

GRACE SERMONS

[J. C. Philpot](#) ** Most "experimental" and "insightful" author.

[Horatius Bonar](#)

[Jonathan Edwards](#) ** Most "solemn" author.

[John Angell James](#) ** Most "practical" author.

[Newman Hall](#)

[John MacDuff](#) ** Best "devotional" author.

[J. C. Ryle](#) ** "Simplest" author to read.

[Charles Spurgeon](#) ** Best "evangelistic" author.

[Thomas Watson](#) ** Best "Puritan" author.

[Octavius Winslow](#) ** Most "comforting" author.

[Archibald Alexander](#)

[John Abbott, "The Christian Mother"](#)

[James Alexander, "The Cultivation of Personal Piety"](#)

[Joseph Alleine, "The Gospel in a Map"](#)

[David Black, "The Deceitfulness of the Heart"](#)

[David Black, "Seeking the Things Which Are Jesus Christ's"](#)

[Thomas Boston, "Death"](#)

[Thomas Boston, "The Resurrection"](#)

[Thomas Boston, "Hell"](#)

[Thomas Bradbury, "Comfort My People"](#)

[Thomas Brooks, "Christ's Love for us"](#)

[Thomas Charles, "Affliction, Its Use And Benefits"](#)

[David Clarkson, "Soul Idolatry"](#)

[Cuyler, "Christian Recreation and Unchristian Amusement"](#)

[Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects](#) ** Best "female" author.

[Thomas Doolittle, "Motives to Love Jesus"](#)

[Darryl Erkel, "Practical Wisdom for Calvinists"](#)

[John Flavel, "Christ Altogether Lovely"](#)

[John Flavel, "The Christian View of Death"](#)

[Andrew Gray, "A Door Unto Everlasting Life"](#)

[Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Celestial Railroad"](#)

[John Kershaw, "Spiritual Blessings in Christ"](#)

[F. W. Krummacher, "The Crucifixion"](#)

[F. W. Krummacher, "The Abuse of the Doctrine of Free Grace"](#)

[Henry Law, "I Am That I Am"](#)

[C. H. Mackintosh, "God in Everything"](#)

[Edward Manning, "Christ, Our Only Rest"](#)

[Edward Manning, "Worldly Affections Destructive of Love to God"](#)

[Hugh Martin, "Joyous Spirituality of Christian Pilgrimage"](#)

[Charles McIlvaine, "Preaching Christ"](#)

[F. B. Meyer, "The Blessed Life"](#)

[J. R. Miller, "Secrets of Happy Home Life"](#)

[J. R. Miller, "Husbands and Wives"](#)

[J. R. Miller, "Mutual Forbearance"](#)

[J. R. Miller, "The Cure for Care"](#)

[J. R. Miller, "The Duty of Encouragement"](#)

[J. R. Miller, "Beautiful Old Age"](#)

[Hannah More, "The Pilgrims" \(an allegory\)](#)

[Thomas Murphy, "The Real Power of the Pastor Is in His Earnest Godliness"](#)

[John Newton, "More than a Calvinist"](#)

[John Newton, "The School Of Suffering"](#)

[Arthur Pink, "God's Agency in War"](#)

[William Plumer, "Job's Trials and Mercies"](#)

[William Plumer, "The Mystery of Sanctification"](#)

[William Plumer, "How God's people may make great attainments"](#)

[William Plumer, "A Sad but Instructive History"](#)

[Elizabeth Prentiss, "Thoughts Concerning the King"](#)

[James Smith, "Wait on the Lord"](#)

[Gardiner Spring, "Human Sinfulness"](#)

[Gardiner Spring, "Discriminating Grace"](#)

[Gardiner Spring, "The Mission of Sorrow"](#)

[Gardiner Spring, "Death and Heaven"](#)

[Thomas Spurgeon, "Spiritual Worship"](#)

[James Stalker, "Seven Deadly Sins"](#)

[DeWitt Talmage, "The Ministry Of Tears"](#)

[Thomas Vincent, "Fire and Brimstone in Hell, to Burn the Wicked"](#)

[Thomas Vincent, "The Vain Securities of the Wicked"](#)

[Jared Waterbury, "Joy in God's Providence"](#)

[Thomas Wilcox, "Honey Out of the Rock"](#)

[Whitmore Winslow, "The Hidden Life"](#)

The reading of good sermons is the most underrated kind of Christian literature on the market today. In former centuries, the reading of sermons was the bulk of the mature Christian's reading diet. Most Puritan books, for example, are sermons edited for print. Sermon reading keeps believers in the Word, matures the soul, and whets the appetite for good preaching. It promotes Christ-centered thinking, healthy self-examination, and godly piety in every sphere of life. Though nothing can replace the Word preached, sermon reading has one advantage over preaching--the sermons that made it into print are usually

the minister's best! Tolle Lege--"pick up and read" great sermon books, especially those of past centuries that are packed with spiritual meat." -- *Joel Beeke*

[HOME](#)

[QUOTES](#)

[SERMONS](#)

[BOOKS](#)

J. C. Philpot (1802-1869)

Deeply soul-humbling, richly Christ-exalting, experimental teaching.

"**My desire** is to exalt the **grace** of God; to proclaim **salvation** alone through Jesus Christ; to declare the sinfulness, helplessness and hopelessness of **man** in a state of nature; to describe the living **experience** of the children of God in their trials, temptations, sorrows, consolations and blessings."

[PEARLS FROM PHILPOT](#)

[MORE PEARLS FROM PHILPOT](#)

[PRIDE](#)

[The Master's Bounty, and the Servant's Obedience](#)

[The Mighty Watcher, and His Twofold Work](#)

[The Fool—His Character, Affliction, and Deliverance](#)

[Spiritual Times and Seasons](#)

[Getting and Losing](#)

[Balm in Gilead](#)

[The Wilderness Wanderer](#)

[The Houseless Wanderer](#)

[Life Given for a Prey](#)

[Not Our Own—Bought with a Price](#)

[Coming up from the Wilderness](#)

[Spiritual Paradoxes](#)

[Zion's Blessings](#)

[The Spiritual Chase](#)

[Heavenly Buying](#)

[The Sweet Loathed and the Bitter Relished](#)

[The Fruits and Marks of the Lord Being Our God](#)

[The Knowledge of Good and Evil](#)

[Light Affliction and Eternal Glory](#)

[Israel's Departure and Return](#)

[The Walk in the Fields and among the Vineyards](#)

[Super-aboundings of Grace over the Aboundings of Sin](#)

[Reconciliation and Salvation](#)

[The Refuge For The Oppressed](#)

[A Discriminating Ministry](#)

[Living Complaints](#)

[The Valley of Achor](#)

[The Blessedness of Trusting in the Lord](#)

[The Lost Sheep Restored](#)

[The Good Shepherd and His Work](#)

[The Only Safe Protection, and the Only Sure Refuge](#)

[The Sin Sick Soul And The Great Physician](#)

[The Sick Man's Prayer and the Sinner's Cry](#)

[The History of an IDOL, its Rise, Reign and Progress](#)

[The Threefold Overthrow of Self](#)

[The Profane, Wicked Prince Overturned;
and the Rightful King Set Up](#)

[Love in its Priceless Value and Unquenchable Strength](#)

[The Day of Power](#)

[The Word of God's Grace](#)

[The Eagle and Her Young](#)

[The Lost Sought and Saved](#)

[The Straying Sheep and the Sin-bearing Shepherd](#)

[The Unction of the Holy One](#)

[The Abiding Comforter](#)

[Heavenly Teaching](#)

[Pleasant Plants and Desperate Sorrow](#)

[Mans Devices and the Lord's Counsel](#)

[The Sacrifice Bound to the Horns of the Altar](#)

[Crucifixion with Christ](#)

[The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax](#)

[Trying the Spirits](#)

[Pilgrims' Hunger and Pilgrims' Food](#)

[The Love of the World and the Love of God](#)

[The Gospel Seed-bed](#)

[Power Given to the Faint](#)

[The Cry of Jonah out of the Belly of Hell](#)

[The Blessedness of Divine Chastening](#)

[The Bitter Waters Sweetened](#)

[The Valley of Baca](#)

[The Afflicted Remnant and Their Confiding Trust](#)

[Patience and Her Perfect Work](#)

[Reconciliation by Death, and Salvation by Life](#)

[Letter of resignation from the Church of England](#)

[On the Law and the Gospel](#)

[The Law of Moses](#)

[The Saint's Path to Eternal Glory](#)

[The Loss of All Things for Christ's Sake](#)

[The Reproach Answered](#)

[The Farewell](#)

[The Solemn Appeal And Earnest Cry Of A Waiting Soul](#)

[Alienation and Reconciliation](#)

[Spiritual Convictions & Heavenly Affections](#)

[Life Given for a Prey](#)

[The Lord's Merciful Look Upon His People](#)

[Israel's Happiness](#)

[The Wilderness and its Fruits](#)

[Prevailing Pleas, or the Hope and Savior of Israel](#)

[The Life of Christ Manifested in the Death of the Creature](#)

[The Love of Christ in Giving Himself for the Church](#)

[The Mountain Made a Plain](#)

[The Triumphs of Mercy](#)

[The Whole Armor of God](#)

[A Spiritual Death and a Hidden Life](#)

[Lawful Strife](#)

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[A Supply for Every Need](#)

[A Believer's Dialogue with His Soul](#)

[What Is It That Saves a Soul?](#)

[The Soul's Growth in Grace](#)

[Spiritual Delight, and Confiding Trust](#)

[The Conqueror's Inheritance](#)

[Abounding of Love in Knowledge and Experience](#)

[The Savior of Israel](#)

[The Subjection of All Things Under the Feet of Jesus](#)

[The Trees of the Field, and Their Appointed Destiny](#)

[The Possession and Dispossession of the Strong Man Armed](#)

[A Compassionate High Priest and a Throne of Grace](#)

[Confiding Trust and Patient Submission](#)

[The Veil Taken Away](#)

[Spiritual Fruit](#)

[The Sieve and its Effects](#)

[The Heavenly Birth and its Earthly Counterfeits](#)

[The Secret of the Lord](#)

[The Lord's Thoughts](#)

[The Everliving Intercessor](#)

[Moab at Ease from His Youth and Settled on His Lees](#)

[The Inward Conflict Between the Flesh and the Spirit](#)

[A Peculiar People](#)

[The Only Safe Keeping](#)

[The Furnace and its Fruits](#)

[Treasures of Darkness](#)

[The Falling Rain and the Budding Earth](#)

[The Groaning Captive's Deliverance](#)

[God the Great Teacher and Leader of His People](#)

[The Fruit of the Lips](#)

[Spiritual Sickness and Health](#)

[Walking in the Spirit](#)

[The Old Man Put Off, The New Man Put On](#)

[The Prayer of Jabez](#)

[The Spiritual Conflict](#)

[Obedience from the Heart](#)

[The Well and the Wall](#)

[Blessings Imputed, and Mercies Imparted](#)

[Acceptable Present to the Lord of Hosts](#)

[The Battle Is the Lord's](#)

[The Heir of Heaven Walking in Darkness,
and the Heir of Hell Walking in Light](#)

[The Better Things Which Accompany Salvation](#)

[Genuine Discipleship](#)

[Spiritual Poverty and Heavenly Riches](#)

[Peace, Tribulation, Victory](#)

[Following on to Know the Lord](#)

[Signs Seen, and Not Seen](#)

[The Breaker](#)

[The Living Sacrifice Presented](#)

[The Blowing of the Great Trumpet](#)

[The Blowing of the Gospel Trumpet](#)

[The Golden Chain of Tribulation and Love](#)

[Gracious Attractions and Heavenly Banquetings](#)

[The Thorn in the Flesh, or
Strength Made Perfect in Weakness](#)

[Prayer, and its Answer](#)

[Prayer, and its Answer](#)

[The Lord's Invitation to the Ends of the Earth](#)

[The Things Which God has Prepared](#)

[for Those Who Love Him](#)

[Man's Misery and God's Mercy](#)

[The Hope of the Cast-down Soul](#)

[The Northern Iron and the Steel](#)

[The Power and the Form](#)

[Joy and Gladness for Mourning Souls](#)

[The Word of Men and the Word of God](#)

[The Death of the Flesh the Life of the Spirit](#)

[The Rising Of The Day Star](#)

[Growing up into Christ in All Things](#)

[The Trial by Fire of Every Man's Work](#)

[The Working of All Things Together for Good](#)

[The Seed of Israel, Justified in Christ](#)

[The Vine and its Branches](#)

[Steps of Thankful Praise](#)

[The Promise of God to His Afflicted Church](#)

[The Eternal God the Refuge of His Saints](#)

[A Confessing Sinner, and a Forgiving God](#)

[The Valley Exalted, and the Mountain Laid Low](#)

[The Destruction through Death of Him Who Had the Power of Death](#)

[A Peculiar People](#)

[Pastoral Counsels](#)

[Zion's Waymarks](#)

[The Narrow Way](#)

[The Doctrine which Drops as the Rain, and the Speech which Distills as the Dew](#)

[The Spirit of Power, of Love, and of a Sound Mind](#)

[Deliverance from the Power of Darkness](#)

[Spiritual Mysteries](#)

[A Longing Soul in a Thirsty Land](#)

[Grace Superabounding over the Aboundings of Sin](#)

[The Fruits of Sin and the Fruits of Holiness](#)

[Sin Condemned and Righteousness Fulfilled](#)

[Waters Which do not Drown and Flames which do not Burn](#)

[The Sentence of Death in Ourselves](#)

[The Sons of God—Their Blessings and Their Privileges](#)

[An Anxious Inquiry and a Gracious Response](#)

[The Clean Water Sprinkled and the New Heart Given](#)

[Heavenly Attraction and Spiritual Obedience](#)

[The Exercise and Profit of Godliness](#)

[Faith's Standing-Ground](#)

[True Discipleship](#)

[The Work of Faith, Patience of Hope, and Labor of Love](#)

[The Wisdom of Men and the Power of God](#)

[Filth and Blood Purged by the Spirit
of Judgment and the Spirit of Burning](#)

[The Soul's Pursuit After God](#)

[The Hope of the Hypocrite](#)

[The Promises Inherited](#)

[Four Links in the Chain of Grace](#)

[Christ Jesus the Lord Received and Walked In](#)

[Plenteous Redemption](#)

[Wilderness Hunger and Heavenly Manna](#)

[The Wine of Astonishment](#)

[The Appeal and Prayer of a Waiting Soul](#)

[Gospel Fruit the Test of Genuine Discipleship](#)

[Abiding in Christ](#)

[The Salted Sacrifice](#)

The Fiery Trial

"Man's religion is to build up the creature.
God's religion is throw the creature down in the
dust of self-abasement, and to glorify Christ."

Horatius Bonar

[Follow the Lamb!](#)

[Ministerial Confessions](#)

[The Night of Weeping](#)

[The Family Discipline](#)

[Home!](#)

[The Holy Spirit](#)

Follow the Lamb! by Horatius Bonar (selections)

"My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me." John 10:27

Christian, your whole life is to be one continuous following of the Lord.

You began with turning your back upon the world, and 'looking to Jesus'; keep ever thus. Looking to Him brought rest to you at first, and healed your soul; so, looking to Him daily will maintain your rest and perfect your spiritual health.

Christian, should your eye ever be withdrawn from the cross, you will be sure to go backwards, to grow cold, and to forget that you were purged from your old sins (2 Peter 1:9). That cross is life, health, holiness, consolation, strength, joy; let nothing come between it and you.

Christian, your life is a book; it may be a volume of larger or smaller size. Conversion is but the title-page or the preface. The book itself remains to be written; and your years and weeks and days are its chapters and pages and lines. It is a book written for eternity; see that it be written well. It is a book for the inspection of enemies as well as friends; be careful of every word. It is a book written under the eye of God; let it be done reverently; without levity, yet without constraint or terror.

The grace of God is your strength, as it is your joy; and it is only by abiding in it that you can really live the life of the redeemed. Be strong, then, in this grace; draw your joy out of it; and beware how you turn to anything else for refreshment, or comfort, or holiness. Though a believing man, you are still a sinner; a sinner to the last; and, as such, nothing can suit you but the free love of God. Draw continually on Christ and His fullness for this grace. This abounding grace, rightly understood, will not make you sin; it will not relax morality or make inconsistency a trifle. It will magnify sin and enhance its evil in your eyes.

Let the righteousness of the Righteous One be your daily covering.

Don't dally with error, and don't tamper with truth. 'Buy the truth' (Prov 23:23) at any price; but 'sell it not' for all the gold and silver on earth.

But the love of controversy is pernicious, even when it takes the side of truth. The man who likes better to be fighting about his food than eating it, is likely to remain lean enough. Disputes, like offences, must sometimes come;

but, like David's 'sharp razor' (Psalm 52:2), they 'work deceitfully,' and are difficult to handle safely. They often eat out love, even when they do not destroy faith.

We deal with a slack hand in things pertaining to our own sins, and let things go unreprieved and uncondemned in ourselves which we are sharp enough to discover and rebuke in others. Deal honestly with every part of your daily life; in regard to duty, or trial, or sacrifice, or self-denial, or forbearance with others.

Strange that in spiritual things we should try to cheat ourselves as well as others! Yet so it is. We are loath to take the worst view of our own case; to think evil of ourselves; to act the stern censor in regard to our own omissions and commissions. We have few excuses for others, many for ourselves; evils that seem monstrous in others are trifles in us. When looking at others, we use a microscope; at ourselves, we either shut our eyes or put on a veil. This dishonest dealing is very pernicious; this 'covering of sin' is destructive both of peace and progress.

If you are one given to the divine companionship, you will be saved from much idle and wasteful society and conversation. You will not feel at home with worldly men, nor they with you.

Do not conform to the world in order to please men or to save yourself from their taunt or jest.

Go where you please, if you can take Jesus with you; go nowhere if He cannot be admitted, or if you are obliged for the time to conceal or disguise your divine discipleship.

Beware of going through prayer in a careless or perfunctory way, like a hireling doing his work in order to get done with it. 'Pray in the Holy Spirit' (Jude 20). Pray with honest fervor and simple faith, as men who really want what they ask for, and expect to get it all. Few things tend more to deaden the soul, to harden the heart, to drive out spirituality, than cold, formal prayer. It will eat as does a canker. Dread it and shun it. Do not mock God by asking what you don't want, or by pretending to desire what you don't care for.

Be much alone with God. Do not put Him off with a quarter of an hour morning and evening. Take time to get thoroughly acquainted. Converse over everything with Him. Unbosom yourself wholly- every thought,

feeling, wish, plan, doubt- to Him. He wants converse with His creatures; shall His creatures not want converse with Him? He wants, not merely to be on 'good terms' with you, if one may use man's phrase, but to be intimate; shall you decline the intimacy, and be satisfied with mere acquaintance? What! intimate with the world, with friends, with neighbors; but not with God! That would look ill indeed. Folly, to prefer the clay to the potter, the marble to the sculptor, this little earth and its lesser creatures to the mighty Maker of the universe, the great 'All and in all!'

You must go straight to Jesus with that cold heart, and warm it at His cross; then your work for Him will be at once a necessity, a delight, and a success.

The Christian has discovered one book truer, more precious, and more poetical than all the rest together. All truth is precious, though not all divine. let the Bible be to us the book of books, the one book in all the world, whose every wisdom is truth, and whose every verse is wisdom. In studying it, be sure to take it for what it really is, the revelation of the thoughts of God given us in the words of God. knowing that we have divine thoughts embodied in divine words, through the inspiration of an unerring translator, we sit down to the study of the heavenly volume, assured that we shall find in all its teachings the perfection of wisdom, and in its language the most accurate expression of that wisdom that the finite speech of man can utter.

Every word of God is as perfect as it is pure (Psalm 19:7; 12:6). Let us read and re-read the Scriptures, meditating on them day and night. They never grow old, they never lose their sap, they never run dry. Though it is right and profitable, as I have said, to read other books, if they are true and good, yet beware of reading too many. Do not let man's book thrust God's book into a corner. Do not let commentaries smother the text; nor let the true and the good shut out the truer and the better.

TAKE HEED TO YOUR STEPS

Beware, not merely of falling, but of stumbling. 'Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise'; like men in an enemy's country, or like travelers climbing a hill, slippery with ice, and terrible with precipices, where every step may be a fall, and every fall a plunge into a chasm. Beware of little slips, slight inconsistencies, as they are called; they are the beginning of all backsliding, and they are in themselves evil, as well as hateful to God. Keep your garments undefiled (Rev 3:4); beware of small spots as well as larger stains or rents; and the moment you discover any speck, however small, go wash in the fountain, that your 'garments may be always white,' and so pleasing in the eyes of Him, whose you are, and whom you serve. 'Crucify the flesh,

with its affections and lusts' (Gal 5:24). 'Mortify your members which are upon the earth'

Stand aloof from the world's gaiety, and be jealous of what are called 'harmless amusements.' I do not condemn all amusements, but I ask that they should be useful and profitable, not merely harmless. Dancing and card-playing are the world's devices for killing time. They are bits of the world and the world's ways which will ensnare your feet and lead you away from the cross. Let them alone. Keep away from the ball-room, the opera, the oratorio, the theater. Dress, finery, and display, are deadly snares. Put away levity and frivolity.

Be you a Christian in little things as well as great. Dread little sins, little errors, little omissions of duty. Remember the Master's words about denying self- every part of self; be not a servant of self, or a worshiper of self, or a 'lover of self' (2 Tim 3:1,2) in any form. Take up your cross, and follow your Lord (Matt 16:24); as it is written, 'Even Christ pleased not Himself' (Rom 15:3).

God's aim in all His doings of grace is to 'hide pride from man'; to hinder boasting; to keep the sinner humble. All 'confidence in the flesh' (Phil 3:1,3), all trust in self, all reliance on the creature, are set aside by that great work of the Divine Substitute, who did all for us, and left us nothing to do, out of which it would be possible to extract a boast (2 Cor 12:9; Gal 6:14; Isa 41:16; 45:25). Let us fling away self-esteem and high-mindedness, for it is the very essence of unbelief. Be meek, be poor in spirit, be humble; be teachable, be gentle, and easy to be entreated; putting away all high thoughts and lofty imaginations, either about what we are or what we can do; content to take the obscurest corner and the lowest seat; and this, not to indulge in a false lowliness, or in 'the pride that apes humility,' feeding our vanity with the thought that we are martyrs, and puffing up our fleshly mind with the idea of our wonderful condescension, or by brooding over our supposed wrongs and trials. Let us be truly humble, as was the Son of God: content to live unknown, and to do our work unnoticed, as a work not for the eye of man, but of God.

Keep self in the background, and don't say or do anything that looks like baiting your hook for a little praise.

True spiritual discernment is much lost sight of as a real Christian grace; discernment between the evil and the good, the false and the true. 'Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits whether they are of God; because

many false prophets are gone out into the world' (1 John 4:1). This 'discernment,' which belongs to every one who is taught of God, is the very opposite of that which is called in our day by the boastful name of 'liberality.' Spiritual discernment and 'liberal thought' have little in common with each other. Truth is a mighty thing in the eyes of God, whatever it may be in those of men. All error is, more or less, whether directly or indirectly, a misrepresentation of God's character, and a subversion of His revelation.

Satan is the consummate deceiver! It is Satan who gives to the ballroom, and the dance, and the theater, and the voluptuous music their special power to harm; for these are Satan's baits and nets, by means of which he allures the unwary, and leads back the believer to unbelieving ground, disarming our watchfulness, dazzling our vision, reviving our worldliness, and perhaps, for a season, lulling us wholly asleep. We know that the last days are to be like the days of Noah and Lot (Luke 17:26-32), days of reveling, and banqueting, and luxury. Let us be wary, lest, standing as we do on the edge of these days, we be drawn away into the sins of an age led captive by Satan at his will.

DO SOMETHING FOR GOD

You were neither born nor re-born for yourselves alone. You may not be able to do much, but do something; work while it is day. You may not be able to give much, but give something; according to your ability, remembering that the Lord loves a cheerful giver. Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for the love of money is the root of all evil. Whenever worldliness comes in, in any shape, whether it be love of money or love of pleasure, you cease to be faithful to Christ, and are trying to serve both God and mammon.

'I am the Lord that brings you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God: you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy' (Lev 11:45).

God calls us to be holy. He becomes our God to make us like Himself. 'He calls us to be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' He expects that we should represent Him among our fellow-men by our resemblance to Himself.

God calls us to be holy. He expects us to grow in unlikeness to this world, and in likeness to that world which is to come. He expects us to follow Him who did no sin, even though the attainment of perfection should not be in a day or a year, but the growth of a lifetime. It is for lack of daily growth, not for lack of complete and constant sinlessness, that God so often challenges

His own.

Let us grow. Let us bring forth fruit. Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

Self in all its forms is a hindrance to our spiritual growth (Rom 14:7). Self-will, self-sufficiency, self-indulgence, self-importance, self-glory, self-seeking, self-brooding, -all these mar fruitfulness. Denying self is the beginning, the middle, and the end of our course here, as followers of Christ. Selfishness takes the form of covetousness, or love of money; of luxury, or love of foods and drinks, and the good things of this life. How can a man grow when he is pampering self instead of crucifying the flesh; when he is indulging and fondling the old man instead of nailing him to the cross; when he is enjoying all softness and ease and worldly comfort, instead of enduring hardness, and taking up his cross and mortifying his members which are upon the earth (Rom 8:13; Gal 5:24; Col 3:5)?

Covetousness

'The love of money is the root of all evil' (1 Tim 6:10). Few things are more hateful in a Christian man than this; few things more completely destroy his influence; and few things more sadly or more justly make him the scorn of the world than eagerness for money, or niggardliness in parting with it. The covetous man cannot grow spiritually. He must ever remain a stunted Christian. 'Filthy lucre' is poison to the soul. If we do not 'make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness' by laying out our substance for God, it will become the blight of spirituality, the destruction of our religious life (Prov 30:8; 1 Tim 6:6-10). Be generous, be large-hearted, be open-handed, be loving, be free in giving, if you would grow.

Pride

Self-satisfaction in any shape, or self-admiration of any kind, in regard to person, or property, or accomplishments, or position; these are immensely hurtful to spiritual life. True godliness prospers only in the lowly heart; the heart which, in proportion as it becomes more and more satisfied with Christ, becomes more and more dissatisfied with itself. If the Master was meek and lowly, shall the disciple be anything else?

The good-natured formality of thousands is just the hateful lukewarmness of Laodicea.

Do you say that you are in Christ, and that you are abiding in Him? Then you ought to walk as He walked. You are bound to follow His footsteps.

We seek henceforth conformity to Him who has set us free, and who bids us follow Him in the path of conformity to the Father's will.

Love Him who has brought our souls out of prison by going into prison for us.

Ministerial Confessions

by Horatius Bonar

We have been carnal and unspiritual. The tone of our life has been low and earthly. Associating too much and too intimately with the world, we have in a great measure become accustomed to its ways. Hence our spiritual tastes have been vitiated, our consciences blunted, and that sensitive tenderness of feeling has worn off and given place to an amount of callousness of which we once, in fresher days, believed ourselves incapable.

We have been selfish. We have shrunk from toil, difficulty and endurance. We have counted only our lives, and our temporal ease and comfort dear unto us. We have sought to please ourselves. We have been worldly and covetous. We have not presented ourselves unto God as "living sacrifices," laying ourselves, our lives, our substance, our time, our strength, our faculties, our all, upon His altar. We seem altogether to have lost sight of this self sacrificing principle on which even as Christians, but much more as ministers, we are called upon to act. We have had little idea of anything like sacrifice at all. Up to the point where a sacrifice was demanded, we may have been willing to go, but there we stood; counting it unnecessary, perhaps calling it imprudent and unadvised, to proceed further. Yet ought not the life of every Christian, especially of every minister, to be a life of self sacrifice and self denial throughout, even as was the life of Him who "pleased not himself"?

We have been slothful. We have been sparing of our toil. We have not endured hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We have not sought to gather up the fragments of our time, that not a moment might be thrown idly or unprofitably away. Precious hours and days have been wasted in sloth, in idle company, in pleasure, in idle or worthless reading, that might have been devoted to the closet, the study, the pulpit or the meeting! Indolence, self indulgence, fickleness, flesh pleasing, have eaten like a canker into our ministry, arresting the blessing and marring our success. We have manifested but little of the unwearied, self denying love with which, as shepherds, we ought to have watched over the flocks committed to our care. We have fed ourselves, and not the flock. We have dealt deceitfully with God, whose servants we profess to be.

We have been cold. Even when diligent, how little warmth and glow! The whole soul is not poured into the duty, and hence it wears too often the repulsive air of 'routine' and 'form'. We do not speak and act like men in

earnest. Our words are feeble, even when sound and true; our looks are careless, even when our words are weighty; and our tones betray the apathy which both words and looks disguise. Love is lacking, deep love, love strong as death, love such as made Jeremiah weep in secret places. In preaching and visiting, in counseling and reproof, what formality, what coldness, how little tenderness and affection!

We have been timid. Fear has often led us to smooth down or generalize truths which if broadly stated must have brought hatred and reproach upon us. We have thus often failed to declare to our people the whole counsel of God. We have shrunk from reproof, rebuking and exhorting with all patience and doctrine. We have feared to alienate friends, or to awaken the wrath of enemies.

We have been lacking in solemnity. How deeply ought we to be abased at our levity, frivolity, flippancy, vain mirth, foolish talking and jesting, by which grievous injury has been done to souls, the progress of the saints retarded, and the world countenanced in its wretched vanities.

We have preached ourselves, not Christ. We have sought applause, courted honor, been avaricious of fame and jealous of our reputation. We have preached too often so as to exalt ourselves instead of magnifying Christ, so as to draw men's eyes to ourselves instead of fixing them on Him and His cross. Have we not often preached Christ for the very purpose of getting honor to ourselves? Christ, in the sufferings of His first coming and the glory of His second, has not been the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, of all our sermons.

We have not duly studied and honored the Word of God. We have given a greater prominence to man's writings, man's opinions, man's systems in our studies than to the Word. We have drunk more out of human cisterns than divine. We have held more communion with man than God. Hence the mold and fashion of our spirits, our lives, our words, have been derived more from man than God. We must study the Bible more. We must steep our souls in it. We must not only lay it up within us, but transfuse it through the whole texture of the soul. The study of truth in its academic more than in its devotional form has robbed it of its freshness and power, engendering formality and coldness.

We have not been men of prayer. The spirit of prayer has slumbered among us. The closet has been too little frequented and delighted in. We have allowed business, study or active labor to interfere with our closet

hours. A feverish atmosphere has found its way into our closet, disturbing the sweet calm of its blessed solitude. Sleep, company, idle visiting, foolish talking and jesting, idle reading, unprofitable occupations, engross time that might have been redeemed for prayer. Why is there so little concern to get time to pray? Why is there so much speaking, yet so little prayer? Why is there so much running to and fro, yet so little prayer? Why so much bustle and business, yet so little prayer? Why so many meetings with our fellow men, yet so few meetings with God? Why so little being alone, so little thirsting of the soul for the calm, sweet hours of unbroken solitude, when God and His child hold fellowship together as if they could never part? It is the lack of these solitary hours that not only injures our own growth in grace, but makes us such unprofitable members of the church of Christ, and that renders our lives useless. In order to grow in grace, we must be much alone with God. It is not in society, even Christian society that the soul grows most rapidly and vigorously. In one single quiet hour of prayer it will often make more progress than in whole days of company with others. It is in the 'desert' that the dew falls freshest and the air is purest. So with the soul. It is when none but God is near; when His presence alone, like the desert air in which there is mingled no noxious breath of man, surrounds and pervades the soul; it is then that the eye gets the clearest, simplest view of eternal certainties; it is then that the soul gathers in wondrous refreshment and power and energy. Nearness to God, fellowship with God, waiting upon God, resting in God, have been too little the characteristic either of our private or our ministerial walk. Hence our example has been so powerless, our labors so unsuccessful, our sermons so meager, our whole ministry so fruitless and feeble.

We have not honored the Holy Spirit. We have not sought His teaching or His anointing. "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth." (1 John 2:20). Neither in the study of the Word nor the preaching of it to others, have we duly acknowledged His office as the Enlightener of the understanding, the Revealer of the truth, the Testifier and Glorifier of Christ. We have grieved Him by the slight put upon Him as the Teacher, the Convincer, the Comforter, the Sanctifier. Hence He has almost departed from us, and left us to reap the fruit of our own perversity and unbelief. Besides, we have grieved Him by our inconsistent walk, by our lack of circumspection, by our worldly mindedness, by our unholiness, by our prayerlessness, by our unfaithfulness, by our lack of solemnity, by a life and conversation so little in conformity with the character of a disciple or the office of ambassador.

We have had little of the mind of Christ. We have come far short of the example of the Master. We have had little of the grace, the compassion, the meekness, the lowliness, the love of Jesus. His weeping over Jerusalem is a

feeling in which we have but little heartfelt sympathy. His seeking of the lost is little imitated by us. His unwearied teaching of the multitudes we shrink from as too much for flesh and blood. His days of fasting, His nights of watchfulness and prayer, are not fully realized as models for us to copy. His counting not His own life dear unto Him that He might glorify the Father and finish the work given Him to do, is but little remembered by us as the principle on which we are to act. Yet surely we are to follow His steps; the servant is to walk where his Master has led the way; the under shepherd is to be what the Chief Shepherd was. We must not seek rest or ease in a world where He whom we love had none.

We have been unbelieving. It is unbelief that makes us so cold in our preaching, so slothful in visiting, and so remiss in all our sacred duties. It is unbelief that chills our life and straitens our heart. It is unbelief that makes us handle eternal realities with such irreverence. It is unbelief that makes us ascend with so light a step into the pulpit to deal with immortal beings about heaven and hell.

We have not been sincere in our preaching. If we were, could we be so cold, so prayerless, so inconsistent, so slothful, so worldly, so unlike men whose business is all about eternity? We must be more in earnest if we would win souls. We must be more in earnest if we would walk in the footsteps of our beloved Lord, or if we would fulfill the vows that are upon us. We must be more in earnest if we would be less than hypocrites. We must be more in earnest if we would finish our course with joy, and obtain the crown at the Master's coming. We must work while it is day; the night comes when no man can work.

We have been unfaithful. The fear of man and the love of his applause have often made us afraid. We have been unfaithful to our own souls, to our flocks, and to our brethren; unfaithful in the pulpit, in visiting, in discipline in the church. In the discharge of every one of the duties of our stewardship there has been grievous unfaithfulness. Instead of the special particularization of the sin reproved, there has been the vague allusion. Instead of the bold reproof, there has been the timid hint. Instead of the uncompromising condemnation, there has been the feeble disapproval. Instead of the unswerving consistency of a holy life whose uniform tenor should be a protest against the world and a rebuke of sin, there has been such an amount of unfaithfulness in our walk and conversation, in our daily deportment and talking with others, that any degree of faithfulness we have been enabled to manifest on the Lord's Day is almost neutralized by the lack of circumspection which our weekday life exhibits.

We need men that will spend and be spent, that will labor and pray, that will watch and weep for souls!

The Night of Weeping by Horatius Bonar

Laughter and revelry belong to a fallen world. They are too superficial to have place among the holy; and too hollow to be known among the truly happy. With the peace of God in our hearts we feel that we do not need them. They may do for childhood; they may do for the world; but not for us. They do not suit our feelings; they are not deep or solid enough to be in harmony with our new nature. They are not the utterances of a truly happy soul.

Yet we live in a gay world that rings everywhere with hollow laughter. Around us are the sights and sounds of mirth by which vain men are seeking to cheat away their ever-fretting uneasiness, to soothe their ruffled consciences, or to drown their bitter sorrows. Oftentimes the saints seem to catch the tone of levity, making mirth with the most mirthful, jesting with the most foolish, singing, perhaps, the world's songs of vanity, speaking its idle words, walking in its vain paths as if its friendships and pleasures were not forbidden things.

Apart, however, from the contagion of the world's influence our tone is apt to fall low and our deportment to lose that solidity and seriousness which become the saints. Almost unconsciously and without knowing how, we get light and airy; we give way to the current of vain thoughts; we forget to set a guard upon our lips; we indulge in foolish talking and jesting in our meetings with each other. Our words are not "with grace, seasoned with salt." We forget the admonition, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers."

This propensity grows upon us. Seriousness becomes a thing reserved entirely for the closet or the sanctuary. We forget our character as saints, called out of darkness and "delivered from a present evil world." We lose sight of our heavenly parentage and divine adoption. Our whole habits of thought, feeling, speaking, and doing too much resemble the flippancies of a heedless, lighthearted world, whose maxim is, "let us eat, drink, and be merry."

Thus our spirituality decays. Heavenly mindedness is gone. We become of the earth, earthly. Our souls cleave to the dust, and we are content to grovel there. We become lean and barren, neither growing ourselves nor helping the growth of others. Our blossoms send forth no fragrance, our branches bear no fruit.

We grieve the Holy Spirit of God whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. He cannot dwell with levity and mirth any more than amid profanity and crime. He retires from the temple into which He had come and in which He would sincerely make His abode forever, driven out from it by the laughter and jesting with which we were making its consecrated walls to

resound. How can He dwell in a temple which, from being a house of God and a house of prayer, we have turned into a place of merchandise, a hall of revelry, a haunt of mirth and song?

I do not mean, as I have said before, that the saint is ever to be gloomy. No. Gloom and melancholy are not our portion. "The lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places." They are not the inmates of a soul that has tasted the joy of pardon and is walking in light, as a happy child with a loving father. But true joy is a serious thing. Its fountains are deep. It is the waking up of the heart's deep springs. Mirth and levity are not joy. They are too shallow to deserve the name. Like the sun-flash on a stagnant pool, they are a mere surface gleam of light. There is nothing in them of the calm radiance illuminating the ocean depths many a fathom down, as if the waters themselves were a mass of solid sunshine, and remaining amid the heaving of the billows, unbroken and unobscured. In coming to Him, who is the fountain of all gladness, the saint of God bids farewell to gloom. Tribulation he may have- no, must have- but not gloom. That has left him forever since the day he knew the Savior, and opened his ears to the joyful sound. Peace is now his heritage.

But still it is not levity that is his portion. It is joy. And this joy is not only far superior to this vain mirth, but it is utterly inconsistent with it. This levity is as much an enemy to real joy as it is to holiness and spirituality. Hence, it must be rooted up. God cannot allow it in His children. His desire is that they should set their affections on things above. This element of earthliness must be purged out. They must be made solemn and thoughtful. To this end He visits them with chastisement. In a moment, perhaps, He smites them to the dust; or, by some slower but withering, crushing calamity, He slays and casts out that foolishness which had wrought itself into the very texture of their being.

His purpose is to make them thoughtful and solemn. He lays on them accordingly something that will make them think. The blow prostrates them, and in a moment all levity is put to flight. They cannot laugh and jest now when their home is desolate and their heart is bleeding. They are withdrawn from communion with an airy, shadowy world and sent into the very inmost recesses of their spiritual being, or forward to the infinite eternity, whose vastness they had been but little alive to.

Trials awaken us to a sense of our self-pleasing ways and our indifference to the condition of the world we live in, not only as being a world of sin, but thoroughly, and all over, a world of misery. They bring us into contact with solid certainties and that produces thoughtfulness. They make us "acquainted with grief" and that drives off all levity. Sorrow and levity keep no companionship.

It is through tears that truth is best seen. When looked at through this medium, objects assume their right proportions and take their proper level.

Shadows then evaporate. Realities compass us about, and these make us solemn. Shadows only make us light and vain. They never stir the depths of our being, but merely flit around its surface.

Thus God solemnizes His saints, and brings them in this respect into closer sympathy with the mind of Christ. All was solemnity with Him. There was no levity ever found in Him. Everything about Him was serene, yet everything was solemn. And the nearer we are brought to resemble Him, the more will this calm, happy solemnity possess us. We shall live not only wakeful but solemn lives. Our whole deportment will speak the depth of the serenity that dwells within. Our looks and tones with all be solemn, and will of themselves testify for God and condemn the world. We shall be men awake and alive, men zealous and in earnest; men who have no relish for levity, because it is incompatible with the deep peace which is their better portion, and who feel that they have no time for it, because eternity is so near.

Yes, a near eternity rebukes and banishes frivolity. Even apart from positive trial this is its tendency. It is the eternal lifetime that makes the lifetime of earth such a solemn thing. Sever the living here from the living hereafter, and man's longest time on earth is little more in importance than the flutter of a leaf, his death no more than the falling of a blossom. But fasten on the infinite and the eternal to our present existence, and everything in life becomes mighty, momentous, solemn. The briefest moment that comes and goes is the meeting place of two eternities. Traversing this narrow pass, with rocks on either side of infinite ascent and lost in impenetrable midnight, how can we fail to be solemnized unless our eyes be closed or our reason gone! The pang that shoots through our earthly frame and makes each fiber quiver would be quite endurable were it but for a moment, were it to die and be buried with us in the same tomb, were there no capacity of eternal anguish in our nature, or no eternity in which that capacity must develop itself. The sting of a moment is a trifle, but the eternal stinging of the undying worm is terrific beyond all utterance. In like manner the thrill of fresh joy which makes the whole man throb with delight would scarce be worth the having or the losing were it only like the lightning, flashing out in its brightness and then quenched forever. But a nature gifted with faculties for infinite enjoyment, and with a whole eternity in which these joyous buds shall expand themselves, turns all our life into a deep and awful reality. A flower that folds up its leaves and withers down at sunset may be carelessly trodden underfoot; but a star that shall roll around forever in its orbit, either effulgent in beauty or dark in the gloom of its own chaos, is an object of wonder and awe.

Such is the life of man! Not the life of one man or some men, but of every man. By itself it may seem a plaything, a mere insect's life; but in connection with the everlasting future, it becomes awfully real and solemn in its aspect.

We may be noble and famed upon the earth, or we may be poor, unlettered, hard-toiling men, still our life is a vast reality. It is no mere shadow, or rainbow, or vision of the night, but an inconceivable reality in all its parts, great or small.

Such especially is the life of the saint! He not only knows that there is an eternity, but he has seen and felt it. Each hour he is looking out upon it like a traveler looking over a dark and infinite precipice which flanks the road on which he is passing along. He not only knows that there is such a thing as forgiveness and eternal life, but he has found them, he has tasted them; his eyes have been opened, and he has now come into the very midst of realities. They compass him about on every side. And especially as he "looks for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing" of the Lord, he feels what a solemn life he is called upon to lead, and levity and mirth as ill become him as they would have done the High Priest, when standing within the veil under the immediate vision of the glory.

Even without the positive infliction of chastisement there is enough to solemnize a saint in what he sees and knows of things as they are. A dying world, a groaning creation, a curse-laden earth, a divided, bleeding church, an absent bridegroom- these are at all times enough to subdue and soften a believer's frame. And thus he walks through earth like Paul after he had been in the third heaven- an inhabitant of another star- one who has his life in heaven- who is too happy ever to be gloomy, but too happy also ever to be light or vain.

Affliction is full of warnings. It has many voices and these of the most various kinds. It speaks counsel, it speaks rebuke, it speaks affection. But it speaks warning too. Let us hear some of its words of warning.

1. Affliction says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (I John 2:15). There is no enforcement of this warning so solemn as that which affliction gives. It exposes the world's hollowness and says, "love not." It shows us what a withering gourd its beauty is and says, "love not." It points out to us its hastening doom and says, "love not." It declares the utter impossibility of loving both the world and the Father, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" There can be no companionship between God and the world. They cannot dwell together under the same roof or in the same heart.

2. Affliction says, "Take heed and beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15). Riches cannot help, neither earthly comfort avail us in the hour of grief. They cannot dry up tears, nor reunite broken bonds. They cannot heal the living, nor bring back the dead. They profit not in the day of darkness. Their vanity and emptiness cannot then be hidden. "You fool, this night your soul

shall be required of you, then whose shall those things be which you have provided." It is then we find that we need a "treasure in the heaven that fails not." "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich."

3. Affliction says, "abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thess 5:22). "Hate even the garments spotted by the flesh." It is not the flesh merely that we are to hate, but even its garments. Nor is it the garments dyed and defiled with the flesh, but even "spotted" with it. It is not merely abstain from evil, but from all appearance of evil. Suffering teaches us to shrink from sin- even from the remotest and most indirect connection with it. It says, "Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate!"

4 Affliction says, "Grudge not one against another" (James 5:9). Let there be no halfhearted affection in the family of God. Let there be no envy, no jealousy, no misunderstandings among the brethren. Why should we be less than friends who are both fellow-sufferers and fellow-soldiers here? Why should we, who are sharers in a common danger and a common exile, bear for each other anything but the sympathies of an intense affection? Why should we not love one another with a pure heart fervently? Yet oftentimes it needs affliction to teach us this, to remove our jealousies, and to draw us together as brethren in sympathy and love.

5. Affliction says, "Keep yourselves from idols" (I John 5:21). If there be one remaining idol, break it in pieces and spare it not. Nothing is so fruitful a cause of suffering as idolatry. Nothing so forcibly displays the vanity of our idols as suffering. It is with this whip of cords that Christ scourges out of us the buyers and sellers- allowing no earthly traffic to proceed in His Father's house.

I give these warnings merely as specimens, a few out of many which might be adduced. There is no room for citing more, though more might easily be found. The two great points against which the warnings of chastisement are directed seem to be selfishness and worldliness. To scourge these thoroughly out of us is God's design.

1. Selfishness. "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." This was Paul's complaint, not of the ungodly, but of the churches of Christ. It was the selfishness he saw in the saints that gave occasion to these sorrowful words.

This selfishness is of various kinds, and shows itself in various ways. It is selfishness in reference to the things of Christ; or in reference to the Church of Christ; or in reference to the work given us to do; or in reference to the sacrifices we are called upon to undergo, and the toils we are called upon to endure. It would be easy to show how God's chastisements are pointed at all these forms of selfishness, aiming deadly blows at each one of them from the outermost to the innermost circle. But this is too large a field. We shall merely take up the first, and even it we can only touch upon. It is the most

important of them all, and stands so connected with the rest that whatever uproots it destroys the other also.

Selfishness, in reference to the things of Christ, obviously springs from coldness towards Christ Himself. A preference of self to Christ is its root and source. Anything, therefore, that tends to obscure or keep out of view the person of Christ must lead to selfishness. It may be the love of the world; it may be the love of the creature, it may be the love of man's applause.

These are the dark bodies that eclipse the glory of a living Savior and nourish self. But these are not all. Satan has deeper devices still. He brings in religion between us and the Savior! Religious acts, ordinances, duties, are all turned by him into so many instruments for exalting self and lowering the Savior. But even this is not all. He has a subtler device still for these last days. He is trying to make the work of Christ a substitute for His person, to fix attention so much upon the one as to exclude the other. The result of this is a thoroughly selfish and sectarian religion. I know this is delicate ground, but the evil is an augmenting one and ought to be made known.

There are not a few who are so occupied with truth that they forget "the true one," so occupied with faith that they lose sight of its personal object, so given to dwelling upon the work of Christ that they overlook His person. They seem to regard the latter subject as a matter, if not beyond them, at least one about which it will be time enough to concern themselves when they see Him face to face. What He is seems a question of small importance, provided they know that He has accomplished a work by which they may secure eternal life. "We are forgiven," they say, "we have peace- all is well." They take but little interest in the person of Him who has purchased these blessings. The redemption is all, and the Redeemer is nothing, or, at least, very little! The sufficiency of His work is all, the glory and excellence of His person, nothing! What is this but selfishness? We get all the benefit we can out of the work of Christ, and then leave Him alone! And this selfishness introduces itself everywhere into the actions and thinking of this class. We can trace it in the mold of their doctrines. Their views of the atonement are selfish, being framed not upon the principle of how God is to get His purpose fulfilled and His glory displayed, but simply of how a sinner is to be saved. Their views of Jehovah's sovereignty and electing grace are selfish, being just so many devices for taking the sinner out of God's hands, and leaving him in his own control. . Their views of the Spirit's work are selfish, being just an attempt to make His aid appear less absolutely indispensable and man's own skill and strength of very considerable avail in the matter of salvation. But even where those selfish views of doctrine have not been adopted, there is a latent tendency toward selfishness among many, which can only be ascribed to their neglect of the person of Christ.

But what has chastisement to do with this? Much every way. Chiefly in this that it throws us more entirely for consolation and strength upon the person

of the Savior. Never do we feel more brought into contact with a living personal Savior than in our days of sorrow. It is Jesus- Jesus alone- Jesus Himself- whom we feel to be absolutely necessary. The truth is precious; His work is precious; but it is with Him that we have chiefly to do it is to Him that we pour out our sorrows.

Thus by creating a necessity for our leaning on the person of Jesus (blessed necessity!) affliction strikes at that which was the root of selfishness. By bringing before us another and far more glorious self, it absorbs our own miserable self, until in the person of Jesus we lose sight of our own selves altogether. There is nothing that so makes us acquainted with Christ Himself as sorrow; and hence, there is nothing so efficacious in eradicating self. It is God's cure for selfishness. It is His way of making us seek, not our own, but the things that are Jesus Christ's. It is His way of carrying us beyond truth even to "him that is true." Truth is precious, but in itself it is cold. But the glory of the Gospel is this that it carries us up beyond truth to its living fountainhead. No, it brings us into the very bosom of Him who came out of the Father's bosom and has now returned to it carrying with Him all those whom the Father has given Him, there, with Him to abide in happy fellowship, world without end.

This, however, is a large subject, and these are but a few hints. We cannot, however, pursue them further here. We pass on to notice the other evil against which the rebukes of God are directed.

2. Worldliness. We have seen that God's cure for selfishness is the setting before us of another self to absorb our own in the person of Jesus. We have now to see that His cure for worldliness is the bringing before us of another world, more glorious than that which He calls on us to forsake. There is no thorough cure for it but this. It is lack of faith that makes us worldlings; and when the believing eye gets fixed on the world to come, then we learn to set our affections on things above. So long, however, as all here is bright, we are content with them; we allow ourselves to sink down and settle quietly among the things of earth. But when God unroofs our dwelling, or tears up its foundation by an earthquake, then we are forced to look upward and seek a better and more enduring portion. Many such shocks, however, are often needed before our souls are broken off from their cleaving to the dust.

The opposite of worldliness is heavenly mindedness or spiritual mindedness. This, the new relish which the Holy Spirit imparts at conversion, in some measure produces. But it is feeble. It easily gives way. It is not keen enough to withstand much temptation. God's wish is to impart a keener relish for the things of God and to destroy the relish for the things of time. This He effects by blighting all objects in which there was earthly sweetness, so that by being deprived of objects to "mind" on earth, it may of necessity be led to "mind" the things above. He dries up all the "nether springs" of earthly joy, that we may betake ourselves to the "upper springs" which can never fail.

There is much worldliness among the saints. There is worldliness in their motives and actions, worldliness in their domestic life and in their interaction with society, there is worldliness in the arrangements of their households and in the education of their families; there is worldliness in their expenditure, so much being laid out for self, so little for God; there is worldliness in their religious schemes, and movements, and societies; there is worldliness in their reading, and in their conversation; there is, in short, too much of the spirit of fervent worldliness about their whole deportment, and little of calm, happy superiority to the things of earth. They are fretted, disturbed, bustled just like the world. They grudge labor, or fatigue, or expense, or annoyance in the cause of Christ, or in serving their fellow-men. They have much of earth, little of Heaven about them. They are not largehearted, openhanded- willing to spend and be spent, unmoved and unruffled, as those whose eye is ever set on the incorruptible inheritance on which they so soon shall enter. They are low and un aspiring in the things of God.

Perhaps there are few things against which we require to be more warned than against this spirit of worldliness. The Church is very prone to forget her pilgrim character in this present evil world and to live as a citizen of earth. Her dignity as the eternally chosen of the Father is lost sight of; her hope as the inheritor of the glory and the kingdom of the Son is obscured. And oh, how much of sorrow she is preparing for herself by thus losing sight of her calling! What desolation may be even now hovering over the tabernacle of many a saint, because they will not come out and be separate, because they refuse to be "strangers on the earth as all their fathers were." Sad it is, indeed, that we should need affliction to teach us this!

Why should we whose home and treasure are above, ever again seek our home or our treasure here? Why should we stoop from our heavenly elevation to mingle again with the company which we have forsaken? Have we repented of our choice? Are we ashamed of our pilgrim staff and our pilgrim road? Surely not. Oh, if to be a stranger on earth is to be divided from sin and sinful appetites, from the seducing vanities and worthless mockeries of the world, from the fascinating beauty and perilous splendor of this decaying scene- if to be a stranger on earth is to be a friend of God, a member of the heavenly household, an expectant of the kingdom, an heir apparent of the crown of glory- who would not be a stranger here?

What higher honor would we seek than to share the homelessness of Jesus, the homelessness of the Church from the beginning? Why should we seek to enter into nearer fellowship and dearer relationship with such a world as this? If we knew of no fairer heritage, we might not be wondered at for lusting after our forsaken pleasures. But we have the pleasures that are at God's right hand forever, and what are earth's allurements to us? What to us are the sights and sounds of earth, who "shall see the king in his beauty," and

hear His voice, into whose lips grace is poured? What to us is the green fertility of earth, who shall enter into the possession of the new earth, when "the winter is past, the rain over and gone"? What to us is the gay glory of a city's wealth and pomp, who shall be made citizens of the New Jerusalem, where dwells the glory of God and of the Lamb, whose foundations are of precious stones, whose walls are of jasper, whose gates are of pearl, whose streets and pavements are of transparent gold?

Let us, then, "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear." Let our loins be girt about and our lamps burning, and let us be as men ready to go forth to meet our returning Lord. If we watch not, if we reject the warning, our chastisement will be sharp and sore.

The present seems a time of peculiar warning to the saints. Many are lying under the rebukes of the Lord. Judgment has begun at the house of God. God is dealing very closely and very solemnly with His own. On many a saint at this moment is His rod lying heavily, for He would sincerely warn and arouse them before the evil day arrive. He is dealing with them as He dealt with Lot on the night before the desolation of Sodom. Let the saints, then, be warned. Let them be zealous and repent and do their first works. Come out, be separate, touch not the unclean thing! Put off the works of darkness; put on the armor of light. He is calling on them to get up to a higher level in the spiritual life, to be done with wavering, indecision, and compromise. He is calling on them to consider the apostle and High Priest of their profession and walk in His steps. He is calling on them to look at the cloud of witnesses, and lay aside every weight, especially that sin (of unbelief) which does so easily beset them, and to run with patience the race set before them- "looking unto Jesus."

Church of the living God! Be warned. Please not yourself, even as Jesus pleased not Himself. Live for Him, not for yourself, for Him, not for the world. Walk worthy of your name and calling, worthy of Him who bought you as His bride, worthy of your everlasting inheritance.

Up, too, and warn the world! The chastisements that are falling so thickly on you are forerunners of the fiery shower that is preparing for the earth. Up, then, and warn them- urge and entreat them to flee from gathering wrath. They have no time to lose, neither have you. The last storm is on the wing. Its dark skirts are already visible in the heavens. Judgment has begun at the house of God, and if so, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God!

The Family Discipline by Horatius Bonar

"Train up a child in the way he should go" is the injunction God lays on us. But it is, moreover, the principle on which He Himself is acting with His Church. He is training up His children here. This is the true character of His dealings with them. The education of His saints is the object He has in view. It is training for the kingdom; it is education for eternity.

How momentous, then, is the training! It is God who is carrying it on by the Holy Spirit. It is the Church, which is the Body of Christ, that is the subject of it. And it is to prepare her for an everlasting kingdom! In bringing many sons unto glory, it was needful that even the Captain of their salvation should be made perfect through suffering. Surely, then, God lays vast stress upon this discipline. In His estimation it is no unimportant nor unmeaning exercise. Knowing this, the apostle exhorts us on this very point, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord." It is too solemn to be despised, too momentous to be overlooked. The education of God's family is concerned with it. The preparation of an heir of glory depends on it.

This discipline begins at our conversion. The moment we are taken into the family it commences. "He scourges every son whom he receives." It is not always visible; neither are we at all times conscious of its operation. Nevertheless, from the very day that "we are begotten again to a lively hope" it begins.

It ends only with life, or in the case of the last generation of the Church, with their being "caught up to meet the Lord in the air." It is a whole lifetime's process. It is a daily, an hourly discipline which admits of no cessation. The rod may not always be applied, but still the discipline goes on.

1. It is the discipline of love. Every step of it is kindness. There is no wrath or vengeance in any part of the process. The discipline of the school may be harsh and stern, but that of the family is love. We are sure of this; and the consolation which it affords is unutterable. Love will not wrong us. There will be no needless suffering. Were this but kept in mind there would be fewer hard thoughts of God among men, even when His strokes are most severe. I know not a better illustration of what the feelings of a saint should be, in the hour of bitterness, than the case of Richard Cameron's father. The aged saint was in prison "for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." The bleeding head of his martyred son was brought to him by his unfeeling persecutors, and he was asked derisively if he knew it. "I know it, I know it," said the father, as he kissed the mangled forehead of his fair-haired son, "it is my son's; my own dear son's! It is the Lord! good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me or mine, but who has made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days."

2. It is the discipline of wisdom. He who administers it is the "God only wise." What deep wisdom then must there be in all His dealings! He knows

exactly what we need and how to supply it. He knows what evils are to be found in us, and how these may be best removed. His training is no random work. It is carried on with exquisite skill. The time and the way and the instrument are all according to the perfect wisdom of God. The fittest time is chosen, just the very moment when discipline is called for, and when it would be most profitable. The surest, most direct, and at the same time gentlest method is devised. The instrument which will be surest yet safest, most effectual yet least painful, is brought into operation. For all is wisdom in the discipline of God.

3. It is the discipline of faithfulness. "In faithfulness you have afflicted me," said David. All is the doing of a faithful God- a God who is faithful to us as well as faithful to Himself. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," says Solomon; and the believer finds in trouble the faithfulness of the truest of friends. He is so faithful that He will not pass by a single fault that He sees in us, but will forthwith make it known that it may be removed. He gave this command to Israel, "You shall in any wise rebuke your neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him," (Lev 19:17) and He Himself acts upon the command He gave. He is too faithful a Father to suffer sin upon His children unrepented. He is true to us, whether in sending the evil or the good; shall we not say, truer and more faithful when He inflicts the evil than when He bestows the good? It almost at times seems to break the heart of a loving friend to be obliged to say or do anything severe toward the friend he loves. Yet for love's sake he will do it. In faithfulness he will not shrink from it. And in doing so, is he not true to his friend? So with a chastening God. He is faithful when He blesses- more faithful when He chastens. This surely is consolation. It may well allay all murmuring and establish our hearts in peace.

4. It is the discipline of power. He who is carrying it on is not one who can be baffled and forced to give up His design. He is able to carry it out in the unlikeliest circumstances and against the most resolute resistance. Everything must give way before Him. This thought is, I confess, to me one of the most comforting connected with the discipline. If it could fail! If God could be frustrated in His designs after we have suffered so much, it would be awful! To be scourged and suffer pain by one who is not able to make good to us the profit of this would add inconceivable bitterness to the trial. And then our hearts are so hard, our wills so stubborn, that nothing save an Almighty pressure applied to them can work the desired change. Oh, when the soul is at strife within itself, battling in desperate conflict with its stormy lusts, when the flesh rises up in its strength and refuses to yield, when the whole heart appears like iron or is adamant, it is most blessed to think upon God's chastisements as the discipline of power! It is this that assures us that all shall yet be well. And it is in the strength of this assurance that we gird ourselves for the battle, knowing that we must be more than conquerors

through Him that loved us.

There might be love in the dealing- love to the uttermost- and yet all be in vain. For love is oftentimes helpless, unable to do anything for the beloved object. There might be wisdom, too, and yet it might prove wholly ineffectual. There might also be untiring faithfulness, yet no results. It might be altogether impotent even in its fondest vigilance. It might be baffled in its most earnest attempts to bless. But when it is infinite power that is at work, we are sure of every obstacle being surmounted, and everything that is blessed coming most surely to pass. My sickbed may be most lovingly tended, most skillfully provided for, most faithfully watched, and I may be most sweetly soothed by this fond and unwearied care; yet, if there be no power to heal, no resistless energy such as sweeps all hindrances before it, then I may still lie hopeless there; but, if the power to heal be present, the power that makes all diseases flee its touch, the power that, if need be, can raise the dead, then I know of a truth that all is well.

Oh, it is blessed and comforting to remember that it is the discipline of power that is at work upon us! God's treatment must succeed. It cannot miscarry or be frustrated even in its most arduous efforts, even in reference to its minutest objects. It is the mighty power of God that is at work within us and upon us, and this is our consolation. It is the grasp of an infinite hand that is upon us, and nothing can resist its pressure. All is love, all is wisdom, and all is faithfulness, yet all is also power. The very possibility of failure is thus taken away. Were it not for this power there could be no certainty of blessing, and were it not for this certainty, how poor and partial would our comfort be! He, yes, He who chastises us is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph 3:20).

Hence to a soul, conscious of utter helplessness and weary of the struggle within, between the spirit and the flesh, there is "strong consolation" in remembering the power of Him whose hand is now grasping him so firmly on every side. His sorely tossed spirit finds peace in calling to mind "the years of the right hand of the Most High"- all the "works of the Lord and his wonders of old." The "strength of Israel" is the name he delights in, as the name of his Chastener. He thus bethinks himself, "The God who made these heavens and stretched them out in their vastness and majesty, who moves these stars in their courses and arrests them at a word, is the God who is chastening me. He who raises and stills the mighty deep and all the multitude of its waves, the God of the tempest and of the earthquake, the framer of light and dark, the wielder of the lightning and the builder of the everlasting hills, is the God who is now laying His rod so heavily upon me." Thus each new proof or aspect of Jehovah's power becomes a new source of consolation in the day of chastisement and sorrow.

Such, then, is the nature of the family discipline when viewed in reference to

God. Love, wisdom, faithfulness, and power unite to devise and carry it out. It must, then, be perfect discipline, the completest and most successful that can be thought of or desired. It is well to look at it in this light, for it is thus that we become entirely satisfied with all that comes to pass and feel that "it is well." But let us consider it in another aspect. We have seen what it is when flowing out of God; let us see what it is when operating upon man.

As we observed before, God's object in chastisement is the education of His children, the training up of the saints. It is their imperfect spiritual condition that makes this so necessary. And now we proceed to inquire in what way it works, and toward what regions of the soul it is specially directed. For while, doubtless, it embraces the whole soul in all its parts and powers, it may be well to consider it as more especially set to work upon its mind, its will, its heart, and its conscience.

1. It is the training of the mind. We are naturally most unteachable as well as most ignorant, neither knowing anything nor willing to know. The ease of prosperous days augments the evil. God at length interposes and compels us to learn. "The rod and reproof give wisdom" (Prov 29:15). He sends trial and that makes us willing to learn. Our unteachableness gives way. We become aware of our ignorance. We seek teaching from on high. God begins his work of instruction. Light pours in on every side. We grow amazingly in knowledge. We learn the meaning of words now which we had hitherto used but as familiar sounds. Scripture shines out before us in new effulgence; it flashes into us; every verse seems to contain a sunbeam; dark places become light; every promise stands out in illuminated splendor; things hard to be understood become in a moment plain.

How fast we learn in a day of sorrow! It is as if affliction awoke our powers and lent them new quickness of perception. We advance more in the knowledge of Scripture in a single day than in years before. We learn "songs in the night," though such music was unknown before. A deeper experience has taken us down into the depths of Scripture and shown us its hidden wonders. Luther used to say, "Were it not for tribulation I should not understand Scripture." And every sorrowing saint responds to this, as having felt its truth- felt it as did David, when he said, "Blessed is the man whom you chasteness, . . . and teach him out of your law"(Psalm 94:12). "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn your statutes" (Psalm 119:71). What teaching, what training of the mind goes on upon a sickbed, or under the pressure of grief! And, oh, what great and wondrous things will even some little trial whisper in the ear of a soul that is "learning of the Father"!

In some cases this profit is almost unfelt, at least during the continuance of the process. We think that we are learning nothing. Sorrow overwhelms us. Disaster stuns us. We become confused, nervous, agitated, or perhaps

insensible. We seem to derive no profit. Yet before long we begin to feel the blessed results. Maturity of judgment, patience in listening to the voice of God, a keener appetite for His Word, a quicker discernment of its meaning—these are soon realized as the gracious results of chastisement. The mind has undergone a most thorough discipline, and has, moreover, made wondrous progress in the knowledge of divine truth through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

2. It is the training of the will. The will is the seat of rebelliousness. Here the warfare is carried on. "The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." At conversion the will is bent in the right direction, but it is still crooked and rigid. Rebelliousness is still there. Prosperous days may sometimes conceal it so that we are almost unconscious of its strength. But it still exists. Furnace heat is needed for softening and strengthening it. No milder remedy will do. "It requires," says a suffering saint, "all the energy of God to bend my will to His." Yet it must be done. The will is the soul's citadel. Hence, it is the will that God seems so specially to aim at in chastisement. Fire after fire does He kindle in order to soften it; and blow after blow does He fetch down on it to straighten it. Nor does He rest until He has made it thoroughly flexible and hammered out of it the many relics of self which it contains. He will not stop His hand until He has thoroughly marred our self-formed plans and shown us the folly of our self-chosen ways.

This is specially the case in long-continued trials; either when these come stroke after stroke in sad succession, or when one fearful stroke at the outset has left behind it consequences which years perhaps will not fully unfold. The bending and straightening of the will is often a long process, during which the soul has to pass through waters deep and many, through fires hot and ever kindling up anew. Protracted trials seem specially aimed at the will. Its perversity and stiffness can only be wrought out of it by a long succession of trials. It is only by degrees that it becomes truly pliable and is brought into harmony with the will of God. We can at a stroke lop off the unseemly branch; but to give a proper bent to the tree itself, we require time and assiduous appliances for months or years. Yet the will must give way. However proud, however forward, it must bend. God will not leave it until He has made it one with His own.

3. It is the training of the heart. Man's heart beats false to God. It is true to many things but false to Him. When first the Holy Spirit touches it, and shows it "the exceeding riches of the grace of God," then it becomes in some measure true. Yet it is only in part. Much falseheartedness still remains. It clings too fondly to the creature. It cleaves to the dust. It is not wholly God's. But this cannot be. God must have the heart; no, and He must have it beating truly toward Him. He is jealous of our love, and grieves over its feebleness or its falling away. It is love that He wants, and with nothing but truehearted

love will He be satisfied. For this it is that He chastises.

These false throbbings of the heart; these goings out after other objects than Himself He cannot allow, but must correct or else forego His claim. Hence, He smites and spares not until He has made us sensible of our guilt in this respect. He strips off the leaves whose beauty attracted us; He cuts down the flowers whose fragrance fascinated us; He tears off one string after another from the lyre whose music charmed us. Then when He has showed us each object of earth in its nakedness or deformity, then He presents Himself to us in the brightness of His own surpassing glory. And thus He wins the heart. Thus He makes it true to Him. Thus He makes us ashamed of our falseheartedness to Himself and to the Son of His love.

Yet this is no easy process. This training is hard and sore. The heart bleeds under it. Yet it must go on. No part of it can be spared. Nor will it cease until the heart is won! If the Chastener should stop His hand before this is effected, where would be His love? What poor, what foolish affection! He knew this when He said, "Let them alone"; and it was the last thing that His love consented to do, after all else had failed. One of the sharpest, sorest words He ever spoke to Israel was, "Why should you be stricken any more?" Let us remember this, and not faint, even though the heart has been long bleeding. Let us remember it, and seek to make the sorrow shorter by gladly joining with Him in His plan for getting possession of our whole heart. We need not grudge it. He has "good measure" to give us in return. His love will taste the sweeter, and it will abide and satisfy us forever. It is well for us to be thus trained to love Him here, with whom, in love and fellowship unbroken, we are to spend the everlasting day.

4. It is the training of the conscience. A seared conscience is the sinner's heritage. It is upon this that the Holy Spirit first lays His hand when He awakens the soul from its sleep of death. He touches the conscience, and then the struggles of conviction come. He then pacifies it by the sprinkling of the blood, showing it Jesus and His cross. Then giving it to taste forgiveness, it rests from all its tumults and fears. Thoughts of peace are ever breathed into it from the sight of the bleeding sacrifice. It trembles no more, for it sees that that which made it tremble is the very thing concerning which the blood of Christ speaks peace. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Thus it is softened. Its first terrors upon awakening could not be called a softening. But now conscious forgiveness and realized peace with God have been to it like the mild breath of spring to the ice of winter. It has become soft and tender. Yet only so in part.

God's desire, however, is to make it altogether tender. He wishes it to be sensitive in regard to the very touch of sin, and earnest in its pantings after perfect holiness. To effect this, He afflicts; and affliction goes directly home to the conscience. The death of the widow's son at Sarepta immediately awakened her conscience, and she cried to the prophet, "O man of God, are

you come to call my sin to remembrance?"(I Kings 17:18). So God by chastisement lays His finger upon the conscience, and forthwith it springs up into new life. We are made to feel as if God had now come down to us, as if He were now looking into our hearts and commencing a narrow search. Moreover, we see in this affliction God's estimate of sin. Not, indeed, the full estimate. No, that we only learn from the sufferings of Jesus. But still we gather from this new specimen of sin's bitter fruits somewhat of His mind regarding sin. This teaches the conscience by making the knowledge of sin a thing of experience- an experience that is deepening with every new trial. "If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he shows them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He opens also their ear to discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity"(Job 36:8-10).

In these last days how little is there of tenderness of conscience! The world seems to know nothing of it save the name. It is a world without a conscience! And how much do we find the Church of Christ a partaker in the world's sins! "Evil communications corrupt good manners." It is sad to observe in many saints, amid much zeal and energy and love, the lack of a tender conscience. For this God is smiting us, and will smite us yet more heavily until He has made it thoroughly tender and sensitive all over, "hating even the garments spotted by the flesh." This training of the conscience is a thing of far greater moment than many deem it. God will not rest until He has wrought it. And if the saints still continue to overlook it, if they will not set themselves in good earnest to ask for it, and to strive against everything that would tend to produce searedness and insensibility, they may yet expect some of the sharpest strokes that the hand of God has ever yet administered. Such, then, is the family discipline! We have seen it as it comes forth from God, and we have seen it as it operates upon man. And is it not all well? What is there about it that should disquiet us, or call forth one murmur either of the lip or heart? That which opens up to us so much more of God and lets us more fully into the secrets of His heart must be blessed, however hard to bear. That which discovers to us the evils within ourselves, which makes us teachable and wise, which gives to the stiff will, flexibility and obedience, which teaches the cold heart to love and expands each narrowed affection, which melts the callous conscience into tender sensitiveness, which trains up the whole soul for the glorious kingdom- that must be precious indeed. Besides, it is the Father's will; and is not this enough for the trustful child? Is not chastisement just one of the methods by which He intimates to us what He would have us to be? Is not His way of leading us to the kingdom the safest, surest, shortest way? It is still the fatherly hand that is guiding us. What though in seeking to lift us up to a higher level, it has to lay hold of us with a firmer, or it may be a rougher grasp? It is still the paternal voice "that speaks unto us as unto children"- dear children- only in a louder, sharper

tone to constrain the obedience of His too reluctant sons.

One remark more would I add to these concerning this family discipline. It is not designed even for a moment to separate them and their God, or to overshadow their souls with one suspicion of their Father's heart. That it has done so at times, I know; but that it ought never to do so I am most firmly persuaded. Is it not one of the tests of sonship, and shall that, without which we are not accounted sons, make us doubt our sonship, or suspect the love of our God? That love claims at all times, whether in sorrow or in joy, our simple, fullhearted, peaceful confidence. It is at all times the same, and chastisement is but a more earnest expression of its infinite sincerity and depth. Let us do justice to it, and to Him out of whom it flows. Let us not give it the unworthy treatment which it too often receives at our thankless hands. Let us beware of "falling from grace" at the very time when God is coming down to us to spread out before us more largely than before all the treasures of His grace. "We have known and believed the love that God has to us," is to be our song. It ought always to be the family song! And shall it cease or sink low at the very time when it ought to be loudest and strongest? Should not trial just draw from us the apostle's triumphant boast: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:35-39). For is it not just when we are brought under chastening that we enter upon the realities of consolation, the certainties of love, and the joys of heavenly fellowship in ways unknown and unimagined before?

The Family Rods

God's rods may seem to speak in frowns and anger, but it is not so; there is not a glance of vengeance in the Chastener's eye. It is a correcting rod, but not a destroying one. Its object is not to punish but to chasten; not to injure but to bless. God has, however, not one rod for His children, but many. For each child He has a peculiar rod, and at different times He uses different rods. It will be profitable for us to consider what those are, and how they are applied.

1. Bodily sickness. The body operates very powerfully upon the soul both for good and for evil. In what way or to what extent we cannot tell. Nor do I wish to discuss this question at all. But, knowing how the soul is acted on by the body, I cannot help think that one of God's designs in sickness is to operate upon the soul through the body. We are not conscious of this; we

cannot analyze the process; the effects are hidden from view. Yet it does seem as if sickness of body were made to contribute directly to the health of the soul in some way or other known only to God. Hence, the apostle speaks of delivering "such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor 5:5). On this point, however, I do not dwell; only it would be well for us to consider whether God is not by this intimating to us the exceeding danger of pampering the flesh: for the weakening of the flesh does help forward the strengthening of the spirit; and the mortifying of our members which are upon the earth- the crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts- does tend to quicken and invigorate the soul. Apart from this, however, there are other things to be kept in view.

Sickness prostrates us. It cuts into the very center of our carnal nature; it exposes in all their deformity "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." What vanity is seen in these upon a sickbed! These are our three idols; and these, sickness dashes down into the dust.

Sickness takes us aside and sets us alone with God. We are taken into His private chamber, and there He converses with us face to face. The world is far off, our relish for it is gone, and we are alone with God. Many are the words of grace and truth which He then speaks to us. All our former props are struck away, and we must now lean on God alone. The things of earth are felt to be vanity; man's help useless. Man's praise and man's sympathy desert us; we are cast wholly upon God that we may learn that His praise and His sympathy are enough. "If it were not for pain," says one, "I should spend less time with God. If I had not been kept awake with pain, I should have lost one of the sweetest experiences I ever had in my life. The disorder of my body is the very help I want from God; and if it does its work before it lays me in the dust, it will raise me up to Heaven." It was thus that Job was "chastened upon his bed with pain, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain," that after being tried he might "come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

Sickness teaches that activity of service is not the only way in which God is glorified. "They also serve who only stand and wait." Active duty is that which man judges most acceptable; but God shows us that in patience and suffering He is also glorified. Perhaps we were pursuing a path of our own and required to be arrested. Perhaps we were too much harassed by a bustling world and needed retirement, yet could find no way of obtaining it until God laid us down, and drew us aside into a desert place, because of the multitude pressing upon us.

No one of the family rods is more in use than this, sometimes falling lightly on us, at other times more heavily. Let us kiss the rod. Let us open our mouth wide to the blessing, seeking so to profit by each bodily ailment, slight or severe, that it may bring forth in us the peaceable fruits of

righteousness. "I know," says one, "of no greater blessing than health, except pain and sickness."

2. Bereavement. This is the bitterest of all earthly sorrows. It is the sharpest arrow in the quiver of God. To love tenderly and deeply and then to part; to meet together for the last time on earth; to bid farewell for time; to have all past remembrances of home and kindred broken up- this is the reality of sorrow. To look upon that face that shall smile on us no more; to close those eyes that shall see us no more; to press those lips that shall speak to us no more; to stand by the cold side of father, mother, brother, sister, friend, yet hear no sound and receive no greeting; to carry to the tomb the beloved of our hearts, and then to return to a desolate home with a blank in one region of our souls, which shall never again be filled until Jesus come with all His saints; this is the bitterness of grief; this is the wormwood and the gall!

It is this rod which ever and anon God is laying upon us. Nor is there any that we need more than this. By it He is making room for Himself in hearts that had been filled with other objects and engrossed with other loves. He is jealous of our affection, for He claims it all as His own; and every idol He will utterly abolish. For our sakes as well as for His own He can allow no rival in the heart. Perhaps the joys of an earthly home are stealing away our hearts from the many mansions above. God breaks in upon us in mercy and turns that home into a wilderness. Our sin finds us out; we mourn over it and seek anew to realize our heavenly citizenship and set out anew upon our pilgrim way, alone and yet not alone, for the Father is with us. Perhaps we are sitting "at ease in Zion," comfortable and contented, amid the afflictions of a suffering Church and the miseries of a world that owns no Savior and fears no God. Jehovah speaks and we awake. He takes to Himself some happy saint, or smites to the dust some wretched sinner. We are troubled at the stroke. We mourn our lethargy. While we slept, a fellow-saint has gone up to be with Christ, and a fellow-sinner has gone down to be with the devil and his angels. The death of the one stirs us up; the death of the other solemnizes and overawes us.

Thus as saint after saint ascends to God, we begin to feel that Heaven is far more truly the family home than earth. We have far more brethren above than we have below. And each bereavement reminds us of this. It reminds us, too, that the coming of the Lord draws near, and makes us look out more wistfully from our earthly home for the first streaks of the rising dawn. It kindles in us strong desires for the day of happy meeting in our Father's house, when we shall clasp inseparable hands and climb in company the everlasting hills. Meanwhile it bids us give our hearts to Jesus only. It does for us what the departure of the two strangers from Heaven did to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration- it leaves us alone with Jesus. It turns into deep experience that longing for home contained in the apostle's words, "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better."

The more that bereavement transforms earth into a desert, the more are our desires drawn up to Heaven. Our treasures having been transferred to Heaven, our hearts must follow them. Earth's hopes are smitten, and we are taught to look for "that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." The night is falling and the flowers are folding up; but as they do so they bid us look upward and see star after star appearing upon the darkening sky.

3. Adversity. This may be the loss of substance, or it may be the loss of our good name, or it may be the falling away of friends, or it may be the wrath of enemies, or it may be the disappointment of our hopes- these are what is meant by adversity. But let Job tell us what it means. "Behold, he breaks down, and it cannot be built again, he shuts up a man, and there can be no opening" (Job 12:14). "He has made me weary: you have made desolate all my company.... I was at ease, but he has broken me asunder: he has also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark; his archers compass me round about, he cleaves my reins asunder, and does not spare; . . . he breaks me with breach upon breach, he runs upon me like a giant.... My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death" (Job 16:7,12,13,14,16). "My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart" (Job 17:11). "He has fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness in my paths; he has stripped me of my glory and taken the crown from my head; he has destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and my hope has he removed like a tree . . . He has put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintance are verily estranged from me" (Job 19:8-10,13). These are some of the drops in the bitter cup of adversity that was given to that patient saint to drink. And they are recorded for our use, on whom the ends of the world have come, and to whom these last days may perhaps fill a cup as bitter and protracted as his.

Yet let us count it all joy when we fall into diverse tribulations, knowing this, that the testing of our faith works patience: but "let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4). We are cast into poverty, but how can we be poor so long as Christ is rich; and is not this poverty sent to make us prize His unsearchable riches and to buy of Him the gold tried in the fire that we may be rich? Our good name is lost through slander and false accusation. The finger of public scorn is perhaps pointed at us, and wicked men are exalted over us triumphing in our reproach. Yet have we not the approving eye of God, and is it not enough if He still honors us and knows our innocence? Let our good name go if God sees fit thus to humble us. We have the "white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows but he that receives it" (Rev 2:17).

Friends fall off and enemies arise: false brethren turn against us, and we are doomed to bear the revilings and persecutions of those whom we have never

wronged but ever loved. But the friendship of Jesus is still ours. No earthly disaster or persecutor can ever rob us of that. No, the coldness of those we counted on as tried and true only draws us the closer to Him, the warmth of whose love knows no abatement nor end. Joseph passed thoroughly this trial, and the Lord set him upon Pharaoh's throne.

Moses passed through it and became "king in Jeshurun." Job passed through it and was blessed a thousandfold. Daniel passed through it and was exalted with double honor. Let us "take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy who endure. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:10,11).

Oftentimes nothing but adversity will do for us. "I spoke unto you in your prosperity; but you said, I will not hear. This has been your manner from your youth, that you obey not my voice" (Jer 22:21). We need to be stripped of every earthly portion that we may seek entirely our portion in Jehovah Himself. We need to be turned out of a home on earth that we may seek a home in Heaven. Earth's music is too seducing and takes away our relish for the new song. God must either hush it or take us apart into a desert place that we may no longer be led captive by it but may have our ear open only to the heavenly melody. We cannot be trusted with too full a cup, or too pleasant a resting-place. We abuse everything that God has given us, and prove ourselves not trustworthy as to any one of them. Some God cannot trust with health; they need sickness to keep them low and make them walk softly all their days. They need spare diet, lest the flesh should get the mastery. Others He cannot trust with prosperity; they need adversity to humble them, lest, like Jeshurun, they should wax "fat and kick." Others He cannot trust with riches; they must be kept poor, lest covetousness should spring up and pierce them through with many sorrows. Others He cannot trust with friends; they make idols of them, they give their hearts to them; and this interferes with the claims of Jehovah to have us altogether as His own.

But still in all this God deals with us as with the members of His own family. Never for a moment does He lose sight of this. Neither should we. So that when these things overtake us, when we are thus "judged," we should feel that we are "chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world"; we should learn not merely to submit to the rod, but to kiss and welcome it, not merely to acquiesce in chastisement, but to "rejoice in tribulation, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed." We should learn not merely to praise God in affliction, but to praise Him for it. We should see that the lot of the afflicted is far more enviable than that of him who is "let alone"; and, instead of trembling when we see the dark cloud of sorrow coming over us, we should tremble far more when we see it passing

off, lest, perchance, that which came charged with blessing to us, should, through our stoutheartedness and unteachableness, leave us callous and unblest.

Christians are "living stones," placed one by one, upon the great foundation stone laid in Zion for the heavenly temple. These stones must first be quarried out of the mass. This the Holy Spirit does at conversion. Then, when cut out, the hewing and squaring begin. And God uses affliction as His hammer and chisel for accomplishing this. Many a stroke is needed; and after being thus hewn into shape, the polishing goes on. All roughness must be smoothed away. The stone must be turned around and around on every side that no part of it may be left unpolished.

As the stones of Solomon's temple were all to be prepared at a distance and then brought to Jerusalem, there to be built together; so the living stones of the heavenly temple are all made ready here on earth, to be fitted in without the noise of an axe or hammer into the glorious building in heaven made without hands.

Every Christian then must be polished here on earth; and while there are many ways of doing this, the most effectual is suffering. And this is God's design in chastisement. This is what the Holy Spirit effects: as like a workman He stands over each stone, touching and retouching it, turning it on every side, marking its blemishes and roughness, and then applying His tools to effect the desired shape and polish. Some parts of the stone are so rugged and hard that nothing except heavy and repeated strokes and touches will smooth them down. They resist every milder treatment. And yet, in patient love, this heavenly Workman carries on the Father's purpose concerning us. He labors until every part is polished and shaped according to His likeness. No pains are spared, no watchfulness relaxed, until we are made entirely like Him, being changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.

To make us "partakers of his holiness" is God's great design in chastisement. Come, then, let us question ourselves and endeavor to ascertain what affliction has been doing for us and what progress we are making in putting off the old man and in putting on the new. Am I getting rid of my worldliness, and becoming heavenly minded? Am I getting rid of my pride, my passion, my stubbornness, and becoming humble, mild, and teachable? Are all my idols displaced and broken, and my creature comforts do I use as though I used them not? Am I caring less for the honors of time, for man's love, man's smile, man's applause? Am I crucified to the world and is the world crucified to me by the cross of Christ; or am I still ashamed of His reproach, and am I half-reluctant to follow Him through bad report and through good, through honor and through shame? Do I count it my glory and my joy to walk where He has led the way, to suffer wherein He suffered, to

drink of the cup of which He drank?

Do I shrink back from the crown of thorns? Am I every day becoming more and more unlike the children of earth, more and more fashioned after the likeness, and bearing the special characteristics of Jesus. Do I realize this earth as neither my portion nor my rest, and, knowing that one chain may bind me as fast to the world as a thousand, am I careful to shake off every fetter that may bind me to the vanities of a world like this? Is chastisement really purifying me? Am I conscious of its blessed effects upon my soul?

The Arousing

It may have been long since the Holy Spirit awoke us from our sleep of death. Into that same deep sleep we know that we shall never fall again. He who awoke us will keep us awake until Jesus come. In that sense we shall sleep no more. But still much of our drowsiness remains. We are not wholly awake, and oftentimes much of our former sleep returns. Dwelling on the world's enchanted ground, our eyes close, our senses are bewildered, our conscience loses its sensitiveness, and our faculties their energy; we fall asleep even upon our watchtower, forgetful that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.

While thus asleep, or half-asleep, all goes wrong. Our movements are sluggish and lifeless. Our faith waxes feeble; our love is chilled; our zeal cools down. The freshness of other years is gone. Our boldness has forsaken us. Our schemes are carelessly devised and drowsily executed. The work of God is hindered by us instead of being helped forward. We are a drag upon it. We mar it. But God will not have it so. Neither for His work's sake nor for His saints' sake can He allow this to continue. We must be aroused at whatever cost. We are not to be allowed to sleep as do others. We must watch and be sober, for we are children of the light and of the day, not of the night nor of darkness. God cannot permit us thus to waste life, as if its only use were to be sported with or trifled away. Duties lazily and lifelessly performed; halfhearted prayers; a deportment, blameless enough perhaps, but tame and unexpressive, and, therefore uninfluential; words well and wisely spoken perhaps but without weight - these are not things which God can tolerate in a saint. It is either the coldness of Sardis to which He says, "If you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you." Or it is the lukewarmness of Laodicea to which He says, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth."

In arousing us God proceeds at first most gently. He touches us slightly, as the angel did Elijah under the juniper tree, that He may awaken us. He sends some slight visitation to shake us out of our security. He causes us to hear some distant noise: it may be the tumults of the nations, or it may be the tidings of famine, or war, or pestilence afar off. Perhaps this entirely fails;

we slumber on as securely as ever. Our life is as listless and as useless as ever. Then He comes nearer, and makes His voice to be heard in our own neighborhood or within the circle of our kindred. This also fails. Then He comes nearer still, for the time is hurrying on and the saint is still asleep. He speaks into our very ears. He smites upon some tender part until every fiber of our frame quivers and every pulse throbs quicker. Our very soul is stricken through as with a thousand arrows. Then we start up like one awakening out of a long sleep, and, looking round us, wonder how we could have slept so long.

But oh, how difficult it is to awaken us thoroughly! It needs stroke upon stroke in long succession to do this. For after every waking up there is the continual tendency to fall back again into slumber. So that we need both to be made awake and to be kept awake. What sorrows does our drowsiness cost us- what bleeding, broken hearts! The luxury of "ease in Zion" indulged in perhaps for years has been dearly bought.

"Think of living," was the pregnant maxim of the thoughtful German. "Your life," says another, quoting the above, "were you the pitifulest of all the sons of earth is no idle dream, but a solemn reality. It is your own. It is all you have to confront eternity with. Work then, like a star, unhasting yet unresting."

There are some Christians who work, but they do not work like men awake. They move forward in a certain track of duty, but it is with weary footstep. Their motions are constrained and cold. They do many good things, devise many good schemes, say excellent things, but the vigorous pulse of warm life is lacking. Zeal, glowing zeal- elastic and untiring- is not theirs. They neither burn themselves, no do they kindle others. There is nothing of the star about them save its coldness. They may expect some sharp stroke of chastisement, for they need it.

There are others who are only wakeful by fits and starts. They cannot be safely counted on, for their fervor depends upon the humor of the moment. A naturally impulsive temperament, of which, perhaps, they are not sufficiently aware, and which they have not sought either to crucify or to regulate, renders them uncertain in all their movements. This intermittent wakefulness effects but little. They do and they undo. They build up and they pull down. They kindle and quench the flame alternately. There is nothing of the "star" about them. They stand in need of some sore and long continued pressure to equalize the variable. fitful movements of their spirit. There are others who seem to be always wakeful, but then it is the wakefulness of bustle and restlessness. They cannot live but in the midst of stirring, and scheming, and moving to and fro. Their temperament is that nervous tremulous, impatient kind that makes rest or retirement to be felt as restraint and pain. These seldom effect much themselves, but they are often useful by their perpetual stir and friction for setting or keeping others in

motion and preventing stagnation around them. But their incessant motion prevents their being filled with the needed grace. Their continual contact with the outward things of religion hinders their inward growth and damages their spirituality. These are certainly in one sense like the star wakeful and unresting, but they move forward with such haste that instead of gathering light or giving it forth, they are losing every day the little that they possessed. A deep sharp stroke will be needed for shaking off this false fervor and imparting the true calm wakefulness of spirit, to which, as saints, they are called. It is the deepening of spiritual feeling that is needed in their case, and it takes much chastening to accomplish this.

There are others who are always steadily at work and apparently with fervor too. Yet too little communion with God shows that they are not truly awake. They work so much more than they pray that they soon become like vessels without oil. They are farther on than the last class, yet still they need arousing. They are like the star, both "unresting and unceasing, yet their light is dim. Its reflection upon a dark world is faint and pale. It is a deeper spiritual life and experience that they need; and for this, it may be there is some sore visitation in store for them.

The true wakeful life is different from all these. It is a thing of intensity and depth. It carries ever about with it the air of calm and restful dignity, of inward power and greatness. It is fervent, but not feverish; energetic, but not excited; speedy in its doings, but not hasty; prudent, but not timid or selfish; resolute and fearless, but not rash; unobtrusive and sometimes, it may be silent, yet making all around to feel its influence; full of joy and peace, yet without parade or noise; overflowing in tenderness and love, yet at the same time, faithful and true. This is the wakeful life!

But oh, before it is thoroughly attained, how much are we sometimes called upon to suffer through the rebelliousness of a carnal nature that will not let us surrender ourselves up wholly to God, and present ourselves as living sacrifices, which is our reasonable service! In thus arousing us from our slumber, chastisement not merely makes us more energetic, more laborious, but it makes us far more prayerful. Perhaps it is here that the waking up is most sensibly felt. Nothing so quickens prayer as trial. It sends us at once to our knees and shuts the door of our closet behind us. In the day of prosperity we have many comforts, many refuges to resort to; in the day of sorrow we have only one, and that is God. Our grief is too deep to tell to any other; it is too heavy for any other to soothe.

Now we awake to prayer. It was something to us before, but now it is all. Man's arm fails, and there is none but God to lean upon. Our closets, in truth, are the only places of light in a world which has now become doubly dark to us. All without and around is gloom. Clouds overshadow the whole region. Only the closet is bright and calm. How eagerly, how thankfully we betake ourselves to it now! We could spend our whole time in this happy

island of light which God has provided for us in the midst of a stormy ocean. When compelled at times to leave it, how gladly do we return to it! What peaceful hours of solitude we have there with God for our one companion! We can almost forget that the clouds of earth are still above us and its tempest still rioting around us. Prayer becomes a far more real thing than ever. It is prized now as it was never prized before. We cannot do without it. Of necessity, as well as of choice, we must pray, sending up our cries from the depths. It becomes a real asking, a real pleading. It is no form now. What new life, new energy, new earnestness are poured into each petition! It is the heart that is now speaking, and the lips cannot find words with which to give utterance to its desires. The groanings that "cannot be uttered" are all that now burst forth and ascend up into the ear of God.

Formerly, there was often the lip without the heart; now it is far oftener the heart without the lip. Now we know how "the Spirit helps our infirmities." We begin to feel what it is to "pray in the Holy Spirit." There is a new nearness to God. Communion with Him is far more of a conscious reality now. It is close dealing with a living, personal Jehovah. New arguments suggest themselves; new desires spring up; new needs disclose themselves. Our own emptiness and God's manifold fullness are brought before us so vividly that the longings of our inmost souls are kindled, and our heart cries out for God, for the living God. It was David's sorrows that quickened prayer in him. It was in the belly of the whale that Jonah was taught to cry aloud. And it was among the thorns of the wilderness and the fetters of Babylon that Manasseh learned to pray.

Church of Christ- chosen heritage of the Lord- awake! Children of the light and of the day, arise! The long winter night is nearly over. The day-star is preparing to ascend. "The end of all things is at hand: be therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (I Pet 4:7). "Why do you sleep? rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation!" (Luke 2:46).

Home! by Horatius Bonar

Afflictions are preparing for us a "more abundant entrance," a weightier crown, a whiter robe, a sweeter rest, a home made doubly precious by a long exile and many sufferings here below. However desperate our earthly warfare may be, it is not forever. No, it is brief, very brief. Its end is near, very near. And with the end come triumph, and honor, and songs of victory. Then, too, there follows peace, and the return of the war-worn soldier to his quiet dwelling. This is the joy of the saint. He has fought a good fight, he has finished the course, he has kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for him the crown of righteousness. His battle is over, and then for him there are rest and home. Home! Yes, home! And what a home for us to return to and abide in forever! A home prepared before the foundation of the world. A home in the many mansions. A home nearest the throne and heart of God. A home whose peace shall never be broken by the sound of war or tempest. A home whose brightness shall never be overcast by the remotest shadow of a cloud.

How solacing to the weary spirit to think of a resting-place so near, and that resting-place our Father's house where we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, where the sun shall not scorch us, nor any heat, where the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us and lead us to living fountains of waters, and God Himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes!

The time is at hand. The conflicts are almost over. Our struggles and sorrows are nearly done. A few more years, and we shall either be laid quietly to rest, or caught up into the clouds to meet our coming Lord. A few more deaths, and then we shall be knit together in eternal brotherhood with all the scattered members of the family. A few more suns shall rise and set, and then we shall ascend in its strength the one unsetting sun. A few more days shall dawn and darken, and then shall shine forth the one unending day. A few more clouds shall gather over us, and then the world shall be cleared forever. But a few brief years, and we shall enter in through the gates into the city, sitting down beneath the shadow of the tree of life, feeding upon the hidden manna, and drinking of the pure river clear as crystal, which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb! But a few brief years and we shall see His face, and His name shall be upon our foreheads!

We have only the foretaste now. The full brightness is in reserve, and we know that all that is possible or conceivable of what is good and fair and blessed shall one day be real and visible. Out of all evil there comes the good; out of sin comes holiness; out of darkness, light; out of death, life eternal; out of weakness, strength; out of the fading, the blooming; out of rottenness and ruin, loveliness and majesty; out of the curse come the

blessing, the incorruptible, the immortal, the glorious, the undefiled! Our present portion, however, is but the pledge, not the inheritance. The inheritance is reserved for the appearing of the Lord. Here we see but through a glass darkly. It does not yet appear what we shall be.

We are now but as wayfaring men, wandering in the lonely night, who see dimly upon the distant mountain peak the reflection of a sun that never rises here, but which shall never set in the "new heavens" hereafter. And this is enough. It comforts and cheers us on our dark and rugged way. It would not be enough hereafter, but it is enough just now. This wilderness will do for us until we cross into Canaan. The tent will do until the eternal city comes. The joy of believing is enough until we enter on the joy of seeing. We are content with the "mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense," until "the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

The Holy Spirit by Horatius Bonar

The Holy Spirit begins, carries on, and consummates in us all spiritual feeling, all spiritual worship, all spiritual life and energy. There be nothing more hollow and unreal than religion without the Holy Spirit. That which is external and superficial, that which manifests itself in mere dress, and music, and routine service may flourish without Him; no, can only flourish in His absence. But the deep and the real must be His work from first to last. The Spirit is absolutely necessary to a religion of love, and liberty, and joy. Mere 'religiousness' is at every man's command. Any man may get it up in a day. But 'spirituality' comes from above, and is the product of the Spirit dwelling and working in the heart.

The 'bustle' of the present day hinders our discernment of this difference; no, it grieves the Spirit provoking Him utterly to depart; thus leaving us with a hollowness of heart which yields no rest nor satisfaction, and which cannot be acceptable to God. The Spirit of God loves retirement and silence; it is then He penetrates into our hearts.

It is the Holy Spirit who has been the life of the Church. When He came, all was life; when He departed, all was death. Nothing was lacking so long as He was in the midst, and when He left nothing could compensate for His withdrawal. When He was present, the Church was the garden of the Lord. When He forsook her, every herb and flower of that garden withered. It was the fulness of the Spirit's power, possessed and exercised by holy men, awakening, quickening, sanctifying, that wrought the mighty changes which history records.

Formalism, routine, and external religion, the excitements of mysticism—these are poor substitutes for the life, and glow, and energy of the Holy Spirit. Nothing but His own presence can avail to lift us out of the unreal religiousness into which we have fallen; to transform creeds into realities, and the bodily bowing of the head, or bending of the knee, into spiritual worship; turning the "dim religious light" into the sunshine of a heavenly noon; drawing out of our hymnals the deep 'heart music' of divine and blessed song; delivering us alike from Rationalism and Ritualism, from a hollow externalism, and from an impulsive and unreasoning fanaticism.

It is His presence only that can vitalize ordinances; clothe ministry with power; unite the broken Church; fill the void of aching hearts; impart to service, liberty and gladness; ward off error; and make truth mighty, filling our sanctuaries with living worshipers, and sending forth men of might to

preach the everlasting gospel; and to proclaim, as in primitive days, the Christ that has come, and the Christ that is to come again.

The Spirit has come, in His love, to quicken the dead in sin; and He is daily moving upon the face of the waters; bringing life out of death. Nor is His arm shortened, that it cannot save.

The Spirit has come, in His love, to give light for darkness. Nor is there any human heart too dark for Him to illumine. He lights up souls. He lights up Churches. He lights up lands, making those who sit in darkness to see a great light.

The Spirit has come, in His love, to gather in the wanderers, far and near. No strayed one has gone too far into the wilderness for Him to follow and to bring back. The "ends of the earth" form the vast region into which His love has gone forth to seek, and find, and save.

The Spirit has come, in His love, to guide the doubting heart. He takes lovingly and gently the hand of the perplexed and inquiring, and leads them into the way of peace. He knows all their troubles and fears, so that they need not fear being misunderstood. He teaches their ignorance and shows them their mistakes, and points their eye to the cross.

The Spirit has come, in His love, to bind up the broken-hearted. His name is the Comforter, and His consolations are as abundant as they are everlasting. "Comfort, comfort my Persons," are the words which he has written down for every sorrowful one (Isa 40:1). In all trial, bereavement, pain, sorrow, let us realize the love of the Spirit. That love comes out most brightly and most tenderly in the day of mourning. In the chamber of sickness or of death, let us find strength and peace in the presence, companionship, and sympathy of the gracious Spirit.

The Spirit has come down, in His love, to seek after the backslider. From a heart that once owned Him, He has been driven out, and He has retired sorrowfully. But He has not ceased to desire a return to His old abode. He still pities, and yearns, and beseeches. "Turn, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you," are His words of longing and pity.

The Spirit has come, in His love, even to the mis-believing and the deluded, seeking to remove the mists with which a rebellious intellect has compassed itself about; and to lead them out into life, and love, and day. They are groping for an idea; and He brings them into contact with a Person, even

God Himself. They are crying vaguely for knowledge; and He presents to them the wisdom deposited in the Person of the Word made flesh. They are in search of sympathy for their wounded hearts; and He places Himself before them in the fulness of His all sympathizing love. They are asking for a creed of certainty and perfection, on which their faith may rest; He offers Himself to them as a living and unerring Teacher- the Author of an infallible Book, all whose pages sparkle with the love of its loving Author. They crave beauty in worship, something to please the eye- aesthetic beauty, as they call it! He draws the eye to Him who is "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

The Spirit has come, in His love, to build up His own. He seeks to fill, with His holy presence, the soul into which He has come. He wants, not a part of the man, but the whole- body, soul, and spirit- the entire being, that it may be altogether conformed to Himself. He has come to His temples, and His purpose is to make them in reality, what they are in name, the "habitation of God, the temples of the Holy Spirit."

The Gospel of the Holy Spirit's
Love
Horatius Bonar

Does the Holy Spirit love us?

There can be but one answer to this question. Yes! He does.

As truly as the Father loves us, as truly as the Son loves us, so truly does the Spirit love us. The grace or free love which a sinner needs, and which has been revealed and sealed to us through the Seed of the woman, the "Word made flesh," belongs equally to Father, Son, and Spirit. That love which we believe to be in God must be the same in each Person of the Godhead, else the Godhead would be divided; one Person at variance with the others, or, at least, less loving than the others: which is impossible.

Twice over it is written, God is love (1 John 4:8,16); and this applies to each Person of the Godhead. The Father is love; the Son is love; the Spirit is love. The Trinity is a Trinity of Love.

When it is said, "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24), the words refer to each Person. If we lose sight of the love of one, we shall lose sight of the love of all. That which is the glory of Jehovah, is the glory of each of the three Persons. Let us beware of misrepresenting the Trinity by believing in unequal love, a love that is not equally large and free in each.

When it is said, "God is light" (1 John 1:5), we know that these words are true of the whole three Persons; not merely of the Father or of the Son. The Father is light; the Son is light; the Spirit is light. As of light, so of love; and he who would doubt that the Spirit is love, must needs also doubt that the Spirit is light. That which is written of God, is written of the Spirit of God. That "name" which God has proclaimed as His, belongs to the Spirit as certainly as to the Father and the Son,- "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands" (Exo 34:6). Shall we rob the Holy Spirit of that blessed name? His personality claims it; and the gracious characteristics which go to make up the name, are as much those of the Spirit as those of the Father and the Son. The personality of the Spirit requires that what is thus written of one should be applicable to all. We are wont to say of the three Persons, "They are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." If so, then the love which we affirm of the whole we must affirm of each. They must be equal in love, as well as in "power and glory."

Let not the old question of unbelief come in "How can these things be?" We cannot "find out the Almighty unto perfection" (Job 11:7); but shall this inability of ours lead to doubt? Shall it not rather lead to faith? Shall we rob the Spirit of His love, because we cannot understand the deep wonders of Godhead? Shall we not

rather

say, If there be love in God at all, there must be love in the Spirit? For to Him it is given to carry out in human hearts the purposes of redeeming love, in striving, awakening, drawing, convincing, quickening, comforting; so that it is impossible to suppose that His love can be less warm, less tender, less large, less personal than the love of the Father and the Son.

Laying aside the disputes of intellectual pride, the questionings of vain human reason, the puzzling suggestions of unhumiliated self-righteousness, the fond endeavors to comprehend the hidden things of God, the stubborn determination not to believe unless we see "signs and wonders" (John 4:48), let us recognize in that simple formula, God is love the foundation of our faith as to the Spirit's gracious character, and the solution of all our perplexities as to His personal and ineffable love. True, He did not take flesh for us; He did not become poor for us; He did not die for us; He did not weep for us the human tears which the Son of God wept over Jerusalem; but none the less does He love us; and none the less is His work for us and in us the work of love,-love without bounds, or change, or end.

We are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19). That threefold name is love; or rather, that one name in its threefold connection with the three Persons, unfolds itself as the expression of the love of Father, Son, and Spirit. The name thus named upon us is the divine declaration and pledge to us of "the love of the Spirit." Our baptism says, not only, "God the Father loves us," not only, "God the Son loves us"; but also, "God the Spirit loves us." We are baptized into the love of the Spirit.

Perhaps much of our slow progress in the walk of faith is to be traced to our overlooking the love of the Spirit. We do not deal with Him, for strength and advancement, as one who really loves us, and longs to bless us, and delights to help our infirmities (Rom 8:26). We regard Him as cold, or distant, or austere; we do not trust Him for His grace, nor realize how much He is in earnest in His dealings with us. More childlike confidence in Him and in His love would help us on mightily. Let us not grieve Him, nor vex Him, nor quench Him by our untrustfulness, by disbelieving or doubting the riches of His grace, the abundance of His loving-kindness.

He is no mere "influence," but a living "Personality"; and there is a vast difference between these two things. An "influence" cannot love us, and we cannot love an "influence." If there is to be love, there must be personality; and, in this case, it must be the personality of love. The fresh breath of spring is an influence, but not a personality. It cannot love us nor call on us to love it. The voice of that which we call "nature" is an influence, but not a personality. There can be no mutual love between it and us. But a being with a soul is a personality, not an influence; and the love of man or woman is a personal thing, a true and real affection-one eye looking into another, and one heart touching its fellow. So is it with the love of the Spirit. There is a personality about Him passing all the personalities of earth,-passing all the personalities of men or angels; and it is this divine personality that makes His love so precious and so suitable, as well as so true and real. There is no reality of love like that of the Spirit. It has nothing in common with the coldness or distance of a mere "influence." It comes closely home to a human heart, because it is the love of Him who formed the heart, and who is seeking to make it His abode forever.

The proofs of His love are abundant. They are divine proofs; and, therefore, assuredly true. It is God who has given them to us, that no doubt of the Spirit's love may ever enter our minds. They are spread over all Scripture, in different forms and aspects. While the Bible was meant to be specially the revelation of the Son of God, it is also the revelation of the Holy Spirit. He reveals Himself while revealing Christ. He utters His own love while showing us the love of the Father and the Son.

The thoughts of the Spirit are thoughts of love. The apostle uses the words, "the mind of the Spirit," in connection with His gracious intercession (Rom 8:26,27); and we know that intercession implies love. The "groanings that cannot be uttered" are awakened in us by the Spirit in His love. He thinks of us; and His thoughts are "precious" (Psalm 139:17). Yes; He thinks of us; and His thoughts are thoughts of peace (Jer 29:11). The Bible is filled with the thoughts of the Spirit; and they are love. They breathe in every page of Scripture; for holy men of God "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

The ways of the Spirit are the ways of love. His manifold dealings with the sons of men, in "opening hearts" (Acts 16:14), teaching, sanctifying, chastening, are the dealings of love,-love which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown. The faintest touch of His hand is the touch of love. The gentlest whisper of His voice is the whisper of love. All His dealings from day to day, whether of cheer or of chastisement, whether of warning or of welcome, are those of love. In a thousand ways He beckons us to come to the Cross; He draws us, unconsciously and imperceptibly, but irresistibly, away from sin and self to God and

heaven. He has not, indeed, human tears to shed, like the son of God when he wept over Jerusalem; but not the less are His yearnings true and tender, and all His ways toward us are ways of unutterable compassion (see Gen 6:3; Psalm 51:11,12; Isa 55:8). He is "very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

The works of the Spirit are the works of love. When He "garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13), it was the work of love. When he moved upon the face of the deep (Gen 1:2), it was in love. When He came upon holy men of old, it was in love. When He wrote the Scriptures, it was in love,-love to us. When He anointed Jesus of Nazareth to preach the gospel to the poor, it was in love to us. When He fulfills His office of "guiding into all truth," it is in love. When He opens eyes and hearts, it is in love. When He chastens, it is in love. When He comforts, it is in love. When He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, it is in love. When He, as one with the Father and the Son, wrote the seven epistles of the Revelation, it was in love,- as the close of each of them shows: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches" (Rev 2:7). His works in the soul of man, in regenerating, upholding, and perfecting, are the works of love,-love like that of Christ, "that passes knowledge": love to the chief of sinners; love to those who have vexed and resisted and quenched Him; love which says, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver you, Israel?" (Hosea 11:8).

The words of the Spirit are the words of love. That which we call "the word of God" is specially the Spirit's word: and it overflows with love; love which, while it condemns the sin, presents pardon to the sinner; love which, while it spreads out

before us "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," proclaims aloud, to the guiltiest of the guilty, free forgiveness and "deliverance from the wrath to come." The gospel of Christ contains in it the good news of the Spirit's love. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Matt 3:11) are the words in which is described the fitting out of men for preaching the good news; and in this baptism we have the manifestation of the Spirit's love. He baptizes because He loves. He sends out men to tell of His love; and the baptism with which He baptizes them is to fit them for this message of love. By this baptism the words of love are put into their lips; and these words are truly those of the Spirit Himself, from whatever lips they may come, by whatever pen they may be written down. They are the words of sincerity and truth. He means what He says when He sends out His servants with the language of love upon their tongues.

Hear some of His words of grace,-grace as boundless and as suitable as that of the Father and the Son; grace which has lost none of its largeness or freeness by the lapse of ages or the desperate resistance of human hearts: "Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies" (Psalm 103:3,4); "O Lord, I will praise you: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away" (Isa 12:1); "Seek you the Lord while He may be found" (Isa 55:6); "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18); "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Eze 33:11); "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11:4); "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity" (Micah 7:18); "The Lord is good; a

stronghold in the day of trouble" (Nahum 1:7); "How great is His goodness" (Zech 9:17). These are the Spirit's own words; and He writes them as the witness for God, the revealer of the divine character, the Unfolder of the love of Father, Son, and Spirit. They are the words of the Spirit, spoken before the Son of God came into the world to reveal and to embody in Himself the love of God to man. The New Testament is yet more abundant in its utterances of love: and in every one of them the Spirit has His part: until all is summed up in the wondrous words which time cannot weaken, and which long use cannot make stale: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17).

The Holy Spirit is no mere mechanical agent in the great work of a sinner's deliverance, and of the Church's up building, obediently doing the work appointed to Him. "I delight to do Your will" is as true of the Spirit as the Son. He loves the sinner; therefore He lays hold of him. He pities his misery; therefore He stretches out the hand of help. He has no pleasure in his death; therefore He puts forth His saving power. He is longsuffering and patient; therefore He strives with him day by day; and though "vexed," "resisted," "grieved," and "quenched," He refuses to retire from, or give up, any sinner on this side of eternity. The extent to which we resist Him, and the amount of His forbearing love, we cannot know. This only we may say, that our stubbornness is something infinitely fearful and malignant, while His patient grace passes all understanding.

We are little alive to the injury we do to ourselves by any misunderstanding as to the mind and the work of the Spirit. The injustice which we do to Him is

great; and
the wrong which we inflict upon ourselves is no less so. No mistakes as to
the
Spirit's gracious character can be trivial or harmless. To regard Him as
"austere," or
"hard," or inaccessible, or needing to be persuaded to do His work in us, is
to treat
Him as at variance with the Father and the Son; slow to carry out the great
purpose
of divine love, in which purpose the three Persons of the Godhead are
equally
concerned. To raise questions as to the riches of His grace is to misread
Scripture,
and to put a dark and false construction upon His testimony for Christ, as
well as
upon His dealings with the sons of men,-His dealings with those who have
been
saved, as well as with those who are lost. For what do the saved ones not
owe to
His love; and what would that love not have done for the lost, had they not
stubbornly set it at nothing to the last! "How often would I have gathered
your
children" were the words which accompanied the tears of the Son of God
over the
rebellious city; and they are words equally expressive of the Spirit's feelings
toward
the stout-hearted of every age and nation.

Imperfect views of the Spirit's character may not be regarded by some as
serious or
fatal, but it is hardly possible that they can be entertained without exercising
a
darkening and deadening influence upon the soul: not in the same way as
defective
views of Christ's work affect us, but still with a most evil result both upon
the
conscience and the heart,-as if there were something in the Spirit which
repelled us,
whatever there might be in Christ to attract us; as if the light which the Cross
throws upon the love of the Spirit were not quite in harmony with that which
it
reveals of the love of Christ; as if the Spirit were not always as ready with
His help

as is the Son.

All wrong thoughts of God, whether of Father, Son, or Spirit, must cast a shadow over the soul that entertains them. In some cases the shadow may not be so deep and cold as in others; but never can it be a trifle. And it is this that furnishes the proper answer to the flippant question so often asked, Does it really matter what a man believes? All defective views of God's character tell upon the life of the soul and the peace of the conscience. We must think right thoughts of God if we would worship Him as He desires to be worshiped; if we would live the life He wishes us to live, and enjoy the peace which He has provided for us.

The want of stable peace, of which so many complain, may arise from imperfect views of the Spirit's love. True, our peace comes from the work of the Substitute upon the cross, from the blood of the one sacrifice, from the sinbearing of Him who has made peace by the blood of the cross. But it is the Holy Spirit who glorifies Christ to us, and takes the scales from our eyes. If then we doubt His love, can we expect Him to reveal the Son in our hearts? Are we not thrusting Him away, and hindering that view of the peace-making which He only can give? Trust His love, and He will make known the Peacemaker to you. Trust His love, and He will show the precious blood by which the guiltiest conscience is purged, and the peace which passes all understanding is imparted. He is the Spirit of peace, and His work is the work of peace. His office is to make known to us the Prince of Peace. Can there be peace without the recognition of the Holy Spirit's love? Can there fail to be peace when this is recognized and acted on? Doubts as to the love of the Spirit

must

inevitably intercept the peace which the peace-making cross presents to us.

Perhaps the want of faith, which we often mourn over, may arise from our not

realizing the Spirit's love. "Faith [no doubt] comes by hearing, and hearing by the

word of God": yet it is the Holy Spirit who shines upon the word; it is He who gives

the seeing eye and the hearing ear. Under the pressure of unbelief, have we fled to

Him and appealed to His love? "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief," may be as aptly a cry to the Spirit as to the Son of God. He helps our infirmities; and in

the infirmity of our faith He will most assuredly succor us. It is through Him that

we become strong in faith; and He loves to impart the needed strength. He gives

to all men, liberally, and upbraids not. Yet in our dealings with Him regarding

faith, let us remember that He does not operate in some mystical or miraculous

way, as if imparting to us a new faculty called faith; but by taking of the things of

Christ and showing them to us; so touching our faculties by His mighty yet invisible

hand, that, before we are aware, these disordered souls of ours begin to work aright,

and these dull eyes of ours begin to see what was all along before them, but what

they never had perceived, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our

Lord." Thus He works in us, often slowly and imperceptibly, but with divine power, making us to understand the gospel and to draw out of it that light

and life which it contains for the dead and the dark. Looking at the cross, under the Spirit's enlightenment, we grow in faith. For never does He

produce or increase faith in us without keeping our eye steadfastly fixed upon the great redeeming work of the incarnate Son. He is not the Spirit of

unbelief or bondage, but of faith and liberty; and His desire is that we should be delivered from unbelief and bondage. He loves us too well to be

indifferent to our remaining in distance or in distrust. He longs to see us children of

faith, not of unbelief; to make us strong in faith; to remove whatever from

within or
without hinders its growth. Trust His love for the increase of faith; for
deliverance
from the evil heart of unbelief; for revealing to you the bright object of faith,-
Christ,
and "God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing unto men
their
trespasses." As truth is the foundation of faith, so, as "the Spirit of truth," He
guides
us out of error into truth, and thus leads us out of unbelief into faith; making
us to
see that the root of what we called our want of faith, was not that we were
believing
the right thing in a wrong way (as is so often said), but that we were not
believing
the right thing, but something else which could not bring rest to us in what
way
soever we might believe it.

Perhaps our want of joy may arise from our over-looking the love of the
Spirit.
Peace is one thing; joy is something more,- "joy unspeakable and full of
glory."
Assuredly He is the Spirit of joy, and as such delights to impart His joy. He
who, by
the lips of His Apostle, said, "Rejoice in the Lord always," wants to see you
a joyful
man. Will you trust Him for this? Will you rest in His love for this gift? Do
not say,
Joy is a secondary thing: a man may be a Christian without joy; some of the
best of
God's people have gone mourning all their days. These are poor excuses for
not
possessing what God wants you to possess, and what would make you ten
times
more useful to all around. God wishes you to be joyful. Your testimony to
God is
imperfect without joy. Cultivate joy; and in order to do so effectually, take
firmer
hold of the Spirit's power, and rest more implicitly in His love. He loves you
too well
to wish you to be gloomy. Be filled with the Spirit and you will be filled
with joy. Joy

is a great help in living a holy and consistent life. Holiness is joy, and joy is holiness.

Accept the Spirit's love for both of these.

The "seal of the Spirit" (Eph 1:13); the "witness of the Spirit" (Rom 8:16); the "indwelling" of the Spirit (Rom 8:11); the "inworking" of the Spirit (Eph 1:19); the "help" of the Spirit (Rom 8:26); the "liberty" of the Spirit (2 Cor 3:17); the "strengthening" of the Spirit (Eph 3:16); the "fulness" of the Spirit (Eph 5:18); the "teaching" of the Spirit (John 14:26); the "baptism" of the Spirit (Mark 1:8);-all these are most closely connected with the "love of the Spirit"; and he who would separate them from that love, would rob them of all their meaning and power and consolation.

It is the loving Spirit that seals, and witnesses, and indwells, and inworks, and helps, and liberates, and strengthens, and teaches, and baptizes. So that in seeking these blessings we must ever remember that we are dealing with one whose love anticipates our longings, and on whose side there exists no hindrance to our possessing them all. Nowhere in Scripture has God led us to suppose that the Holy Spirit would be lacking to us in any time of need, or that we could be beforehand with Him in any desire of ours for any spiritual blessing. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11:13).

In our day, when that which is miraculous or supernatural is suspected or scorned, it is not easy even to gain a hearing for such truths. The Holy Spirit, we may say, is discarded as the most incredible part of the supernatural and impersonal. He Himself is regarded as an airy nothing, or as mist; and His direct and divine agency is treated as the dream of diseased enthusiasm. The removal of the supernatural from religion means specially the removal of the Spirit. To retain Him personally in our theology is considered to be retaining the most incredible part of the supernatural,-the most visionary article in our creed.

Hence the need of bringing fully into view both His personality and His character.

That modern unbelief should dislike the whole subject, and treat it as incompatible with reason, and therefore incapable of proof, as being wholly beyond the range of our senses, need not surprise us: nor would we attempt to meet Rationalism on its own ground. But what we say is this: Our information regarding the Holy Spirit must come wholly from revelation; and the question is, Does the Bible bear us out in the above statements? It certainly does seem to contain the doctrine we have been affirming. Its Author evidently meant us to accept that doctrine as true. If that doctrine cannot be true, it must be honestly struck out of the Bible; not by explaining texts away, or misinterpreting whole chapters, but by boldly affirming that Scripture is inaccurate. The words regarding the Spirit are too plain to be diluted into unmeaning figures. He who inspired the Bible has used language that cannot be mistaken. He has not left us in any doubt as to what He intended. Hence the quarrel of unbelief is a quarrel with revelation, and more specially with the Author of revelation. This is the real point at issue in these days, in the controversy with Rationalism.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit's person and work must stand or fall with the Bible. If it is incredible, then Scripture has utterly deceived us, and the God who made us has given us a book, as the revelation of divine truth, which contains what no man ought to believe or can believe. If the innumerable references to the Spirit be mere figures of speech,- Orientalisms,-meaning nothing real, then to accept them as literal, and to believe in a personal Spirit, must be pure fanaticism; and as to such a thing as the love of the Spirit, only visionaries or mystics

would
accept it.

Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure; and the Word of God is true
and
real. Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or one tittle of what is
written in
Scripture cannot. What God has made known to us concerning the Spirit,-
His
wisdom, love, holiness, and power, remains unaltered throughout the ages;
as true
to us in these last days as it was in the beginning.

That the Holy Spirit is the producer in the human heart of everything that
God calls
religion, is beyond question to any one who accepts Bible statements as
divinely
true. He begins, carries on, and consummates in us all spiritual feeling, all
spiritual
worship, all spiritual life and energy. Nor can there be anything more hollow
and
unreal than religion without the Holy Spirit. That which is external and
superficial,-which manifests itself in dress, and music, and routine service,-
may
flourish without Him; no, can only flourish in His absence. But the deep and
the
real must be His work from first to last. The love of the Spirit is absolutely
necessary to a religion of love, and liberty, and joy. Religiousness is at every
man's
command. Any man may get it up in a day; but religion comes from above,
and is
the product of the Spirit dwelling and working in the heart.

The bustle of the present day hinders our discernment of this difference; no,
it
grieves the Spirit provoking Him utterly to depart; thus leaving us with a
hollowness
of heart which yields no rest nor satisfaction, and which cannot be
acceptable to
God. "The Spirit of God," says Melancthon, "loves retirement and silence; it
is then
He penetrates into our hearts. The Bride of Christ does not take her stand in
the

streets and cross ways, but she leads her spouse into the house of her mother"
(Song 8:2).

"The gifts of the Holy Spirit"! This is the Church's heritage (Acts 2:38,39). How far she has claimed it or used it is a serious question; but that this gift was meant for her in all ages is beyond a doubt. The whole book of the Acts of the Apostles is evidence of this. "My Spirit remains among you," is a promise for the Church as truly as for Israel (Hag 2:5).

From the beginning it has been so; and the holy men raised up by God to speak His words or do His works were men "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Exo 31:2). It is this Spirit that has been the life of the Church. When He came, all was life; when He departed, all was death. Nothing was lacking so long as He was in the midst, and when He left nothing could compensate for His withdrawal. When He was present, the Church was the garden of the Lord; when He forsook her, every herb and flower of that garden withered.

Even in Old Testament days it was so; but since Pentecost, more largely and more powerfully. The indwelling and inworking Spirit, who is the promise of the Father and gift of the Son, is that which belongs to the Church of every age, little as she may have claimed or welcomed her peculiar glory.

"The gift" and "the gifts" are, both of them, expressions used in connection with the Spirit (Acts 8:20-10:45). He is one, yet manifold; called "the seven Spirits of God," and "the seven lamps of fire," and the "seven eyes," and the "seven horns" (Rev 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). He is not only spoken of in connection with each saint, but

with the
body, the Church universal, which is the "habitation of God, through the
Spirit" (Eph
2:22); "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19); and, as such,
possessor of
His love.

Such is the manifold fulness of the Spirit which as the gift of Christ, is the
property
of the whole Church of God. That fulness is not only the fulness of peace,
and
wisdom, and holiness, but of love. It is given her, not for herself only, but
for the
world out of which she has been called. She is to shine in the light of this
love upon
a dark earth. She is to pour out of the fulness which she receives upon a
parched
and needy world; out of her are to flow rivers of living water (John 7:38).
Great is
the world's need; but not greater than the provided supply: for the fountain
of love,
out of which the Church receives and pours this living water, is
inexhaustible and
divine.

The love of the Spirit is, like that of the Son, a love that passes knowledge, a
fountain whose waters fail not: "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,
proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1).

In the possession of this heavenly gift,-of these sevenfold gifts,-the Church
is
unspeakably rich, whatever her outward condition may be. Enjoying the
fulness of
this abiding Spirit, she manifests her character as the witness for Christ and
as the
light of the world. These gifts of the ascended Christ (Eph 4:8) made her
what she
was meant to be in the midst of the world's evil and of the powers of
darkness, "a
burning and shining light." In the power of such gifts she went forth to do
battle with
the idolatries and immoralities of heathendom. Boldly entering the cities of
classic

fame, she took possession of pagan temples and Jewish synagogues; and thousands everywhere, through apostolic preaching gathered round the throne.

It was not the gift of miracle, of healing, or of tongues, that did the work. These were subordinate things, and in many places never used by the apostles. These were not "the best gifts" which we are commanded to covet (1 Cor 12:31). It was the fulness of spiritual power, possessed and exercised by holy men, awakening, quickening, sanctifying, that wrought the mighty changes which history records. It is well that we should look back to Pentecost, with wistful eyes, longing for a ministry of Pentecostal power, as the only remedy for the unbelief of the last days. But mere physical miracles are not the desirable things. The gifts of the Spirit, the Church's inalienable inheritance, are quite apart from bodily manifestations; and they remain with us still. But do we claim them? Do we use them? Do we not trust in other strength? Do we not lean on learning, on science, on talent, as if by these we were to fight and overcome? And, in so doing, do we not mistake our true position, and character, and mission? No, do we not grieve and quench the Spirit?

Yet, the love of the Spirit is unquenchable. He is unwilling to depart. He despises not the day of small things; but He bids us look beyond and above them. Formalism, routine, and external religion, the excitements of mysticism,- these are poor substitutes for the life, and glow, and energy of the Holy Spirit. Nothing but His own presence can avail to lift us out of the unreal religiousness into which we have fallen; to transform creeds into realities, and the bodily bowing of the head, or bending of the knee, into spiritual worship; turning the "dim religious light" into the sunshine of a heavenly noon; drawing out of our hymnals the deep heart-music of

divine and blessed song; delivering us alike from Rationalism and Ritualism, from a hollow externalism, and from an impulsive and unreasoning fanaticism. It is His presence only that can vitalize ordinances; clothe ministry with power; unite the broken Church; fill the void of aching hearts; impart to service, liberty and gladness; ward off error; and make truth mighty, -filling our sanctuaries with living worshipers, and sending forth men of might to preach the everlasting gospel; and to proclaim, as in primitive days, the Christ that has come, and the Christ that is to come again.

He has come, in His love, to quicken the dead in sin; and He is daily moving upon the face of the waters, -bringing life out of death. Nor is His arm shortened, that it cannot save.

He has come, in His love, to give light for darkness. Nor is there any human heart too dark for Him to illumine. He lights up souls. He lights up Churches. He lights up lands, making them that sit in darkness to see a great light.

He has come, in His love, to gather in the wanderers, far and near. No strayed one has gone too far into the wilderness for Him to follow and to bring back. The "ends of the earth" form the vast region into which His love has gone forth to seek, and find, and save.

He has come, in His love, to guide the doubting heart. He takes lovingly and gently the hand of the perplexed and inquiring, and leads them into the way of peace. He knows all their troubles and fears, so that they need not fear being misunderstood. He teaches their ignorance and shows them their mistakes, and points their eye to the cross.

He has come, in His love, to bind up the broken-hearted. His name is the Comforter, and His consolations are as abundant as they are everlasting.

"Comfort

you, comfort you my Persons," are the words which he has written down for every sorrowful one (Isa 40:1). In all trial, bereavement, pain, sorrow, let us realize the love of the Spirit. That love comes out most brightly and most tenderly in the day of mourning. In the chamber of sickness or of death, let us find strength and peace in the presence, companionship, and sympathy of the gracious Spirit.

He has come down, in His love, to seek after the backslider. From a heart that once owned Him, He has been driven out, and He has retired sorrowfully. But He has not ceased to desire a return to His old abode. He still pities, and yearns, and beseeches. "Turn, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you," are His words of longing and pity.

He has come, in His love, even to the mis-believing and the deluded, seeking to remove the mists with which a rebellious intellect has compassed itself about; and to lead them out into life, and love, and day. They are groping for an idea; and He brings them into contact with a Person, even God Himself. They are crying vaguely for knowledge; and He presents to them the wisdom deposited in the Person of the Word made flesh. They are in search of sympathy for their wounded hearts; and He places Himself before them in the fulness of His all-sympathizing love. They are asking for a creed of certainty and perfection, on which their faith may rest; He offers Himself to them as a living and unerring Teacher,-the Author of an infallible Book, all whose pages sparkle with the love of its loving Author. They crave beauty in worship, something to please the eye,-aesthetic beauty, as they call it! He draws the eye to Him who is "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

He has come, in His love, to build up His own. He seeks to fill, with His holy presence, the soul into which He has come. He wants, not a part of the man, but the whole,-body, soul, and spirit,-the entire being, that it may be altogether conformed to Himself. He has come to His temples, and His purpose is to make them in reality, what they are in name, the "habitation of God, the temples of the Holy Spirit."