The Fruit of the Spirit

George Bethune, 1845

Preface to the Third Edition

The author, having had the satisfaction of knowing that some good has been done, both at home and abroad, by the divine blessing upon this quiet little book, is encouraged to send it, after a careful revision, again to the press, as the former editions were exhausted some time ago, while the demand still continues. He has chosen for it a form smaller and cheaper, though not less neat, that it may be within the reach of more, yet easily read. The seed is scattered by a feeble hand, but not without hope that the God of the harvest will give it increase to the praise of his holy and merciful name.

George Bethune
Philadelphia, July, 1845.

PREFACE

If anyone should ask why the slight volume now offered to the reader has been added to the multitude of books, the author can only answer, that the pressing entreaties of many, who heard the substance of it from the pulpit, have encouraged him to allow its publication, in the hope that what was *listened* to with much attention, may be *read*, by the divine blessing, with some profit. He lays no claim to originality or depth in his manner of treating his subjects, but he has endeavored to be plain, and according to the word of God. The *critic* may find much that a better taste might have corrected, the *curious* little that is new, and the *polemic* less that savors of party; but, he trusts, that nothing will be discovered in these pages, which a Christian should condemn as inconsistent with the morality of the Gospel.

In the care of the church to establish and defend sound doctrine, the *ethical* part of Christianity is sometimes neglected. It is, therefore, necessary that definitions which have become obscured, should be re-impressed, and the detail of a Christian life stated in so simple a manner, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein."

The author has long believed, that *the teaching of truth is the best way to refute error*, and that there is no argument so convincing of the divinity of religion, as the life of a godly man. He passes no censure upon his brethren who have girded on their armor, and are fighting lustily in the arena of controversy; but he thinks he makes no error in keeping aloof from such conflict, while he endeavors to teach those whom the Head of the Church has placed under his care, "to do justice, to love mercy, and walk humbly with God," learning of Him who was "meek and lowly in heart," to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

In the study of the precious text, for the illustration of which the following essays were written, he has felt as if he and his people were sitting at the feet of Jesus. All the hours spent upon them have been very sweet and pleasant, and if, in their printed form, they should be made useful, his reward will be rich indeed, for both the seed-time and harvest will have yielded joy and excited thankfulness.

The generous reader can not judge severely a work, however imperfect, which was undertaken from a desire to do him good; and the vigorous believer, who may find here little to satisfy his manly appetite, will, perhaps, breathe a brief prayer, that God would bless the humble offering to others, and pardon the errors and short-comings of a fellow-laborer in the vineyard of Christ.

Galatians 5:22-23, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

INTRODUCTION

It is not necessary to our becoming good Christians, that we should be profound philosophers, acute critics, or learned theologians. "The gospel is preached to the poor," who have but little time to acquire learning, or to use learning if they had it. Our Master told his disciples, that "whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein;" and Paul, though the most learned of all the blessed apostles, delights to show the power and excellency of the simple gospel, over all the wisdom and skill of men.

Thus we are taught that, however valuable philosophy and learning may be in their proper places, they are valuable to the Christian only when under the direction of a child-like spirit. Indeed, nothing is so much in the way of simple faith, as that pride which unsanctified philosophy begets. It was after the fishermen of Galilee followed Jesus, and the Syro-Phoenician, and the woman of Samaria, and the Gentile nobleman, and many a humble soul besides, had rejoiced in his love, that the Sanhedrin boastingly asked, "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?" And the apostle, when the number of the church had swelled to thousands, was able to find few, if any, of "the wise, the scribes, or the disputers of this world" among them. Great then is the error of that Christian, who refuses to believe any of the facts in religion, which the Scripture sets forth, because, like Nicodemus, he cannot understand how such things can be.

The mediation of Christ, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, are the grand characteristic doctrines of the Christian system.

The one exhibits God justifying his mercy in the salvation of his people; the other exhibits God carrying on that salvation to its glorious result.

The one shows us our dependence, as guilty lost sinners, upon the grace of God for pardon and life; the other our utter insufficiency, as weak and corrupt sinners, to avail ourselves of the blessings of salvation without his renewing and perfecting power.

The one declares that God is willing to receive for Christ's sake all penitent and believing souls; the other offers to us faith and repentance, that we may be enabled to go unto him and abide with him.

The one assures us that there is a way of salvation; the other teaches us how we may know that we are walking therein.

The one gives to God all the glory of pardon; the other, all the glory of our sanctification.

The one is as essential to salvation as the other; and it is as important that we should know the doctrine of Scripture concerning the work of the Spirit, as that concerning the work of Christ.

The aim of this little treatise will, therefore, be to show,

I. The Office of the Holy Spirit in the Hearts of God's People.

II. The Effects of His Divine Work, as Manifested in the Graces of Christian Character.

O almighty God, Father of lights, who gives wisdom liberally to all that ask it of you, and upbraids them not—you promised by your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, to teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance, whatever you have commanded us. Bestow upon us plentifully of the Spirit of your Son, that, learning of you in meekness and simplicity of heart, our minds may be kept from all blindness of error or wresting of your holy truth, and our faith be fruitful in good works, to your glory and our eternal profit, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Section 1. The OFFICE of the Holy Spirit

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is revealed to us principally in the Gospel. Jesus Christ was the first to speak plainly of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; although the light of the New Testament enables us to discover many traces of a distinction between these Divine Persons in the older Scriptures, as when God declares he has "set his Son on his holy hill of Zion," or promises to "pour out his Spirit upon all flesh."

The work of salvation includes not only the *pardon* of Christ's people as sinners, but their *restoration* to perfect and eternal holiness. Like every other work of Almighty power, it is ascribed to God—yet, in the execution of it, each of the blessed Persons has a distinct office and agency.

The **Father** is ever represented as the conservator of the rights and honors of the Godhead, and, therefore, as the director and approver of the work. He sends his only begotten Son into the world; pronounces himself well-pleased with his obedience in the form of a servant, and exalts him to His own right hand, with "a name that is above every name," in reward of his faithfulness unto death; and it is He who, in answer to his Son's intercession, sends the Holy Spirit into the hearts of his ransomed ones, to seal them as his own with the image of Christ, and carry on the work unto the day of their perfect redemption.

The **Son** manifests the purpose of God in salvation; provides in his own sufferings and obedience the atonement and the righteousness which justifies the Father in pardoning the sinner and restoring him to happiness; and stands as the Mediator between the believer and the God whom he has offended, but to whom he would return.

The **Holy Spirit** prepares the human nature for the incarnation of the Son; strengthens the Immanuel in the performance of his work on earth in obedience and suffering; and then fits, persuades, and enables the sinner to receive the salvation and follow Christ, by opening the eyes of his understanding to perceive the truth which Christ has revealed, converting his depraved heart to love it, and strengthening him in all his powers to obey it and walk in it.

Thus is salvation the work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and to Father, Son and Holy Spirit should we render equal praises. But *as the purpose of the Father could not be complete without the work of the Son—so the work of the Son cannot be efficient without the application of the Spirit.* The apostle Peter declares his believing brethren to be "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ;" and the apostle Paul says, "Through him (that is Christ) we have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

It is, therefore, to the energy of the Spirit, that we are to attribute all the effects of the Gospel upon our hearts. For, as in the first creation, God made the world by the Son, the word of his power—yet it was the Spirit which moved upon the face of the waters to bring order out of confusion, and light out of darkness; so, in the new creation of his people to holiness, the word of God in the gospel of his Son prevails not, until the same Spirit has moved on the corrupt and dead soul, awakening it to a new and holy life.

Hence the graces of the Christian character are called "The fruit of the Spirit."

It is important, also, to observe the *name* which is given to this Divine Person and agent in our redemption. He is called the Spirit, or Holy Spirit. God the Father has never revealed himself immediately; all his revelations are made to us by the Son or the Holy Spirit. Hence the Baptist says, "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him," or made him known. And the writer of the Hebrews calls the Son "the brightness" or shining forth "of his" Father's "glory, and the express image," or expressed character, "of his person." For the same reason the Son is called "the eternal word," or speech, or voice of God; and the various manifestations of God's power are declared to be the works of the Son. "All things were made by him, (the Word,) and with out him there was nothing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

All the divine appearances, or manifestations of God to the senses of men, under the Old Testament were, most probably, by the Son, except some of the prophetic visions which opened the spiritual world. Christ was the *Angel of the Covenant* who appeared unto Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who "dwelt in the bush," and "spoke to Moses from the cloudy pillar." Daniel expressly says, that he who walked with the three in the fiery furnace, had "a form like unto that of the Son of God." Even the *Shechinah*, the Visible Glory, that rested upon the ark of the covenant, thought by many to represent the Holy Spirit, may with greater consistency be supposed to have represented Him, who was the Angel of the Covenant, and of the Presence, who led the people by that cloud in the wilderness, and who, as we have seen in the New Testament, is declared to be the "brightness of God's glory."

The Holy Spirit has not manifested himself to the senses, except when he descended like a dove upon the Savior at his baptism, to prove that "the Spirit of the Lord God was upon him;" or in cloven tongues of fire, which rested upon the heads of the eleven, when the "mighty rushing wind filled all the house where they were sitting," to show the communication of promised spiritual gifts. It is remarkable that these manifestations were emblematic—the dove, or the tongues; and, having been made to establish the fact of the Spirit's communication to the Savior and the church, they were never afterwards repeated. No visible influence accompanied the power of the Spirit in the conversion of the thousands at the Pentecost, or when the apostles conferred the Spirit upon others by the laying on of hands. Yet that God does manifest himself by the Spirit, is clear from the names of the Spirit; "the Spirit of knowledge," "the Spirit of wisdom," "the Spirit of power," "the Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him," and "the Spirit of truth."

The revelations of God by the Holy Spirit, and the operations of that Spirit, must be purely spiritual, and can be known only by our spirits, and his effects upon them, and, through them, upon our lives. Hence our Savior, in answer to the cavils of Nicodemus, says: "The wind (the unseen wind) blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes and where it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He is conscious of its influences only by its effects.

In another place the Master says, " The kingdom of God comes not with observation, (that is, of the senses,) neither shall they say, Lo! here, or lo! there, for behold it is within you." For the same reason the Gospel is termed "the dispensation of the Spirit," to distinguish it from the Levitical, the dispensation of sense.

The spirit, throughout the epistles of Paul, is opposed to the flesh, or the sensual part of man; and he tells us that "the Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are born of God." We can, therefore, expect and know the Spirit's power, only by his spiritual influences, and hence *the fruits of the Spirit are spiritual graces, virtues of the Spirit*, as love, joy, peace, and the rest.

It is also instructive to mark, that what the apostle terms *the fruits of the Spirit, are really the qualities and actions of the renewed man*. It is the Christian who loves, who is joyous, peaceful, long-suffering, gentle, good, faithful, meek, and temperate. These are personal characteristics—yet they are the fruits of the Spirit; which teaches us that they are not the actings of the Spirit himself, but the effects of the work he has wrought upon the heart, and of his influence which still abides there.

The Christian is not less a free agent because of the Spirit's power, for all these qualities require the exercise of his will; but his soul has been graciously wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, (who well knows how to deal with the spirits he has made,) so that all the tendencies of his character are changed, and he delights in and is enabled to manifest the graces of that holiness, to which it was the purpose of God in salvation he should be brought. The fruit is not grafted on the branch, but the branch is grafted on the living vine, and by the power of the life derived from it, brings forth fruit. The love, the joy, the peace, and the rest, are the believer's—but the glory of them belongs to the Holy Spirit. As, when in the natural man the flesh works upon the soul so as to produce sin—sin is termed the work of the flesh (verse 19). Just so, when the Holy Spirit, working on the soul, produces holiness—then holiness is termed the fruit of the Spirit. How the Holy Spirit works upon the soul to produce this effect, we cannot explain; neither can we explain the power of matter over mind; and, certainly, the fact in the former case is not more incredible than in the other. The natural man is conscious of the influence of his body over his mind; so may the Christian be of the influence of the Spirit over his heart.

The Spirit undoubtedly uses the truth of the Gospel in sanctifying the believer's heart; for "the word of God" is called "the sword of the Spirit." Our Savior prays, that his people may be "sanctified through the truth." The apostle says, "If the truth shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." The apostle Peter speaks of our "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God."

David declares that "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Yet all these effects are ascribed to the Spirit of God; and faith, which is nothing else than a believing apprehension of the truth that "purifies the heart," "works by love," and "overcomes the world."

It is clear, however, that the truth is not sufficient of itself, for many hear it, but receive it not. A sword must be wielded by a strong hand, so must the word be wielded by the Spirit; and the Savior prays that the word may be the means or instrument by which his people may be sanctified Thus, the fruits enumerated in the text, grow from the seed of the word sown in the heart, but the heart was prepared to receive the seed of the truth, and is strengthened to shoot it forth unto fruitfulness of grace.

The seed in the parable of the sower was the word of God—yet only that which fell in good ground yielded fruit; while that which fell on the beaten path, never entered the earth; and that, which fell among thorns, was choked; and that which fell on stony ground, where the soil was thin, soon withered away.

But all our hearts are by nature hard, filled with cares and deceitful pleasures; or, if they show any slight sensibility, it soon passes away. The Holy Spirit, who would cultivate our hearts so that the word may be fruitful in them, prepares them as good ground; he breaks up the hard heart by contrition, that the seed may enter; he takes away the *hard rock* that it may shoot deep; he weeds out the *thorns* lest they choke it; and, even after that, he sheds dews of influence, and heat from the Sun of Righteousness, and breathes his vital breath continually upon it, that it may grow unto perfection.

This he does in conversion, when he softens the hard heart, which is enmity against God and resists his truth, to feel his power; and in sanctification, when he communicates to it, and continues to communicate, his congenial energy. To whom then shall the praise of the harvest be given? To the soil, which but for him, would have borne noxious weeds? Or to the Divine Cultivator who prepared the soil, supplied the seeds and quickened and guarded its growth?

We must, however, take care in using these figures, derived from natural things, to illustrate spiritual things, lest we carry them too far, and impute to the soul the senselessness and sluggishness of matter. *The natural heart is indeed dead in trespasses and sins, wholly inclined to all evil, and, therefore, can bring forth no good thing*. But the death of a spiritual, immortal, and ever-active soul, is as different from the death of the body, as spirit is different from matter. The dead *body* is wholly motionless and unconscious, but the dead *soul* is willingly and intelligently active in wickedness. There is a will in the dead soul; and although that will is in bondage to sin, it is still will, and is in bondage because the heart loves sin.

Hence, although our conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, the sinner is commanded "to turn unto God," and he is condemned for not repenting, because he, by his impenitence, "does always resist the Holy Spirit," and "will not come unto Christ, that he might have life." There is difficulty understanding the dynamics here, but not in practice.

Every sinner knows that he continues to sin voluntarily; and every reader of the Scripture knows that if he "yields himself to God," the Spirit will take possession of his heart; and every one, who puts these two truths together, must know, that, if he be not converted, it is his own fault, because he has not only neglected striving to enter the strait gate, but has struggled against the Spirit, lest he should be brought to enter.

Dependence upon the grace of the Holy Spirit for a new life is no excuse nor warrant for idleness, but, on the contrary rebukes it; else there were no meaning in the command, "Cast away from you all the transgressions whereby you have transgressed, and make a new heart and a new spirit, for why will you die?" (Ezekiel 18.31,) or in the promise, "They that seek shall find;" or in the condemnation of those, who have not "believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

As we are to be zealous in seeking the conversion of our souls, so after conversion are we to be zealous in seeking our sanctification unto God. Sanctification, like regeneration, is the work of the Spirit of God—yet our Lord commands us to "be holy as our Father in Heaven is holy," and the injunctions of the apostles are frequent to "grow in grace, and in knowledge;" "to set our affections upon things above;" and "to walk worthy of the calling with which we are called." These show that it is our duty to be holy, and to grow in grace, in knowledge, in heavenly-mindedness, and Christian consistency, until we are holy, even as our Father in Heaven is holy.

We cannot be obedient to the heavenly voice so long as we wait, without any effort upon our own part, for the Spirit of God to do all within us and for us. We are to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" that is, we are to strive industriously with a holy anxiety, until our salvation be complete; and the fact, that "it is God that works in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure," is declared as a reason and encouragement to our industry, not to our indolence. Thus the grace of the Holy Spirit is promised only to those who seek it.

Our Lord, after enforcing the duty of perseverance and importunity in prayer, says: "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" And in the book of Hebrews we are told to go "boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need." So that without prayer, earnest, faithful and constant—we may not hope for the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts.

And again, we are taught that this Holy Spirit may be "resisted," "despised," "grieved," and "quenched."

He is "resisted," when we refuse to obey the gracious motions he makes within us to the doing of good works, and remain idle and wicked.

He is "despised," when we set a slight value upon his gracious benefits, and do not improve his divine help unto the utmost.

He is "grieved," when we do not put away from our hearts all that is offensive to his pure sight-as impurity, pride, enmity, or idolatry.

He is "quenched," when we so continue to "resist," "despise," and "grieve" him, that he leaves us to our sinful folly, and we feel no more his power within us, in a sense of sin, a desire of divine assistance, and an endeavor after a holy life.

The grace of the Holy Spirit, like the talents in the parable, is given us to increase by our own industry; for "to him that has (that is, makes a good use of the divine blessing) shall be given" more, and "from him that has not, shall be taken away even that which he seems to have." While, therefore, we grow in the Christian life by divine grace, it is our duty to grow in grace.

Besides, the quality of grace is such, that though it is strength from God, we must use it. *Grace gives no new faculty, but strengthens the faculties which we have*. When our Savior cured the paralytic, he did not give him new limbs or new sinews, nor did he raise him up, set him on his feet, and carry him on his way. He commanded him to arise; and, when, in obedience to the divine word, and reliance upon the divine promise conveyed in it, the withered man made the effort—a new life went through his wasted frame, and he arose, by his own volition and effort, through the strength which was given him.

Just so, the grace of God does not give to the Christian another soul, but quickens him with new life, and endows him with new energy. God gives us strength, but it is a strength which we are to exert.

The mind, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, perceives and understands the truth; the conscience, quickened by the Holy Spirit, feels and acknowledges it; the heart, converted by the Holy Spirit, loves and obeys it. Yet it is the Christian himself who thus understands, acknowledges, loves and obeys the truth; though he does so by the grace of God enabling him. If he neglects the study of the truth, or refuses to study it with candor and simplicity, or to nourish it with care and affection, he has no reason to hope for the grace of God. It is only when and so long as we use or exert the strength of grace, that we can know we have it, or may expect to enjoy it and profit by it. "The idle soul shall suffer hunger, but the hand of the diligent makes rich."

Our working is the sure sign of the presence of grace, our idleness is the sure sign of its absence. God's people, "in the day of his power," are a "willing people;" and the Holy Spirit works in them both "to will and to do;" for, as there is no obedience except it be from the heart, we cannot do, except we be willing, God's good pleasure.

Hence, the fruits of the Spirit are the qualities and actions of the renewed man, not produced without him, but wrought through him.

Let us, then, be ever mindful of our *dependence* upon the Spirit of God. *We derived our new life from him, and only he can maintain it in us. Without him we can neither think good thoughts, speak good words, nor do good deeds*. Any strength, of which we may be conscious, is from him alone; and, if he withdraws himself from us, we must languish and die.

While we bless the Spirit of life for his gracious influence, let us not forget that we have received his power from the Father, only for the sake of the righteousness and intercession of Christ his Son. All our good has been wrought in us by the power of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, no good nor merit in us could have procured for us his gracious favor. If the Father had not sent his Son, if the Son had not lived and died and interceded for us—the Holy Spirit would never have been ours.

While we seek from the Father, for Christ's sake, the continual help of the Holy Spirit, let us ever "maintain good works." It is for the maintenance of good works that the Holy Spirit is given; and it is only in the faithful use of his gracious strength, that we can hope to obtain more. If, therefore, "we would obtain what God does promise, we must love what God does command." What can we render, less than our whole hearts and lives, for such an unspeakable gift? "Know you not," says the apostle, "that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

Section 2. The FRUIT of the Spirit. The Effects of the Holy Spirit's Work, as Manifested in the Graces of Christian Character.

Several *principal truths* have now been ascertained by us, which it is necessary that we should remember, if we would profitably pursue our meditations upon our holy and beautiful text. They are these:

The purpose of God in salvation is, to deliver his people, not only from the *punishment* due to them for their sins, but also from their *sinfulness* itself; that they may no longer offend him by their disobedience, but serve and enjoy him in that perfection for which God designed the nature of man in his original creation.

This sanctification, or growth of holiness, is wrought in the hearts of God's people by the divine power of the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the ever blessed and glorious Godhead.

The instrument, or means, employed by the Holy Spirit in producing this moral change, is the truth of God in the gospel of Christ; which he makes effectual, by enlightening the *understanding* to perceive it, quickening the *conscience* to feel and acknowledge it, and converting the *heart* to love and obey it; and thus his gracious influence is revealed in the personal qualities and actions of the renewed man, which are, therefore, called "the fruit of the Spirit."

Galatians 5:22-23. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

LOVE

The apostle holds forth to us a rich cluster of graces, but he names first the *stem* from which the rest hang. For as upon Christ, the living vine, all the living branches grow, and from the Spirit, through Him, derive their vigor and fruitfulness—so it is from *love* that the other graces proceed, and through love are ripened unto perfection.

Yet it were an unworthy figure to make love, the sweetest fruit of the cluster, a mere stem, which is dry and tasteless. *We should rather compare these graces to fruits, which grow the one out of the other, love being the first formed and chief.*

Love has never been accurately defined, but we know it to be, That affection which has delight in its objects, and desires their welfare.

A rational being loves not without a reason, which seems to him good. The reasons of a Christian's love are drawn from the word of God, guiding and governing the sensibilities of his soul.

He loves God, because of his holy excellence, his loving-kindness toward him, and the enjoyment he has in his communion.

He loves those to whom he is bound by the closer ties of life, not only because of the natural affections the Creator has implanted in his heart, but because God has, in a greater or less degree, entrusted their welfare to his care.

He loves Christians, because they are beloved by his heavenly Father, bear His image so far as grace has transformed them, and because their sympathy and friendship is a mutual blessing.

He loves all men, because God has commended them to his love; and he desires and delights in their welfare, as God loves the world.

He loves the holy angels, because they are faithful and honored servants of his God, minister to him now by Christ's gracious permission, and will be his loving companions in the praise of God throughout eternity.

It is, however, to be regretted, that the Scriptural term CHARITY has fallen into disuse, or, rather, has been reduced and confined to the sense of mere alms-giving. Charity, as our translators of the New Testament understood its meaning, describes this grace better than "love," which has so many lower associations. For the apostle does not say, love to God, or love to the church, or love of our neighbor, but simply "love;" meaning not so much the acting or going forth of love, as that loving temper, or lovingness of soul, which disposes us to love whenever the proper object is presented.

Thus God was love long before he had made any creatures to be the objects of his love, even from all eternity; and though, it may be said he loved his own glorious self, and delighted in his own infinitely lovely perfections—yet we may not doubt that *it was his loving disposition, which led him to create beings upon whom he could bestow the riches of his goodness, and receive their love in grateful return*.

Adam, when he stood without human companionship in the garden of sinless delight, had all the affections which man has now, or glorified man will have in the vast society of Heaven, though doubtless not so expanded, because they were not called forth and educated. He loved his God with an entire and child-like affection. He loved all around him, the waving trees, the variegated flowers, the mellow fruits, the flowing waters, the rejoicing birds, the innocent beasts, the morning light and the evening shadow, the sun, the moon, the stars, and all that told of his Maker's love and invited to his Maker's praise.

Yet there was a want in his soul, a loving tendency God had implanted in his holy nature, which needed other beings to love, and to love him. "God saw it was not good for man to be alone," and, therefore, he gave a human companion to his bosom, and formed for him that holy union from which all the relations of life are derived. He did not change and adapt the heart of man to these new ties, but ordained them because they were necessary to man's loving nature.

If it should be asked, Is not God a sufficient object of all love? Was it necessary that the human heart should have any other beside him, to call into exercise all its pure affection? there is a ready answer. Love is an active principle; and, especially when stimulated by gratitude for kindness received, as is the love of a holy being for God, it must manifest itself by some proof or return. When pent up in the heart, it produces uneasiness and pain. Indeed, experience convinces us, that the mere excitement of our sensibilities, without an opportunity of their going forth in action, has a hurtful and hardening influence upon the heart; as is seen in those who love to weep over tales and scenes of fictitious woe—yet steel themselves against sympathy with real suffering. The holy soul pours out its love in adoring thanks to God; but thanks are not enough. He would do something to prove his affection. His inquiry is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits" towards me? And were there none in the universe to love but God, the answer would be, Nothing but thanks. God already has all. He is infinitely above needing anything to increase his blessedness. All that we have is his, and what we can give him is now his own. As David sings, "O my soul, you have said unto the Lord, You are my Lord; my goodness extends not to you;" (or as another translation has it, "My goods are nothing to you;") and then adds, "but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." He could bestow nothing upon *God*, but he could prove his gratitude by kindness towards the *children of God*. God has created other beings for us to love and serve, that in so doing we may not only prove, but cultivate and increase our love to himself.

Thus holy love to God is always accompanied by loving-kindness toward his creatures. The angels are holy, and their delight. has ever been in loving God; yet adoration and praise is not all their employment. They are "ministers of his, who do his pleasure;" "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation;" and they feel a joy, above Heaven's ordinary rapture, "over every sinner that repents."

The command to man, to "love God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength," is followed by a command to "love his neighbor as himself," which could not be, unless love to our neighbor is included in love to God; for how else can we give all our heart to God, and love ourselves and our neighbor too? So one apostle says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" and another, "No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us."

In the various descriptions of Heaven, where the Christian will be perfectly holy and happy in the love of God, the idea of a holy society and communion with other holy intelligences, is always introduced: "the spirits of just men made perfect, and an innumerable company of angels." Therefore, the apostle names "love," as the first fruit of the Spirit's gracious work in restoring us to a holy perfection; even that lovingness of spirit, which disposes us to love God, and to love all whom he has commanded us to love in loving him.

A reference to the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians will probably convince us, that this loving disposition is what the apostle intends by CHARITY. There he tells us, that we may "speak with the tongues of men and angels;" "may have the gift of prophecy," and "understand all mysteries and all knowledge;" may "bestow all our goods to feed the poor;" and give our bodies to martyrdom by fire—yet be destitute of charity, and have no part in the kingdom of God. But that "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

Many and various effects are thus attributed to love; so that charity is neither one, nor all of them, but the disposition and temper of the soul which produces them all. *Love is a holy, abiding and vigorous spirit, which rules the whole man, ever directing him to the humble and loving fulfillment of all his duties to God and men.*

This loving temper we can have only so far as we are sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to perceive, and converting us to love and obey the truth. This is taught in all those passages which declare that the perfection of obedience is in love. As the apostle says to Timothy, "Now the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith sincere;" and again to the Colossians, " Above all things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness," not only combining together and perfecting all Christian virtues, but also making the society of men or angels perfect.

Heaven, where all shall be holy and blessed, is described as a place of perfect love; and the nearest approach we can make to the enjoyment of Heaven upon earth, is the enjoyment of this love in our souls; for, says the beloved apostle, "He who dwells in love, dwells in God and God in him;" and what higher idea can we have of Heaven, than that there we shall be happy in the presence and communion of God?

It is taught yet more fully in that short but wonderful sentence, which the loving disciple loved to repeat, *"God is love."* Nowhere do we find it said that God is wisdom, though he is omniscient; or that he is power, though he is almighty; or that he is justice, though he is infinitely just. *These are attributes to the divine nature; but love is the divine character itself, the perfection of the infinite God.* When God made man in his own image, he made him a being of peace and holy love; and the Holy Spirit, in restoring man to this moral likeness of God, can do it only by restoring him to this loving spirit.

Hence, when the apostle names together "faith, and hope, and love," he tells us that love is the greatest of the three; because, though *faith* makes us acquainted with such a portion of the wisdom of God as we are here able to receive; and *hope* is the expectation of certain good from the hand of that God, with whom faith makes us acquainted; it is *love*, which makes our moral likeness to him. Faith and hope are the handmaids of charity, who bring her glad tidings of God's glory and truth and promise, that she may rejoice yet more in him and in his blessed service. They are the golden conduits through which the love of Heaven flows to the soul on earth. Nay, they are the wings of love, upon which she lifts herself above every base thing, and flies upward to the bosom of God. Yet are they but the means, love alone is the end. They shall fail in the light and fruition of God's blessed presence; but charity will never fail, and throughout eternity will strike her harp, and swell the song of all whom the love of God has washed white in the blood of the Lamb!

This charity must be the effect of the Spirit's work in sanctifying the heart through the truth; for as none are holy except those who are heartily and unreservedly obedient unto God—so none can be truly obedient to him except those who truly love him and delight in his truth. For, certainly, that outward worship and seeming service, in which the heart is not found, can be nothing better than insult to God, who looks not on our outward countenance or actions, but upon the thoughts and intents of the heart. If we do not approve in our souls of the commandments he has given us, we may comply with them from a dread of his wrath, but there is rebellion in the soul, a doubting of the wisdom of the Lawgiver, and a willingness, if we dared, to throw off his authority altogether. And, as our duty to men is but a part of our duty to God, the same lack of love will, in God's holy sight, blast all our pretenses to virtue in our. conduct towards them.

When, however, the soul has been taught by the Holy Spirit, and is truly convinced that the truth of God is perfect wisdom, that all his ways are just and good, that his every commandment is a law of love, and all his promises are "yes and amen in Christ Jesus"—then every revelation of God's attributes, every act of his providence, every precept of his will, and every assurance of his love, calls forth its love to him, and urges it willingly along the path of duty. When this instruction is complete, the love of the soul will be perfect, its obedience perfect, and its blessedness perfect. The holy man will find all his delight in God and his service, for he will have no motive, and, therefore, no inclination to sin; while the love of God towards him, in thus giving him a knowledge of Himself, guiding him in the way of life, and assuring him of His favor, will, the more he contemplates it, increase his affection and zeal.

Thus satisfied with the riches of the love of God, he will be listed above all temptation to offend against his fellow men. What is it that produces wrong against others, but a love of those things which God has forbidden, because they are hurtful? "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not from hence, even of your lusts, which war in your members," (elsewhere called "fleshly lusts,") which war against the soul?

When the soul is filled with love and delight in God, it will never contend or quarrel for such things. He, who has the friendship of God, can suffer no real injury. Therefore, though called to bear injustice from his fellow men, he regards it as part of God's discipline of his spirit; and he "suffers long" and patiently, bearing no ill-will against his enemies, but is "kind" and gentle in return. He is contented with the lot which the God he loves and who loves him, has assigned; and "envies not" the superior fortune of any in this world; while he is so persuaded of the inexhaustible riches of God's blessing, that he would have the whole universe share it with him.

The glory of the holy and divine object of his love, humbles him to a deep, but not painful, sense of his own inferior nature; and he "vaunts not himself," nor is "puffed up" with pride, but gives to God all the glory of all his worthiness. Ever impressed with a sense of the Divine Presence, and fearful of offending a Being in whose approbation is his delight, he "behaves" himself "not unseemly" before the world, but with that sincere courtesy which love and modesty always teaches.

Nay, bent upon the better riches which await him beyond this life, he "seeks not his own;" and is content to suffer the loss of worldly good, rather than have the serenity of his temper ruffled, and his love for his neighbor weakened. Therefore, he is not "easily provoked;" trifles cannot disturb him; nor will he be continually suspicious, but rather "thinks no evil," from very abhorrence of all that which would pollute the pure fountain of his thoughts; while he "rejoices in the truth," because he loves to reflect its holy light from his soul. Thus he "bears all things" with patience and resignation; "believes all things," with the candor of a pure and unsuspecting mind; and "hopes all things," because he loves and longs only for that which is good.

Ah! we say: How difficult is such a love in such a world as this! But it is not more difficult than godliness, and were our love of God perfect, our love to man would be perfect also. Yet, courage! believer, when "that which is perfect is come," this imperfection "will be done away." In Heaven all will be holy. "The wicked will cease from troubling." Sin will be found neither in our companions nor ourselves; and universal love, without a check or hindrance, will bind the holy family together and to God. Here our love to God, and our love to man flowing from it, is imperfect, because our knowledge is imperfect. We "see through a glass darkly." We "know but in part." But when we know even as we are known," our love shall be as perfect as our knowledge. Until that blessed Heaven be opened for our entrance, the strength of our faith can only be known by the strength of our love, and the increase of our faith by the increase of our love; for "the fruit of the Spirit is love."

We should, then, be ever mindful, that *without a loving spirit to God and man, we have no evidence that we have received the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit*. It is not enough that we have knowledge, for the stripes of the unfaithful servant who knew his master's will, were many more than his who knew it not. "Knowledge puffs up," says the apostle, "love edifies." *Knowledge without love is nothing better than worthless wind, which blows us up into a great conceit of ourselves, making us arrogant towards men, and presumptuous towards God, and so hateful to both.* But knowledge, used by love, builds us fairly and firmly upon the true foundation Christ Jesus, until we become a perfect temple for the habitation of God through the Spirit.

The man of mere knowledge is, at best, like that fig-tree which our Lord saw between Jerusalem and Bethany, making a rare show of leaves from a distance—yet barren of all fruit when we come near to get good; and, like that tree, he will be accursed by the judgment of Jesus. But the man of love, who grows in grace as he grows in knowledge, is like the tree "planted by the rivers of water," not only fair in the garniture of foliage, but "yielding its *fruit* in its season," and, therefore, worthy of a place in the garden of the Lord.

It is not enough that we have zeal; for all zeal that flows not from love, is but a mixture of pride and ambition, intolerance and censoriousness. We may call it, as Jehu did his, a zeal for the Lord; but the end shows it to be a zeal for ourselves, that men might admire us in the church, as they do heroes in the battlefield. Even martyrdom, "the giving of our bodies to be burned," is then nothing more than an obstinate courage, such as has often distinguished the worst men in the worst causes. Party spirit and sectarian bigotry, like their father the devil, may often assume the form of angels of light, and deceive men, but they cannot deceive God; and, like every other lying counterfeit of goodness, will bring shame and contempt upon all who put them in the place of love to God and man. The fire of true zeal is the fire of love come down from Heaven, a pure and holy flame, which burns to warm, to cherish, and to bless. But that which shows itself in rancorous controversy and bitter recriminations, was kindled in Hell, and burns to torture and destroy!

Nor is external practice of any kind enough to prove our gracious state. *The character of an act is found only in the motive*; and charity, as we have seen, in the loving disposition of the soul. There is scarcely any outward conduct required by the Gospel, which we might not imitate from very selfishness. How often has . . .
ostentation worn the garb of benevolence,
ambition called itself public spirit, and
secret hate deluded its victim by honied courtesies!

In these days, when the beautiful morality of religion is so much lauded, what guise of selfishness is so specious as that of piety! We may not be conscious of the hypocrisy; for such is the deceitfulness of sin, and the willingness of the heart to be deceived into good opinions of itself, that nothing but the light of God can detect and discover to ourselves our true character; but we have this certain rule, *that which is not love is sin.*

Only so far as our hearts are filled with love, are they filled with grace. Every thought of discontent with our lot, or dissatisfaction with God's commandments; every thought of ill-will, dislike or envy, nay, every thought, which is not love and peacefulness, is a witness against us that our sanctification is incomplete. Let us then search the dark corners of our hearts, and cast out from them all but love; for, until they are filled with love, they cannot be filled with God; because God is love.

While we believe that neither knowledge, nor zeal, nor outward practice, can avail us anything, without love—let us remember, that **true love is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit through the truth, and will manifest itself by loving acts.** Love is a fruit of the Spirit, and a quality to which we cannot attain without his influence. Therefore, if we would grow in love, we must seek the aid of the loving Sanctifier, who has been promised unto us by our blessed Lord. God is willing to bestow the Spirit upon those who ask him, and we should ask with the earnestness of those who pray for life. But we should not be satisfied with asking. We must prepare and open our hearts for his indwelling, by laying aside all that may displease his holy sight, "all malice and all deceit, and hypocrisies, and envies and evil speakings." For if it is true that the Lord will not hear those who "regard iniquity in their hearts," how certainly will he resent as an insult, a prayer for the spirit of love, from one who is cherishing the remembrance of some silly quarrel or petty affront!

The means of the Spirit's communication to the soul, is the word of God. It is only through the truth that we can hope to be sanctified; therefore should we, with the simplicity of children, study the records of grace. "As new-born babes," we must "desire the sincere (pure) milk of the word, that we may grow thereby." **As we read and meditate upon its holy pages, the beauty of the divine character will beam upon our souls, and beautify them by its light**. *Faith* will bring us near to the bosom of Him who has loved us with an everlasting love; and *hope* will drink in the future blessedness of a heavenly life. Cheerfully, then, shall we descend from the Tabor of heavenly communion, and the Pisgah of heavenly vision—to *walk the path of love which leads to our eternal home.*

Such love will always *manifest* itself. Our blessed Lord, the perfect example of charity, whose footsteps every true child of God must follow, found it "his food and his drink to do the will of his heavenly Father," and "went about doing good." The excellence of Job's character was, that "the cause he had not known, he searched out." He who is indifferent to the welfare of others, may chance to have few claims of charity obtruded upon his notice; but no truly charitable spirit need ever be at a loss, in such a world as this, for occasions to do good; and we may be sure that we are unfaithful if we are ignorant of them.

True charity waits not for opportunities, but goes to seek them; and when there is a will, God will always point out the way.

The best study of the will of God is the practice of it, for Christ says, "if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." God loves such willing scholars, and loves to teach them; and they that walk in love will find their path to be "brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."

JOY

Joy is that lively pleasure of the soul which we feel in the possession of present good, or the certain expectation of good in the future. Thus, when a man has actually obtained what he had desired, and which yields him delight, we say he enjoys it; and when we receive news of approaching happiness, we call it joyful news.

There is a false joy, derived from a mistaken estimate of that which is really worthless, or insufficient of itself to yield us happiness. The joy which men have in the perishing and deceitful pleasures of this world, like the mirth of the drunkard, has its end in sorrow. It is

"Like to the apples on the Dead Sea's shore,
All ashes to the taste."

Solomon compares it to the burning of thorns, making much crackling, and some smoke, but no abiding heat.

The joy here spoken of is a real joy. It is a fruit of the Spirit. The renewed man has been taught to see the difference between true and counterfeit good. He loves God and holy living, because he is convinced that "godliness is great gain;" and he rejoices in the assurances of faith that godliness is his. *The more godly he is, the more joy he has. Nothing interferes with his joy but sin.* It flows from God, like water from the fountain, pure, though sin may embitter and discolor it. It shines like light from the Sun of Righteousness, though sin may so sully the windows of the soul through which it passes, as to dim its brightness.

Christian joy can come only from God. The renewed man knows he is a sinner, and that the "wages of sin is death;" and *he hates sin, not only because of its future punishment, but because of its present pollution, and of its offensiveness in the sight of the God he loves*. God, by his blessed Spirit, through the truth, reveals to him the promise of pardon for his guilt, and deliverance from his sinfulness. He is filled with joy.

He is joyful in his escape from eternal damnation.

He is joyful in the assurance of grace to live a holy life.

He is joyful in the hope of heavenly blessedness.

He is joyful in the knowledge of God.

A true *ear* has delight in perfect harmony.

A true *eye* has delight in perfect proportion.

So does a true and holy *soul* delight in God. He delights to contemplate . . .
infinite *power* directed by infinite wisdom,
infinite *wisdom* directed by infinite goodness,
and infinite *goodness* directed by infinite truth.

He delights in the impress of this divine perfection upon all the works of the Creator, where sin has not clouded their beauty or shattered their form. He thinks of the world as God made it, as it was when the golden light of the primeval morning discovered nothing but loveliness and innocence and peace; and he partakes of the joy of Him who looked upon "everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

He delights in the knowledge that the Creator is the God of providence and of grace; and that, though now sin seems to rule, there is a mighty purpose in Christ, working through all and over all, to bring forth a new and more glorious creation, a new Heaven and a new earth, from which sin, and all that tempts to sin, shall be utterly cast out, that eternal righteousness may dwell in them, and God again pronounce them very good.

He delights in the display of divine perfection by the divine law. "Your testimonies," says David to his God, "are the rejoicing of my heart." And again, "Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." To him, who has not been enlightened to know, and converted to love the wisdom of holiness, God's commandments are grievous, because they come in the way of his desires, and threaten vengeance upon his sins. But the renewed soul loves God's laws, for the same reason that he loves God, because they are holy. Every precept of God is to him a direction in the way of happiness, and reveals the beauty of the divine government; and, therefore, every discovery of the divine will is an occasion of joy. His dissatisfaction is not with the strictness of the law, but with himself for coming short of it; and he desires that he may be sanctified to its entire obedience, not that the law may be reduced to the level of his ability.

He delights especially in the divine perfection as made known in the *gospel* of Christ. The riches of the wisdom of divine grace awaken his liveliest admiration.

To know that God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, for the salvation of sinners;
to know, that the same justice which requires the punishment of the transgressor, approves and assures the pardon of the penitent;
to know, that by the dwelling of God in our flesh as Christ the Mediator, God is brought near to all Christ's people, and all Christ's people near to God;
to know, that the same Holy Spirit which, as the power of God, effected creation, and sustained the humanity of Jesus in his work, is promised to dwell in him, to renew him to a holy life, and sustain him in the blessedness of obedience;
to know, that God the Creator, Governor, and Judge, is his God, his Redeemer, Sanctifier, and loving Father;
to know, that *all things, even his trials and sorrows, are working together for his eternal good, according to the omnipotent purpose of God's adopting love;*
to know, that when the few years of his pilgrimage are passed, he has an eternal and holy home in his Father's house, where he shall rejoice with all the redeemed family, and the innumerable company of angels who have never sinned;
and to know, that all this has been accomplished for him, and secured to him, without one shadow being cast upon the divine attributes;
but that, on the contrary, the character of his adorable God has received from his salvation a new luster, and that the holy intelligences throughout the universe will admire and glorify the King of salvation, as throughout eternity they behold the redeemed sinner growing in holy beauty and heavenly beauty—
to know all this, must fill him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Well, therefore, is the gospel called Glad tidings of great joy.

No wonder that Abraham rejoiced to see the day of salvation, though afar off, and was glad!

No wonder that Isaiah was enrapt in ecstasy, and cried, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings! Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people."

No wonder, that the converts of the Pentecost eat the bread of salvation "with gladness and singleness of heart," and wherever the gospel went there was "great joy in that place!"

No wonder, the apostle's glad command to all his believing brethren, was, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!"

With such joy in his heart, the Christian finds on every hand, and at all times, occasion to show it forth. *Wherever* he is, God is his Savior and his Friend. *Whatever* happens to him, is God's gracious will concerning him. Even when Providence is dark and mysterious, and his afflictions for the present seem not joyous but grievous, there is a solemn joy, a reverent and sublime exultation in the thought, that though "clouds and darkness may be round about his God, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

Everything calls upon him to be glad.

The sun, when he rejoices in the morning, "as a strong man to run his race;"
the moon and the stars, as "they tell of the glory of God, and show forth his handiwork;"
the spring, with its budding promises;
the summer, with its mellowing plenty;
and the autumn, with its garnered stores;
even winter has its blessings around the social fireside, while the memory of summer and the hope of spring are heightened by its gloom.

All the voices of nature are glad, for they speak of God. *All the events of life should be joyous, for they are ordered by his hand.* Nay, there is not a path which the Christian is called to tread, which the Savior walked not in his way, through our life, to his heavenly glory. *There is not a footstep he is called to take which is not marked by the blessed feet of God incarnate*. Thorns and thistles are strewn thick, but they are only to remind him that this poor world is not his rest, and quicken his eager zeal to reach his sinless and joyous home.

The Christian finds a joy in his *obedience*. It was a noble discovery of heathen wisdom, that virtue is the highest good, because it is its own reward. (Alas, that they knew not what virtue is!) The language of Scripture, the experience of the faithful angels, the blessedness of God himself—all assure us that *happiness is only to be found in holiness, and holiness in the creature is obedience to the commands of the Creator*. They are the ways which infinite wisdom has marked out for us, and, therefore, are ways of pleasantness and peace. *Heaven is the place of perfect blessedness, because it is the place of perfect holiness*. We can be happy on earth only so far as we are holy; and so far as we are holy, we must be happy.

So the Christian finds it. Every duty which he successfully attempts yields him joy. He has a satisfaction more lively than mere contentment, when he has fulfilled the will of his heavenly Father; and this joy increases in proportion to the difficulty of the service. If his lower nature, the sinful world, the tempting devil, have opposed his purpose, but opposed it in vain—he has the joy of conquest, a joy well worth the sweat and tears and struggle that it cost. The joys of sin, though they may be easily won, are dashed with bitterness. The joys of obedience like everything else that is precious, are not gained without an effort, but yield rich reward in the end.

"You have," said one who was grateful, "put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and their wine increased." His joy was in his heart; and though vintage and harvest should fail—his joy would not. His joy no man could take from him, and with it no stranger could intermeddle. Therefore has he left for us the safe counsel, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." The self-approval of the honest man, in the midst of poverty, is better than all the riches of the knave, who lives in constant dread of detection, and despises himself for his own baseness.

The calmness of disciplined passion is better than all the excesses of lust, which grows with what it feeds upon; so that one calls a sensual man, "a deep ditch"—filthy, but ever with room for more filthiness. The health, the coolness, and the mental soundness of temperance, are better than all the mad joys of the drunkard, which fever and blast and madden both body and soul.

Then what a joy there is in *benevolence!* What a happy consciousness in having done good to a fellow-creature! The *miser* may gloat over his gold, wrung perhaps from broken hearts, certainly withheld from suffering wretchedness. The ostentatious *voluptuary* may walk through his sumptuous rooms, roll proudly in his mirthful equipage, or feast his parasites at his groaning table. The *ambitious* man may trample upon the necks of his victims, that he may reach the cold, sharp, solitary pinnacle of worldly power. But avarice and luxury and rank can yield no such pleasures as the godly man feels, when he has wiped the tears from the widow's and the orphan's eye, and caused their hearts to sing for joy; when he has poured out the oil and balm of his sympathy into some bleeding bosom; brought back some wanderer from virtue into the way of peace; or cheered some darkened spirit with the light of life from the gospel of the blessed God.

"The *joy of doing good*," says a Persian poet, "is like the breeze of the evening to the cheek parched by the heat of the desert." Earth has no joy like it, for it admits the believer to a share in the blessedness of the good God. It was the comfort of the Redeemer throughout his life of sorrows. By night he cheered his soul in communion with God; by day in going about doing good. It is the joy of Heaven, for the blessed angels love no happiness so well as ministering in Christ's name to the heirs of salvation. Every opportunity of doing good is like a well of refreshing waters, opened by divine love in the *Baca* of our pilgrimage.

Nor is this all the joy the Christian finds in doing good. He rejoices that he finds in it proofs of God's sanctifying love. It is the fruit of the Spirit; the gracious manifestation that God is dwelling in him; that his natural corruption has received some check; that his infirm purposes have been made successful by divine power; and that the tide of his affections has been turned from the ebb of evil to the flood of good. He rejoices that he is thus permitted, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to make some returns of gratitude unto God, which will be acceptable to his heavenly Father through Christ Jesus; and that God will approve, for the sake of the same blessed Jesus, his every act of service with eternal reward when he rests from his labors, and his good works follow him into his heavenly heritage.

Therefore it was, that the prophet of the Lord declared, in a day of gladness to the people, *"The joy of the Lord is your strength."* It is the joy which obedience yields, which confirms and animates the believer in his duties, and for the same reason it is continually increasing, because it increases obedience.

Those who shrink from duty, will find Christ's yoke galling, and his burden oppressive. Every one who, like Jonah, attempts to fly from the obedience which God enjoins, will, like Jonah, find himself in the deep waters. When the world is permitted to contend with the Spirit of God in the heart, there will be (unless, grieved and offended, the Holy One abandons it) the noise, the disquietude, and the wounds of conflict. To attempt the service of two masters must, at the best, be a fatiguing and anxious thing; and so the lukewarm, the slothful, or worldly-minded professor will know nothing of spiritual joy. But the obedient soul shall be made glad. "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart." Every act of faithful obedience is seed sown, which will bring forth a harvest of light and joy. He who walks like his Master, doing good on earth in his way to Heaven, will "drink of the rivers of God's pleasures," and taste the grapes of Canaan even in the desert.

Is it asked: How is this joy consistent with the sadness of repentance, sorrow for the sins of others who keep not God's holy law, and grief for the dishonor of God's most holy name?

There may seem to the unsanctified soul a paradox in this, and misconception of the truth has led many to think that religion is a sad and gloomy thing, and to prefer the gaiety of the world to the soberness of piety. But a few words will set the honest inquirer right.

Repentance is a sad thing. We must be sad, when we think of our sinful infamy, of the ungrateful wrongs we have done to the love of God, and the sorrows that it cost our Lord to purchase our redemption. The Christian weeps over his sins, the broken law of God, and the sufferings of Jesus. But religion alone shows us the cause of such sorrow. The cause itself is sin. *The Spirit probes and lays open the heart which sin has ulcerated, that He may cleanse and dress and heal it.* Were the plague permitted to remain hidden, it would spread its poison through the whole nature, and bring on the agonies of eternal death. The probing may give pain, and the cautery anguish—yet the balm which is afterward applied is sweet and soothing. *The joys of the world bring sorrow, but the sorrows of repentance are full of joy.*

If it be bitter anguish to know we are sinners, is it not unspeakable joy to know that we are saved by grace? If the soul shudders at the sight of the Hell it deserves, will it not exult in the hope of the Heaven which is promised? If it weeps over the sorrows of Jesus on the cross, will it not rejoice to know that he is lifted up on his throne, the glorified and triumphant Savior of all who love him? If it laments to see the wrongs done to God's holy law, will it not be glad to see all those wrongs more than covered by the righteousness of Jesus?

The obstinate and sulky child, that resists its parent's will, is indeed unhappy; but what a blessed relief it finds in the tears he weeps upon his parent's bosom, as he sobs out his confession, and knows he is forgiven!

Repentance is a sad thing. It is hard to break through all the sinful habits we have loved, and to deny ourselves what fallen nature craves. It is hard to attempt duties we have never practiced, and in which we are opposed by the world, the flesh, and the devil. The Christian's work may seem yet more hard to those who see him forsaking the pleasures and pursuits in which they place all their happiness.

But the renewed heart is more than consoled by the full conviction that all it leaves is sin, and all it seeks is holiness. *Self-denial may be hard at the moment, but the believer knows that it is life and health in the end.* Chastisement loses its pain, when he is assured by it of his Father's love. He has "food to eat that the world knows not of." *What the world thinks to be pain, he thinks pleasure; what the world thinks pleasure, he thinks pain.*

"The objection," as good Bishop Horne says, "turns out, as all other objections do, to the advantage of the Gospel, which resembles a fine country in the spring season, when the very hedges are in bloom, and every thorn produces a flower."

Besides, we are to remember, that *though godliness has some profit in this life, the great harvest of it is in eternity*. So, even if it is true, that the Christian in this world, is of all men the most miserable—his *joyful hope of heavenly glory is well worth the loss of a few pleasures here*. For which is better, a few years of silly mirth with an eternity of anguish—or a few years of anguish with an eternity of joy? *To be cured of sin-sickness, we must take bitter medicine;* but better take it and live forever, than refuse it and die forever.

Yet, if we look around us, it is not so certain that the Christian is the least happy man. The world may have more show of gaiety, but his calm, clear eye, though it be washed with tears, reveals a better joy within. It is a sad thing to look upon the wickedness of men, to see them dishonoring God's word, and going on in the way to damnation. So sad, that Jeremiah had not tears enough for it, but wished his eyes were fountains, and his head waters, that he might "weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people." Yet have we reason to rejoice, that the Lord has his cause in his own hand, and will vindicate his power and his truth. The wicked shall not prevail against him, and his salvation shall increase until all nations call him blessed. "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice!"

It is a sad thing to see wicked men going down to eternal damnation, especially when they are near and dear to our hearts, and, therefore, should we pray earnestly, and with tears, that they may be turned from the error of their way and live. But it would be far worse, if God were robbed of his justice, so that the wicked might go unpunished. If God were to take no note of the wicked, where would be the peace and safety and justice of his universe?

Therefore, says David, "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad ... before the Lord: for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth—he will judge the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth."

Sorrow for the transgressor, who suffers justly under the law, is not inconsistent with joy that we live under a righteous and holy government. The angels in Heaven rejoice before God, even when they see the wrath of his justice against his rebel subjects; and so shall we, when we are permitted to join them, though it may seem impossible now.

In Heaven our joy will be full. Here, a beneficial sorrow must mingle with it. But there, even repentance will have lost its sadness. How can that be? *How can the redeemed saint remember his sins, and look upon the Savior whom he has pierced, and not weep?* "We know not now, but," by God's grace, "we shall know hereafter."

Joy, spiritual joy, is thus not only a *privilege* but a *duty*. It is a certain fruit of that Spirit, which renews unto holiness. "The kingdom of God is not food and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Our Savior taught his Gospel to his disciples, that his "joy might remain in them, and that their joy might be full."

Such is the experience of all true believers. The man that found the pearl of great price, "for *joy* went and sold all that he had" to buy it. How did the Old Testament saints, though they had but the twilight of the day of salvation, rejoice in God! David is not satisfied with being glad himself, but would have all rejoice with him, even the mountains and the sea. The apostles, too, though in the midst of tribulation, rejoiced as one of them expresses it, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." *The apostle Paul makes it as much a duty to rejoice as to pray*; nay, he puts rejoicing first. "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God concerning you."

How can we love God, and know that he loves us, and not be glad?

How can we trust in God, and know that he is our Father and our Friend, and not be glad?

How can we believe in the infinite merits of the Savior he has provided for us, and not be glad?

How can we serve him willingly with our whole heart, and not find joy in obedience?

How can we think of the *Hell* from which we are rescued, and the *Heaven* to which we are destined, and not rejoice greatly?

To be destitute of spiritual joy is to be without love, without gratitude, without submission, without confidence, and without hope. Every true Christian, who has "Christ formed in his heart, the hope of glory," should say with Mary, when she felt that she was to be the mother of Jesus, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior!"

Our joy should be continually increasing. The new convert may have a more sudden rapture, but the growing Christian has a more steady and deepening joy. The stream may leap more near the fountain, because it is more shallow; but as it expands, it flows more noiselessly, because it is more full. It is the knowledge of God, and trust in his grace, which awakens the believer's joy; so, as he grows in knowledge and in grace, he will grow in joy. There may be occasional shadows, and perhaps darkness, when sins rise up to shut out the sunlight of the Gospel; but, when the heart is upturned to God, and sin is banished from it, it must lie in brightness. It is a bad sign of our progress in the divine life, when our joy does not grow. It shows that we do not learn the truth as we ought to do, for the loving heart "rejoices in the truth." It shows that we do not pray as we ought to do, for the Master has commanded us to "ask, and receive, that our joy may be full." It shows that we are not faithful in obedience, as we should be, for it is the delight of the faithful to do God's will.

This joy should be *manifest*. The Christian should never forget that he is a witness for Christ, and an example of Christ's religion. What a libel upon Christianity it is to be always sad! What a contradiction for one to wear a gloomy countenance—yet profess to have God in his heart! No wonder the world stumbles at such inconsistency. Our Savior taught his disciples, even when they fasted, not to wear a sad countenance as the hypocrites do, but rather to appear unto men not to fast; which seems to intimate that *gloom and hypocrisy generally go together*. Nothing will be more likely to gain attention from the world to religion, than proof in the lives of its serious professors that it makes men happier than sin.

"Let us then be glad in the Lord, and in the power of his might." If the Spirit of God dwells in us, we will be joyful; and we shall find, too, that the wise man spoke truth when he said, "A merry heart does good like a medicine;" and at last we shall hear the blessed invitation, "Enter into the *joy* of your Lord."

"Here," says excellent Thomas Watson, and with his sweet words we end our essay, "Here joy begins to enter into us, there we shall enter into joy! What joy shall the soul have, when it bathes itself forever in the pure and pleasant fountain of God's love! If a cluster of grapes here on earth is so sweet—then what will the full vintage be? How should all this set us a longing for that place where sorrow cannot live, and joy cannot die!"

PEACE

The blessed Spirit, who, through the truth, disposes the renewed man to love God and his fellow creatures for God's sake, and so makes every revelation of truth an occasion of joy, every event of providence a blessing, and every duty a pleasure—at the same time produces in his soul that sweet composure, tranquil contentment, and appearance of safety, which we call PEACE. For godly love has nothing of that uneasy fever which belongs to earthly passion, neither has godly joy the tumultuous excitement of worldly gaiety. The love is too secure in its satisfaction to be agitated, and the joy too deep and abiding for fitsul transports. "The fruit of the Spirit is—PEACE."

The excellent value of peace is taught us by the stress which is laid upon it throughout the Scriptures.

The Gospel, the most glorious of all God's designs, is called "the Gospel of peace."

The great name of God, by which he is revealed to his believing people, is "the God of peace."

Christ, the blessed Savior, is "the Prince of peace."

Here, peace is the fruit of the Spirit.

The promise which foretold the coming salvation to the saints of the old dispensation was, "The Lord shall give his people the blessings of peace."

The reward of evangelical obedience is peace: "Great peace have they which love your law."

The desire of the apostles for the churches they taught was, that "peace might be multiplied" unto them; which Paul so strongly expresses when he says, "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means."

The salutation of Jesus was, "Peace be unto you."

His parting blessing was, "Go in peace."

The Heaven of the redeemed, where their happiness shall be complete in perfect holiness, is the New Jerusalem, or "heritage of peace.

What a blessing must that be, which purchased for us by the merits of Jesus, flowing from the fullness of God the Father, dispensed by the royal will of Christ the Mediator, wrought in all his people by the Holy Spirit, and shedding a perfect beauty over the Heaven of their reward, gives name and title to them all!

It must be a blessedness which, lost by the fall, the guilty cannot enjoy, and nothing less than the mediation of the Son of God can obtain for the penitent sinner; but which, belonging to the perfections of the holy God, he bestows only upon those who are made like him in holiness, and can therefore be neither given nor taken away by the world.

It is, in fact, not a single blessing, but a consequence of all blessings, for our peace can never be perfect so long as we fear any annoyance, or suffer the uneasiness of desire for what we do not possess.

Hence the word is often used to signify prosperity and happiness. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

The peace of the ever-blessed *God* is essential to his nature. It is a sublime and inconceivable tranquility, arising from the harmony of his infinite attributes, and his infinite removal above any dependence upon the creatures he has made. But *man* is dependent upon God his Creator, and his fellow creatures, to whom God has bound him by relations which he cannot break. His peace, therefore, must be derived from God, and can only be enjoyed in a conformity with the constitution of things which God has ordained.

The peace of the renewed man, which is the fruit of the Spirit, may then be considered as:

I. Peace with God.

II. Peace with himself.

III. Peace with his fellow creatures.

This order is chosen because it will appear, upon farther examination, that a man cannot be at peace with himself until he is at peace with God, nor be at peace with his fellow creatures until he is at peace with himself.

I. Peace with GOD.

"God is love," an infinitely deep and ever-flowing fountain of goodness, and his loving-kindness is extended to all whom he may bless consistently with his justice and holy truth. To be at peace with him, therefore, is to enjoy the riches of blessing which his love ever bestows, while nothing but sin can separate us from his favor.

But we are sinners, and by that sin, which "brought death into the world and all our we," we had lost the fair inheritance of his love, and the happiness which that love alone can bestow. We became God's enemies, and, therefore, God became our enemy. "For," says Paul, " the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be;" and "the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" so that, as "the Scripture has concluded all under sin," we are all "by nature children of wrath."

In order, then, to the restoration of peace between an offended God and sinful men, it is necessary, on the one hand, that his just wrath be appeased, the pardon of our sins justified, and his loving kindness warranted. And, on the other hand, that the enmity of our hearts against him be taken away, and we become cheerfully obedient to his will. The first, Christ has accomplished by his sufferings, obedience, and intercession on our behalf. The latter is accomplished in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit, for Christ's sake.

The wrath of God against the sinner is a *just* wrath. It is not mere impulsive anger against man as man, but the indignation of the righteous Ruler and Judge against man as a sinner. Indeed, it is not inconsistent with a certain pity for the unhappy object of the Divine vengeance; as we read, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" which evidently means that God so pitied the sinner, while he condemned him for his wickedness, that he delights to save him, when it can be done consistently with the honor of the divine law, and the aims of divine justice.

Such is the solemn proof of the divine justice in the sufferings of Christ for us, that God may pardon the penitent who accepts Christ's work in his behalf, and yet the dignity of the divine law be sustained in a far higher degree than if it had never been broken, while none who reject Christ and continue willful sinners can hope for any mercy at his hands. He, who spared not his own Son when he stood in the place of the sinner, will not spare the sinner who refuses to forsake his sins and return to his allegiance. As the apostle says, "Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitia ance of God: to declare, then through faith in his blood, to dec. righteousness for the remission of sins past, through the forbearance of God: to I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus."

In the same manner, were God to bestow his favor, and the unspeakable blessings which flow from it, upon the sinner, who, though penitent, is utterly unworthy of it—blessing would cease to be the reward of obedience, and become an arbitrary dispensation of God's mercy independent of justice. But, when Christ, the incarnate Son of God, himself becomes a voluntary servant of the divine law, and honors it by a perfect obedience, and God, in reward of his righteousness, bestows his favor upon the sinner who is presented in Christ's name, he demonstrates his delight in righteousness, and his willingness to reward righteousness, and righteousness alone, with his highest favor.

When, therefore, the Holy Spirit enables the penitent to perceive the work of righteousness wrought in behalf of all those who believe in Jesus Christ, and to present the death of Christ before God as the death he deserved to die, and the righteous obedience of Christ as the obedience he owed to the divine law—he sees that the just anger of God no longer burns against him, and that for Christ's sake he is received again into favor and life. Hence the work of Christ's suffering and obedience is styled the atonement, or at-one-ment, the ground upon which God and the believing sinner are again reconciled or made one. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore Jesus said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, *my* peace I give unto you;" that is, the peace which I have purchased, and is, therefore, mine to give. For as God is well pleased with Christ's righteousness, so is he "well pleased" with Christ's people, "for his righteousness' sake."

Notwithstanding the work of Christ, however, the connection between holiness and happiness, sin and misery, remains unaltered. "The wages of sin are" still "death," and there can be "no peace for the wicked." It is, therefore, only so far as the sinner by repentance has learned to delight in God and in obedience to his holy will, that he can enjoy the peace of God through Jesus Christ. Thus, *the purpose of Christ was not merely to deliver from punishment, but to restore the sinner to holiness, "to save his people from their sins."* This, we have said, is the work of the Holy Spirit for Christ's sake. He so enlightens the mind to perceive the beauty and excellence of holiness, so sheds abroad the love of God through Christ in the heart, so fills the soul with a desire to be conformed to the image of God—that the believer is sweetly won to delight in the will of God, and to find the ways of his commandments pleasantness, and all the paths which he prescribes to be peace.

All the influences of the Spirit which confirm, increase, and carry on unto perfection the believing sinner's peace with God, are sanctifying influences. This shows us the meaning of the prayer in the epistle to the Hebrews, "Now the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;" and of the salutation, "Peace to those who are sanctified."

From this peace with God flows,

II. The peace of the renewed man with HIMSELF.

We have all enough of unhappy experience to know that there may be such a disquiet, dissatisfaction, and conflict within a man's soul, as to render him miserable, whatever his external lot may be. It may be the agony of remorse for unexpiated crime; the quakings of fear or the suspense of doubt; the gnawing of envy or the burning of jealousy; the fever of ambition, or the craving of inordinate desire; nay, the same bosom, like a nest of vipers, may contain them all. These must be subdued or removed before the soul can be at peace. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to do this. The same gracious Spirit who assures us of peace with God, makes peace in the soul.

The Spirit makes peace in the **conscience**. There is no mental anguish so great as that self-condemnation which we call "an evil conscience." The strongest minds feel its pangs the most, while the weaker are not beneath its influence. The Scripture declares an accusing conscience to be one of the chief torments of the damned. It is "the worm which dies not," and "a fire that is not quenched." the conscience is in the soul itself a fearful witness for God, whom sin has offended. The sinner may resist or forget it for a time, but like the waters of a dammed up stream, or the fires of a pent volcano—it will yet burst forth and rage with accumulated fury. Christ uses the conscience to teach us our need of him, and awakens its terrors in the soul that we may be driven to his salvation to escape its lash. But when the Spirit has enabled the heart-broken penitent to see the riches of Christ's mediation and rely upon it, the terrors of conscience subside into peace.

This peace is not stupidity, nor hardness, nor perversion of conscience, such as often allows wicked men to go on frowardly in their evil ways—but a rational relief from the sense of guilt, and a consciousness of better affections and aims. The believer no longer dreads the wrath of God, nor is he haunted by a fearful looking for of judgment. He has the pardon of his sins assured to him with the promise of the divine love. He still mourns and hates the sins he has committed, but because of their *wickedness*, and not merely of the *punishment* threatened against them. He knows that he has dishonored God, but yet rejoices in believing that Christ has covered the dishonor, and by perfect obedience more than remedied his defections. He is not only a pardoned criminal, but the principal consequences of his crime have been prevented.

Before, he was aware of a spirit of rebellion in his heart that continually inclined him to commit transgressions, for which his conscience threatened him with judgment and made him afraid to think of God. Now, he is conscious of a prevailing disposition to love God, and do those things that are well pleasing in God's sight; which leads him continually to implore the divine assistance, and encourages him, though far from having attained that perfection in holiness which he desires, to look to God as a pitiful Father who knows his infirmities, but also knows the desire of his soul. His conscience is at peace with him, a faithful friend, whose very wounds are wounds of love, rebuking only to lead in the way of truth and happiness.

The Spirit makes peace in the **mind**. The narrow circle of human experience, the ignorance of future contingencies under which the mind labors, and the consequent doubt we feel as to the course we should pursue, and the lot that awaits us—are all opposed to peace. The busy inquiry of every mind, not utterly imbruted by unworthy passion, after truth, shows the sense we instinctively have of the torture of doubt and the pleasure of knowing what is truth. But when the renewed man has been taught to receive with child-like simplicity divine truth, and to *know that the great Disposer of all events is his Father and his God*; when he believes that the will of God in every event is love towards him, and that by walking in the way of his commandments he is certain, through grace, of reaching everlasting life—then all doubt is banished, and the Sun of Righteousness, dissipating the clouds and the shadows, sheds healing peace and certainty upon his soul. He may walk in what to the world is darkness, and seem to have no light, but he will be still confident, staying himself upon his God.

The Spirit makes peace in the **heart**. This is impossible, when the affections are set entirely upon things of earth and time, to enjoy true peace; for, besides that they will clash and conflict with each other, from the narrowness of the sphere to which they are confined—there will arise envy, and jealousy, and hate, towards those who may be more successful, or interfere in any way with our schemes of aggrandizement. A love of the world, if it be not kept in check by some superior principle, will always become inordinate, and may continually lead to discontent and strife.

But the disorders and disquietudes of the heart are healed, when the blessed Spirit has fixed the affections upon its Almighty and Divine Friend. They go forth then in a right direction. There can be no excess in loving God, and no disappointment of a return for our love. Upon Him we may bestow all our hearts. So that the renewed man will find peace in his new and holy relation to his heavenly Father. He will love, and find delight in loving all whom God has commended to his love. Yet placing his trust for happiness upon God, his heart cannot be deprived of its true peace by their change, failure, or death. Having delight in God supremely, his desires of the things of earth will be restrained and moderated to just limits; he will be satisfied with a pilgrim's portion, and inclined neither to murmur at his own lot, nor to envy the lot of others. The love of God shed abroad in his heart will expel from it all malice, and hate, and envy, and quarrelling, and disappointment. His "heart is fixed, trusting in God."

This again leads us to consider,

III. The peace of the renewed man with his FELLOW-CREATURES.

It is to this peace that the apostle, in all probability, chiefly refers in the text, and by it he intends, not an actual state of harmony with all men, for we cannot always secure their good disposition; and unhappily, the practice of Christian duty too often provokes their dislike and persecution of Christ's people; but a peaceable temper and behavior, such as secures us from any blameworthiness in the event of their quarreling with us, and would secure their good will if they acted fairly and justly towards us. This temper must result from peace with God and our own souls; for he who is at peace with God, the Ruler of all, and enjoys the blessings of his favor, will have no disposition to quarrel with his fellow men; and he who has confined his desires and aims within proper limits, will have no occasion to quarrel.

It would be difficult to enlarge upon this duty without repeating much that we have said of Christian love, or anticipating what is yet to be said of long-suffering, gentleness, goodness and meekness. Yet it should be remarked, that, though all these graces testify to our peaceful disposition, and are well calculated to promote peace, *the aim of securing peace, or of living peaceably with all men, should continually be in our minds.*

The renewed man has a horror of all war except with sin. Delighting in love himself, the dislike, or offensive conduct of others to him, must give him pain. He ought, when it is unavoidable, to submit to it with long-suffering, and meek forgiveness. Yet it will be submission to a trial, which, if it were God's will, he would gladly avoid. Every means, therefore, of preserving harmony with his fellow men, consistent with a faithful discharge of duty, will be employed by him.

He will be cautious to avoid all appearance of evil, and, not satisfied with a consciousness of good intentions, he will endeavor to make those good intentions appear. For it often happens, that the very way in which some men attempt to do good has a tendency to provoke, and the endurance, with patience, of anger when provoked, does not expiate the fault of having provoked it by misguided zeal or incautious approaches. Thus, a controversialist may think he contends for the truth from a love of truth, and of men's souls which are to be benefitted through the truth—yet, if he uses language, or arrogant censure, in such a way as is calculated, from the laws of our common nature, to irritate and wound—then he is truly guilty of breaking peace.

Or, one may feel himself bound in faithfulness to point out to his neighbor his faults, and rebuke them—yet if he does so roughly and bluntly, the goodness of his aim will hardly excuse the ill consequences of the means.

Or, it may happen that another may see that his neighbor, whom he sincerely loves, has from ignorance or error acquired a most unreasonable prejudice or dislike against him—yet, however unreasonable it may be, it will not be enough for him to endure it patiently, unless he has taken all pains to remove his prejudice and convince him of his error. "Therefore," says Paul, " let us follow after the things that make for peace;" and again, "Follow peace with all men."

It is generally a bad sign of a Christian's temperament when he is frequently getting into quarrels. "Those who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution;" but the Christian has no right to *court* persecution, and there is great danger that he whose manner provokes others against him, will become angry himself in turn. Many a man, who thinks himself a martyr, and by partial friends is characterized as one—may find himself in the end to have been little better than a meddler, and rash disturber of the peace.

Our blessed Lord, it is true, went to his death through the malice of those whom his love would have saved, but if we would share in his glory as well as in his cross—then we must be like him, and "neither strive, nor cry, nor let our voice be heard in the streets." "It must needs be that offences come, but woe unto that man by whom the offence comes." "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea." Oh! never let us forget that the gospel came to bring "peace on earth, and good will towards men!"

What avail will it be to us that there is a way of reconciliation to God, unless we are ourselves at peace with him? Let us, then, seek the aid of that blessed Spirit who alone can seal peace upon our hearts. It is a dreadful thing to be ignorant whether God is our enemy or our friend. It is our own fault if he be our enemy, for though we deserve nothing but wrath, he is ready to be our friend. O for the Holy Spirit to open our eyes, that we may acquaint ourselves with the holy beauty and love of God, and be at peace with him!

Let us distrust all peace which comes not to us through the merits of Jesus. If God loves us not for Christ's sake, then he is our enemy, for he "will by no means clear the guilty." To think ourselves at peace with him without a trust in Christ alone, is to reject the only advocate we can have with the Father, and to challenge the justice of God against our souls. Nor can we be at peace with him unless we enjoy his communion.

It is not a barren treaty which true faith makes with God. It is a covenant of blessing on his part, and of cheerful obedience on ours. The friend of God loves his communion, loves his service, loves his word, loves his people. It is an alliance offensive and defensive. He takes us under his protection—and we contend for his cause. Therefore will we delight to draw near unto him, and look forward to that blessed world where the union will be complete and eternal!

Let us cherish this holy peace:
peace with God,
peace with our own souls,
peace with our fellow men.

Nothing else will make . . .
life pass so pleasantly,
the path of duty seem so easy,
the trials of earth so light, or
the hope of Heaven so full of glory.

Nothing else will liken us so much to God himself.

What infinite tranquility there must be in the Divine Mind! What perfect concord there must be in his holy attributes! How calmly must he look down upon all the changes and events of his vast dominions! Yet those who rest in his loving bosom, taste of this sublime composure. "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keeps their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

"The wicked are like a troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt;" but the pure in heart, like a clear fountain, whose waters are unruffled by passion, and unpolluted by earth and sense, reflect from their tranquil bosom the serenity of the Heaven which smiles above them, and the glory of the Sun of Righteousness. "Grace be unto us, and peace be multiplied!"

LONG-SUFFERING

The composition of this term might lead some to think that the apostle intends merely a forbearing and forgiving temper towards those who insult or injure us; and, indeed, the early Christians, exposed as they were to constant persecution and contempt, had great need of such grace; but "long-suffering" means yet more. His idea is exactly expressed by patience, or that enduring courage and fortitude derived from confidence in the faithfulness of God, and a sure expectation of final deliverance, which sustains the believer through a long period of labor and trial. It is patience having "her perfect work."

In the days of the apostles, this world offered but little inducement to a profession of Christianity, but on the contrary, if for this life only they had hope in Christ, they were of all men the most miserable. Daily threatened with confiscation of their goods, stripes, imprisonment and death by their enemies without, they were sorely tried by the inconsistent lives and ambitious heresies of some within the church, while in their most zealous attempts to do good, they often met with little or no apparent success. It was, therefore, for the crown of life awaiting them beyond the grave, that they labored and suffered. They "looked not upon the things which are seen and temporal, but upon those which are not seen and eternal." To encourage them in perseverance, the apostles dwelt much upon the glory which would be revealed at the "appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ," and the joys of Heaven, as the recompense of gracious reward.

The afflicted Christians were, however, liable to one or the other of two temptations. They might be discouraged because of the long delay of their reward, and faint. Or they might become impatient, and presumptuously desire to receive it before the time of their rest had come. As the apostle said to the Hebrews, "You have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise." Hence one of the fruits of the Spirit in the character of the regenerate is "LONG-SUFFERING."

We are in these days happily delivered from the bloody persecutions which tried the faith of the primitive disciples—yet the world is still a world of sin, and we meet with many temptations to relax our zeal and industry in the Christian life. Few of us are too eager for our heavenly inheritance; alas! our hearts cling too closely to the things of this life; but we are all apt to become restless under trial, and weary of well doing before the reward is won.

Let us, therefore,

I. Meditate on the excellence of the grace of long-suffering.

II. Consider some of the occasions which specially require its exercise.

I. The excellence of the grace of long-suffering.

Patience is one of God's own attributes. He proclaimed his own name to be "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty." By the apostle in Romans, he is called "the God of patience."

God is, indeed, infinitely above those disturbances of pain and vexation, to which the finite creature may be subject; yet the restraining of his just anger against the transgressor, and his patient waiting for the execution of his glorious designs, are declared to be excellencies of his God-like nature. It would be nothing for him to sweep all the race of sinners into instant death, but he shows the glory of his character in so loving the world, notwithstanding its rebellion, as to provide for us a Savior, and through him to send his Spirit; continuing to give temporal blessings to the evil and the good, and though provoked every moment, and his long-suffering itself made an encouragement to sin—still waiting, that perhaps the sinner may repent.

Upon what daily blasphemies and ungodly crimes, upon what nightly impurities and nameless horrors must God look down! What contempt of his law, what neglect of his gospel, what hardness and infidelity of heart must his all-seeing eye discover! Yet his *sun* still shines, his *rain* descends, his fruitful seasons change, and (blessed be his holy name!) his Gospel is offered, his Spirit strives, and the strait gate of life stands open. He is the holy and the just God, who will by no means clear the guilty—yet he is the long-suffering and the patient God. There is reason for his long-suffering. His mercy waits, but he is sure of his power. His purposes may seem to be delayed, but can never be defeated. The end and "the time of the end," and the means of its accomplishment, are chosen by him in wisdom, and made certain by his sovereignty.

God can be patient and long-suffering without loss or injury to his divine glory. So may the child of God, who by the Holy Spirit has been renewed into his image. The same providence which secures God's glory, secures his salvation. His eternal interests are identified with God's kingdom. Relying upon the wisdom and the power and the truth of God, he can wait unto the end.

Patience is a characteristic of the blessed Savior. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps." How patiently did he endure all the sorrows of his lot, the fickleness of friends, the rejection of "his own," the "contradiction of sinners against himself," the agonies of anticipated suffering, the mockeries of his ignominious trial, and the tortures of his cross! At any moment he might have asked the Father, and legions of angels would have flown to execute vengeance upon his cruel enemies and false friends—yet did he suffer long with all. "When reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not."

Whence came his patience and long-suffering?

"He committed himself unto him who judges righteously." "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." He loved the world, and was willing to suffer all for its sake, but he knew his reward was sure, and that his glorious kingdom would certainly be given him by his righteous Father.

And now, though seated upon that mighty throne, surrounded by all the power in Heaven and earth, how patiently he waits for the final consummation! How he bears with the lukewarmness of his people, and the opposition of the world to his cause! He has received the promise that unto him every knee shall bow, and seated at the right hand of God, he "waits until all his enemies be made his footstool."

Jesus is patient and long-suffering, because, while full of mercy, he is confident of his final triumph. So may the believer in Jesus be. He is a member of Christ's spiritual body, and he will triumph with his blessed Head. If he is a partaker of Christ's *sufferings*, he will also be a partaker of his *glory*, when it shall be revealed. His Lord's triumph will be his own. Therefore, sharing in the kingdom, he shares also in the patience of Jesus Christ.

How long-suffering is the Holy Spirit in his dealings with sinful men! It is his office to plead with men by his truth, that they may repent, and all the various and multiplied means of grace prove his gracious zeal for the salvation of our souls. But how many continue to despise his truth, reject his warnings, and deafen their ears to his persuasions, insulting and resisting him in his official character as the advocate of God's claims with men! Yet bearing so long as he does with them, God considers it necessary to warn us that "his Spirit will not always strive," but that there will be a limit even to his divine forbearance.

Those who are ultimately converted by his grace, for a long time resist him, and many a sermon and sacrament is despised by them; yet he bears with all, until he subdues them to his love.

Even after conversion, with how much sin does the Holy Spirit contend in those hearts which he has taken for his abode! How many doubts and sinful errors are there! How many unworthy and impure thoughts! How much pride, and malice, and uncharitableness! Yet he does not abandon us to our sinful folly, but continues to fight against our depravity, and deliver us from the power of our enemies. He, too, though full of mercy and compassion, is certain of his final triumph.

So may the Christian, who is a living temple of the Holy Spirit, be patient. The same love for the souls of men, the same merciful judgment of their errors, the same forbearance with their opposition, will make him patient and long-suffering; for he knows that the truth will prevail, and that the delay of God to vindicate his power by his wrath, will not impair the strength of his arm, while it proves the richness of his grace.

Long-suffering is a remarkable trait in the character of every eminent saint we read of in the Scriptures.

"Behold," says an apostle, "we count them happy who endure." *"Suffering affliction" has been the furnace in which God has ever refined the gold of his saints.*

How patient must the righteous *Abel* have been with his cruel and malignant brother!

How patient must *Noah* have been during that one hundred and twenty years, when the ark was being built, and his preaching met with nothing but scorn! Solitary in goodness, he never murmured nor fainted in his trust.

What is the history of the *patriarchs*, but a history of faith and patience inheriting the promises?

Moses was meek above all the men who were in the earth, never, so far as we can learn, but in one instance, allowing his spirit to grow hasty, either from the contradiction of the ungrateful Israelites or the chastening of God. He "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

We "have heard of the patience of *Job*;" but what was the lot of all the prophets, all the apostles, the confessors, the martyrs? What is now the experience of every one who endeavors to lead a holy life and to do good, in this wicked and gainsaying world? Without patience, who can prevail?

Therefore is long-suffering or courageous patience made a special and necessary mark of sincerity in the profession of the Gospel. The apostle Paul beseeches us "to walk worthy of the calling with which we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He prays for the Colossian Christians that they may be "strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

Nay, patience is the principal virtue which the Holy Spirit employs in the perfection of the believer's character. "For whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort in the Scriptures, might have hope. Now," adds the apostle, "the God of patience and of consolation, grant you to be like minded, one toward another, according to Christ Jesus."

In this spirit Paul declares, "We glory in tribulations also, knowing this, that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed." Here we find patience in tribulation, the basis of the rest. So James also, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers trials, knowing that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Here patience is the finishing of the work, as we have just seen it to be the beginning. *Perfect patience is perfect Christianity.*

Is **faith** necessary to a Christian? How can one believe in the love of God by Jesus Christ, and not be patient! To be impatient is to doubt either God's wisdom or his love. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the gardener waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be also patient; establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draws near." If the gardener be patient through faith in the God of providence, how much more should we through faith in the God of grace? "Not my will, but may your will be done," is the language of patient faith, or faithful patience.

Is **hope** necessary to a Christian? How can we have hope without patience? "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." The certainty and liveliness of our hope in things to come, should have the effect to make us bear with patience the toil and trial through which we attain to them. As Paul reasons for us: "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption—the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

Is **love** necessary to a Christian? Patience and long-suffering prove love. For how can I love God, and delight in his will and glory—yet be impatient of that providence by which his will is done, and his glory secured? How can I love my fellow men, as God in Christ loved them, and not be long-suffering with their faults, their errors, or their enmity?

We see, then, how excellent a grace this long-suffering is. In the words of one, "Patience commends us to God, and keeps us his. Patience is the guardian of faith, the preserver of peace, the cherisher of love, the teacher of humility. Patience governs the flesh, strengthens the spirit, sweetens the temper, stifles anger, extinguishes envy, subdues pride, bridles the tongue, refrains the hand, tramples upon temptations, endures persecutions, and consummates martyrdom. Patience produces unity in the church, loyalty in the state, harmony in society, and peace in families. Patience comforts the poor, and moderates the rich. Patience makes us meek in prosperity, cheerful in adversity, and unmoved by reproach. Patience teaches us to forgive those who injure us, and to be the first in asking forgiveness of those we have injured. Patience adorns the woman, and approves the man. Patience is loved in the child, praised in the youth, and admired in the old. Her countenance is calm and serene as the cloudless face of Heaven, and no wrinkle is seen upon her brow. Her eyes are as the dove's for meekness—yet full of cheerfulness and joy. Her complexion is the color of innocence, and her mouth is lovely in silence. She rides not in the whirlwind and the stormy tempest of passion—but her throne is the humble and contrite heart, and her kingdom the kingdom of peace."

To make our meditation the more practical, let us,

II. Consider some of the occasions which specially require the exercise of long-suffering.

One of these occasions for the exercise of patience, is **when we suffer wrong from our fellow-men.** At such a time, the spirit of the reptile, which turns when trodden upon, prompts us to revenge. Nothing is easier than to show such a malicious courage. But the spirit of Christ and Heaven says: Be long-suffering. In doing us wrong, they sin against God—yet he bears with them. So the world treated Christ, yes, and with unspeakably greater cruelty—yet he bore with them; and the Holy Spirit, as we have reason to believe, made some of his very murderers the first converts of grace at Pentecost!

What right have we then to revenge? How patient and merciful should we be to our enemies? *They are only the instruments in the hands of God. He but permits them to wrong us, because he sees it will be good for our souls.* In being impatient of them, therefore, we are impatient of God.

"When men of spite against us join,

They are the sword, the hand is Thine."

Teach us, then, O God, to "humble ourselves under your mighty hand, that we may be exalted in due season!" If we never suffered wrong, when would there be an opportunity for forgiveness, for magnanimity, for patient reliance upon God's justice?

A second occasion for the exercise of patience is, **when our fellow Christians fall into sin or error**. The spirit of the world, which is ever ready to hide its own faults in declamations about virtue, at once prompts us to condemn the sinner, and cast him out. It is indeed trying, when the believer sees the cause of Christ suffering through the faults of his servants. But the spirit of Heaven bids us be patient and long-suffering. We are sinners even as they are. *Were it not for divine grace, we would fall into the same transgressions.* Yet God has borne with us, and he now bears with them. It is his law and his Gospel, and his cause which suffer. If he, then, be long-suffering, how much more should we? "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault; you who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted."

So also with the errorist. Perhaps there is no occasion when wrath is less justifiable, than when excited by a contrariety of opinion. *What a pride and self-importance must there be in the mind of one, who, setting himself up for a judge, requires every one to think as he does, or be pronounced a knave or fool!* Is our own judgment perfect? Must every man who differs from us be dishonest? Christian meekness will always answer, *No.* Against opinions which we firmly believe to be hurtful, because contrary to the word of God, we should contend, and endeavor to establish the truth in their stead; but, towards the errorists themselves, we should exercise a meek and long-suffering charity. *The holy God of truth and of the church is long-suffering with us, and long-suffering with them.* It is against him they oppose themselves, and his truth they deny.

Surely, then, we have no right to be more severe than God. Who made *us* the judges of our fellow-sinners? Even when the discipline of the church is required, that discipline should be so mingled with love and gentleness toward the offender, as to show that it is right zeal for God, and not the triumph of party, for which it is exerted.

A third occasion for the exercise of patience is, **when we suffer under the immediate chastisement of God**. It is his wise infliction. He never afflicts us but for our good. We drink from the cup of the Master, and are baptized with the baptism of all his most faithful followers. How patiently, then, should we endure with such a guardian, and such sympathy! Heaven is an unspeakably rich reward, worth infinitely more than we can suffer in reaching it, or than we must suffer to be fitted for it. *It is of the mercy of God, that we are not now suffering in Hell.* Let us, then, reckoning "that the sorrows of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed," and remembering that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps," "be patient in tribulation."

Another occasion for the exercise of patience is, **when we are called to labor long in the cause of God, with little or no success**. This is certainly among the most severe trials to which the Christian is subject. Yet it is one in which he is not alone. It was the experience of Noah, and all the prophets. It was the experience of the Master himself. "He was despised and rejected by men;" yet he was faithful unto death. His reward did come, though the travail of his soul was long.

It is our privilege, as well as duty, to labor; it is God's office to give the increase of our work. Shall we dictate to him how he should manage his own cause? The true soul labors not for personal success, but for God's glory. That glory is sure. It is His own. In his own time and in his own way he will accomplish it. He will not ask whether we were *successful*, but whether we were *faithful*. It is by patient continuance in well-doing that we attain o glory and honor. Let us, then, trust God in he darkness as well as in the light, in the winter as well as in the summer, the seed time as well as the harvest. "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." It is the Lord's cause; let us then "commit our way unto him, and he will bring it to pass." "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience."

To cultivate this grace of long-suffering, let us look for the influences of that Holy Spirit, sent by the God of patience for the sake of the patient Jesus, who alone can work it in our hearts.

Let us meditate much upon the Holy Scriptures, which contain so many proofs of God's faithfulness to his patient people, and such rich promises of eternal recompense for our trials.

Let us delight in anticipating our heavenly rest, that its hope may cheer us under present trial.

Let us guard against every rising of impatience, and account ourselves unfaithful, disrespectful and rebellious, until we can, like little children, sustained by our Father's arms, rest ourselves and all our anxieties upon his loving bosom.

So may we come to share in the joys of those who came out of great tribulation, and cast our crowns of glory at the feet of the patient Lamb who was slain, but now lives and reigns evermore.

GENTLENESS

Perhaps no grace is less prayed for, or less cultivated, than gentleness. Indeed, it is considered rather as belonging to natural disposition, or external manners—than as a Christian virtue. Seldom do we reflect that not to be gentle, is sin. Yet here we find it among "the fruits of the Spirit."

James also, when he describes the wisdom from above, says, "it is first pure, then peaceable, gentle."

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, when he appeals to them in the name of Him who was the incarnation of that divine wisdom, and the example of Christian character, beseeches "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

And *David* long before, while blessing God for his salvation, had exclaimed, "Your gentleness has made me great."

It well befits us, therefore, to meditate upon a quality which bears the impress of divine beauty, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, and proves him who possesses it to have been . . .
born of the Spirit,
taught by the Father, and
transformed into the image of his dear Son.

Gentleness can be defined as a sweet mildness of temperament, manifested in words, address, and general demeanor.

The Greek term in the text signifies literally, an obliging disposition; that applied by James to the wisdom from above, a yielding disposition. Paul uses the same where our translators have written gentleness of Christ; and the Septuagint renders the word in Psalm 18:35, the gentleness of God, by one expressive of parental tenderness in the education of children. Our own word "gentle" once meant well-born, and gentleness is that mild and courteous demeanor which distinguishes the refined and educated from the rude and barbarian.

Christian gentleness is not to be confounded with meekness, for meekness is afterwards named as a distinct grace; and we read both of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The difference cannot be better stated than it has been by Macknight, who says, "MEEKNESS is a passive virtue, and consists in the bearing of injuries and provocations, without wrath or resentment. Whereas GENTLENESS has more of the nature of an active virtue, and exerts itself in a mild and obliging manner of speaking and acting." Meekness bears with oppression or harshness. Gentleness is the bestowing of kindness.

James distinguishes also between gentleness, and easiness to be entreated; for the first is, as we have seen, a mild and pleasing disposition; the latter, a candid openness to conviction, and a willingness to be led in the right way.

Gentleness is neither love nor peace, but the sweet and amiable temper and manner resulting from them, and persuasive of love and peace in others towards us.

Gentleness is, moreover, utterly different from the hollow courtesy or sycophantic pliancy, so frequently characterizing the politeness of the world, which men use, either because they fear to displease, or wish to gain the favor of others for their selfish advantage. Gentleness is not at all inconsistent with the strictest adherence to truth, even when that truth itself is most offensive to the depraved heart, or with a fearless and honest rebuke of wrong; though the gentle person takes care that he adds nothing by his own manner likely to offend, but, on the contrary, endeavors to present the truth, or administer the rebuke, in such a way as to recommend the one, and sweeten the other. As David says, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which will not break my head."

We have, happily, through the grace of Christ, instances of persons who, with great suavity of demeanor and mildness of speech, are yet remarkable for their unwavering integrity of opinion, and faithful advices to their erring friends. Indeed, the world always imputes cowardice to the blustering, and selfishness to the rude, as it does cunning to the flatterer, and insincerity to the ever-assenting.

Gentleness is a virtue of the heart renewed by the Spirit of peace and love. The Christian is gentle, because he is humble from a sense of his unworthiness and dependence upon God's grace. He is subdued by contrition, and reverent through devotion. His temper is chastened, and there is no surer sign of a repentance which needs not to be repented of, than quietness of spirit. "Lord," says David, "my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child."

The Christian is gentle because he is benevolent. The same Spirit who taught him quietness before God, has taught him love towards men. All that he does and says will therefore be amiable and kind, for he wishes to do them good and to make them happy. Love always desires love in return, and so he will not be satisfied with the consciousness of love for them in his heart, but seek that they may be convinced of his affection, and receive his efforts to serve them as the words and deeds of a generous friend, who finds his own good, in their welfare.

Gentleness is thus opposed to passionateness and irritability. There are some professing Christians, and among those whom, in the judgment of charity, we consider sincere Christians, who seem willing to do everything for Christ and their fellow-men but curb their own temper. They are sound in their religious opinions, faithful in the use of privileges, industrious and liberal in every benevolent enterprise, but at the same time ready to fire at the slightest shadow of offence, and sometimes at the imagination of a shadow.

The Christian friends who love them most, are never at ease in their presence, lest some unguarded word or gesture, or omission of word or gesture, should excite their anger. Their homes are continually disturbed and unquiet. Their children watch their clouding brows with dread, and fear rather than respect them, for nothing so destroys respect for a superior as his lack of self-command. The partners of their bosoms live in a constant anxiety, never knowing at what moment their fitful and unreasonable petulance may break forth. Even their benefactions lose their grace, and forfeit gratitude, for few have strength enough to bear at once the weight of obligation and the insults of anger. The loveliness of Christian character is lacking. The countenance may be fair and the features well-formed, but they will seem hateful and repulsive if distorted by passion; and *the sweetest voice grows harsh and shrill when not modulated by kindness*. In vain the world looks to them for a pledge of those mild graces with which religion has promised to bless earth and consummate Heaven.

It is true, much allowance must be made for physical temperament and natural disposition, and such persons, in their penitent moments, are fond of saying that none know but themselves the temptations which they suffer. This pleads for our charity; but they should remember that the influence of religion is to subdue the sinful passions, and change the natural disposition. They should think, too, of the scandal they cause to the world, the ill example they set their household, the unhappiness they give their friends—and all this while they bear the peaceful name of Christian, as followers of the gentle Jesus, the Lamb of God, and Prince of Peace. They know not what evil they do, or what good they prevent, by each silly burst of idle anger.

Gentleness is opposed to arrogance and haughtiness. There are those who never speak but in a tone of command, or without a manner which seems to say, "I am speaking to an inferior." Whether this arises from pride of rank, pride of wisdom, or pride of righteousness, it is inconsistent equally with religion and good sense. For while religion levels all ranks, at least so far as to make us all one in Christ Jesus, *it is most generally found that those accustomed to an elevated station are the most affable to those less fortunate in life*; and while the world resents and sneers at the airs of those whose heads are turned by new riches or new office, they applaud, without envy, others, who show themselves superior to such weakness as intoxication from prosperity. True wisdom, the wisdom from above, is ever easy to be entreated, and the apostle James speaks of "the meekness of wisdom." God, the Father of lights, never upbraids any who ask wisdom of him; and *how can one taught by him be arrogant towards a fellow pupil of the same Teacher!*

The wisest men even in this world's science are ever the most lowly in their pretensions, and the countenance of the true philosopher gains new gentleness and serenity with every year of study. As for the pride of righteousness, it is an absurdity. For How can a man be proud in humility, and arrogant in love, and presuming in meekness?

We are the witnesses of Christ, his representatives on earth, and none ever came to him or met him in he way, but found him lowly in demeanor and in speech. He took infants to his blessed bosom, he comforted the sinner that wept at his feet, and he bade even the woman taken in crime to go and sin no more. There is a dignity in religion, but it is the dignity of goodness, a dignity can stoop without degradation to the lowest, and seek to raise the vilest without contamination. The Son of God was gentle, and so must all God's children be.

There is another spirit which often follows the child into the man, and sometimes into the Christian, to which gentleness is opposed, and that is **sulkiness**. This arises not so much from pride, as from a dissatisfaction with one's self, and a malignant wish to communicate dissatisfaction to others. It is chiefly seen in those who have taken offence at some trifle, which they are ashamed even to confess or to charge the offender with; and in those who, after a quarrel, which they know they ought to make up, are unwilling to show any advances. You will see one of these, on the approach of the object of dislike, with a moody, stupid countenance, a dull and fallen eye, and a pouting, hanging lip. His words are few, reluctant and unmeaning, if he be spoken to; or he is silent, if none address him. He seems to chill the very atmosphere around, and, however much the company may be disgusted at his senseless mood, they find it infectious, and one sulky person will destroy the cordiality of a whole circle.

This is also unchristian and foolish. The Christian should be slow to take offence, and ready, nay, eager to make the first overtures to reconciliation. "Anger rests in the bosom of fools;" and a sulky man feels like a fool, and looks like one. While we remain at enmity with a fellow creature, we are at enmity with God. How much more noble, more Christianlike, to meet an enemy with a smile of kindness, an open hand, and that gentle spirit which turns away anger! The sulky person all the time despises himself, and in his secret soul must admire the superior virtue of the other, who can do with ease what to him is so difficult—forgive with gentleness.

Gentleness is opposed to **coldness** and reserve of manner. In some this arises from indifference to the society of those around them; in others again from a criminal shamefacedness, which shrinks from going forward to solicit regard. Either spirit is unchristian.

The Christian, as we have seen, must have a loving disposition. He must desire to love and be loved wherever he can, as his Master set him the example. He has no right to shut himself up from those whom God has made his neighbors and brethren. Aversion to society is a crime, and neglect of Christian fellowship a contempt of a principal means of grace. Nor has he a right to select only certain favorites, and exclude others. We are sent into the world, not merely to enjoy ourselves, but to do good; "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Our Master had his favorite friends, it is true; but he was also gentle and affable to all. We must consider how we may be profitable to others, as well as how others may be profitable to us. We cannot be exclusive when we are like the gentle Jesus, or the merciful God.

Shamefacedness or **bashfulness**, which deters us from offering kind affections in the name of Christ, is not an innocent weakness, for it interferes with our duty, which is to be kind and courteous to all. It has more to do with pride than men are apt to imagine, for the exclamation of the bashful Christian, when urged to go forward and cultivate opportunities of usefulness, is, "What will they think of me? They will condemn me for being too intrusive."

In other words, he fears to follow Jesus who sought out objects of mercy, lest he be condemned by his fellow men. But in this fear he is mistaken, for while he shrinks from advancing to meet others, he wishes that others would come to meet him. Would he censure them for so doing? Would he not, on the contrary, delight to receive such encouragement? Let him then judge of others by himself. How could we face a martyr's fire, if we bashfully shrink from meeting a fellow man with the gentleness of Christian love?

Gentleness is opposed to bluntness and abruptness of manner. Harshness is not named, because it is too obvious to need a formal statement, that violent and rough address or rebuke are in the strongest contrast to gentleness. No one can be harsh without a measure of anger, or rough without disregard of another's sensibilities. Severity, except in some rare instances, and then when we act in God's name, is reserved with vengeance in Jehovah's hands; and he mingles mercy with judgment.

Violent and vituperative epithets are strange sounds from the lips of one that professes to follow Him, "who when reviled, reviled not again." All who have the same spirit with the apostles, "persuade men, by the terrors of the Lord." Prophecy said of our Savior, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. The bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." Even in condemning the hypocritical scribes, whose secret wickedness he saw, his language is rather in sorrow than anger, for the word our Bibles have rendered "Woe!" might in equal truth have been translated "Alas for you!" What right then has a sinful follower of his, to be harsh with a fellow sinner?

There are those, however, who have too much good feeling to be intentionally harsh, who yet allow themselves in a bluntness and abruptness of speech, which differs often only in intention from positive severity. These never seem to reflect that they require a courteous and modest address from others to themselves; but *think because they are honest and well-meaning, they may say what they please in what manner they please*. The slightest knowledge of human nature, the most superficial observation of God's language to men, should convince us, that if we would win men and turn them to the truth, *we must approach them not only with kindness but due respect*. "Honor all men," says the apostle, and we have a beautiful exemplification of this principle in the manner of his address to Agrippa and Festus.

"A zealous man has not done his duty," says Jeremy Taylor, "when he calls his brother a drunkard and a beast ... but when he is, though severe against vice, charitable to the man, and careful of his reputation, and sorry for his dishonor, and observant of his circumstances, and watchful to surprise his affections and resolutions when they are most tender and most tenable; for men will not be in love with virtue, where they are forced with rudeness and incivility; but they love to dwell where they are invited friendly, and are treated civilly."

It is a poor excuse that our natural manner is blunt and abrupt, and, therefore, men should take no offence at it. We show but little benevolence, when, to do men good, we are not willing to mend our manners, but, for lack of a little care, disgust and turn them away from our good counsel.

The roughest woodcutter sharpens his axe, that he may cut rather than bruise, and the most ignorant artisan will oil his machinery lest it should turn with difficulty and noisy creaking.

Just so, should not the Christian avoid blunt words, and give gentleness to his manner? Besides, it is not so certain, that because a man is blunt and rude in speech, he is sincere. There is more sign of sincerity in the man, who shows that he takes pains to be kind. Even if the world gives him credit for honesty, it is for honesty in its least lovely form; and *truth is most attractive when most meek and gentle*.

Gentleness is, in fine, that kind, pleasant, considerate and persuasive spirit, which evinces itself in a kind, pleasant, considerate and persuasive manner, finds its pattern in the character of Jesus Christ, and has its warrant in the command and mercifulness of God. Such a spirit the Holy Spirit works in the soul of every genuine believer.

The **excellence** of Christian gentleness needs but little setting forth.

Gentleness recommends us to our fellow men, and so increases our opportunities and influence for usefulness. *There is a charm in gentleness, which a man must be a savage to resist.* Who can wantonly ill-treat a lamb or a dove? Who can refuse the gentle graces of childhood, or of female sweetness and winning modesty? Armed only with love, the gospel made its way, rebuking every sin and resolute against all wrong, though sword and fire and chains opposed its gentle conquests, until it has subdued and transformed the institutions of all the civilized world.

Thus should the Christian conquer, disarming malice and changing enemies into friends. Talk as men may of courage, conscience never denies the principle that "better is he who rules his own heart, than he who takes a city."

God himself subdues and rules his people by gentleness. "Your gentleness has made me great," says David; and again, "There is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared;" and the apostle, "The love of Christ constrains us." *So let us make men our friends by gentleness and love, that we may, in the spirit of meekness, make them by God's grace the friends of Christ.*

Gentleness is for our own comfort. However it may comport with our petty infirmities at the moment, to be revengeful, or proud, or harsh, or blunt—no man ever feels comfortable after having wounded the feelings of another; but every one has humanity enough to enjoy the warm reflection of pleasure he has caused in another. Gentleness is the charm of society, which distinguishes the civilized from the savage. *He who neglects to cultivate this sweet grace, may be tolerated, and sometimes loved, but it will be for some other reason, and despite his lack of gentleness*. The diamond may be precious in the rough, but it would be far more so if polished and bright. Christ came from Heaven to earth, that we might learn from him how to prepare for Heaven, and he was meek and lowly and gentle.

Gentleness is pleasing to God. He loves gentleness, because it is a sign of a humble and loving heart. He loves to see the world made happy, and he loves the gentle Christian who seeks to make it so. He loves to see his children useful, and gentleness increases their usefulness. He loves the gentle, for they are like his beloved Son, and like himself. As his rain upon the mown grass, healing its wounds and repairing its verdure; as his still and penetrating dews, which fall noiselessly but genially; so would he have his children's spirit to bless the hearts and lives of men.

Let us then never forget:

1. that Christian gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit

2. that we must ask and receive it only at the hands of God for Christ's sake

3. that , if we would have an answer to our prayers for gentleness, we must cultivate it in our hearts, anoint our lips with it, and rule by it our constant demeanor.

GOODNESS

Goodness, in modern language, is generally another name for virtue; and Christians, when they call a man good, intend to say, that he is sincerely pious; but, originally, the word had not so wide a meaning. No man, indeed, can be truly good, unless he be truly pious, or truly pious without being truly good; yet goodness is a distinct grace among many which religion produces.

Here we find goodness to be one of several fruits of the Spirit, which together make up the Christian character; and frequently in the Scriptures we read of goodness in such connections as render attention to its particular signification necessary.

Thus Paul in the Romans says, "Behold the goodness and severity of God." Goodness, one attribute, is contrasted with severity, another attribute, to the perfect God. "Good and upright is the Lord," said the Psalmist, "therefore will he teach sinners in the way." His goodness, combined with his love of righteousness, moves Him to make sinners happy by making them holy. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men!" The occasion of gratitude is God's bountiful providence for our necessity and enjoyment. The good God is a holy God, but *the holy God is good in the kindness and compassion which he shows to his creatures*.

In the same manner the apostle says, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die—yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die." More will be done to serve a good man than one merely just. And again the Psalmist: "O my soul, you have said unto the Lord, my goodness extends not to you (reaches not to you) but to the saints that are in the earth." Goodness cannot, then, be religious duty in general, for God, through Christ, does accept of our obedience; but some service or kindness of which God stands in no need, but our fellow Christians do.

Good is that which is necessary to our happiness; "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Goodness, therefore, must have reference to the happiness of our fellow creatures, and we may define it to be: *A sincere desire for the happiness of others, expressed by conduct calculated to advance that happiness.*

Love, named by the apostle before, is, as we have seen, a lovingness of heart, or a disposition to cherish an affection for others wherever there is opportunity. But we may love those to whom, strictly speaking, we can do no good—such as God and his holy angels. Goodness in us, implies some lack upon the part of those toward whom it is felt and exercised.

Peace, or peaceableness, and gentleness, with some other Christian virtues, are forms of goodness, but no one of them includes the whole idea, for we must be more than peaceable and forgiving and gentle, if we would be good. Mercy is sometimes confounded with goodness; but mercy is, rightly, kindness to the unworthy, while goodness makes no such distinction.

The best practical definition of goodness is given in the life and character of Jesus Christ: "Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good." *So far as we resemble Jesus in his devotion to the welfare of men, we possess the grace of goodness.*

It is, therefore, not to be wondered at, that so eminent and essential a grace of the Christian character should sometimes be named to express the whole of it; and it were well to learn from this natural interchangeableness of terms, that, if we mean by good men, Christians, to be Christians—we must always be good.

Goodness, being *an active disposition to promote the happiness of others*, refers of course to their moral as well as to their physical welfare, their temporal as well as their eternal enjoyment. The goodness of the world seeks, at best, to relieve the afflictions, and add to the comforts of men in this life; and, so that their few days of this sorrowful time can be rendered more tolerable, the fate of the undying soul is little thought of. There is also a fanaticism, (for it deserves no better name) which, in supposed eagerness for the salvation of men from eternal misery, overlooks, and even willfully disregards their sufferings here. But the good Christian is prompted by the same motives, which urge him to secure to men the hope of Heaven, to make them as happy as he can before they get there.

The world will have but a poor opinion of their goodness, who are very liberal in offering God's riches, but take care to give none of their own; while the Christian, who is most ready to relieve present trouble, will receive greater respect for his honesty, when he warns against eternal danger.

Thus we find that our blessed Master proved to the world his pity for their souls, by his pity for their bodies. He who gave his own flesh and blood to satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst, could not look upon a crowd fainting for lack of bread, but he must work a miracle to supply them with it; and his way to the cross, where he offered himself as a ransom for sinners, that he might redeem them from Hell, and purchase for them Heaven, was besieged by crowds of sick and sorrowful patients, and "he healed them all."

The chosen attendants of Him who came to take away *sin*, which "brought in death and all our woe"—were the *lame*, leaping in the ecstasy of recovered soundness; the *leper*, with his flesh clean and smooth as a child's; the *blind*, following him with rejoicing eyes; the *dumb*, singing grateful doxologies; the *dead*, loosened from his grave-clothes; and the *mourner*, with her dead given back to her bosom.

Yet the continual earnestness with which he preached the Gospel of the kingdom, and the zeal with which he made every instance of healing the body a parable of his readiness to be the Savior of our souls, demonstrated his greater anxiety to save from the wrath of him who is able to cast both body and soul into Hell. The good Christian is a follower of Him "who went about doing good."

As it is, then, the office of Christian goodness to do good unto all men, as we have opportunity, and to be faithful in goodness unto death, there is no need of specifying the many ways and occasions of doing good, (for which, indeed, a volume would be insufficient,) but we may with greater economy of time,

I. Inquire how we may distinguish between true and false goodness.

II. Consider some principal arguments to the cultivation of so excellent a grace.

I. The distinguishing marks of true and false goodness.

True goodness flows from Christian faith. It is not to be denied, that there is a sort of goodness which seems natural to human nature, for which reason we give the name of humanity to pity and mercifulness. God, for wise purposes, permitted our fallen nature to retain a certain pleasure in seeing pleasure, and a certain dislike of seeing pain. In the same manner as we paint pleasant pictures to gratify the eye, and combine harmonious sounds to delight the ear, men may often do good from a satisfaction they have in it, or avoid giving pain lest they might suffer themselves in seeing it. But the moment it is necessary to neglect, oppress, or give pain to others, that some stronger passion may be gratified, their goodness is at an end. This is no harsh slander of the world. The laws of every corporation, the economy of trade, nay, the common rule by which men govern themselves in dealing with others, *proceed upon the supposition that every man will be swayed by his personal interest and selfish feelings*. Take away responsibility, where there is the slightest seeming interest in doing wrong, and you have gone far to take away goodness.

This may show itself differently in different individuals, because in different dispositions, different passions may be paramount.

One man's ruling passion may be *covetousness*. He may not be naturally cruel. He has no wish that those with whom he has no concern should suffer want or wounds. But let an unfortunate family be the tenants of one of his houses, and to exact his rent, he will strip them of their all, and turn them shivering and starving into the street. Encourage him with the prospect of gain, and he will arm the privateer or the slaver, to pay himself a rich dividend, at the cost of blood and rapine and unspeakable misery. Nay, show him a wretch that must suffer and perish, unless he takes largely from his hoards for his relief, and he will let him suffer and perish, because he has more pleasure in hoarding his money than he has pain at the thought of another's distress.

Another may not be covetous, but he is *voluptuous* and sensual, and he will blind his eyes to the future misery of the victims of his licentiousness; he will defraud the honest and industrious of their due, rather than deny himself indulgences; and revel in luxurious excess, when the poor man is starving for lack of such crumbs as fall from his table.

Another is not a sensualist, but he is *ambitious*, and he will not scruple to trample upon the interests of his whole country, or wade to power through rivers of blood. The same man, who would have wept over a child crushed by the wheel of his carriage in a peaceful street—will ride exultingly over a field of battle, though every tramp of his war horse is upon a gallant bosom, and his artillery is sweeping thousands of husbands and fathers into a miserable eternity!

Another is neither covetous, licentious, nor ambitious, but he is *indolent*; and so that he can keep himself from the annoyance of knowing that others are in trouble, he will lounge on in sleepy ease, though the world were dying for want of his help.

These are strong instances, but they illustrate human nature as it is when fairly tried; though we may individually abhor such crimes, as Hazael once did the assassination of his prince, or David the robbery of the poor man's one ewe lamb, or the youthful Nero his first death warrant. "We know what we are, but we know not what we might be," if the right test were applied.

We read of the African women who ministered to the fainting explorer Mungo Park, we are ready to echo all his praise of woman's goodness.

Yet, when we read again of Fulvia tearing the tongue of the dead Cicero with her golden bodkin; or the bad Elizabeth treacherously giving the gentle Mary to imprisonment and death; or of the Indian women, foremost in torturing their captured enemies; we are as ready to believe that there is none so cruel and unforgiving as a revengeful, jealous, angry woman!

The boasted charity of the world, when examined, will be found to have cost the dispensers of it, little that they valued, or to have purchased an ostentation and applause which they valued more. Half, at least, of its hospitals and asylums have been founded by funds wrung from the wretch "Upon the bed of sin, delirious with its dread;"

or by those who robbed their heirs to make amends for lives of niggardliness; that the public newspaper gives them credit for a charity, which no more warmed their bosoms than it does the marble bust that crowns the monument.

What becomes of goodness when envy, or jealousy, or revenge, or pride, contends against it? How small a drop of such subtle poison embitters the whole heart? "Away with goodness," the world then cries; "Crucify it! crucify it!"

There is no security for goodness unless in some strong inner principle, which lifts the heart of man above those things for which the world quarrels, and thus purifies the natural affection of self-love from all taint of selfishness. That principle is found in Christian faith alone. The true Christian loves his God and Savior, and seeks his happiness from his love. *Transformed into the image of the good God, he delights to imitate him in works of goodness*; and being full of better hopes and treasures than those of earth and time, no worldly interest is sufficient to outweigh his motives to do good. Religion does not destroy his love of himself to make room for the love of others, but causes him to see and feel that their happiness is in a high degree consistent with, and contributive to his own.

Unselfish benevolence, or a benevolence without any reference immediate or ultimate to ourselves, is a chimera which cannot exist in the government of a God, who punishes crime and rewards virtue, thus governing men by their motives.

A man who acts without a motive, is either a madman or a fool. The delight attending a good action is one of the strongest impelling motives to it; and he, who seems to do good without such consciousness, and without loving to do good, is not in heart a godly man. Jesus served "for the reward set before him." Jehovah himself takes delight in goodness, and devised the plan of redemption for his own glory; and so far from a well-regulated self-love being a sordid affection, it exalts us to a communion with God and the Savior.

True goodness, therefore, can only be maintained by a faith which supplies higher motives to its exercise, than the world can suggest to the withholding of it.

The fact, that among us and other Christian nations many noble acts of goodness are done by those who do not claim to be spiritual Christians, does not militate against the principle for which we are arguing. *They have learned their morality from Christian books, and have been encouraged by Christian examples.* None of us, however skeptical we may be, are without the light of Christian truth, or apprehensions of the Christian's eternity. It is religion which binds society together. It hallows the vows of wedlock. An appeal to the ever-living God, who is to judge us all, is the last proof of testifying veracity; and the highest officer of our government, which owns or denies no religion in its constitution, is sworn into office upon the gospels of Jesus Christ.

The noblest maxim of heathen ethics is that of Tully, *"It is better to suffer an injury than to do one;"* yet how far short does it fall of the Christian's rule to love his neighbor as himself, and to do good even to his enemies? A comparison of the state of society, where true Christianity prevails, with that of other lands, shows how efficient the Christian's creed is in softening and humanizing the heart; but it is only when that creed rules the heart entirely, that its goodness is complete.

Such being the source of true goodness, it is easy to perceive **what its distinguishing characteristics are.**

True goodness is not a mere sentiment. Activity enters into its very nature. "Most men," says the wise author of Proverbs, "will proclaim their own goodness, but a faithful man who can find?" There are some few, who have reached such a pitch of depravity as to be utterly indifferent to the very name of virtue, nay, to glory in the effrontery of vice; but such monsters are rare.

Most men wish to appear good to themselves and to others. They will talk much, and perhaps eloquently, about duties to society, humanity, patriotism, and god-like charity. Nay, they resent as a personal affront any doubt expressed respecting the natural kindness of the human heart. They are loud in denouncing the tyranny or injustice of others, and will sympathize, as they think, deeply with some distant people pining in famine, or struggling for freedom, or ground down by despotism. They will melt over the sorrows of some heroine of romance, or the scenic fable of exaggerated woe. The glowing pages of the poet or the orator, descriptive of warm affections and heroic devotion, will kindle a correspondent glow in their bosoms, and they imagine that they also are good. They picture to themselves scenes in which they would like to display the benevolence within them, and imagine occasions when they would shine forth in the glory of virtuous enthusiasm.

But alas! these scenes are never realized; these great occasions never come; and *though opportunities for an ordinary and unobtrusive kindness abound on every hand*, they never seek them out, but rather choose to dream again of ideal goodness and romantic generosity. Because they cannot show their goodness upon a large scale, they will not put it forth at all.

It is an excellent observation of Blair, and one which such persons would do well to remember, that "much of the happiness of the world depends upon what are termed little things; it is rare that God honors us with heroic and famous distinctions in doing good." It is, if we mistake not, Burke who says, that "a state, which lays its foundation in rare and heroic virtues, will be sure to have for its superstructure the basest profligacy and corruption;" because ordinary service and integrity are thus made of no account, when in truth they are the life-blood of the body politic.

No one can say that he has no opportunities of doing good, in a world where there are so many *poor* to be fed, so many *sorrowful* to be comforted, so many *youth* to be educated, so many *strangers* to be taken by the hand, so many *sick* to be nursed, and, above all, so many *souls* to be saved. He must be blind and deaf, who can see no object of goodness, and hear no call for compassion. Whatever we may think of ourselves and of what we would do, none but those who are actually engaged in doing good have any true goodness. Our means of doing good may be small, but each of us has enough to be busy with; and, like a man trading upon little capital, we should turn it the more often and with greater industry, that it may yield the greater profit. *The truly godly man is the man who does good.*

True goodness is not merely impulsive, but *rational* and *considerate*. There are many who, the moment that they see any one in want or suffering, are so pained at the sight, that they instantly strive to comfort themselves by some gift or effort for their relief; and this class of persons, especially if they be rich, are fond of thinking that money is the cure of all human ills, and when they have given money, perhaps profusely, are satisfied with their easy redemption. But true goodness, though it feels pain in regarding pain in others, and has pleasure in lessening it, thinks more of the sufferer than itself. It will therefore pause, and be at some trouble to inquire what service is best, and how it may be rendered.

Charity (we use the word in its large sense) *when it is dictated by reason and piety, will be guided by reason and the word of God*; and such charity will often convey a lasting benefit at the price of present gratification, when the man of impulse would have inflicted a lasting injury. *Goodness should be willing to give time, and thought, and patience, and even labor; not merely money and kind words and compassionate looks.*

True goodness is self-sacrificing. Not in the end, for in doing good for God's sake we can make no real sacrifice; but self-sacrificing in the ordinary sense of the word. Many are willing to give from the superabundance of their money, and think they have done wonders when they give the hundredth part of what they pay their milliner, or their wine-merchant—yet would not scant their table of a dish. Others give the waste hours of their leisure to charity, and chat well pleased with their goodness among pleasant companions, in session as a committee to do good upon a large scale. Others, again, are proud of using their influence with the world on behalf of some needy person, who in his turn feeds them with flattery. Their goodness, it is easy to see, costs them nothing, for it only costs them money or time or influence, of little or no use to themselves. It is, therefore, worth nothing in the sight of God, and next to nothing in the sight of men.

Our true goodness can be measured only by the *sacrifices of self* which we make for it; and that poor widow, who cast in the two mites, all she had, and perhaps went without that day's meal, approached nearer the dignity of His mercy, who for our sakes became poor, than he whose name is blazoned high in the lists of princely donors for gifts which came from overflowing coffers.

True goodness is not confined to one or several modes of exhibition, but shows itself in all. The godly man is not content with giving to the poor, and relieving the wretched, and exhorting the sinner—while he is harsh to his family, and overbearing to his servants, and haughty to his neighbors. He is gentle and kind to all—affable, courteous, ever ready to oblige, showing in every word, and look, and gesture, that he wishes to see all happy. Wherever he enters he brings sunshine with him, the sunshine of Heaven gleaming from his holy heart upon a shadowed world.

The grace of God can dwell in strange places, but it is difficult to conceive how a peevish, passionate man, careless of others feelings and comforts, can be a godly man, though he may have built a hospital and fed a city with bread.

For the same reason, the godly man will never do good to one, at the risk of another's suffering, except it be his own. He is never reckless of consequences. He remembers that human interests are strangely complicated and intermingled, and *while he tries to do good to the more needy and suffering, he tries to do harm to none*. A little patience, and a little pains, by the blessing of God, will soon enable him so to adjust and distribute his kindness, that the general good may be advanced with the individual.

True goodness is not confined in its objects. As the godly man's kindness goes beyond himself to his family, it goes beyond his family to his countrymen, and beyond his countrymen to the world. The same word, which has commanded him to love his neighbor as himself, has taught him that every man is his neighbor. It may be right to begin at home, for our Savior, who loved the world, began his gospel at Jerusalem; but, if we would love like Jesus, we must embrace the world. The Christian may love his own spiritual household, but woe to that Christian whose goodness is limited by his sect! Some do good only to those who are grateful and worthy; but true goodness is like His, who causes "His sun to shine and his rain to descend upon the evil and the good, the just and the unjust."

Some are good to their friends or those who are indifferent to them, but turn coldly away from their enemies, and treat with marked dislike even fellow Christians who have offended them. They show that *their goodness comes not from Christ, who loved his enemies, washed the feet of the traitor Judas, and prayed for his murderers.*

True goodness is **untiring**. "Be faithful unto death," is the Master's command. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not," is his exhortation and promise.

It is only by "patient continuance in well-doing" that we can attain to "glory, honor, and immortal life." This poor world is not our rest, and until our Judge shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, we must not "forget to do good and share." We may work in darkness, and see no present fruit, but we work for a faithful Master, and through his grace our reward is sure.

II. Some principal arguments to the cultivation of this excellent grace of goodness.

Goodness is an evidence of the work of God's Spirit in our hearts. The end of the Spirit's work is to make us like God and his Son Jesus Christ. What resemblance of the creature to the Creator, of the Christian to his Lord, can be greater than that of doing good? Is he not the one who opens his hand and supplies the needs of everything that lives? Is he not the Father of the fatherless, the Judge of the widow, the Consolation of the sorrowful, and the God of the stranger? Did not Jesus love the world, go about doing good to the world, and die for the world? Only then by doing good can we be like him. **In the judgment day, the inquiry will be made not into our opinions or professions alone, but into our deeds, as proving the correctness of our faith and the sincerity of our professions.** Never can we know that we are in the right way, except we walk in the footsteps of Him, who did good in all his life and death. *He came from Heaven to do good on earth, that we in doing good might tread the path to Heaven.*

Goodness is well pleasing to God. It was when he looked upon his Son doing good, that he declared himself well pleased; and only when we do good is he well pleased with us for Christ's sake. In our goodness to our fellow men, he sees our love to him. He recognizes the character of his children, and the fruits of his Son's atonement. As he loves himself for his infinite benevolence, so will he love them who are like him in goodness.

Goodness recommends our religion to the world. The goodness of God is the attribute which worldly men most admire in him; and when they see the Christian's good works, they will recognize the divinity of the gospel, and glorify him in Heaven. *They will never believe that Christianity leads to a better world, unless they see it making this world better.*

For the Master's sake, for God's sake, for the world's sake, we must do good. There are two faithful sayings recorded in Scripture, the one, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" the other, that the "man of God be careful to maintain good works." We prove our faith in the first, by obedience to the second.

Goodness is the source of rich pleasure to ourselves. If God be happy in doing good, every one must be happy who does good like him. None ever tried doing good, that did not find it so. Most other pleasures perish in the using, but the memory of good actions is always sweet. Goodness comforts us in calamity. It sustains us in trial. It makes the wilderness of life blossom, and soothes the pang of death, when the godly man enters into the joy of his Lord.

Our good works enhance our eternal felicity. Christ goes before us to open Heaven by his grace, but our good works follow to enhance our reward. How sweet there, as we look upon the Lamb who was slain for us, to remember that we lived for him and those he loved! When the redemption is complete, will it not be the joy of the blessed angels to remember all their acts of ministering kindness to the heirs of salvation? Will it not be the blessedness of the redeemed to remember their acts of kindness to those who stand with them around the throne? Whose joy, whose glory will be the greatest? His, who did the most good.

O blessed Spirit, whose alone is the fruit of goodness, work that goodness in our hearts, that by your continual help, we may live the life which Jesus lived, and share the joy in which he rejoices. Even for his sake. Amen.

FAITH

(Faithfulness/Truth/Veracity)

It may seem strange to some that the apostle should not have named faith first of all, instead of after several Christian graces; as we are taught in the Scriptures, that faith in Christ is the life of Christian morality, suggesting the affection of love for God and man, and moving us to a correspondent course of conduct; and, especially, as the apostle Peter, in a passage almost parallel to the one before us, exhorts his brethren "to add to their faith" some of these very graces here named before it. (2 Peter 1:5-7.) The explanation, however, is, that the word is not here to be understood in its more common sense.

Faith, in its pure signification, is belief in testimony, as distinguished from personal knowledge. We believe that there is such a country as China, though we may never have seen it; and that there once lived such a man as Julius Caesar, though he died nearly nineteen hundred years ago, because we have had sufficient testimony to convince us of both facts; but we know that we exist by our own consciousness, and need no further proof from others to assure us, nor could any testimony convince us to the contrary. We speak sometimes figuratively of the testimony of our senses, but strictly, what we perceive by our own senses, we know of ourselves.

When faith in testimony is exercised about things in which we are personally concerned, it will, in due proportion to its strength, influence our conduct. If a man be ill of some dangerous disease, and is told by a physician in whose veracity and skill he has entire faith, that a certain remedy will restore him to health, he will take that remedy. If one, whom we believe to be a person of truth and ability, offers us his friendship and aid in difficult circumstances, and we need his kindness, we will rely and count upon it; or, if we make a bargain with such a one, we will perform our part of the contract with a strong conviction that he will perform his part.

Faith in such a case is more than mere belief. It is confidence. Such is the nature of Christian faith, which is based upon the testimony of God in the Scriptures; and no man has true faith in the word of God, unless he believes his soul to be infinitely precious, and commits himself for salvation to Jesus Christ, and follows him in all those holy duties, the practice of which is through grace, the only way to attain everlasting life. Therefore Paul and James agree, when one says, "Faith without works is dead;" (that is, has no real existence;) and the other, "I will show you my faith by my works." We are not saved by faith without works, for there is no such faith in Christ; neither are we saved by works without faith, for no works, but those which flow from faith, are acceptable with God.

But that is not the meaning of faith here. It is rather what is usually expressed by veracity, honesty, fidelity, or the observance of truth in all our assertions, promises, and engagements. The supposition of our truth induces others to put faith in us, and the keeping or fulfillment of that truth, is the fruit of the Spirit which is called "Faith."

This sense of the term, though unusual, is not singular. We find the same Greek word in Titus, 1:10, where servants are exhorted to show, "all good fidelity." In Deuteronomy, 32:20, we read, "Children in whom there is no faith," or veracity; and the word in the Septuagint is the same as here. In Romans 3:3, the apostle asks, "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Shall their unbelief make God's declarations untrue? Indeed, it is common for us to speak of pledged faith, of relying upon another's faith, of acting in good faith, and of the faith of treaties and contracts.

This use of the word faith itself shows the value of the virtue signified by it. Without such truth there could be no confidence. The boundaries of our personal observation would be the limit of our knowledge. The child would doubt his parent, and the pupil his teacher. History would cease to instruct by the lessons of the past, and the voyager to other lands would travel for all but himself in vain. No bargains could be made except those consummated on the spot, and commerce would dwindle to a momentary traffic. Distrustful nations would own no treaties, and perpetual arms be the sole security from perpetual danger. The person of a herald would cease to be sacred, and the white flag of truce and peace be crimsoned with his blood. Society in its simplest, as well as its most extended forms, would be broken up.

The same cement, without which the confederacy of affiliated states would crumble into ruin, is necessary to marital attachment, household affections, and the charities of neighborhood. The wildest barbarism is but a remote approach to the confusion and anarchy of a world in which every man would be a liar, a traitor, and supplanter of his brother, language no longer the interpreter of thought or vehicle of knowledge, and truth itself, in the general distrust, no better than falsehood.

A violation of faith is, therefore, not a light crime, and injurious only to the one or the few immediately deceived. It is rebellion against the God who ordained the laws of society, with the happiness to be found in them, and treason against society itself. So the consent of the civilized world has stamped it. For, though, from the sad corruption of the public moral sense, certain forms of knavery and deception, (not less, but, because upon a larger scale, more criminal than the petty cheating of the vulgar rogue,) have come to bear the name of financial tact or clever operations; and breach of trust is, by some strange inconsistency, but a misdemeanor in the eyes of law.

Yet the last insult to which a man will submit is to be called a liar, and society frowns away from her circles the detected scoundrel, unless indeed his villainy has been lucrative enough to gild his infamy, to dazzle the debased multitude with splendor, or stop the accusing mouth with the luxuries of his table. Even then there is a natural perception of a fitness in truth, which no sophistry can utterly blind, and the false and dishonest man carries within his bosom a nest of envenomed thoughts, that will hiss far louder than the populace without.

What the opinion is, which God holds of falsehood, he has expressed by that terrible sentence, that "all liars (which includes all the deceitful and dishonest) shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." And, truly, well does he deserve such extremity of punishment, who, so far as his influence extends, plucks the corner-stone from the fabric of social confidence, extinguishes the light of the world, and *insults the all-seeing and holy God to his face, that he may deceive and wrong his fellow men.*

The truth or faithfulness here insisted upon, means, primarily, truth and faithfulness toward God in our Christian profession; but our duty to God necessarily includes those duties to our fellow men which he has enjoined, and the apostle is here speaking of the fruits of the Spirit, or of those graces which prove the Spirit of God to be dwelling in the Christian. It would be impossible, in the narrow limits of this essay, to describe, or even allude to the many forms and occasions of observing truth and faithfulness. We may, therefore, confine ourselves to the purpose of showing, how a true and faithful conscience toward God will preserve the Christian's truth and faithfulness in all his conduct and example before men.

The man of truth and faithfulness will be ever cautious lest he should offend:

Faithfulness as it regards his **words**. The resolution and the prayer of David should be those of every true Christian. "I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth as with a bridle." "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth. Keep the door of my lips." James, who seems to have been especially anxious to recommend the daily practice of Christianity in what are termed the common virtues, devotes a whole chapter to the importance of words, and the good or evil they may do. "If any man among you," says he, "seems to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, that man's religion is vain." And again, "If a man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." Our Savior too has told us, that "for every idle word" we shall be brought into judge ment. The Christian will, therefore, cautiously weigh his words and guard his conversation, lest in anything he may offend against the truth, and so against God and man.

He will speak nothing but what he knows to be truth, and that truth only in love.

There are many, however, who talk so much, that they cannot talk cautiously, and hence talk much error and falsehood. The briefest pause in conversation is painful to them, and they feel themselves bound to fill it up, and when they once begin, are so charmed with their own voice, that they run precipitately on, lest any other should have an opportunity to disturb their self-delighted eloquence. It must be a clever brain at the best, which can send forth a constant stream of truth and thought, and, such persons being usually deficient in that organ, they are obliged to avail themselves of the trifles which are uppermost, and such words, for lack of better, as rise to their lips. Hence their opinions are crude and hasty, and necessarily often erroneous, or even when correct, so badly expressed that they often seem to assert what they neither mean nor believe; and as far as their testimony is credited (though happily it is not much) their hearers go away with false and injurious impressions.

It is not easy to shine in conversation, and yet more difficult for those who would be always coruscating. Hence they endeavor after piquant anecdote, witty paradoxes, marvelous narratives, and illustrative incidents. So long as the treasury of their memory furnishes the true and the reasonable, they may confine themselves to them; but there is a strong temptation, and one they rarely resist, to invent and counterfeit the supply which the occasion needs; and this especially as, Lord Bacon tells us, "the admixture of a lie does ever add pleasure," for a romance will have more readers than true history, and a fairy tale than Solomon's proverbs. Every public speaker knows how apt he is in the impetus of his declamation to seize upon words, and even opinions, which in a cooler moment he would reject; and we have seen the frantic steed become so blind with its own rapidity as to rush into a ditch or over a precipice; but there is perhaps nothing so rashly impetuous or apt to involve itself in foulness or danger, as the careless, talkative tongue.

Besides, such persons, eager for a new supply of facts and incidents, are seldom scrupulous as to the sources from which they gather them, and thus become the most busy and mischievous instruments of scandal and slander. To have the petty triumph of telling a new report, to astound their listeners with the unexpected error of some godly man or exemplary woman, (the better the character the more startling the story, for who cares to hear that a thief has stolen again, or a drunkard has had another debauch?) is a pleasure your careless talker can hardly deny himself. It is to be hoped that there are but few, at least in a community like ours, who would deliberately and maliciously invent a false report, to destroy the character and peace of his neighbor; but there are some fully equal to such baseness, else a large proportion of the lies in daily circulation could never have been told. It is a most pernicious maxim, that there must be some foundation for every wide-spread scandal; or, as the common saying is, "Where there is smoke there must be fire;" for it accuses the character of Him who died upon the cross, a victim of calumny, and of those to whom he said, "Blessed are you, when all men speak all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake."

How then do such base falsehoods come to be believed? Not certainly upon the credit of the original inventors, but from the repetition of them by those of whom the world thinks better than that they could willingly lie to injure another. Let it be engraved upon our memories, that the person who repeats a slander, even though he give the name of his author, is no better and far more mischievous than its originator. He endorses the lie by his repetition of it, and, as without his endorsement it could never have gained credit, he is responsible for the mischief by the law of God and man. We would take a spurious note far more readily from an honest man than from a known counterfeiter, and every additional hand it passes through adds to the deception.

Besides, slander is more accumulative than a snowball. It is like a salad, which every one will season to his own taste, or the taste of those to whom he offers it; or like the kite of a child to which additional exaggerations are attached, each light in itself, but together forming a counterbalancing weight, without which the airy trifle would fall again to earth, when, with eager speed, he runs to make it soar aloft. O the mischiefs, the heart-burnings, the disgraceful enmities, which have occurred from otherwise good and well-meaning people repeating the words of those whom they know, or ought to know, to be unworthy of belief! What is it, tale-bearer, that makes you so credulous of another's faults, but a consciousness within your breast that you are no better than you describe him to be!

Faithfulness it regards **promises**. When men wish to make an assertion more binding, they confirm it with an oath, which is nothing else than declaring that they make it in the presence of God as a witness. Few men, it is to be presumed, certainly no true Christian, would engage to do a thing by an oath lightly. They would weigh well their capacity and opportunity to perform, before they thus bound themselves. But the *faithful Christian believes himself ever to be in the presence of God, and that He is a witness of all his engagements*. So with him every promise will have the sanctity of an oath, and, therefore, will not be lightly made. There are those, however, who are apt, in the enthusiasm of the moment, to pledge themselves earnestly to their neighbor and society, to do what they find themselves either unable or unwilling to perform, when the excitement of the occasion has subsided. They then, it is true, see that they were rash and improvident in their pledges, and perhaps hold themselves excused for neglecting their fulfillment. But their neighbors or the world think of the promise itself, not of the circumstances. They have perhaps relied upon it, made their own arrangements accordingly, or are looking for the reality of a virtue which promised so well.

The failure of one to perform his promise may be cause of failure in others who are innocent; and if a professing Christian be the promise-breaker, the plea of enthusiasm will not do much to save his religion from reproach. Probably few have done more mischief to the public character of the church of God, than those who are loud in their professions and engagements during some religious excitement—yet, when it is over, fall into lukewarmness and worldly-mindedness; and but for more steady and cautious Christians, who at such times, were perhaps reproached for coldness and unbelief, the cause of religion would long since have been stranded.

Upon the same principle, we may well doubt the propriety and safety of vowing or publicly resolving upon an extraordinary morality, or difficult and singular courses of conduct, which the Scriptures, and the example of Christ and his apostles, have not enjoined. Such resolutions are like the vauntings of the boaster, rarely indicative of firm moral principle, but rather serving to cheat the resolver himself into a belief of a determination he does not possess. The effect may be to sustain him for a season by the unusual effort which the fear of shame may excite, but in the end, like every other substitute for calm and rational virtue, they will fail and bring disgrace.

Vows of duty to God, and pledges of truth in our engagements with each other, are highly proper; but, except in matters clearly revealed by precept and example, they should be made with the greatest caution. The man, who cannot be kept in virtue by the simple rules of God's law, will never be restrained from vice by any morality of human devising. The spasmodic exertions of a frame when diseased, may show more strength than its healthy efforts, but the very strength of those spasms prove the absence of health, and are sure to be succeeded by a correspondent depression and inaction.

It is to this error in attempting virtue that the wise man refers, when he says, "Be not righteous over-much; neither make yourself over-wise: why should you destroy yourself?" And again, "It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God."

We have strong proofs of this in the Pharisaism of a Savior's time, and the supererogatory vows and penances of later times, by which monstrous and unnecessary difficulties received the name of eminent virtue, and a breach of common morality became but a venial offence. Virtue lies not in promising extravagantly, but in doing well. And as has been observed by another, "We must not needlessly multiply vows upon our souls. The more care we take before we utter anything with our lips, the more secure shall we be of fulfilling what our lips pronounce; though there is no inconvenience of solemn engagements to God to do what his law has made our duty before."

This caution should especially be used by Christians in their contracts of business. Such contracts are engagements, which require special attention. For as the world are apt to think more of those arrangements which respect the things upon which they have set their hearts, so, few things are more likely to bring scandal upon a Christian's profession than the lack of punctuality and strict truthfulness in his worldly affairs. Yet there is reason to fear, that the Christian in his business sometimes forgets the precision and inflexibility of Christian morality. Truth is necessary to business, but, because it is so necessary, the abuse of confidence is the more criminal. It is like that mighty vapor which, when duly controlled and regulated as to its power of expansion, gives energy to effect the grandest purposes, but when extravagantly applied, explodes and shatters the Whole economy into ruin, and brings destruction upon the many for the folly of the few.

What may be the maxim of the world upon this subject, is not our duty to know, but no Christian can venture, for his own gain, another's interest who has confided in his integrity, and be guiltless before God. Unforeseen calamities may happen to men and in their wisest projects, but a rash speculator and an over-grasping adventurer with other men's means, breaks, in the eye of Christian morality, that commandment which says "you shall not steal," as really as the man who picks a pocket or robs on the highway.

The man true and faithful to his God will, in all his dealings with his fellow man, remember the caution of his Bible, "He who hastens to be rich has an evil eye, and considers not that poverty may come upon him." And again: "Those who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

The man of truth and faithfulness will not be satisfied with conforming, however strictly, to the laws of men.

Although in its spirit the world is at enmity with God, it has paid an unintentional homage to the excellence of God's law, by prescribing many of its rules as necessary to the good order of social interests. Hence there is a certain resemblance between the external conduct of the man of worldly honor and that of the Christian, and the laws of men are, to a certain extent, agreeable to the laws of God. Yet it must happen, partly from the imperfection of everything human, and partly from their unwillingness to bind themselves by a morality so strict, that *our legislators will omit many things which the law of God requires*. The Christian, however, while he conscientiously obeys the human government under which he lives, remembers the higher responsibility which he owes to God, as our Lord commanded us to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." There may be many obligations to his neighbor which the laws do not compel him to fulfill, or which he may resist by the aid of cunning counsel and protracted litigation—which are yet required by the rule to do unto others as he would have them do unto him. Just so, there may be frequent opportunities of demanding from his neighbor advantages which the letter of the law will enable him to exact, that he should cheerfully give up, according to the rule which bids him to love his neighbor as himself. In many of these instances, the public opinion of a trading community would justify his adhering to the decision of the courts, and count it no shame for him to insist upon the words of the bond, though they were "the money or the pound of flesh." Professing Christians, in the exciting pursuit of gain, sometimes observe a *legal rigidness* and exactness in matters of business, which is far from consistent with integrity of conscience and charity of heart. Because other men avail themselves of the laws to the utmost, they justify themselves by the example of the ungodly, and think it necessary to foil wrong with its own weapons, forgetting that it befits them to return evil with good.

The faithful man will be known by his adding equity to law, mercy to justice, and clemency to right. He will so govern his conduct in business, that he will not fear to open his books with his heart before the eyes of God, or to meet the final appeal of both debtor and creditor to the Judge of quick and dead, who discerns the thoughts and detects the most secret sin. So far from reducing Christian character to the standard of human legislation, he will endeavor, as his influence may enable him, to elevate human legislation to the standard of Christianity.

Thus will he avoid the charge which our Lord brought against the unbelievers of his time, that they sought "honor from men, and not the honor which flows from God only." It is but an empty honesty in the sight of God, which is compelled by fear of commercial discredit, a sheriff's writ, or a cell in the penitentiary. It is no better than the wearing of a garment cut in the fashion of the day, for laws may change their fashions as garments do. Nor will it be a good excuse for the Christian in the day of judgment, that, though he broke God's law in defrauding another of what was his due, or in exacting more than he could righteously claim, the law of the courts below was on his side. Truly, from such a one God will demand the debt due to himself for his broken precepts; for as we judge "we shall be judged, and with what measure we mete out, it shall be measured to us again;" and the sentence will be, to "deliver him over to the tormentors, not to go thence until he has paid the uttermost farthing."

The man of truth and faithfulness will neither be seduced nor intimidated by mere public opinion.

The moral sympathies of our race are quite as strong as the physical, and there is a magnetic influence which mind has over mind that no one can doubt, who has studied his own heart, or the conduct of others. In no other way can we account for many violent and wide-spread excitements that have prevailed in the world, and for which subsequent and cool investigations could discover no just cause; or for the tenacity of the public in retaining many barbarous and silly customs, the propriety of which each individual of that public, if questioned singly and by himself, would be ready to doubt. It is the seduction of public opinion which has led to the perpetration of many a wrong, and the dread of that opinion which deters many a coward soul from doing what is right.

If public opinion be on the side of our supposed interests, the *sophistry of self* readily persuades us to make a summary decision that so many cannot be in error, when a sober examination of the word of God would rebuke and abash us. The oraror pleads for us, the wit makes our scruples contemptible, and the voice of conscience is hushed in the approving hum or acclamations of the crowd.

It is fashionable to sin, and often do fashion's harlot arts paint the cheek of crime with the semblance of virtue's healthful bloom, and hide the diseased and loathsome form of corruption under mirthful and attractive robes. Yet of what is public opinion generally made? How many are there in the multitude, whose united persuasions gain our willing ear, to whom, as individuals, we would go, relying upon their candor, their good sense, and high principle, to ask advice in the regulation of our conduct?

"Popular fame," says Cicero, "is the consent of knaves and fools;" and if we reflect how rare honest and wise men are, we must confess he is not far from the truth. It is obvious, also, that there are many depraved tendencies common to all men, and that, with the exception of those few who steadily and from principle resist those tendencies, the general voice will be given in palliation of their indulgence, so that *by agreeing with public opinion, we are often only "following the multitude to do evil."*

Besides, men naturally associate with their like, the rich with the rich, the powerful with the powerful, the learned with the learned, the poor with the poor, the good with the good, and the vile with the vile. What seems to be public opinion in one circle, is not public opinion in another; what would be glorious in this would be infamous in that; and in choosing our association, we choose what we wish public opinion to be, confirming ourselves in evil or good as our bias may incline.

There are many methods, also, of controlling and even making public opinion. A few may have the power, by indirect bribery or intimidation, to rule the rest, and the very talent which they thus display is cited as a proof of the value of their opinions. Hence *we find instances of whole communities being led astray by some general though corrupt influence, until it becomes infamous to stand up for the right, and no man can insist upon the obligation of pure honesty without being written down as a knave*. The moral sense of the community becomes perverted upon other, though kindred, questions, and each man, seeing roguery upon a large scale justified and gilded, is less chary in venturing upon his petty personal deviations from the one straight path of true virtue.

The man, therefore, who would be faithful to his God, will mark his course through life by His holy word, not swept about by the eddies of human opinion, but steering by the fixed and bright stars of heavenly truth, which shine in a luster undimmed, and in orbits unbiased by the attractions of earthly interests and prejudice. Or, if he chooses to strengthen and regulate himself by others' example, it will be the example of the good and the godly. *He would rather be rebuked by the wise and religious, than applauded by the foolish and profane.* It is said of an ancient, remarkable for unyielding integrity, that on being applauded by the crowd for some sentiments he had expressed, he turned to a friend and asked, *"What foolish thing have I said?"*

Our Savior has left us this emphatic warning: "We unto you when all men shall speak well of you," for so did their fathers of the false prophets." *The faithful man looks for the judgment of God alone, and the judgment of men is valuable to him only when it coincides with the divine.*

Some, however, who will not allow themselves to be seduced by public opinion into overt acts of wrong, are deterred, by the fear of it, from doing right. They have, perhaps, a yielding and courteous disposition, and dislike to set up and maintain their opinion against that of others. It seems to them doubly rude, not only to differ from the company they are in, but to differ in such a way as to pronounce it morally in the wrong. Hence, though they give no audible assent to error and irreligion, they will say nothing against it, nay, even refrain from doing what is right, lest the example should cast reproach upon the general laxity of morals.

Or they fear to be thought bigoted and singular; and think their criminal bashfulness, to be the modesty and meekness of an unobtrusive religion.

Or they dread the charge of insincerity and hypocrisy in pretending to be better than they really are, a charge the world is sure to fix upon any who greatly outshine them, not conceiving the possibility of a virtue which is so far above their own pitch; and become unfaithful to God from the dread of seeming insincere before men.

Or—yet more frequently, they shrink from the laugh of the world, and "the slow, unmoving finger of scorn." Ridicule, though it has been so called, is not a test of truth, but rather the stratagem of a weak cause; yet it is a severe trial of faithfulness. Multitudes have been found who were ready to contend for distinction even at the cannon's mouth, but there is scarcely ever a bosom shielded by moral firmness as to be impenetrable by the shafts of wit.

In the records of all the persecutions of Christian people by the rack, the fire, and the sword, we rarely find an instance of open apostasy from the impulse of terror. But how frequent, on the other hand, in these days of comparative safety, has *truth been laughed into corners, and religion made to hang its head and blush, by the polished sneer or profane witticism?* The same Peter, who flew in the face of an armed guard, and smote with his ready sword the servant of authority, was made to lie and blaspheme by the sarcastic question of a harmless kitchen maid.

Yet after all, we ask again, what is the opinion or the laugh of the world? Did it not mock *Noah* all the hundred and twenty years that the ark was a building? Did it not mock *Lot* when he warned his sons-in-law of the fires which were about to descend upon guilty Sodom? Did it not deride *Jesus* himself on the way to the cross? Has it not often murdered the martyr in one year, and canonized him the next? One day enthroned the bloody conspirator in almost regal pomp—and on the morrow shouted execrations as it dragged him to the scaffold? Is it of such a world that the man of God is to be afraid?

Bernard well says, "Among the good it is safe to be good; but among the bad to be good deserves praise. For when it is safe, it is easy; but among the bad to be good, is difficult in proportion to the goodness."

For what purpose is the Christian sent into the world, but to show the sins of its opinions and practices by the contrast of his own? Is it not then a base desertion of duty to put his light under a bushel lest men should accuse him of immodesty in letting it be seen? Has not our Savior told his people that they should be as cities set upon a hill, which cannot be hidden? A godly man will be singular, when found among wicked men; but is it not his duty to be singular? That very singularity is his praise. What has made any of the glorious dead remarkable for their worth, but their singularity in it, as Aristides, who was called *the Just?* Why do we so mourn over a single error of one otherwise illustrious in goodness, but because it shows him not wholly above the corruption of the mass, as did the bribery of Bacon? Excellence is, by its etymology, singularity. It proves its possessor to act from high motives within his own bosom, and not from mere fashion, and a moral aggregation with the mass about him. It shows him to be not of men, though among them; above the world, though in it.

And thus our Savior said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven," admitting the divinity of religion, because its virtues are above those of unassisted humanity.

Besides, as this last quoted text leads us to observe, it is by this example of singularity that the world is to be reformed. *The light of a godly man's life is like a gleam of light shed down from Heaven upon our darkened earth*. The humblest Christian, if faithful in goodness, may shed an influence widely around him.

"How far a little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

It is not the virtue which makes itself conspicuous, but the blackness of prevailing sin. In the daylight the candle would "pale its ineffectual fire," and if the world were all good, goodness would cease to be remarkable. But how could virtue be known, if none were to show themselves virtuous! The same general corruption, which makes goodness singular, renders the display of it more necessary.

Were it not for the few good men the world always has in it, it would be all crime. Their example has been the *salt* which has saved the mass from utter putrefaction, and will be, by God's blessing, the *leaven* which shall yet leaven the whole lump.

For his own sake, therefore, for the world's sake, for God's sake—the faithful Christian will never be deterred by fear of the world's opinion, from avowing his opinions, combating error, and doing what God has made his duty to do, accounting, as Barrow nobly expresses it, that "it is a glorious infamy which one sustains for the sake of righteousness."

The man of truth and faithfulness is constant to his piety in all circumstances.

"The righteous man will hold on his way." "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day." *He has one rule, one path, one aim, at all times.*

But there are some seemingly very zealous Christians while, in their youth, they have comparatively few cares, who yet lose all their zeal, or, at least, greatly decline in it, when business opens to their industry, and the ambition of gain seizes upon their hearts.

Some, while they are poor and have few opportunities of worldly indulgence, are very rigid in their notions of Christian self-denial and moderation. Yet, when they get the means, by some change of fortune, become more extravagant and luxurious than those whom they once censured.

Others again, while rich and comfortable, are cheerful and pleasant in their religious duties; yet, when reverses come upon them, are querulous and impatient, and part, perhaps, even with their integrity.

Some are themselves rigid in their separateness from the world, condemning its most innocent amusements, and counting it a sin even to smile; yet, when their children grow up around them, and are to be established in society, they forget their former scruples, and indulge them to an excess in worldly fashions, which makes Christians weep.

Some are loud in their professions among Christians, but among the world are like the world.

Some are good Christians at home and in the church, and in social life, but carry nothing of it into their business.

Some, who in private life or in their individual conduct would shrink from any stain of dishonor, will forget all their morality for the maxim that "all is fair in politics;" or as members of corporations seem to believe, that because corporations have no souls, they lose theirs when they enter one.

While some who, where they are known, carefully guard themselves from all irregularity, will indulge themselves, if they go abroad, as though they had left their God and conscience behind them.

There is no need of showing the wickedness of such inconsistency, or the shame and reproach it will bring upon the Christian name. *The true Christian*, in whom the fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness, *will always, and in all places, and with all companies, be a Christian*. Never extravagant in his professions, he will be always firm to his principles. Temptation will be to his faithfulness what fire is to the gold. It will purge its dross, and make it more pure and shining. Like Moses, he will endure "as seeing Him who is invisible;" like Paul, fighting the good fight, running the race to the end, and keeping the faith; like Jesus, looking for "the reward set before him." The world did not give him his religion, neither can the world take it away. "His life is safe with Christ in God."

Who is sufficient for these things? None but he who is "strengthened with all might both in the inner and outer man." The seat of faithfulness is in the heart where the Holy Spirit dwells. Let us then not rely upon any resolution or firmness of our own; but, while we put forth every effort and observe every caution, trust in the Spirit of Christ alone to make us faithful even unto death, ever mindful that we go nowhere where God is not, and that for every thought and word and deed we must give an account.

He alone, who walks with God on earth, will attain the blessedness of walking with God in Heaven. The conflict is arduous, but the victory is sure, and the glory eternal. "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." *There is no virtue so rare as honesty, but the rarer the jewel, the more precious it is.* Happy is the man who has it, and rich will he be in that better world, where none wear jewels but those whom God honors as his own.

MEEKNESS

The holy honesty, devoted charity, and ardent zeal of Paul, gave to his style a fullness, force, and grandeur, which have excited the admiration of every one who has studied his writings. Nowhere do we find those qualities combined as they are in him.

In some authors we have great energy and rush of thought and language, in others great copiousness and clearness; but the former are apt to be rash and inaccurate, if not superficial, sweeping us to the conclusion they wish us to reach, with a torrent-like rapidity, which will not allow us to examine the successive stages of the argument, and this, perhaps, because they are conscious that the argument will not bear a close scrutiny.

The latter, from an anxiety to be thorough and lucid, are apt to become dull even to stagnation, and we find difficulty in following them from their cautious beginnings to their prolix close.

Of the first, the scholar has a notable instance in Demosthenes, who cared not to convince his Athenian auditors with logical truth, if he could infect them with the enthusiasm he assumed. Of the others, the ethical writers of every age furnish frequent examples.

But the style of Paul, while it hastens on with an earnest and resistless energy, is at the same time, deep, broad, and clear, drawing into its stream continually fresh supplies of thought, omitting nothing necessary to prevent misconception, or remove error. His aim is to set forth nothing but truth, and that truth, not for his personal success, or the end of a party—but for the good of his fellow men, and the glory of God. Hence, though it has been less noted by critics, there is a nice delicacy in the selection of his words, and the arrangement of his thoughts, as worthy of admiration as his power and sublimity. Every word of it has its purpose and meaning, and even when he seems at first glance to have heaped synonym upon synonym, and enclosed parenthesis within parenthesis, a careful examination will prove him to have been guilty of neither tautology nor disorder.

These remarks have been suggested by his introduction of the *grace of meekness* after that of faithfulness. He has spoken before of love, and peace, and long-suffering, and gentleness, all of which bear a strong resemblance to the quiet beauty of meekness—yet having named faithfulness, he immediately adds it to the rest. There is a reason for this.

The faithful man must be a firm and decided man. The grace itself supposes its possessor to be exposed to opposition, ridicule, and even persecution. The apostle well knew how prone the mind is to be chafed and irritated; how likely indignation against error is to excite anger against the errorist; how zeal in a good cause oftentimes moves a man to mingle with it desire of personal distinction and success, which if baffled, stirs up anger and revenge against opponents; and, therefore, he instantly insists upon faithfulness being followed, or rather accompanied by meekness. The same Spirit, which produces the one, produces the other, for the fruit of the Spirit is MEEKNESS.

That meekness is a grace of very high order, we are taught:

By the frequency with which it is enjoined in the sacred Scriptures: "Walk with all lowliness and meekness." (Ephesians 4:2.) "Put on therefore meekness and long-suffering." (Colossians 3:12.) "Follow after meekness." (1 Timothy 6:11.) "Showing meekness to all men." (Titus 3:2.)

By the prominence which is given to it, as one of our Savior's principal characteristics: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." (Matthew 11:29.) "I beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:1.)

By the declaration of its necessity to the profitable reception of gospel truth: "The Lord will beautify the meek with salvation." (Psalm 119:4.) "To preach good tidings to the meek." (Isaiah 61:1.) "The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord." (Isaiah 29:19.) "Receive with meekness the engrafted word." (James 1:21.) And again, "The meekness of wisdom." (James 3:13.)

And by the fact, that temporal as well as eternal blessings are promised in reward of it, in both the Old and New Testament: "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:11.) A promise our Savior repeats in his Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5.)

Besides which, Peter tells us that "a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God, of great price," or estimation. (1 Peter 3:4.)

How serious and devout should be our endeavors to understand and possess a grace, to which the Holy Spirit so often exhorts, which is so essential a badge of Christ's true followers, is so necessary to growth in Christian knowledge, gives on earth so rich a foretaste of Heaven, and adorns the soul with a loveliness God delights to look upon and to bless!

In defining gentleness (which we considered to be a sweet and obliging temper manifested by sweet and obliging words and manners) we distinguished it from meekness, as being more of an active nature, while meekness is rather a passive virtue, and consists in the maintenance of a calm and forgiving disposition under provocations and affronts. Perhaps the most simple and accurate definition that can be given of it is, *A temper of mind not easily stirred up to resentment.* Yet, though passive in the sense we have stated, it is not a mere latent or negative quality, but one which must exert a positive and visible control over our external deportment, and should therefore be assiduously cultivated.

Meekness toward GOD is a humble and acquiescing submission of the soul to the truth of all his **doctrines**, however they may through their mysteriousness oppose the pride of human reason; to the excellence of all his **commandments**, however severely they may tax the wicked inclinations of our nature; and the paternal wisdom of all his **providence**, however it may defeat or postpone the wishes our hearts have formed, and afflict us with present sorrow. Meekness is thus, the fruit of the Spirit, which works in us faith to receive the divine testimony in all things, and contrition of repentance to feel our ill desert and our need of beneficial chastisement.

Meekness toward MEN *is a refraining from revenge or anger*, however much our patience may be tried by their injuries or their crimes. It is not weakness nor cowardice, which bears because it cannot or dare not resist, for it is the accompaniment of faithfulness, which fears nothing but the displeasure of God. Nor is it insensibility or stoicism, for it is the accompaniment of love, and goodness, and gentleness, and fidelity, toward all men. But it is a rational, benevolent, and heroic temper, wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, through the influence of divine truth.

Moses was meek above all men on earth, and presided with the most devoted love over the children of Israel, while they continually insulted him, and rebelled against God.

Jesus Christ was meek, and, though he might have swept his impudent and persecuting enemies to instant death, he continued to entreat them with his love, and offer them salvation even to the end.

In the estimation of the world at large, it is considered cowardice to brook an insult or suffer an injury unrevenged, and they call it honor to wash out a hasty aspersion in the blood of the reviler. But the brute of the field, nay, the meanest reptile that crawls, shares in such a spirit. Meekness is the elevation of the soul above such brutal impulses, and he, who practices it, aspires to rule over his own heart, a nobler conquest than the Greek or the Roman ever won. "Better," said the wise man, "is he who rules his own heart, than he who takes a city;" because the task is more difficult, more rarely accomplished, and, when accomplished, has more valuable results.

Not to feel the wounds of insult and wrong, is to be like a *stone*.

To feel and desire revenge, is to be like the *brute*.

But to bear and to forgive, is to approach as near the glory of God as human nature can.

The Christian is meek, because he traces, in all he is called to endure, the hand of his God. Nothing, not even the insults and injuries of wicked men, can occur without his wise and gracious permission, as Attila, who poured his desolating fury over the fairest portions of Europe, was called "the scourge of God." *The Christian will look beyond the scourge to the hand that wields it.* He dares not be angry, he dares not be otherwise than meek, because to be angry would be to rebel against his God.

Our beloved Master, the pattern of our meekness, looking ahead to the shame and tortures of the cross, prayed for the wicked hands which crucified and slew him, and submitted to them as unto God, saying, "Not my will, but yours be done." In the same spirit, the dying Stephen would not have his martyrdom laid to his murderers' charge, while *he looked upon his cruel death as a shorter passage to Heaven's glory.*

We condemn ourselves for murmuring against the chastisements of God, when they come in the form of sickness and bereavement; but sickness and death are no more his instruments than our fellow men are. We know that those afflictions are necessary to the discipline of our spirits, to the trial of our faith, and the development of our Christian virtues—and for this reason we should rejoice in them; but upon what principle shall we justify impatience and anger, when the discipline is administered by the agency of men?

The Christian remembers what God has borne with from him, and how He has forgiven him. *No insults he can receive from men, no wrongs they can do him, can compare with those of his sins against God.* Yet God has released him from his debt of ten thousand talents—and can he now take by the throat his fellow servant, who owes him but a hundred pence? *The joy of being forgiven so great a debt, should readily reconcile us to forgive such petty claims*; nay, in justice we should consider God's kindness to have cancelled them all. Can he demand square accounts with his neighbor, who cannot settle his account with God?

Besides all that we suffer for righteousness' sake, we suffer in the cause of God. We follow the Captain of Salvation to the war, and with him, notwithstanding all, we shall be more than conquerors. The true soldier fights, not from malice, but for glory. He strikes, not because he thirsts for blood, but that he may win his way to fame. He sinks from the warrior into the murderer, when he burns with hate. He loves the difficulty of the contest, because it enhances the praise of the achievement.

It would be little glory for the Christian to meet with no resistance, no suffering, no wounds, in his faithfulness to God amidst a world of sinners. He must endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ. The taunts, the wounds, the dust of the conflict, are all necessary to the splendor of his crown. God will recompense him for all, and according to all, that he suffers; and they, who stand highest in the glory and blessedness of Heaven, are "the most noble army of the martyrs," who have "come out of great tribulation." *Shall the Christian then be angry at that which opens a way to higher blessedness? Shall he strike in revenge of a wound, which pensions him upon the eternal bounty of his God?* Shall he permit the malice of sinful men to rob him of his crown? The weapons of his warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. He loves the world, but his warfare is with his own heart, and he even rejoices in wrongs from others, for they teach him how to subdue it. This is the sense of the apostle's exhortation, "For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners, against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." The struggle is not against sinners, but against sin; and the apostle goes on to say, "Despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when you are rebuked of him;" thus teaching us, that

the contradiction of sinners is the chastisement and rebuke of the Lord.

The Christian is meek from his concern to preserve and recommend the honor of religion. The Christian lives not merely for himself, but for God and the world. The seeds of divine truth are to be sown and cherished in his heart, but the verdure and fruits, which germinate from them, appear in the character and actions of his daily life. His virtue, to indicate its divine original, must shine superior to that of the world. Perhaps no quality is so demonstrative of higher principle as *meekness under insult*.

It was the unresisting and meek suffering of the early martyrs, that made them conquerors over the rack, the flame, and the wild beasts of the theater. They had no other defense, no other weapon. They professed the religion of a meek and lowly Jesus, and it was to drive them from that religion that their enemies tortured them to the death. If one of them had railed from his stake, or cursed from his cross, or gnashed his teeth, and shaken his impotent fist at his tormentors—their victory would have been as complete, as by his recantation. The nobleness of his courage would have been lost, and the sublimity of the scene destroyed. It was the *meekness*, more than the *blood* of the martyrs, which was the seed of the church. Courage and endurance were virtues, of which the heathen world had ten thousand examples, before Jesus was crucified on Calvary, or Paul beheaded at Rome. But *meekness in suffering, and forgiving love toward enemies*, even in the sharpest extremities of oppression, were new virtues, which despite of sophistry and malice and power, established the religion of God the religion of God over the hoary pride of the most ancient superstitions.

Thus it is with the Christian and the world now. Well does the devil know, that if he can distort the Christian's face with envy and anger and revenge; if he can pervert the Christian's tongue to revilings and stormy rebuke; if he can arm him for quarrel instead of love; if he can substitute the venom of his own serpent malice, for the meekness of the Lamb of God—he has destroyed the attraction of Christianity, seduced his enemy to his own ground, and made the victory complete.

The querulous irritability, the morose sulkiness, the angry passions of crabbed Christians, under the provocations of the world, and, especially, the provocations of fellow Christians, do more for the devil, than all their prayers and professions and moneyed gifts can do for God.

When Christians quarrel, whoever seems to win, the devil is the only gainer. They may get the shells, but he has the kernel. It is indeed necessary often to contend for truth, and even with good men, but the contest should ever be in love and meekness; and they are the best advocates of truth, who speak the truth in love," and "show, out of a good conversation, their works in meekness of wisdom."

We must not forget, however, that *the same spirit of meekness, which calmly and patiently endures insults, will also be slow to provoke others to anger.* It is but little credit to us, if, while we maintain our own composure of mind—we wantonly, or through neglect, disturb the serenity of others. *The meek man will therefore be not only kind in his feelings, but courteous in his manners.* Many professing Christians would be startled at the idea of *impoliteness* being a sin and *courtesy* a duty, yet the apostle commands us to be courteous. The hollow politeness of the world is hypocrisy, but Christian politeness is the reality of that to which the world pretends. So far from courteousness being conformity to the world, the world in its courtesy outwardly conforms to the rules of Christianity. The Gospel enjoins, "in honor preferring one another," and the polite man imitates it by giving place to his neighbor, and calling himself his "obedient servant."

Nothing is more rude than egotism and arrogance, or a selfish insisting upon our own convenience to the inconvenience of others. Meekness teaches us to lay aside all these, so that the meek man can scarcely fail to be a courteous man. But this has been already treated at large under the head of *Gentleness*.

The meek man will govern his tongue. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks." The meek man cannot be harsh in speech. We do not find brambles growing on grape-vines, nor thistles on fig-trees; neither do we hear vituperative and annoying language from a gentle and forgiving spirit. "A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." Rough words are like oil, which make the flame of anger burn the fiercer; meek words often, like water, put it out.

"And what," asks Tertullian, "is the difference between the man who is irritated and the man who has irritated him, except that the last did wrong first, and the first afterward?" *Even when we rebuke, it is to be done with meekness*, as the apostle exhorts, "In meekness instructing those who oppose;" and again, "If a brother be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." How meekly did Christ bear with his disciples, "being grieved for the hardness of their hearts!" Nay, meekness often requires that we speak not at all, as Paul tells the pious slaves, "to please their masters in all things, not answering back;" and as our Lord was like " a lamb dumb before his shearers, opening not his mouth."

It was said of the heathen Socrates, that it was known when he was angry, by his being silent. *The tongue is an unruly evil, and it is best sometimes to keep it imprisoned by the teeth, which God has given us to fence it in with, than to let it blab us into trouble.* The lion, when he is angry, lashes himself into a passion with his tail; but men lash their rage with their tongue, and the faster and longer they talk, the more angry they become.

"I have known," says Cicero, "many sin by speaking, and few by keeping silence; it is therefore more difficult to know how to be silent than how to speak." There is a Spanish proverb to the same effect; "Any fool may babble, but it takes a wise man to hold his tongue."

The meek man will meet insult with kindness, for, as kindness to all men at all times is a Christian duty, the Christian in his meekness will allow nothing to interrupt it. "Christ," says Peter, "also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps;" and what was that example, but blessing even his enemies? *Kindness meekly, not ostentatiously rendered, will soften any heart in which a spark of humanity yet lingers.* Oh! is it not a glorious revenge to convince our enemies of their error, and turn them into friends? Yet it is a triumph none but the meek can achieve; for to set about showing kindness, with the selfish aim of mortifying those who have done us evil by a proud display of superior virtue—will, instead of putting coals of fire on their heads, only burn our own hands. *Meekness is the conquering charm.*

The spirit of meekness must be assiduously cultivated. It is one of the hardest lessons in the school of Christ, where, indeed, nothing can be learned but by hard study and diligent practice. It is not a virtue by itself, but a sweet consequence of many other virtues.

If we would be meek, we must not be ambitious after worldly good. Ambition is an aspiring to be above others, and, therefore, a struggle with them, for none are willing to be undermost. Hence come envy, hate, slander, malice, and revenge. We must root out the bramble, if we would not have its thorns. When thistles are once in a field, it requires no small husbandry to get rid of them. But a meek Christian, with his hopes set upon a better country, will never be ambitious after worldly good. "Such a man," says the excellent Leifchild, "walks in a calm and sequestered valley, and hears only at a distance the clashing of ambitious interests in the regions above him. He hears, but he is not attracted thither."

There is much of true though quaint philosophy in this page of John Bunyan: "We will come again to this *Valley of Humiliation*. It is the most fruitful piece of ground in all these parts. It is a fat ground, and as you see consists much in meadows. Behold how green the valley is, and how beautiful with lilies! I have known many laboring men who have got good estates in this valley (for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble). Some also have wished that the next way to their Father's house might be here, that they might be troubled no more with hills or mountains to go over; but the way is the way, and there is an end.

"Now as they were walking along and talking, they espied a boy feeding his father's sheep. The boy was in very poor clothes, but of a fresh and well-favored countenance, and as he sat by himself he sang ….
He who is down, needs fear no fall;
He who is low, no pride;
He who is humble, ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
Little it be, or much:
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because you save such.

Fullness to those abundance is,
That go on pilgrimage;
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age.

"There, said the guide, do you hear him? I will dare to say this boy lives a merrier life, and wears more of the herb called heart's-ease in his bosom, than he who is clothed in silk and velvet. And so we will proceed with our discourse."

It is this very freedom from worldly ambition to which our Savior refers when he says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Surely they who live in quiet get more good of the earth, than those who are in continual trouble, and struggling to get more.

Vanity, which is a base form of ambition, must also be laid aside if we would be meek. For those who are continually anxious to get the admiration of others, can never seem meek or amiable in their eyes. *To desire the praise of God is noble, but the praise of men is not worth its cost*. It is at this the apostle strikes, when speaking of Christian women; for in his day, as now, it seems they were fond of attracting notice by mirthful dresses. A strange, though common, error; since if a woman has beauty she impairs it by decoration, and if she have it not, the decoration makes her homeliness the more remarkable. Brilliants are always set plain, and all the tinsel in the world cannot turn paste into a diamond. "Whose adorning," says he, "let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price." Meekness is thus charming to both God and man. What is true of that form of vanity which he particularly rebukes, is true of every other.

We must study also the great examples of triumphant meekness, which are written for our learning in the word of God; for there we find *meekness the rarest, as well as the most excellent character*; and we can never hope to keep company with Abel, and Noah, and Isaac, and Moses, and Samuel, and Job, and Jesus, and his early people, in Heaven—unless we follow their meek footsteps upon earth.

We must, above all, humble ourselves before God in prayer, asking for that Spirit to dwell in our hearts, one of whose fruits is meekness. For *none but he who is humble with God, has learned to be lowly among men.* Therefore it is that he chastens us to make us meek, if we will not learn to be so without it. Oh! let us anticipate the end of his discipline by lying low at his feet, as it becomes sinners to do, who have nothing to demand, though all to ask. The spirit of Christ is the spirit of meekness, which none but God can give; yet "if any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

TEMPERANCE
(Self-Control)

To have a just acquaintance with an author's meaning, it is very necessary, especially if he wrote in another age or language, to ascertain the exact sense in which he used his terms. For a word often comes, for various reasons, to differ widely from its original signification, and by attaching our own idea to it, we make the author say something else, or more, or less, than he meant to say. This is particularly true of the word temperance, and it therefore requires a careful definition, that we may know what the apostle intends by the fruit of the Spirit which he calls by this name.

The Greek term, by its etymology, is *self-command*, or the *governing of one's self*. The earlier ethical writers among the Greeks (those of the school of Socrates) first determined its meaning to be, self-control, or a proper moderation of our passions and appetites, but especially those for food and drink. Afterwards Aristotle (who exerted a greater influence over the opinions of the world than any other uninspired writer, ancient or modern,) distinguished carefully between continence and temperance; understanding, by *continence*, merely the denial of indulgence to any irregular desires or inclinations we may feel; and by *temperance, the healthful regulation of our desires and appetites themselves, preventing their excess*. The one, it is easy to see, may be the result of virtue or not; the other is a virtue itself.

A thief, who abstains from intoxication merely that he may more securely commit crime; a prize-fighter, who denies himself indulgences while training for the ring; an invalid, who fears the inroads of excess on his life; or one who refrains only from a dread of worldly disgrace, can scarcely be called virtuous, though he may exert some self-command. It is in him one selfish principle overcoming another that is weaker.

But the man who learns to control his desires themselves, and keep them within their proper limit, because he considers an undue inclination sinful, is truly virtuous, because sincerely temperate. The one is abstinence from the overt act, the other a purification of the heart. The one may tolerate an intemperate soul in a temperate body, the other rules the soul itself. The one might yield to temptation if it could be done with safety, the other maintains an unshaken firmness.

Socrates was accustomed to say that a man of true science would not be intemperate; and if he meant by true science, true virtue, which is not only the knowledge of what is right, but a hearty love for it, he spoke truth; but if he meant only knowledge, he erred, as daily experience and observation prove to us, for men are continually doing what they know to be wrong, and often what they know to be hurtful. Medical men, of great skill in their profession, have become gluttons and drunkards; nay, have written learnedly upon gout, and surfeits, and delirium tremens, while qualifying themselves for those very diseases. The temperate man would not exceed, because he hates not merely the consequences, but the vice itself.

There are those again, who, by their constitution of body, seem to have no tendencies to criminal indulgence of this character, and, therefore, are not subject to temptations; yet, though this may in some respects be a happy nature, it cannot be called virtue, for it belongs to the body, and not to the soul. *Temperance is the restraining of propensities which, if unchecked, would become excessive. For every appetite, the excessive indulgence of which is criminal, was implanted by God in our natures, and the rule of it committed to the soul.*

Adam in his innocence had all the appetites which we naturally have, and the humanity of our blessed Lord was "tempted like as we are—yet without sin." *A man without passions or appetites, if we could conceive of such a one, would be an imperfectly constituted, not a virtuous man*. Indeed, he would not be of the same nature with us, and, therefore, incapable of virtues required of us. A spiritual angel, who, having no need of food or drink, has neither hunger nor thirst, cannot be said to be temperate in those respects; wherefore our Lord, when he wished to give us a pattern of human virtues, and temperance among the rest, took not on him the nature of angels, but flesh and blood. For the same reason, the presence of naturally strong appetites is not criminal in itself, but the undue indulgence of them; and the man, whose appetites are stronger, and yet restrains them, has a higher virtue than he, whose appetites, being weaker, are governed with less difficulty.

Neither does temperance suppose the entire eradication of these tendencies, for they are more or less necessary accidents to our present mode of being, and to attempt to put off our being, is a sort of suicide, and a rebellion against God. It is said of Origen, an early father of the church, that he held such an opinion, but deeply repented of it on mature consideration. Well he might, for an old man in his doting decay, cannot be called virtuous, because years have relieved him of passion and appetite, neither do we become virtuous as we approach the frigidity of old age. Paul, in vehement disgust at the temptations of appetite, earnestly prayed to be delivered from his body of sin and death, but an honest review of the connection will show that his prayer was for grace to control his body; and in another passage, he thus speaks of himself: "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me (which Grotius and Bull think to be some distressing and bodily disease.) Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Now, whether the opinion given by Grotius and Bull be the correct one or not, the principle is just in reference to any infirmities. *We must subdue and control them by the help of God, and not seek the annihilation of the natural qualities from which they arise*. The notion of superior purity and advantage in a state of seclusion from those relations which constitute the closest bonds of social life, is erroneous from the fact that we so refuse to discharge the duties the Scripture makes incumbent upon us; and the Savior, though, for wise reasons, he remained without many ties which God intended should connect us with happiness, blessed them and honored them.

But the best answer to that opinion is, that *the eradication of these tendencies is impossible*, and not promised in this life even by the grace of God; which should teach us to resist temptation here, encouraged by the blessed hope of that better life where our bodies like our souls shall be pure, and neither hunger nor thirst, but be forever beyond the reach of temptation. To be above these temptations would be to have a higher life on earth than our Savior had, and to be exposed to worse temptations of pride and self-sufficiency. Every thorn in our flesh is necessary as a *goad* to quicken the Christian pilgrim on his way to Heaven; and observation has shown that those, who are unnaturally placed beyond the reach of any appetite, are not in heart more pure, but less so than others.

The Latin word, from which our term *temperance* is taken, expresses this idea. If a probable derivation of it be correct, it means *the timely use or regulation of ourselves*. But it was easily brought to mean *restraint or moderation*. "Who can refrain (temperate) himself from tears?" asks a Roman poet.

The Latins speak also of tempering the strength of wine with water, as we do of tempering steel; or, as in the oft-quoted beautiful expression, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb;" or, in that touching petition of our evening prayer, "So temper our sleep that it be not disorderly." Indeed, *our common word temper means the proper adjustment of our passions, our moral disposition*; for, though vulgarly it is said, that "a man shows temper," when the idea is that he is angry, it is a wrong use of the word; since, on the other hand we say, "a man shows admirable temper," when we mean that he preserves his calmness in difficult circumstances.

These pains have been taken with the definition of the word, to show that *the temperance of which the apostle speaks has its seat in the soul*.

The fruit of the Spirit is "TEMPERANCE." It is altogether of a higher nature, requiring a far greater degree of moral strength, than that temperance which belongs to the body alone, which, indeed, is a consequence of temperance, not spiritual temperance itself. *The mind was made to rule over the body*, and unless the ruler be well regulated, the subject cannot be.

The effect of sin has been to invert the order of nature, by giving the senses and appetites rule over the soul; and the triumph of grace is the restoration of the soul to its original supremacy over the body, which is done, not by weakening the body, but strengthening the soul. The soul is strengthened, as our holy text tells us, by the influences of the Spirit of God. The quickening of spiritual life is in regeneration, but afterwards it is increased by the effects of faith, hope, and love.

The Christian has full confidence in the wisdom of all God's requirements, recognizes that his very heart is visible to God's all-seeing eye, and that he is responsible at the judgment for every thought and motive as well as act. He therefore conforms his heart to the divine will, cultivates communion with God, and keeps his thoughts with all diligence, for they are the issues of life. He believes fully in the redemption of his soul by the merits of Christ, and the sufficiency of Christ to sustain him even to the perfection of glory.

Difficult then as may be his struggles with temptation, he has hope in his conflict, the hope of victory, and hope of reward. *Such faith and hope in God must awaken love to him*; and this love makes his efforts cheerful and pleasant. *He loves to be what God loves, and this he cannot be without governing his sinful propensities*. So that, where faith and hope and love abide, temperance abides. As the apostle says, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do—do all to the glory of God."

"Temperance," says Jeremy Taylor, "consists in the action of the soul principally, for it is a grace which chooses natural means in order to proper and natural and holy ends. It is exercised about eating and drinking because they are necessary, but, therefore, it permits the use of them only as they minister to lawful ends." Certainly he who eats and drinks thus, will be guilty of no excess.

The first rule, then, for the cultivation of temperance, should be the entire consecration of the heart to the glory of God. The heart is the fountain, and all the issues from it must be like itself. The pure in heart have a more than Midas-touch, transmuting the occasions of temptation into aids of holiness. With the helmet of hope, the shield of faith, the breast-plate of righteousness, and the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, the Christian is unconquerable. Repeated baptisms in the blood of Jesus, and the pure waters of holy truth, have the double effect of washing away guilt and preserving the soul invulnerable. We should not degrade the grace of temperance into a mere habit of earthly expediency, and satisfy ourselves with an outward conformity to its rules. It is not ascetic self-torture that recommends us to a holy God. None but as the pure in heart" can "see God." If you would be temperate, be a Christian.

Yet, in considering the influence of the mind over the body, we must not forget the influence of the body over the mind. The sin of intemperance does not lie only in the abuse of God's bounties at the moment, but in the evil consequences of such abuse to the soul itself. It is sufficiently notorious, that *no excess of indulgence can be permitted to the body without discomposing the mind, and polluting the moral temper*. The *drunkard* not only loses discretion of thought, but is disposed to immorality, anger, and every wicked passion. The *glutton* stupefies his mind, and sensualizes his spirit in the same manner. A very large proportion of crime is committed under the provocations of intemperance, and though drunkards are more notorious, gluttons are hardly less numerous. It must be, therefore, that in proportion as we exceed the limits of moderation, and approach the degree of drunkenness or gluttony, we become guilty of the crimes to which those excesses prompt.

Self-denial in the use of food and drinks is thus another rule for the cultivation of temperance. If we allow our inclinations to carry us to the utmost verge which reason permits, it will require but a slight temptation to make us cross the almost imperceptible line which divides it from wrong. Our propensities are downward, and increase in impetus as they descend; we must arrest them in time, before we reach the limit, or we shall be carried over it. Besides, *we must accustom ourselves to the conflict, before temptation comes*; we must skill ourselves in self-denial of things lawful, if we would acquire the habit of defense from sin itself.

Thus the three rules for discipleship, which the Savior gave us, are, "to deny ourselves," "to take up (not wait for it to be laid upon us) our cross daily," and "to follow him." The Apostle Paul took a lesson in this from the athletes of the games, who were in training sometimes for years in order to win the prize, by abstaining from all diet which would unduly stimulate, or practices which would enervate the system. " Every man," says he, "that strives for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly. So fight I, not as one that beats the air. But I keep my body under control, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." From which we see, that *he considered this discipline of self-denial essential to his success in gaining the crown of life, and that all his faith and knowledge would not prevent him from apostasy, if he did not subdue his body* by such careful regimen.

In another passage he has a yet more significant illustration. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, (that is, consecrated to him,) which temple are you." And again, "What! know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, who you have of God, and you are not your own?"

The body of the Christian is, by the Spirit of God dwelling in him, made a habitation of God. With what care should we guard and preserve it from the least shadow of defilement? *Every abuse of appetite is as a sacrilege in the house of God, and temperance is the ministering angel to keep the temple pure.*

In Romans he uses another figure: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, (consecrated,) acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Our bodies are to be as sacrifices laid upon God's altar, living yet consecrated, as a reasonable duty in us, which God for Christ's sake will accept. It is difficult to imagine such a consecration of our bodies without a holy and cautious self-denial, for he who uses his body for God's glory, and not merely for his own pleasure, will have God's glory more than his pleasure in view, and not push his license to extremes.

Yet it is not necessary to temperance that we take no pleasure in things permitted, for God himself has, in his goodness and wisdom, associated pleasure with a proper satisfaction of appetite, which, instead of rejecting, we ought to be thankful for. There is no reason why a man should choose unsavory food, rather than that which is at once healthful and pleasing to the taste; but to be very particular in our foods and drinks, argues a childish and petty idolatry of appetite, even though we should not eat or drink to excess.

A proper taste in the choice and dressing of our food may be subservient to temperance and health. A French gourmand, who indulges himself in a great variety of light and well-cooked dishes, is sinful in his devotion to his palate; but is scarcely so gross and beast-like, certainly not so neglectful of health, as the glutton among us, who gorges himself with heavy meats until his blood almost stagnates with thickness, and his humours are heavy and oppressive. It is not in the quantity only, but the quality of our food, that we are to practice self-denial. *In general, the simpler and lighter the food, the more favorable to the health of the body and the health of the soul.*

This subject the physician can treat better than the moralist, but it is worthy of our consideration, that the promise of God is, "Your *bread* and *water* shall be sure;" and that it is most probable neither animal food nor wine were used by men until after the flood. In the paradise of innocence, the happy pair ate of the fruits of the garden, and drank of the rivers that watered it—yet they were satisfied until they fell into sin.

"There were then," says Seneca, (for the ancient heathen had dim traditions of that happy time,) "no beds of state, nor ornaments of gold and embroidery, nor the remorses that attend them, but the heavens were their canopy, and the glories of them their spectacle. There was no fear of the house falling, or the rustling of a rat behind the walls .... but they had the open air and breathing room, crystal fountains, refreshing shades, the meadows dressed in their native beauty, and they lived contentedly. ..... Happy the man that eats only for hunger, and drinks only for thirst; who stands upon his own feet, lives by his reason rather than by fashion, and provides for use and necessity, and not for pomp. Let us curb our appetites, encourage our virtues, and have our riches within ourselves rather than without, for fortune has the least mark of a man when he shrinks himself into a narrow compass. Let my bed be narrow and plain, and my clothes simple. My food with little expense and little service, and neither a burden to my purse nor my body. That, which is too little for luxury, is more than enough for nature." Such was the language of the Roman philosopher, how well would it be for many Christians to make it in truth their own?

A yet further reason for self-denial is, that *the limits which we think are those of lawful indulgence, are continually though imperceptibly enlarging*. He, who once thought a small house would be enough for him, finds himself straitened in a palace; and he, who once intended to be satisfied with a decent competence, wishes to make his thousands, hundreds of thousands, and his hundreds of thousands, millions.

You can no more fill the heart of man, by complying with its wishes, than a vessel pierced with holes can be filled with water. The only method is to stop them up, or at least reduce them into narrower compass. ***Happiness is to be found rather in checking our inclinations than in gratifying them.*** *It is thus with our appetites. The more we indulge them, the more we increase them.*

There is an Italian proverb, "He who has drunk the ocean, wants another bottle." The only method of safety is to deny ourselves at first. Every day, by such rule, our needs will become less, and our self-denial more easy. *Self-denial has its pains as well as pleasures, but it has less pain and more pleasure than indulged appetite.* By every decrease we make of the body's demands, we give the soul more time and strength to attend to its religious duties. We put off so much of the body of sin and death, and assimilate ourselves to the lot of the blessed. We make our expenses less, and, therefore, have fewer pains to provide for them, less covetousness and idolatry of gain, less envy of riches, and less temptation to dishonesty.

"See my dinner of herbs," said a Roman patriot, whom a foreign emissary would have tempted with gold to betray his country; as if he had said, a man, who can be satisfied with so little, need never sell himself for gold. Happy is the Christian, whose few wants never tempt him to betray his Lord! Plain food and sturdy furniture have made few bankruptcies. Extravagance and defalcations go together. God and man are robbed by intemperance.

Besides, a self-denying youth, in ordinary circumstances, makes a healthful and vigorous old age. And the Christian, who has so short a time to serve his Master upon earth, should husband his strength, and make the best use of it to the last. That aged Christian is indeed an honored veteran, who, when most men fail, can yet say, in grateful fidelity to his Master, still:

"Let me be your servant.
Though I look old—yet I am strong and lusty;
For in my youth I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood;
Nor did I with unbashful forehead woo
The means of weakness and debility;
Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty but kindly; let me go with you,
I'll do the service of a younger man."

This subject might be enlarged upon much more, but let us leave it here. The consecration of the heart to God by faith in his Son; daily prayer for the grace of his Spirit, daily study of his holy word, daily industry in doing good, and the daily denial of our fleshly appetites, that we may have time and strength and purity of purpose for the blessed service of God; making his glory our chief aim, and our best happiness; and living, as far as in us lies, free from the shackles of the flesh and the attractions of earth, that we may be, body, soul, and spirit, willing and continual sacrifices to God, are the true methods of cultivating the temperance which is the fruit of the Spirit.

The perfection of the heavenly state will be in a spiritual body as the dwelling-place of the holy soul, when the holiness of the soul within shall irradiate and illustrate its temple, as the divinity of Jesus shone through the body of his humanity upon the Mount of the Transfiguration; the soul all holiness, the body all purity. The holy and purified humanity of Enoch, by a life of piety and temperance, approached so near to Heaven that it needed not death to bear him across the threshold. The true Christian, through a godly temperance, may know by sweet experience something of this transformation.

Let us conclude our meditation with a prayer, written for us by the good Jeremy Taylor:

"Almighty and gracious God and Father of men and angels, who opens your hand and fill all things with plenty, and has provided for your servants sufficient to satisfy all their needs; teach me to use your creatures soberly and temperately, that I may not, with undue food and drink, make the temptations of my enemy to prevail upon me, or my spirit unapt for the performance of my duty, or my affections sensual and unholy. O our God, never suffer that the blessings which may either minister to sin or sickness, but to health and holiness and thanksgiving; that in the strength of your provisions I may cheerfully and actively and diligently serve you; that I may worthily feast at your table here, and be accounted worthy through your grace to be admitted to your table hereafter, at the eternal supper of the Lamb, to sing a *Hallelujah* to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen."

"Against Such There Is No Law"

After considering, as we have done, the great purity and extent of those virtues here declared to be the result of the Spirit's influence upon the Christian character, we should deprive ourselves of much instruction, encouragement and comfort in the Christian life, were we to omit a proper meditation upon the few words with which the text concludes.

The apostle has been arguing to show that the new man in Christ Jesus, whose heart is ruled and whose life is ordered by the Holy Spirit, is no longer in bondage to the law, which had so long governed the Israelitish worshiper; but that, as one grown to man's estate, is set free from the authority of tutors and schoolmasters, (4:1-6,) to guide himself by his own discretion, so the church, being complete in Christ, is admitted to a spiritual freedom, and set above the law. It is free from the law of ceremonies, (which, from its heavy exactions, might well be said to have been "a yoke of bondage,") because the Spirit of Christ now does for the soul, by his inward grace, all that these ceremonies signified; and it is free from the moral law, because Christ, by his substitution, righteousness and death, has magnified the law for us and made it honorable, redeemed the believer from that penalty, which he must justly have incurred, as a sinner, and *by his Spirit so transforms the dispositions and desires of his people, that God's commandments are no longer grievous to them but joyous, a perfect law of liberty, with which they delight to comply*.

The Christian life is not a slavish and reluctant obedience to God's requirements, because we fear punishment should we transgress; but a willing surrender of our affections and powers to God and his service, and because we love him for his excellent goodness, hope in his mercy, and find pleasure in those things which he has commanded us to do. The laws he has given are to be studied by us, not as affording, through a compliance with them, the only escape from death, but as *wise and beneficial rules of living prescribed for us by our loving and merciful God*. They are constant and friendly guides, to assist us in finding the way in which we wish to walk; and thus, instead of being against us, as restricting our pleasures, demanding hard and painful services, or threatening us with extreme and deserved punishment—they are for us, as helping us on in the pursuit of happiness in this world, and eternal life in the world which is to come.

The heart which is now full of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, such as we have learned those graces to be—must have been converted from its natural tendencies, which are adverse to the pure, meek, loving and beneficent spirit of Christianity; and the believer, thus transformed, will delight humbly, patiently, faithfully and readily, to fulfill that law in all things.

A sufficient answer is thus given to that most pernicious and fatal error, in these days, happily, seldom avowed, though there is reason to fear that it is not eradicated from the minds of many, which supposes that the salvation of Christ sets us free from any obligation to obey the moral law of God; and to the objection brought by some enemies of the truth on the other extreme, that the doctrine of justification by faith tolerates a licentious and unrighteous life.

The passage which we have now studied, clearly sets forth, that *the very object of the Spirit dwelling in the hearts of believers, is to produce in their character all those virtues which are called the fruit of the Spirit; and that, when they are not found in us, we are destitute of all evidence of our being born again as the children of God, and partakers of the redemption in Christ.*

The Christian is set free from the law, not by the destruction of the law, (for Christ and Christianity came to fulfill the law, not to destroy it,) but by the elevation of the believing soul to such a holiness and purity of desire and intention, that his conformity to the law is the free and cheerful actings of his own sanctified will. He who has in his heart love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance—cannot lead an unrighteous or licentious life, any more than a sweet fountain can send forth bitter waters; but, as Peter tells us at the close of a passage parallel to the one before us, "If these things are in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

These graces in our hearts, and the practice of them in our lives, constitute the only, but sufficient, evidence of our actual Christianity, as the leaves of a tree and its fruit in season can alone, but do certainly, prove the healthful vitality of the tree which bears them. These effects of divine power in our hearts, are the genuine and undoubted testimony of the Spirit with our spirits, that we are born of God; for as none, but he who believes in Jesus, shall be saved, so *no faith is real but that which "purifies the heart," "works by love," and "overcomes the world."*

It were well if professing Christians paid more regard to these plain and easily applied rules for trying their Christian sincerity, and less to those which have been invented by men. It is far safer to compare our daily conduct with the fruits of the Spirit here described, than to rest upon the intangible and shadowy evidence of mere emotions, frames, and sensibilities.

An angel from Heaven ought not to be believed, if he were to assert our Christianity and salvation, when we could find none of these proofs in our lives. For, as Archbishop Secker well observes, "If we are destitute of the fruits of the Spirit, it is bad; if we find them in our hearts and lives, we have proof enough of our condition being good, and need never disquiet ourselves for want of any other. Being able to tell the very moment when we became pious and virtuous is not material, provided we are so now.... A feeling of immediate and sensible assurance of God's favor, so impressed upon us that we can certainly distinguish it to be of divine origin, from the manner in which it affects us, may be given, but is nowhere in Scripture made necessary; and all feelings are imaginary and deceptive, unless they be accompanied by that one which the apostle experienced and mentions: For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conduct in the world."

No one need to involve himself in metaphysical casuistry, and make the question of his soul's safety a complicated problem, if he be willing to try his daily life by the simple tests of Scripture.

Thus, if a professing Christian allows himself to retain hatred, or ill-will, or envy, against his neighbor, no supposed spiritual emotions, nor ardor of devotional feeling, should counterbalance the direct testimony of God against his piety; as we learn from 1 John 4:20: "If a man says, I love God, and *hates* his brother, he is a liar; for he who loves not his brother, whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?" He is destitute of the fruit of the Spirit, which is **love**.

If he finds the duties and trials of the Christian life grievous and oppressive, so that he is continually downcast and troubled, not finding in his religion a comfort more than compensating for all his trials, which enables him to say, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior;" no matter what other evidences of religion he may imagine himself to possess, it is clear that he does not belong to the same school with him who said, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice;" neither has he obtained a full entrance to that "kingdom of God," which "is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." He has not the fruit of the Spirit, which is **joy**.

If he is prone to anger, impatient of contradiction, fond of dispute, and rancorous in controversy; or if, while he remains calm himself, he is the occasion of unnecessarily disquieting the spirits of others, especially the church, and trouble instead of peace prevails through him; he may like Jehu, profess great zeal for the Lord, and seem very active in the cause of religion, but is far from being a close follower of him, the Prince of Peace, to whom the prophet testified, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." (Matthew 12:19.) Neither will he be a full reaper in that harvest of righteousness, and praise unto God, "the fruit of which is sown in peace of those who make peace." He has not the fruit of the Spirit, which is **peace**.

If he is repining and impatient with his lot on earth, murmuring against the afflictions of providence, and querulous about every deprivation; finding little comfort in the hope which promises an eternal refuge from sin and sorrow, when life's brief pilgrimage is over; then it is clear that he has not the spirit of Christ, who taught us to pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven;" or of the apostle, who had "learned, in whatever state he was, to be content." He may have much knowledge, and do many acts which religion enjoins, but he has not that fruit of the Spirit, which is **long-suffering**.

If he is violent in his disposition, noisy and impetuous, rude in speech and careless of the feelings of others, bent upon having his own way, and unwilling to yield to his neighbor's comfort or honest scruples; instead of "being courteous," "honoring all men," and considering the example of Him who was meek and lowly in heart—then no supposed goodness of intention, or honesty of mind, can make up for the absence of that fruit of the Spirit, which is **gentleness**.

If he is selfish in preferring his own ease or indulgence to his neighbor's good, bestowing charity only when it costs him no sacrifice, or gets him praise and credit among men, and gives not from a principle of love to God and good will to his fellow creatures; he may have, from his opportunities and position, the means and ability to bestow largely upon the poor and the church; but the life of Christian charity is lacking, for he has not that fruit of the Spirit, which is **goodness**.

If he is not a strict observer of his truth, allowing himself to say nothing that might tend to another's unjust hurt, or to promise nothing which he is not sure he intends, and will be able, to perform; or if he waver from his firm avowal of religious principle and adherence to religious practice, as times, companies, or circumstances vary; if he is not sincerely honest, conscientious and steadfast in his duty to God, while he holds his fellowship with the world around him—then he swerves from that continuance in well-doing, that courageous devotion to God, and that equal love to his neighbor with himself, which are the certain marks of a true believer. He has not the fruit of the Spirit, which is **faith**.

If he is proud of his own attainments in religious virtue, or vain of earthly station or personal advantages; or, in any way, regards superciliously his fellow Christians or his fellow men, not ascribing to God all that makes him to differ from them; if his manner is not humble and kind, and his conduct prove that he is willing to forget himself for their advantage; no matter what his protestations of Christian feeling may be, he ought not to wear the name of that Jesus, who "came not to be ministered unto but to minister;" for he has not that peculiar fruit of Christ's Spirit, which is **meekness**.

Or, if he is undisciplined in his spirit, not subjecting his desires and appetites to the rule of God's law, because it is God's law, but indulges himself in "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," or abstains only from some motive equally selfish; he may think that he has many evidences of regeneration, but this one is wanting to make the evidence complete and satisfactory, the fruit of the Spirit, which is **temperance**.

The rule by which the false prophets were to be tried, is that by which we should try our own hearts and conditions: "By their *fruits* shall you know them." *About the fruit there can be no deception.*

Such is the character of these graces, that we cannot exhibit them in our lives, except we have them in our hearts. Words or even actions professing kindness, when we feel no love, are hypocrisies. Smiles and lively thanksgivings, when there is no pious joy within, are hollow and miserable pretenses. The open hand and the smooth speech, when enmity or coldness rule the bosom, are treacherous perfidies. Endurance from mere necessity is not patience; nor the polite control of tongue and conduct always gentleness; nor are gifts in charity always goodness; nor professions and pledges, faithfulness; nor a downcast brow and self-condemning confessions, meekness; nor abstinence from mischievous indulgence, temperance.

"It is easy," says Dr. Abercrombie, "to assume the phraseology of religion, to acquire a knowledge of its doctrines, to argue ingeniously and acutely on points of faith. It is not difficult to practice with decorum its rites and forms, to observe its ordinances, and to show all that zeal for the externals of religion, by which a man acquires a certain character in the eyes of men. It is easy for those who have the means, and it is gratifying to the feelings which exist in the generality of mankind, to practice much benevolence, and to show much real concern for alleviating the distresses of others;" and we may add, that it is not difficult for those who are accustomed to polite or even civilized society, to wear a kind and pleasing aspect, to preserve a calm and attractive mode of discourse, to veil an impertinent sense of one's superiority, or displeasure, or to refrain from gross and profligate excesses; but much of all this, it is to be feared, may and does exist, while there is none of that discipline of heart, without which knowledge is vain, and faith but an empty name.

"Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart;" and as God is the judge of our sincerity in religion, *it is not merely to our external conduct, but to the temper of our hearts, that we are to look for the evidence of our sincerity*. Duties performed merely through fear of God's wrath, or as a painful price paid for future happiness, while the heart is not in them, but revolts from them—are not obedience, but selfishness and slavery. The external conduct has no value, except as proof of the inward temper. It is not enough that we have the *form* of godliness, in our most secret hearts we must confess its *power*; for, as amiable as the external show of these virtues may be in the sight of men, it is only as fruits of the Spirit, that they are precious in the sight of God.

We should at the same time not forget, that the world can know us by our external conduct alone; and, though we are not to make a boast of our religion, nor use it for our own glory among men—yet we are so to "let our light shine," or the power of our religion appear, that men, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

The graces of the Christian religion are, as we have seen, principally, those virtues which men profess to admire and love. The world knows very well how to distinguish right from wrong in such matters; and as religion lays claim to these virtues in a higher degree than any sentiment of worldly honor or unassisted human nature can reach, it will watch the Christian with critical and jealous eyes, and not be satisfied if he is no better than other men. "What do you more than others?" will be their reproachful inquiry of the church, if its members be not as distinguished in virtue, as the light of heavenly illumination should be from the twilight of human reason.

We see also how the main practice of religion lies in such things and such occasions, as we have mostly to do with. God honors some men by making them apostles, and others by making them glorious in martyrdom; some, by giving them great power to use for his service; others, by bestowing upon them riches that they may be benefactors upon a large scale; some, by causing them to suffer great reproach, that their light may appear the brighter, when it emerges from the cloud; and others, by laying them upon beds of long and painful illness, that their exemplary patience and resignation may give an unusual testimony to their superiority over trial.

But every Christian cannot be an apostle, or martyr, or confessor, or a great or rich man, or a hero in any form. The greater portion of us have to walk through life in the usual and thronged paths, and can be distinguished from our fellow travelers only by those virtues which common people may exhibit. If no men were patriots but those who command armies, or take a prominent part in the public councils, it is clear that a country would soon come to ruin. It is so with the church. If we wait for the exercise of our virtues, until we have an opportunity to make our virtue *notable*, we shall live and die without it. *Love, joy, peace, and the rest, are graces which may adorn the most ordinary and lowly cottage, and beautify the Christian character around the retired fireside*, as well as in the sun-light of public observation. The heart is to be purified from hate, and envy, and discontent, and dishonesty; and the tongue and the carriage, and the daily living, made ornamental to the religious profession.

He who is not prepared to serve God daily, in his household, in his business, in his fellowship with men—need not flatter himself with dreams of what he would do, were he permitted to enact his career upon a wider theater. He might seem more consistent in such circumstances, but it would be his pride, not his godliness, that would render him so. We can therefore, scarcely do ourselves greater mischief than to separate a religious life from a good life, and a good life is good living at all times. Religion has its mysteries, its peculiar doctrines, and its supernatural hopes; but the knowledge of these mysteries, the belief of these doctrines, and the cherishing of these hopes, are not the ends of religion; they are only the means of it. *Religion is love to God, and love to man.*

The best guidance we can have in religion, under the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit, is an honest and sincere heart. *If a man makes the word of God his guide, and the strength of God his stay, and means to do right, he will rarely do wrong*. Duty will have its dark places, and its difficult places, but, if he still struggles on toward God and Heaven, like Bunyan's Pilgrim in the Slough of Despond, he will get through on the right side.

If, on the contrary, he be desirous of having as much of the world as he can, and doing as little for the church and God as he can, and yet retain the Christian character and the Christian's hope—he will be constantly betrayed into inconsistency, and find Christ's burden heavy and his yoke galling. It is the restive bullock, that is galled in the yoke, not the docile and gentle one.

If we keep ourselves to those things "against which there is no law," whose excellence is undoubted and acknowledged by all, we shall stand in danger of no just condemnation; and, though we cannot escape scandal and censoriousness, we shall have the consolation of a good conscience, knowing that we have not deserved them. If our hearts are guarded well, and the Holy Spirit, through prayer and faith, and the study of the Scriptures, and the use of all the means of grace, dwells in them, we shall be spared much anxiety in comparing our external conduct with the standard of truth. We must have a spirit elevated above mere law by love and gratitude and delight in God and goodness, if we would be elevated above the bondage of law, and beyond its censures.

Let us remember also, that, although these are *graces* of the Spirit, they are Christian *virtues*; and that, although we cannot possess them except by God's gift, we must exercise them by our own endeavors. The Holy Spirit uses ourselves as the means of our own sanctification; and so, if we would be found "serving the Lord," we must not only be "fervent in spirit," but "diligent in business." The excitement of our sensibilities without any consequences of outward practice, is hurtful, instead of beneficial, to the moral temper; and one, who has only religious emotions (if that were possible) without religious activity, is sure to meet with the curse of the Master, when he comes "seeking fruit, and finds none."

It is a solemn consideration that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. How clean should that temple, and all its vessels be, in which God dwells? Our hearts, our members, our eyes, our ears, our tongues—should all be kept holy, because they are set apart to the Lord. As a garden fenced in by his ordinances, watered by his influences, breathed upon by his Spirit, and lightened and warmed by the Sun of Righteousness—should the Christian's life and the Christian church be, abounding not only in leaves and blossoms, but substantial fruit. Then would the Lord God dwell among us, and hold communion with us, as he once did with his holy children among the shades of Paradise, and there would "be none to hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain." Then would the stakes of the church be strengthened, and its cords be extended, until Zion should become the whole earth, the "wilderness be as Eden, and the desert as the garden of the Lord."

Our pleasant meditations upon our sweet text must now close. Yet, like him who saw the Lord on the holy mount, we could linger around it and say, "It is good for us to be here." How pure is the atmosphere, and how calm! Controversies and sectarian jars reach not this elevation. *No creed forbids such virtues*. How clear the sunshine! No doubt rests upon the beauty of these divine graces. How holy the society! Each virtue, and all, reminding us of Jesus and the shining ones, who followed him on earth and now adore him in Heaven.

Beloved, let us leave our holy thoughts to practice this holy morality; nay, we can meditate as we practice, and *while we walk on earth, our hearts may be in Heaven*. Happy will the writer be, if God has permitted him to bind up the fallen tendrils of any neglected grace; to shed the dews of the Spirit upon one drooping virtue; or to encourage into full loveliness one shrinking promise of Christian duty. Happier shall we all be, if knowing the will of our heavenly Father, we do it—that Jesus may be glorified in us upon earth, and we be glorified in him forever.

"Finally, brethren,
whatever things are true,
whatever things are honest,
whatever things are just,
whatever things are pure,
whatever things are lovely,
whatever things are of good report;
if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Amen.

"For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:8