weigh with candor what I have to say on the nature and advantages of a proper self-control. This is one of the lessons which you should begin early, and which you will need to be learning all your days.

As to the **NATURE of self control**, it should be noted that the very term implies difficulty, struggle, conquest. It is the high-spirited horse whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle. It is the lively, dashing stream that needs to be confined by strong embankments. Were there nothing turbulent and impetuous and unruly in man's temper, it would cost no effort to govern himself. There is nothing sinful in indignant feeling, when awakened by an adequate cause, or kept within suitable bounds. The very caution of the Bible, to be slow to anger, implies beyond a doubt that occasions sometimes arise when anger may not only be properly felt, but properly exhibited. There is an indignation which is not in all cases wrong. Anger may, for valid and sufficient causes, kindle in the bosom of a wise man; but it "rests," or takes up its abode, only in the bosom of a fool. Like fire, it is a good servant though a bad master; valuable if kept on the hearth, but destructive if it reaches the roof.

What we need especially is to guard against *sudden and undue excitement.* It is a great matter to be always so calm and self-collected, that we can look at things as they are, and, if we must be angry, still strive to regulate our anger. This is a difficult task, requiring a stronger and steadier hand than most men possess. Now and then we do indeed meet with an individual of so much native sweetness and amiability of temper, that self-government, in his case, seems to be an easy work. Generally, however, patience under provocation is the result of frequent, prayerful, and persevering exertion. To reach so happy an eminence costs many a painful and self-denying struggle.

One of the most obvious effects of the original apostasy, was to subvert man's government of himself. He then not only broke those bands in sunder, which bound him to his Maker, but he deranged and unhinged all the laws of his own moral constitution. From that moment passion got the ascendency over reason, and his bosom became the abode of excited and misguided temper. So disloyal did man's feelings become to his better judgment, that he needs to be restored to himself, almost as much as he needs to be restored to his Maker. Indeed the one recovery is in some degree always connected with the other, and is a proof of its genuineness.

The injunction of inspired truth is, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." Anger provokes anger. One hard word calls out another, just as fire kindles fire, until what was at first a bare spark, apparently not worth regarding, bursts out into an uncontrollable flame. Once it might have been extinguished by a single glass of water or by the slightest tread of the foot; but now it rages on, rioting in its own power, and forests, barns and houses are swept away in its devastating course.

We should also fix it deeply in our minds, that there is something *really noble in Christian self-control.* It is not everyone that has strength enough of good principle to rise above the customs of an ungodly world, and bear reproaches with serene and uncomplaining dignity. Rarely can we find such an illustration of real, genuine magnanimity. We have seen it somewhere strikingly said, that it is easier to be a martyr, than to gain the victory over a bad temper! This is strong language, but perhaps no stronger than truth will justify. To be calm in the midst of tumult, to keep cool when suffering provocation, and to repress anger rather than give it vent, is a surer evidence of sound religious principle than to mount the scaffold or embrace the stake!

There is nothing weak or mean-spirited in pursuing such a course as this. What an example of wise, virtuous and elevated self-government is given us in the conduct of the brave and unselfish Nehemiah. There were many things to irritate and annoy that good man; and indeed he tells us that he was "very angry." But his anger betrayed him into no foolish expressions, and never lessened his respect for himself. The real dignity of his character he preserved, and forgot not what was due to the standing of the Governor of Israel.

The self-possessed man thinks before he speaks, and deliberates before he acts. Anger has been called temporary insanity—and justly is it so called, because, for the time-being, it dethrones reason and leaves the bosom a prey to every ungovernable feeling. Most sins are weak at first, and come to maturity by degrees. But anger is born in full strength, and hurries the individual on to the perpetration of irretrievable mischief—without thought, reflection or prayer. Before he is aware, he has taken a step, which, one hour after, he would not have taken for the world. The fatal word has been uttered, and cannot be recalled—the injury has been done, and cannot be repaired. "Beginning a quarrel is like opening a floodgate," and hence we are exhorted—"so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out." Our comfort and our safety, under God, consist in being always master of ourselves.

We must learn to put *the best possible construction* upon the doubtful conduct of others. We are not to regard every man as an enemy who does not meet us with a smile, or to jostle him off the walk because he chooses a particular side. The very fact that we are forever suspecting evil, will go far to create the evil which we thus allow ourselves to suspect. How much better is it to think all is right, and go calmly and fearlessly forward.

Nothing is more common than to be mistaken, when we attempt to judge of the motives of men. What we are so ready to consider and resent as so many indications of malice, may be the result of mere inadvertence, and of the very same inadvertence with which we ourselves are every day chargeable. The direst catastrophes have often grown out of language which was not intended to convey the least harm. While the world continues as it now is, we shall find it impossible to get on without having our feelings sometimes chafed and our temper tried. But what is to be gained by being suspicious and asking for explanations? When the two goats, in Luther's fable, met on a narrow bridge, they escaped their mutual ruin by one's lying down that the other might walk over him.

Seasons of angry excitement are seasons of delusion, in which our opinions are generally erroneous, and our decisions extreme. We are tempted then to mitigate the disturbance which our own bad feelings have excited. But this is not the time to speak or act. What we need, is to wait until the dust settles and the mists disappear, that we may the better see where the path of true comfort and dignity lies. Kindness shown us is often like lines drawn in the sand, which the next wave is sure to obliterate; while anything in the shape of an injury, real or imaginary, leaves a mark which seems never to wear out.

As for stopping at every corner to defend our reputation, it is all a mistake. "A lying tongue is but for a moment," and if we treat unfounded reports with neglect, other people will commonly do so too. The best way to build up a fair reputation, is to be sure to act right—and leave our reputation with God. Slander may generally be lived down, but it can seldom, if ever, be talked down.

THE BIBLE—THE YOUNG MAN'S BOOK

My object in this chapter is to hold up the Scriptures, as a book for your daily study and meditation. There is no volume on earth like the volume of inspiration. Lay up these words of heavenly wisdom in your hearts, bind them as frontlets between your eyes, and all will be safe for time and eternity. Nothing can harm you so long as you take the Bible as a "light to your feet and a lamp to your path."

I may surely claim your earnest attention, while I converse with you about the book of God. You will not turn away when I approach you with such a message. The Bible, the blessed Bible, as a volume for youth, is my theme, and a theme worthy of an angel's pen. You need such a revelation to enlighten your understanding, and sanctify your heart. Let me enumerate a few of those features of the Bible which should commend it to your regard.

1. *It is inspired*—its thoughts are *the thoughts of God,* and its words were *chosen by the Holy Spirit.*

No man, young or old, will ever read the Bible aright, while he denies its true origin. The secret of its power lies in the fact that it is divine. While, in form and appearance, the book is like other books, it bears upon its pages the imprimatur of the celestial world. Its every chapter and verse is a communication from God.

I cannot at present enter upon an extended argument to prove the Divinity of the Scriptures. The merest outline of evidence must suffice. Look at the miracles which attest its claims—miracles wrought in open day, and in the presence of thousands of credible and competent witnesses. Recall a multitude of prophecies which have been fulfilled and are fulfilling to this hour. Think how the laws of Nature have been suspended, and the events of ages controlled to certify its character. Then open the book itself, and mark the purity of its sentiments, the splendor of its diction, and the agreement of its parts. If you consider these points carefully, you cannot fail to be convinced that the Bible is really and truly the book of God.

But there is another source of proof, still more satisfactory to the mass of Scripture readers; I refer to what is called internal evidence. Thousands who are not in circumstances to master the argument derived from miracles and prophecy, are yet perfectly convinced that the Bible is the word of God. Their proof is that of the shepherd boy, who said of the sun, "I see its light, and I feel its heat." They know where the Scriptures originated, by the unmistakable influence exerted in the reading of them upon their own hearts. This is the argument of experience, and it has mighty power with well-disposed minds. Here is a resting-place, from which none of the batteries of infidelity can frighten the humble believer. "I told him," said an unlettered Christian, recently, of his conversation with a Socialist lecturer—"I told him that I was not scholar enough to argue with him on science, yet I knew, by my own experience, that the Bible was true, and that he might as well try to persuade me that what I eat is not food, as that what I read in the Scriptures is not inspired."

Remember then, beloved youth, when you read the Bible, that you are holding communion with God himself. These thoughts, these precepts, these doctrines, are his. Everything about the Book, its history and its devotions, its statutes and its ordinances, its threatenings and its promises, indicate its Divine origin. It needs no harbinger to introduce it to men, no herald to announce its approach. The light which beams through its pages is light from the eternal throne, and the truth which it utters is truth coming from the Shekinah. Its voice is like that which our first parents heard in the midst of the trees of the garden. God himself is talking with you when you open these leaves and read these words.

2. This book is remarkable for *its age, and its supernatural preservation.*

If we have a spark of veneration for antiquity, our veneration must be excited by a sight of the Bible. It is the oldest writing extant. Its pages look down upon us, not from the pyramids of Egypt, but from the rock of Horeb, the land of Uz, and the banks of the Jordan. It speaks to us from Ararat, from Carmel, and from Olivet. This book has outlived everything contemporary with it. Babylon has been overthrown, Troy has been sacked, Jerusalem destroyed, but the Divine Scriptures remain unharmed and unchanged. The library of Ptolemy has perished, but the history of the bondage in Egypt remains. We may liken it to a monument standing in solitary grandeur on the wide wastes of time, inscribed from base to summit with evidences of its origin.

With the Bible in our hands, we seem to stand by the very cradle of the world, and see it advancing from infancy to manhood. From it we learn the origin of nations and empires. Portions of it were composed when there were no other writings in existence, and it informs us of things which, but for its chapters, could never have been known. The grand themes of this wonderful volume are the original innocence, the sad apostasy, and the final redemption of the race. These are the sum of the book, and on these the inspired penmen delight to dwell. But there is an infinite variety of thought to fill up this compendious outline—thoughts enkindled by fire from the altar of God. No other work is so full, so complete, so suggestive. There is a wonderful power of condensation here.

The Bible tells us about Eden, about the tree of knowledge, about the ark, and about the Red Sea. It has chapters on the wilderness of Sinai, and the conquest of Canaan. As we turn over its leaves, we read of the dispersion of nations, the planting of countries, and the promise of a Savior. Laws are here recorded as old as the world, and statutes are given concurrent with the race. Its writers were sixty in number—shepherds, kings, seers, priests and fishermen. Beginning with the first man, this one volume brings the history of the human family down through the long period of forty centuries, in unbroken succession. Not a page has ever been omitted—not a paragraph has been erased.

We may almost say of the Bible, as of its author, it has life in itself, Kings have set themselves, and rulers taken counsel against it in vain. To use the beautiful thoughts of another, "If compelled sometimes to prophesy in sackcloth and be slain in the streets, it is sure like the witnesses in prophetic vision, to stand upon its feet again. If committed to the flames, it will come out like the three Hebrew children, without so much as the smell of fire upon it. Even if entombed in the grave, it will, without fail, like Him of whose mission it treats, rise again on the third, the appointed day." Fear not, my young friends, that the Scriptures will ever be put down by force or fraud. No weapon of wit, or scorn, or cruelty formed against them can prosper.

3. There is an *inimitable beauty and sublimity in the very style of the Bible.*

This is a matter which cannot fail to arrest the attention of every man of taste and refinement. No room for discrepancy of opinion exists here. The language of the Bible, its sweet imagery, its kind entreaties, its grand conceptions, its bold appeals, and its touching pathos, can never be sufficiently admired. It unites in the most perfect degree both the tender and the terrible, the mild and the majestic. In these respects, all the sages and orators of antiquity are left in the background. We must turn to the writings of shepherds, fishermen and tent-makers, for the highest and purest specimens of genuine eloquence. Let me refer you to a very few passages as examples.

Are you looking, beloved youth, for something tender in incident, and spirit-stirring in plot, and exquisite in narrative? We have it in the Bible. Read the story of Joseph and his brethren, of David and Goliath, of Daniel in the den of lions, of Naomi and Ruth, and of the prodigal and his father. It is impossible to conceive of anything more impressive. No unsophisticated mind can weary in perusing tales so artless, events so pleasantly put together, instruction given so unpretendingly. These histories will never wear out. As long as the human heart retains any freshness and life, it will be interested with the coat of many colors, the sling and the stone, the prayers thrice a day, the gleaning after the reapers, and the fatted calf. It is a bad sign when such incidents lose their power.

Or is it the grand and majestic that you would contemplate? We have it in these sacred pages. What can equal the psalmist's description of the Most High, when he represents him as "riding upon a cherub and flying upon the wings of the wind." Habakkuk tells us, "the Holy One stood and measured the earth, he beheld and drove asunder the nations, the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow." Paul cries out almost as if already in heaven, "O death, where is your sting, O grave where is your victory!" This is genuine sublimity, the sublimity not of language merely, but of emotion, conception and thought. Compared with the loftiest flights of uninspired genius, it towers like a mighty mountain above the adjoining hills.

If you are in search of fine writing, you will not search in vain, if you have the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Revelation to study. There is more true beauty in the story of the governor of Egypt making himself known to his brethren, or in the book of Ruth, than in any work of fiction the world has ever seen. Where is there such a song as the Canticles, or such condensed maxims as the Proverbs, or such a description as the scene at Sinai, or such a parable as the rich man and Lazarus, or such a representation as that of the angel swearing that there shall be time no longer? These things interest the peasant as well as the philosopher. The child of ten years delights in them no less than the ripe scholar.

My young friends, would you acquire an effective style of speaking or writing, learn to draw from these wells of good Anglo-Saxon. Become familiar with the oracles of God. Everything here is ornate and tasteful, while at the same time, everything is strong and vigorous. The lawyer should study the Bible, and so should the statesman, as well as the preacher of the Gospel. It should be studied by the boy in his efforts at letter-writing, and by the young man preparing to win the honors of college. As to style simply, it ought to be regarded as a model.

4. This is the book which tells us *how sinners may secure the favor of an offended God.*

Here we learn, what without it we could never know, whence we came and where we are going. It informs us what man was by creation, what be has become by sin, and what he must be made by grace. No sooner did our first parents apostatize from God, than they were told of One who should in due time appear as a deliverer. Immediately after the fall, the whole race was placed under a dispensation of mercy. God began at once to reveal himself to men, in the person of a Mediator, through whom their restoration was to be effected.

The Bible leaves us in no doubt as to the fact, that we are all sinners in the sight of God. Its teachings on the subject of man's total depravity, are too clear to be misunderstood, and too explicit to be explained away. You may find the sad tale told in one form or other by patriarchs, by prophets, by apostles, and by Christ himself. With equal distinctness is the declaration made, that, without a new birth, no one can see the kingdom of heaven. And blessed be God, the Bible does not leave us enveloped in darkness as to the way of salvation. It points us to the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, as opening a way for the sinner's reconciliation with his Maker. And it reveals to us the wonder-working grace of the Spirit to change the heart. The remedy is fully adequate to the disease. We have only to look to "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," that we may not perish, but have eternal life.

Surely you cannot be indifferent as to the relations in which you stand to your Maker. The inquiry will arise in your minds in the lonely walk, during the sleepless hours of night, and while standing by the bed of a dying friend, "With what shall I come before the Lord, or bow myself before the Most High God?" You must wish to know how poor guilty sinners, as you feel yourselves to be, can be pardoned and saved. Go then, study the 51st Psalm—ponder the conversation of Christ with Nicodemus—read how the father welcomed home the returning prodigal—hear with what tenderness the Spirit and the bride say "Come." These are topics which, let the proud and the skeptical and the ungodly think as they will, are full of deep and commanding interest. King Alfred, amid fame and power and prosperity, confessed that he needed pardon for sin, and hope in death, and a home in the eternal world. These are desires which the Bible alone supplies.

Beloved youth, you need not be in uncertainty as to the question of your future welfare. That Bible which you have in your hands, has guided millions upon millions, as vile as yourselves, to the mansions of eternal rest. In instances without number, it has dispelled the darkness of the coffin, the grave, and corruption. And what more could you wish for? If you are polluted, this holy book speaks of a cleansing fountain; if guilty, it points to a curse-removing sacrifice; and if fearful, it utters words of assurance. Its grand excellence is, that it makes plain the path to heaven.

5. The Bible is replete with *consolation for the weary and heavy laden.*

You are aware that an inheritance of grief is just as sure to mortals, as the laws of Nature are inviolable. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Some parts of this pilgrimage seem more bright and cheerful than others; but, make what concession we will, life is a warfare, and earth a valley of tears. No long experience is necessary to convince us that our very comforts contain the elements of sorrow. The dearest delights we here enjoy only expose us the more to disappointment, and open avenues to the entrance of pain. This is the hard tenure by which we hold all earthly good.

Allow me to remind you, that you cannot escape the endurance of evil. Affliction will come—it will come from your own mistakes, it will come from the friends you love, and it will come from the hand of God. But where will you flee for refuge when the world is all hung in mourning? In this lovely and buoyant portion of life "you resemble birds," says one, "which build their nests in the sweet months of spring, while the foliage spreads its protection around them. Soon, however, cold winter comes, and the leaves drop off, and the little habitation has nothing left but the bare sticks and straw." How true to the life is a picture like this! It reminds us of the change which often passes upon the joyous and merry-hearted, when sickness approaches, and old age reaches out its palsied hand. Everything in us and about us serves to impress the lesson, "Too low they build, who build beneath the stars."

Yes, let me assure you, trials you must meet, as a part of your allotment. But open the Bible, and read, "Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." Look in upon the experience of the saints, and see how it is, that through much tribulation they enter the kingdom of heaven. Think of the great cloud of witnesses who, like their Divine Master, have been "made perfect through suffering." Hear it said; for your encouragement, "When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you."

Is not the Bible the best book for mourners? Its language is, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." Think of this, beloved youth, when your fond hopes are dashed to the ground, and pain seizes upon you, and friends are far off. Is there any other resource for an hour like this? "Bring me the book," said the great Sir Walter Scott in his last hours. "What book?" inquired his son-in-law Lockhart. "Can you ask?" replied the dying man; "there is no book but the Bible." True, there is no book for a dying hour but the Bible.

Now, beloved youth, let me ask, will you carefully and prayerfully study the Bible? I cannot tell you how much my heart is set upon securing this one great object. Take this blessed volume, press it daily to your bosoms, make it the man of your counsel, and I dare promise that it will guide you safely amid all the rocks and shoals which obstruct your voyage. Here is to be found that wisdom which has length of days in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor. The ways which this Holy Book discloses, "are ways of pleasantness," and all the paths which it reveals "are peace." Never shall I despair of any one of you, whatever the perils of the post you occupy, if you will take the Bible with you, and often stop to ask counsel of the Most High. This will prove a safer defense than munitions of rocks. With such a book for a companion, I shall expect to see you lifting up your heads, manfully, and pressing forward in the high road of duty.

What can I say to enhance the value of God's book in your eyes? Let me beg you to carry it with you to your apprenticeship, keep it in your bedroom as a clerk, and place it among your choicest volumes as a student. One thing I dare promise every young man, the oftener and the longer you read the Bible, the more will you love to read it. Its pages will be sweeter to you at forty than at twenty, and at seventy than at fifty. The consolations it offers, the promises it gives, the prospects it unfolds, and the glories it reveals, will increase in richness and fullness to the very end. The last chapter read to you before you go to your heavenly home, will seem most delightful of all.

Never shall I forget what emotions it awakened in my bosom, a few months ago, to hear an aged minister say, "My sight is so gone that I shall never be able to read another chapter in the Holy Bible." That venerable saint has since been taken to his rest, but what would he not have given, during the few days which then remained to him, for the privilege of searching again those precious pages which had so often soothed and cheered his heart in the land of his pilgrimage. With equal interest did I listen a few days since to a young lady, while the cold sweat of death was upon her brow, as she recommended, in tones of almost angel sweetness, to her companions in study, the daily and devout reading of the Holy Bible. It was pleasant to see early life, in this case, like advanced age in the other, testifying to the value of the word of God. Wilberforce, a little before his death, said to a pious friend, "Read the Bible—read the Bible—let no religious book take its place. It has been my hourly study." Books about religion may be useful, but they are no substitute for the simple truths of the Bible.

Let me close with one recommendation, and I make it to every youth who reads these pages—it is, that you never allow a day of your lives to pass without reading at least a chapter of the Bible. Do this while living quietly in your father's house; do it when forced out into the world to breast its difficulties and struggle with its storms. Keep the blessed Bible by your side, and let its precious doctrines and precepts dwell in you richly in all wisdom. I shall expect you thus to become useful and honorable men, as well as sincere and devout Christians. Under the guidance of this Divine light, you will walk safely in the way.

CHRIST—AN EXAMPLE TO YOUNG MEN

There is one safe model character. No allowance need be made for him, whose early life I deem it my high privilege now to portray. Of the blessed Jesus, who was born of a woman, and had his dwelling among men, it may with truth be affirmed, that he never betrayed a bad temper, never spoke an idle word, and never did a wrong act. From the first, his character was a perfect character, and his life was a perfect life. In the tenderness of infancy, in the bloom of youth, in the maturity of riper years, "he did no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth."

How beautiful is such a picture! We love to be assured that the life of the Son of God on earth was no less complete as a pattern, than his death on the cross was complete as a sacrifice. All in detail is not given that we perhaps could have wished; but enough is revealed to show that his conduct as a youth is worthy of universal imitation. So much was he like all men in the trials he was called to bear, and in the duties he was appointed to perform, that you may well be invited to walk in his steps. Be what the Savior was, and you will be all that fond parents and kind friends could desire. No higher object can awaken your aspirations.

1. Reflect upon the perfect FITNESS of Christ to be an example for the young. This is a point, which I am persuaded, none of us ponder as we should. We are too much in the habit of thinking of the Son of God, as a being so entirely of a different order and another world, that he can scarcely enter experimentally into our feelings, or have any effective sympathy with us in our sorrows. It is hard to get a full impression of his oneness with the children of men, and the interest which he thus takes in our welfare. But this is a mistake no less prejudicial to ourselves, than it is derogatory to the glory of his name, as Mediator. Let me set you right here.

That spotless character which I now present to you, is the character of one *in your very nature.* The real humanity of him whom all the angels of God worship, you scarcely need be told, is as fundamental an article of the Christian's creed, as is his proper divinity. Whatever apparent contrariety there is between them, you must put the two characters together; Maker, and Elder Brother; existing from eternity, yet born in the days of Herod the king; the Word made flesh and dwelling among us. It would no less effectually undermine the religion of the gospel, and take away the foundation of the sinner's hope, to show that Jesus was not truly and in fact a man, than it would to show that he was not truly and in fact God. There may be a difficulty in conceiving of him in both lights at one and the same moment. How He, who was to be called the Son of the Highest, and to whom the Lord God was to give the throne of David, and who was to reign over the house of Jacob forever, could also be the babe of Bethlehem, the boy in the temple, and the young man of Nazareth, we cannot tell. Suffice it to say that "thus it is written." The Bible reveals it as a fact.

Call the statement mysterious, if you please, that the infant in the manger should be the Creator of the world, and that the child that asked questions of the doctors should be "the Wisdom of God," and that the man Christ Jesus should be "the Lord our righteousness"—it is no more mysterious than the union of your own soul and body, and no more difficult of comprehension.

I make no attempt, in holding up to you this bright example, to explain the doctrine of a two-fold nature in the one person of Christ. Sufficient is it for all useful purposes, that it is revealed as a truth, which we are to receive, and wherein we are to stand; and that we can see the connection of this precious truth with everything that is vital in experience, and everything that is correct in deportment. As God, Jesus made the world, searches the heart, is present where two or three meet in his name, governs the universe, will raise the dead, and conduct the final judgment; while as man he rested by the well of Samaria, wept at the grave of Lazarus, washed the disciples' feet, and ate of the broiled fish and honey-comb. You must hold fast here, as to life itself. Never forget that Jesus is your kinsman, as well as your Judge. As really was he a child in his mother's arms, and as really did he grow up in the home of his parents, and as really did he buffet the temptations of life, as any other of the sons of men. In this way alone could he have become a perfect example for your imitation.

I present to you also, the character of one, who subjected himself to *your condition.* Not in appearance merely, but in deed and in truth, did Christ take upon him the infirmities, and bear the sorrows of a son of Adam. So far as respects susceptibilities, mental and physical, he was "made like unto his brethren;" subsisting as they do, and feeling both joy and grief as they feel them. In all these respects he was as you are. His body, like yours, needed food, clothing and sleep; his hands, like yours, could be hardened with toil; his flesh, like yours, might be lacerated with stripes, and his mind, like yours, could be harassed and perplexed. If you have struggles, so had he. If you need encouragement, so did he. Satan could tempt him. His enemies could give him trouble. The soldiers could crucify him. His Father's countenance could fill him with joy. He could be animated by hope.

So far as the discharge of duty, and endurance of sufferings, and exposure to hardships, and conflict with temptations were involved, the condition to which Christ stooped, differed in no essential particular from that of mere men. Though he could bear his burden better, for he could bear it without impatience, without unbelief, without repining, this by no means proves that he felt it the less, or shed any fewer tears on its account.

Take away sin, and its accompanying dread of the future, and the Savior's condition was as is yours. With this exception, you have not a difficulty which did not press with equal weight upon him, nor a sorrow to which his heart was not equally exposed. His feelings could be hurt by ill-treatment as easily as yours, and he could weep over the neglect of professed friends as sincerely as you. Is your path rough? Christ's was still more so. Are you sometimes distressed? So was he. The fears which agitate your bosom, his was not a stranger to, and the hopes which may gild your closing hour, are hopes which shed their influence on his death. How fitted to be an example!

Again, Jesus was once of the *very age* which you have now reached. The thirty years which he spent on earth before entering on the work of his public ministry, included the period of childhood and youth. There was a reason for this. If it was a season of comparative obscurity, it was not a lost season. It gave him a fuller experience of human life in its early gladness and grief, and it enabled him to furnish a pattern for those who most urgently need it. What he felt of pain and weakness as a child, and what he knew of care and labor as a youth, serve to render his example the more useful.

It was not as an aged man, bending under the infirmities of years, that Jesus was seen crossing the hills and traversing the valleys of Judea. He was seen in Nazareth, not as one whose head is covered with the frosts of many winters, but as a child by his mother's side, as a boy in his father's shop, and as a youth at his allotted work. His time of life was just that which we contemplate with the deepest interest.

Can you think with indifference of the fact, that Jesus once stood, in age, exactly where you now stand? The precise number of weeks, and months, and years which have gone over your heads, went over his also. Your circumstances at this critical period, he cannot overlook; he remembers his own at the same period of life.

2. Let me name some of those VIRTUES, which the example of Christ inculcates for the young. A wide field opens here, inviting our entrance, and promising richly to reward our examination. The character of Jesus was one grand constellation of excellencies, embracing everything pure, and true, and lovely, and of good report. It is adapted to all men, and all countries, and all climates. I can dwell only on a few items.

Christ was distinguished for the improvement he made in the morning of life. His youth was not wasted in indolence, or lost in self-indulgence, or frittered away in things of no profit. None of the hours of the holy child Jesus were misspent, none were misappropriated. It is the explicit testimony of the inspired oracles, that he increased "in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and man." As he grew in years, he grew in knowledge. Having a true body and a reasonable soul, these could be expanded and developed as are the bodies and souls of other children and youth. The word of God no doubt was his study, and we may well conclude that he meditated therein day and night. He loved the appointed services of God's house. Its prayers and its praises were his delight.

However destitute Christ may have been of such literary advantages as are now justly prized, of one thing we are assured, he was blessed with the assiduous attentions of a wise and good mother—a mother who had received her child as a special gift of God, and who regarded him with mingled tenderness and veneration. Never did woman, before or since, perform so delightful a task. Can you conceive of anything more touching? Mary is sitting with the holy child Jesus by her side, and they read together out of the book of the law. Her heart overflows with tenderness, and his heart overflows with gratitude. Every day she witnesses his improvement, and every day he repays her care by his tender attentions.

I am well aware that this is treading upon ground where the imagination must not be allowed to run wild. We must not lose sight of the fact, that Jesus was "the mighty God," as well as the babe of Bethlehem; that he was not only the boy twelve years of age hearing and asking questions, but was possessed of all the attributes of Deity. This point has, I trust, been sufficiently guarded. The Godhead must not be forgotten, while we are contemplating his manhood. Still, to get the full benefit of his example, we should consider it in all the aspects presented in the holy Scriptures.

Jesus too was *dutiful to his parents.*

This is one of the loveliest features in the picture before us. The sacred writers are careful to say, that he was subject to Joseph and Mary, consulting their wishes, submitting to their authority, and obeying their commands. Never did he give them one moment's pain by impatience or forgetfulness, or lack of respect. Never did he fail to satisfy all their just expectations. It is the concurrent testimony of all early Church history, that Jesus learned the trade which his reputed father practiced, and thus cheerfully contributed to the comfort and maintenance of the family of which he was a member. He did not allow his parents to toil while he trifled, or to wear themselves out, while he ate the bread of idleness. Such a sight is always sad, and we may be assured, it was not witnessed in the household of which the holy child Jesus was an inhabitant.

I love to think of Christ as an obedient, dutiful son, the son of poor parents, taught early to labor with his hands, and by the cheerfulness of his spirit, and the correctness of his deportment, filling the lowly dwelling in which they lived, with light and joy and peace. How different this from the conduct of many an idle, restless, wayward child, disturbing the serenity of his father's fireside, and piercing his mother's heart with bitter sorrows! Such a one, whatever his talents or advantages, has not the mind that was in Christ.

Reflect, my young friends, upon the conduct of the Son of God, if ever tempted to swerve from the commands of him who begat you, and to disregard the entreaties of her that bore you. In turning a deaf ear to their requisitions, you will most assuredly wrong your own souls. Jesus delighted to honor his parents, and so must you, if "your days are to be long upon the land that the Lord your God gives you." Alas, how little is that son like Christ, who is careless whether he makes home happy or miserable! Whatever beauty of countenance, loveliness of person, or brightness of talent he possesses, he bears no resemblance to the holy child Jesus.

Again, besides being diligent and dutiful, Christ was truly and eminently pious. Love to God ruled his heart, not only controlling every inward emotion, but finding expression in all suitable outward acts. How cordially did he join the public worship of God's house, and go up with the multitude that kept holy day. With what pleasure did he unite in the daily devotions of the holy family at Nazareth! Such was his delight in prayer that we find him engaged in this sacred employment late in the evening, a great while before day, and even during the entire night. With him there was no forgetfulness, no indifference, no declension. Wherever he was—at the well of Samaria, in the house of Martha, or dining with the Pharisee—he evinced the same devout state of mind. His zeal knew no abatement, his faith no inconstancy, and his peace no interruption.

Yet there was nothing ascetic, nothing unsocial—in the piety of the Savior. We have good reason to conclude that he was as far removed from austerity and seclusion on the one hand, as he was from worldly conformity on the other. An air of mingled cheerfulness and sobriety seems usually to have sat on his brow. As he could weep with those who weep, so he could rejoice with those who rejoice. Never did he live a day without spiritual and heartfelt communion with God, and never without some act of tender and considerate benevolence.

Take the conduct of the blessed Savior for thirty-three years together, and what an example does it furnish of sincere and elevated piety! How serious is his frame of spirit, and yet how pleasant! How devotional, and yet how cheerful! How steadfast, and yet how mild! How courageous, and yet how condescending! At all times and under all circumstances, he was just what every child, every youth, and every man should be.

Now, what can I do better than to urge you, my young friends, to take the holy child Jesus as a pattern, and walk in his steps? Do this, and you will never grieve a father's or a mother's heart. Do this, and you will never make a brother or a sister blush. Do this, and you will never disappoint the hopes of the church of God. Do this, and you will not fail to be a blessing to the world. You will be all that the wisest benevolence could desire, if in temper and deportment, you are like the youthful Savior.

Bear with me while I press this suggestion. Other names are worthy of respect and love, but here is a name which stands out single and alone. What is Joseph, or Josiah, or John, compared with the holy child Jesus. They were dutiful, but they sometimes gave way to ill feelings and temper. They were pious, butt their hearts sometimes wandered from God. They were examples of goodness, yet it would not always be safe to follow them. But with Jesus there is no defect, no drawback, no alloy. I wish the youngest of you to remember that there was a person in the world of your very age who never had an ill feeling, never uttered a wicked word, and never did a wrong act. Think what a life the blessed Savior lived, at the same season through which you are now passing. Learn to contemplate him as he lies in the manger, or rests on his mother's bosom, or enters the carpenter's shop, or puts questions in the temple, with adoration and love. If he be your Redeemer, he is at the same time your example, and you are to walk in his steps.

This is a topic which none can exhaust. Gladly would I fix the minds of every one who reads these pages upon such a pattern of successful diligence, unwavering dutifulness, and Scriptural piety, as is here brought before us.

In Jesus there was no inattention to duty, no impatience of restraint, no forgetfulness of God. Think how he felt and acted, if ever you are tempted to dislike study, neglect your parents, or give up the duties of devotion. It is not thus that the holy child Jesus grew strong in spirit, and was filled with wisdom.

Especially look to him in every hour of sadness. Do you feel yourselves poor, and in danger of being neglected? Go, make your trouble known to one who had the cup of sorrow put to his lips from the birth. Are you sometimes terrified at a life of toil and labor? Go, and refresh your spirits by a sight of what is doing in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. Does a life of serious piety now and then seem impracticable? Go, gather strength and courage from Him who delighted in nothing like communion with his Heavenly Father. There is no reason why you should faint or be disheartened.

RELIGION—THE PRINCIPAL THING

We are brought to the last of a series of chapters, which I trust you have not read in vain. In our progress, a wide range has been taken, and a variety of topics; some of them not often publicly discussed, has come under review. I have had high authority for enforcing, with all earnestness, the precepts of the second table of the law; but you need not be told that there is such a thing as sustaining a fair reputation, according to the world's estimate, of which the fear and love of God constitute no part. This is the point in relation to which my tenderest solicitudes are awakened, and I cannot bring these chapters to a close, without enjoining it upon your serious and immediate attention. Make the Almighty your friend, and you will never be ashamed or confounded.

To fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole duty, and I may add the whole happiness of man. This "has promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It is "the conclusion of the whole matter." Religion, pure and undefiled religion, as it is before God even the Father, is the perfection of human character and attainment. It is *adapted to man's nature, and it is indispensable to his welfare.*

1. Religion is *adapted to man's nature.*

What is religion? We speak of it as love to God, as repentance for sin, as faith in Christ, as a reception of the doctrines of the Bible, and as obedience to the divine commands. All these are included in the comprehensive word. Such a religion, growing out of the very relations which man sustains to his Maker, not as a creature merely, but as a sinner, and having for its object his restoration to holiness and happiness, must be suited to his nature.

This will appear, if you consider how strongly it addresses itself to his rational faculties. Taken as a collection of revealed truths, nothing is so fitted to give elevation and expansion to the mind, and to call its powers into the most vigorous exercise. Religion presents to one's consideration the most stupendous facts and events of which he can form a conception. The creation of the world, the special providence of God, the apostasy of the race, the redemption by Christ, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment—are the grand themes on which he is daily called to meditate. Can there be any source of mental and moral grandeur, comparable with these? Is there any other class of subjects, that takes such hold of the thinking faculties, and raises them so high? In this way, true piety always gives increased strength and perspicuity to the workings of the intellect. So far as respects clear, consistent thoughts of God, of human accountability, of the awards of a future world, religion not only "lifts the poor from the ash-heap," but it sets him above the "kings and nobles of the earth." What a spring did it give to the mental faculties of the Dairyman's Daughter, and the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain! It forms the very best school of intellectual elevation.

The mind will be feeble—so long as it is exercised solely with little things. To enlarge the scope of one's thoughts, he must learn to break away from the dull routine of every-day duty, and bring his powers into vigorous contact with things intrinsically grand and great. A new spring is given to his intellectual faculties, the moment he begins to take the dimensions of lofty and ennobling truths. His whole inner man now finds itself addressed by an adequate object, and at once girds up its energies for the task of swimming in waters where there is no bottom.

Rely upon it, my young friends, there is everything in scriptural, vital religion to widen the scope and stimulate the movements of the human understanding. All the lessons it gives us about the deep and awful depravity of man, his accountability to God for every feeling of his heart and every act of his life, his entire destitution of anything good in the sight of God, his dependence on the blood of Christ for pardon, and on the Spirit of Christ for sanctification, and the need he has of help from above in every step of his journey towards heaven, are adapted, beyond anything and everything else, to awaken thought, elicit inquiry, and prompt to effort. If the gospel bows down the loftiness of man and lays his haughtiness low, that God alone may be exalted, it does this, not by darkening his understanding, but by renewing his heart; not by cramping the workings of his intellect, but by changing the character of his affections. So true is it that the very tendency of real, spiritual religion is to unfold and call out all the mental energies, that no one can go through that conviction of sin and renunciation of self, and trust in the atonement, which the Scriptures denominate "passing from death to life," without being made by it a more thinking, reflecting, intellectual being than he was before. As to the mass of the community, the effect of genuine conversion in moving and expanding the mind is surprising indeed. In no other schools are lessons given which make so powerful an impression, or secure such mental development.

Never fear that any one will become mentally imbecile, by having his attention rightly directed to the subject of religion. To utter such a sentiment is a gross slander, as the lives of Hale, and Boyle, and Newton, and Owen, and Edwards, and Davies, and Chalmers, and a thousand other almost equally honored names, clearly testify. It is not the study of a self-existent God, a Deity incarnate, a throne of judgment, and a world of retribution, that bedwarfs the mind. It is not such a conviction of sin as led Luther to cry out from the very depths of his soul, "Oh! my sin! my sin!" it is not such a view of Christ on the cross as broke the cords which bound so fast the burden of Bunyan's Pilgrim; nor is it such an undoubting assurance of the love of God as lessened the death-struggle of the heroic Martyn—that can ever weaken the power of the mind. The thing is impossible. To pretend so is to exhibit the grossest ignorance. But this is not all.

Religion is something more than a mental exercise, it is suited to man's *moral susceptibilities.* We have a heart as well as an intellect, and our affections need to be regulated, even more than our understanding to be expanded.

Here it is, that the apostasy especially wrought its evil, and here it is that redemption especially applies its remedy. The Bible exhibits to us the attributes of God, not merely to excite emotions of awe, and grandeur, and magnificence—but to awaken love, and admiration, and confidence. It reveals a Savior dying on the cross, not only to engage the attention—but to produce an abiding influence on the heart. It speaks of sin, and pardon, and heaven, and hell, not simply to stir the intellectual powers—but to take a fast and energetic hold on the conscience. The God it makes known, is the God in whom we are to put our trust as a Father. The Redeemer it reveals is the Redeemer who offers to shelter us from the Divine wrath. The bliss it proclaims, and the woe it threatens—is bliss for us to seek, and woe for us to shun.

Yes, beloved youth, that religion which is recommended to you, is something without which your moral and spiritual nature can never have a right development. In befitting good men, you will not only gain a wider comprehension, and a sounder judgment, and a higher range of intellect, but you will gain, what you far more emphatically need, a better state of religious feeling. No one, try what experiments he please, can succeed in persuading himself that he is not a transgressor, and does not require an atonement. To attempt this is to practice an imposition upon himself. Hence, the great doctrine of salvation by the blood of the cross, though adapted to give breadth and compass to the understanding, is still more directly adapted to give peace and tranquillity to the conscience. If it is an instrument of expansion to the mind, it is the very panacea for the ills of the heart.

Let any candid man read the account of the creation, the temptation and fall, the institution of sacrifices, the promises of a Savior, the incarnation of the Son of God, his death in the room of sinners, the intercession which he is making at the right hand of the Father, the invitations of mercy sent abroad in his name, and the glory hereafter to be revealed, and compare all this with what he feels in his own bosom and sees in the world around him, and whatever else he may think or say, he cannot avoid the conclusion—that there is that in the religion of the Bible, which meets the necessities of the heart as nothing besides ever did, or ever can. It fills the great need of the human bosom. Without it one can never be what he should be—or do what he ought to do—or enjoy what he might enjoy.

This is a blessing of which no one can be destitute—and still hope to rise to the dignity of true happiness. "Every reflecting man," says a distinguished writer, "when thinking of his situation in the world, will often ask, With what can I be satisfied? I look at the **opulent**, and see Ahab pining away for a garden of herbs, and the rich fool dying while his barn was building, and Dives begging for a drop of water. I think of the **wise**, and see Ahithophel hanging himself, and Aaron making a golden calf, and Solomon besotted by his idolatrous wives. I turn to men of worldly **pleasure**, and see that such pleasure is nothing else than the bed into which Satan casts the Esaus, and the Absaloms of the day. I contemplate **honor**, and see in the far-famed Westminster Abbey, that the mightiest dead have nothing left them but a boasting epitaph. I must die. I must meet God. I must go into eternity, and how can things like these suit my case?" It can never be. To dream of happiness from objects so vain and evanescent—is to spend money "for that which is not bread."

May we not say then, that religion is adapted to man's nature, intellectual and moral? Why else has he such a capacity for mental enlargement, and such susceptibility to the influence of hope and fear? Why else does he feel such an irrepressible longing after immortality? Why else is the entire world, in which he lives, unable to carry one drop of real consolation to his lips? Why else is he so poor, so dependent, so unable to provide for himself? These simple facts tell us, as with angel eloquence, what he is, and what he needs. But,

2. Religion is *necessary to man's welfare.*

Certainly it gives the best possible promise of *worldly prosperity.* No one can take a readier way to establish himself in the respect and confidence of good men, and to gather around him the means of true enjoyment, than cordially to believe the doctrines, and faithfully practice the precepts of Christianity. The slightest consideration of the subject shows us that it must be so. Do the principles of the Bible ever lead to waste and prodigality? The tavern and the gaming-table often eat up the substance of a man—but prayer and church-going never do. Will piety carry discord and turmoil into the domestic circle? Many a husband has reduced his family to rags and wretchedness, by visiting the evening club and the halls of merriment—but never by the worship and love of God. Will one's health be undermined by submitting to the rules of the gospel? Excessive worldly care brings multitudes to an untimely grave, but never does a well-balanced Christian temper shorten a man's days.

There can be no ground for hesitancy on this subject. If "the way of transgressors is hard," if "the gall of bitterness" is connected with "the bonds of iniquity," and if "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked," we cannot expect to see either individuals or families permanently flourish—if God is forgotten, and the Bible neglected, and the sanctuary forsaken. I would not have you influenced by mere mercenary motives; but there is a natural and obvious connection between true piety and temporal success, and it cannot be wrong to show this connection. Right feelings towards God are almost sure to produce those habits of industry and economy which surround men with comfort and competency. These are New Testament as well as Old Testament blessings; and it may be said in our day, as emphatically as it ever could be, "forsake not Wisdom, and she shall preserve you, love her, and she shall keep you, exalt her, and she shall promote you; she shall bring you to honor, when you embrace her." If the prosperity you desire implies a competency of earthly good, a well-regulated home, and a peaceful frame of mind—love to God, and faith in Christ, and trust in the promises are in their very nature calculated to secure all these blessings. You do not often find miserable destitution among people who read the Scriptures, and keep up morning and evening prayer, and attend church regularly, and commune with God.

Do you still doubt? then ask the fathers, and they will teach you, and the elders, and they will tell you. Their testimony is that of men who have been young but now are old, and it all goes to show that the righteous are not forsaken, nor does his seed beg bread. In regard to this great matter, there can be no dispute. Heaven and earth unite in enforcing the injunction—Take fast hold of true Religion; "let her not go, keep her, for she is your life." No other friend will prove so careful of your welfare. She will lodge with you at night, toil with you by day, make her abode with you in the city, travel with you in the wilderness, and sail with you on the ocean. You will find her presence on the stone where Jacob lay down to sleep, in the den where Daniel was surrounded by the hungry lions, by the pillar where Hannah moved her lips in silent supplication, in the prison where Paul and Silas sang praises, and on the hill-side where the Man of Sorrows poured out his heart to God. She has written her name on many a cottage hearth, and many an opening cave, and many a dungeon floor. Her business is to make men happier as well as holier. Better that a vessel should be at sea without a rudder—than a young man in the world without piety. If the hour ever comes, when he is ready to resolve not to seek the Lord, he may expect in turn that God will cast him off forever.

It is of immense importance that all this should be well and thoroughly understood. Thousands look upon religion as valuable because it is connected with a safe and peaceful death, but see nothing to endear it to them as a means of good for this world. This is one of the greatest mistakes into which the unthinking multitude can fall. True piety is a rich *present* blessing. Its influence is felt beneficially upon all one's associations and connections in life. Let it universally prevail, and "our sons will be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace."

There are, however, dark hours in every life, and this leads me to add—that religion is the only sure support in trouble. Come sooner or later, the evil day most assuredly will. Disappointment, misfortune, unkindness, and inconstancy all will crowd around your pathway, as you make your journey through this valley of tears. At any moment, health may decay, friends prove treacherous, and a cloud black as midnight overshadow your prospects. Besides, there are troubles of the heart—which no human medicine can cure; and trials of the spirit—which no music has power to charm. What shall such a child of sorrow do, when his gourd withers, and the sun beats on his naked head? It is not the boisterous song, or the merry dance, or the flowing cup—which can cheer the mind in an hour like this. Ah! said Sir John Mason; all things forsake me in my affliction—but my God, my Bible, and my prayers. It is only "to the upright" that "'there arises light in darkness."

Chalmers tells a story, which ought to convey a salutary lesson. A person in deep melancholy once went to an eminent physician to ask his advice; and what think you was the answer he received? He was gravely told, as the best remedy in his case, to attend the performances of a celebrated stage-player. This was the only balm which the learned medical man knew for a wounded spirit. But it turned out, to the discredit of his prescription, that the patient was this very actor himself, and that while he was, night after night, exciting the applause of a crowded theater, his own heart was cold and cheerless as the grave. What a spectacle! This poor man went to kindle a joy in which he could not participate, and to stand a dejected mourner in the midst of the tumultuous joy which his own voice had awakened. Would that every pleasure-loving youth would remember this lesson! It teaches us in terms not to be gainsaid, that the heart may be torn with anguish, while forced smiles seem to irradiate the countenance.

Hume professed to be a happy man, how sincerely it is not very difficult to determine. You have all heard with what foolish and indecent jesting he passed the hours of the last night he was permitted to live. This was done, no doubt, to keep up the impression that his principles sustained him to the very end. But the heart has its own testimony to give on such subjects, and there are times in every man's life, when its voice will be heard. This man, after much pains and labor, succeeded partially in making an infidel of his own mother; but when he was absent from home, she fell sick, and was filled with mental anguish. In this emergency she wrote to her son, begging him to come back, or send her by letter the requisite consolations. Hume received the tidings with great sorrow, and set out at once; but before he arrived the mother was in eternity. Infidelity fails in the hour of sadness.

You must allow me to be specific here. We are all aware that it is no uncommon thing for the gayest flower to droop and die, just as it begins to send forth its sweetest fragrance. Yonder is an ardent, noble-minded young man, who at the very outset of his career, has been disappointed in the object on which he had most fully set his heart; and what can comfort him now? Here is a lovely female, through whose fresh joys the ploughshare of desolation has been ruthlessly driven, and now the hectic spot is coming out on her cheek. In the next dwelling is a young mother, who refuses to be comforted, because the babe she loved so well, and for a little while, pressed so warmly to her bosom is torn from her embrace, and put in its coffin. Now tell me what kind of cordials you would administer in cases like these? Could you do better than commend such sad ones to the friendship of Him, who breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax?

Is there not something cruel, I had almost said inhuman, in sending these children of grief to look for consolation on the briery and thorny fields of the world? Rely upon it, no comforts but those that come from the cross, no music but that made by the harp of the Son of David, can relieve maladies like these. But blessed be God,

"Earth has no sorrows which heaven cannot cure."

Even the valley of the shadow of death is often lighted up by the presence of the Savior. This is an event which may overtake you, while the pulse of youth is still throbbing full and strong in your veins, or it may be deferred until old age has made its unmistakable marks on your brow. But be its advent when it will, it must prove the crisis of your being, and consign you to eternal joys—or eternal sorrows. In view of that dreadful hour, what is there to cheer the soul, but a well-established belief in the gospel of Christ, and a cordial reliance on the blood of the cross. No one, rest assured, is carried by angels to Abraham's bosom, merely because of his amiable dispositions, or his freedom from open and disreputable vices. There must be a renewal of the heart unto righteousness, or the crown of glory that fades not away, can never be worn.

Tell me then, is not religion necessary to human welfare? Look at man in prosperity and adversity, in health and in sickness, in life and in death, and say—does he not need just such a guide as the Bible, just such a refuge as Jesus, just such a father as God? Under all these circumstances, he must learn to cast anchor within the veil, if he would be secure from the storm. When God is relied upon, and Christ is trusted in, and the Scriptures are loved, there can be "no enchantment against Jacob," nor "divination against Israel."

My young friends, if you admit the truth of what has been said—and admit it I know you do—then we shall expect you to stand up, in all companies, and on all occasions—open, bold, and manly advocates of the gospel. As far as in you lies, never allow the book which brings such blessings to our world to be treated with contempt. Be understood everywhere as taking sides fearlessly and without flinching, with the church of God. Less than this you cannot do, without proving treacherous to the best interests of your fellow-men. Less than this you cannot do, without causing a dark cloud to overspread the face of your own heavens. Less than this you cannot do, without being derelict in your duty to God. Be not like Esau, "who for one morsel of food sold his birthright." You are passing through your SPRINGTIME; be careful so to spend it—that you may have a pleasant summer, an abundant autumn, and a cheerful winter.

Become truly and personally religious in early life. This you need for the expansion of your minds, and the rectification of your hearts, as a help to success, and a support under disappointment. Nothing is so essential to your welfare, as an experimental faith in Christ, and a daily subjection to his laws. Be good men and true men, of a sound creed and a holy life, men who fear God and keep his commandments, and it will be well with you for both earth and heaven.

Your lot, I need not tell you, is cast upon eventful times. The world is probably on the eve of great changes. Before the frosts of winter shall have whitened your heads, immense revolutions will occur in the state of society. O, be prepared to stand in your lot, and perform your part faithfully. In the times which try men's souls, nothing will answer like a steady, cheerful trust in God. See to it that all is right here—and all will be right everywhere. This is firm footing. Here is solid rock.

Only be right with God, and come joy or come sorrow—the outcome will be safe. No fear for you, if you but make it your earnest morning and evening prayer, that you may be led in the way of peace and truth, by the blessed Spirit. Under such teachings your feet shall not stumble, nor will you ever wander from the way. Should disease invade your body, and death lay its icy hand upon you in early life, you may lift up your eyes, and say as did a dear friend of mine, "Blessed Savior, I am near my home. Satan has tried to disturb me, but I have examined the ground of my hope, and find that I am on a rock. Yes, I feel that I am on a rock."

These pages have cost me thought, and labor, and prayer; but I ask no richer reward than to be the instrument in the hand of God, of helping you to become useful men and true Christians. "May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace."