

A Practical Directory for Young Christian Females eBook

A Practical Directory for Young Christian Females by Harvey Newcomb

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LETTER I.

The Christian's Mark.

“Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I *press* towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—PHIL. 3:13, 14.

MY DEAR SISTER,

Ever since the death of our dear mother, I have felt a deep interest in your welfare. And your being left, while young, in a measure dependent upon me, has increased my affection for you. You have now left my roof, to sojourn among strangers. You have little knowledge of the world, and your religious experience has been short. I trust, therefore, you will cordially receive a few hints from one whose fraternal affection has been strengthened by many peculiar circumstances, and who, for many years, has not ceased to remember you in his prayers.

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Young Christians, when they first obtain peace and comfort in Christ, are prone to think the struggle over, the victory won. But nothing can be farther from the truth. They have but just enlisted under the banner of the great Captain of their salvation, in a warfare which will never cease till they shall have obtained the final victory over sin and death, and entered into the joy of their Lord. This mistake often leads them to be satisfied with what they have already experienced, and to cease that constant inward strife and earnestness, which they exercised while under conviction, before they found “joy and peace in believing.” They see such a heavenly sweetness in divine things, that they think it impossible they should “lose the relish all their days.” This begets self-confidence, and they trust in their own strength to keep where they are, instead of eagerly pressing forward, in the strength of Christ, after higher attainments. The consequence is, they soon lose their lively sense of divine things, backslide from God, and become cold and barren in their religious affections. A little child, when it first begins to walk, is safe while it keeps hold of the hand of its mother, or faithful nurse. But, when it begins to feel confident of its own strength, and lets go its hold, it soon totters and falls. So with the Christian. He is safe while he keeps a firm hold of Christ’s hand. But the moment he attempts to walk alone, he stumbles and falls.

The Scriptures represent the grace of God in the heart, as a growing principle. It is compared to a mustard-seed, which is the least of all seeds. But, when it springs up, it rises and spreads its branches, till it becomes the greatest of all herbs. The beauty and appropriateness of this figure will not be appreciated, unless we take into consideration the luxuriant growth of plants in Eastern countries. The Jews have a fable of a mustard-tree whose branches were so extensive as to cover a tent. There are two things that no one would expect to see, in the growth of such a plant: (1.) To spring at once into full maturity. (2.) To become stationary in its growth, before it arrives at maturity. If it ceases to grow, it must wither away and die.

The spiritual reign of Christ in the heart is also compared to a *little leaven*, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. It was so little at first that it was said to be *hid*. It could not be seen. So grace, when first implanted in the heart, is often so little in degree, and so much buried up in remaining corruption, that it can scarcely be discovered at all. But the moment the leaven begins to work, it increases without ceasing, till the whole is leavened.

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Again; Christ says, “the water that I shall give him shall be *in him* a well of water, *springing up into everlasting life*.” When these words were uttered, our Lord was sitting upon a deep well, in conversation with the woman of Samaria. As his custom was, he drew instruction from the objects around him. He directed her attention away from the water which can only quench animal thirst, to that living water which refreshes the soul. But she, not understanding him, wished to know how he could obtain *living water* from a deep well, without anything to draw with. In order to show the superiority of the water of life, he told her that those who drank it should have it *in them*, constantly springing up of itself, as if the waters of the well should rise up and overflow, without being drawn. The very idea of a *living spring* seems to cut off the hope of backsliders. You remember the cold spring that used to flow from the rock, before our father’s door. The severest drought never affected it, and in the coldest season of a northern winter it was never frozen. Oft, as I rose in the morning, when the chilling blasts whistled around our dwelling, and everything seemed sealed up with perpetual frost, the ice and snow would be smoking around the spring. Thus, like a steady stream, let your graces flow, unaffected by the drought or barrenness of others, melting the icy hearts around you.

This “*living water*,” in the soul, is intended to represent the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In the new birth, there is formed a holy union between the Spirit of God and the faculties of the soul, so that every correct feeling, with every good act, is produced by the Holy Spirit acting in unison with those faculties. Hence, our bodies are called the temple of the Holy Ghost, and he is said to dwell in us. What a solemn truth! What holy fear and carefulness ought we to feel continually; and how softly should we walk before the Lord of Hosts!

“The righteous,” says David, “shall flourish like a palm-tree; he shall *grow* like a cedar in Lebanon.” But if the cedar should cease to grow as soon as it springs up, it would never become a tree. It must wither and die.—Again; it is said, “Ye shall *go forth and grow up as calves of the stall*.” A healthy calf, that is fed in the stall, cannot but grow and thrive. And surely the Lord has furnished us, in his holy word, abundant food for our spiritual growth and nourishment. If the calf is diseased, or if he refuses to eat, he will pine away and die; and so with us. The apostle Paul speaks of *growing up* into Christ, in all things; and of *increasing* in the knowledge of God. By this he evidently means, that experimental knowledge of God in our hearts, by which we are changed into his image. The apostle Peter exhorts us to “*grow* in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Again, he directs us to feed upon

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the sincere and simple truths of the gospel, as the infant is nourished by its mother's milk, and to *grow* thereby. As conversion is called being "born again," the young convert is very properly compared to a "new-born babe." As a babe is least when first born, so the Christian, when first converted, has the least grace; unless, indeed, he becomes diseased, and pines away, like a sickly infant. And such is truly the deplorable case of the backslider.

The motives which urge us to seek and maintain an elevated standard of piety are the highest that can be presented to our minds. *The glory of God requires it.* This is the greatest possible good. It is the manifestation of the divine perfections to his intelligent creatures. This manifestation is made by discovering to them his works of creation, providence, and grace, and by impressing his moral image upon their hearts. In this their happiness consists. In promoting his own glory, therefore, God exercises the highest degree of disinterested benevolence. Nothing can add to his happiness; nothing can diminish it. If the whole creation were blotted out, and God were the only Being in the universe, he would still be perfectly glorious and happy in himself. There can be, therefore, no selfishness in his desiring his own glory. It is the good of the creature alone that is promoted by it. A desire to glorify God must, then, be the ruling principle of all your conduct, the moving spring of all your actions. But how is the glory of God promoted by your growth in grace?

1. It is manifested to yourself, by impressing his image upon your heart; and by giving you a spiritual discovery of the excellence, purity and loveliness, of his moral character.
2. It is manifested to others, so far as you maintain a holy life and conversation; for thereby the moral image of Christ is exhibited. The glory of Christ is manifested by the holy walk of his people, just as the glory of the sun appears by the reflected light of the moon.
3. The glory of God is promoted by making others acquainted with the exhaustless riches of free grace, and bringing them to Christ; for, by that means, they receive spiritual light to behold the beauty and glory of the divine perfections, and his image is stamped upon their souls. But your usefulness in this respect depends mainly upon the measure of grace you have in your own heart. The reason why many Christians do so little good in the world is, that they have so little piety. If you would be eminently useful, you must be eminently holy.

But, you may ask, "What is the standard at which I must aim?" I answer: The law of God is the only true standard of moral excellence; and you have the pattern of that law carried out in action, in the perfect life of our blessed Lord and Master. No standard short of this will answer the requirements of the word of God. "He that abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, **EVEN AS HE WALKED.**"

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All that we fall short of this is *sin*. There is no want of ability in the case, but what arises from our own voluntary wickedness of heart. Christ says that he came not to *destroy* the law, but to fulfil it. "We are not released from the *obligation* of perfect obedience; though grace has taken away the *necessity* of such obedience as the ground of our acceptance with God." The law is not made void, but established, by grace. We cannot be *saved* by our obedience; because we have already broken the law, and we cannot mend it. But, while we trust alone in Christ, independent of anything in ourselves, for justification before God, the signs or evidences of our faith must be found within us. There must be a new and holy principle in our hearts; and just as far as this principle prevails, so far it will show itself in obedience to the law of God. There is no resting-place, in the agonizing conflict, till we are "*holy as God is holy*." I do not say that Christians ever do become perfectly holy in this life. The contrary appears, from the testimony both of Scripture and experience, to be the universal fact. But this is the measure of obligation, and we should strive after it with all the earnestness of which we are capable.

We must not settle down contented with our attainments, while one sin remains unsubdued in our hearts. The Scriptures are full of this doctrine. The apostle Paul expresses far more earnestness of desire after higher attainments in the divine life than is ever felt by such Christians as have only a feeble and glimmering hope of entering the abodes of the blessed. "If *by any means*," says he, "I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead;" or that state of perfect holiness which the saints will have attained at the resurrection. And the kind of effort which he put forth to obtain the object of his desires is most forcibly described in the passage quoted at the beginning of this letter. In view of this standard, you will be able to see, in some measure, the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and it will drive you more entirely out of yourself to the cross of Christ. You will see the necessity of daily renewing your repentance, submission, and faith.

You see, from what the apostle says of his own experience, that high spiritual attainments are not to be expected without great labor and strife. True piety is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit; but the fact that God works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, is made the ground of Paul's exhortation to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

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The attainments of eminent saints are too generally looked upon as out of the reach of common Christians. They seem to think God is not willing to give all his children the same measure of grace. But he could not have said more than he has in his holy word, to convince them to the contrary. “Open thy mouth *wide*, and I will fill it.” Our Lord repeatedly assures us that God is more willing to give good things to those that ask him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. And whoever will read the lives of such eminent Christians as Edwards, Whitefield, Brainerd, Martyn, Payson, Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. Anthony, Mrs. Huntington, James B. Taylor, and many others which might be mentioned,—and take notice of the means which they used, will not be surprised at their attainments. The Bible represents the Christian as in the constant exercise of holy affections; and we should never rest with anything short of this. Some of the persons I have mentioned did arrive at such a state of feeling. President Edwards enjoyed, for many years, the constant light of God’s countenance, and habitual communion with him. And so did Mrs. Edwards, James B. Taylor, and many others.

She, for a long time, enjoyed, as she said, “THE RICHES OF FULL ASSURANCE.” She felt “an uninterrupted and entire resignation to God, with respect to health or sickness, ease or pain, life or death; and an entire resignation of the lives of her nearest earthly friends.” She also felt a “sweet peace and serenity of soul, without a cloud to interrupt it; a continual rejoicing in all the works of nature and Providence; a wonderful access to God by prayer, sensibly conversing with him, as much as if God were here on earth; frequent, plain, sensible, and immediate answers to prayer; all tears wiped away; all former troubles and sorrows of life forgotten, except sorrow for sin; doing everything for God’s glory, with a continual and uninterrupted cheerfulness, peace, and joy.” At the same time, she engaged in the common duties of life with great diligence, considering them as a part of the service of God; and, when done from this motive, she said they were as delightful as prayer itself. She also showed an “extreme anxiety to avoid every sin, and to discharge every moral obligation; she was most exemplary in the performance of every social and relative duty; exhibited great inoffensiveness of life and conversation; great meekness, benevolence, and gentleness of spirit; and avoided, with remarkable conscientiousness, all those things which she regarded as failings in her own character.”

How did these persons arrive at this eminence in the Christian life? Although by free sovereign grace, yet it was by no miracle. If you will use the same means, you may attain the same end. In the early part of his Christian life, President Edwards says,—“I felt a *burning desire* to be, in everything, a *complete* Christian, and conformed to the blessed image of Christ.

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I had an eager thirsting after *progress* in these things, which put me upon pursuing and *pressing* after them. It was my *continual strife*, day and night, and constant inquiry, how I should *be* more holy, and *live* more holily, and more becoming a child of God, and a disciple of Christ. I now sought an increase of grace and holiness, and a holy life, with much more earnestness than ever I sought grace before I had it. I used to be continually examining myself, and studying and contriving for likely *ways and means*, how I should live holily, with far greater diligence and earnestness than ever I pursued anything in my life; yet, with too great a dependence on my own strength—which afterwards proved a great damage to me.” “Mrs. Edwards had been long in an uncommon manner growing in grace, and rising, by very *sensible degrees*, to higher love to God, weanedness to the world, and mastery over sin and temptation, through *great trials and conflicts*, and long-continued *struggling* and *fighting* with sin, and *earnest* and *constant prayer* and *labor* in religion, and engagedness of mind in the use of all means. This growth had been attended, not only with a great increase of religious affections, but with a most visible alteration of outward behavior; particularly in living above the world, and in a greater degree of steadfastness and strength in the way of duty and self-denial; maintaining the Christian conflict under temptations, and conquering, from time to time, under *great trials*; persisting in an unmoved, untouched calm and rest, under the *changes and accidents* of time, such as seasons of extreme pain and apparent hazard of immediate death.”

You will find accounts of similar trials and struggles in the lives of all eminent saints. This is what we may expect. It agrees with the Christian life, as described in God’s word. It is “through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of heaven.” This is the way in which you must go, if you would ever enter there. You must make religion the great business of your life, to which everything else must give place. You must engage with your *whole soul* in the work, looking to the cross of Christ for strength against your spiritual enemies; and you will come off “conqueror at last,” through him that hath loved us, and given himself for us.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER II.

The Importance of a thorough Knowledge of the Doctrines of Christianity—means of obtaining it.

“Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.”—John 17:17.

MY DEAR SISTER,

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Some people are frightened at the idea of *Doctrine*, as though it were a mere abstraction, which has nothing to do with practical life. This notion is founded on a misapprehension not only of the meaning of the term, but of the connection of actions with established principles of the mind. The general signification of the word *doctrine* is, the principles upon which any system is founded. As applied to Christianity, it means *divine truth*; for this is the foundation upon which the Christian religion rests. Although the truths of God's Word are not reduced to a regular system in the Bible, yet, when brought together, they make the most beautiful and perfect of all systems. It is proper, therefore, that we should contemplate them *in a body*, as they appear with the most perfect symmetry, in the plan of God's moral government. There is a disposition, at the present day, to undervalue doctrinal knowledge. Many people think it of little consequence what they *believe*, if they are only *sincere*, and manifest much *feeling* on the subject of religion. But this is a ruinous mistake. There is a most intimate connection between faith and practice. Those principles which are believed and received into the heart govern and control our actions. The doctrines which God has revealed in his Word are the principles of his moral government. As we are the subjects of that government, it cannot be a matter of small moment for us to understand, so far as we are capable, the principles upon which it is administered. If we mistake these principles, we may be found in open rebellion, while we think we are doing God service. For example: God commands us not to steal. But, if we do not *believe* that he has given this commandment, we shall feel under no obligation to *obey* it. And every truth which God has revealed is as intimately connected with practice as this, although the duty enjoined be, in itself considered, of less consequence. Christianity is called a spiritual building. "Ye are built up a spiritual *house*." "Whose *house* are we?" "We are God's *building*." Now the *foundation* and *frame-work* of this building are the doctrines or truths of the Bible. Some of these doctrines are called *fundamental* or *essential*, because they lie at the *foundation* of the whole building; and are so *essential* to it, that, if taken away, the whole would fall to the ground. These are, The Existence of God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the Fall, and consequent Depravity of Man; the Atonement of Christ; Justification by faith in him alone, and the Office of the Holy Spirit in the work of Regeneration. If any *one* of these were taken away, it would overturn the whole building. These may, therefore, well be called the *foundation*. But you see there are other very important parts of a *frame* besides the foundation. So there are many other very important

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truths of Christianity, besides its essential doctrines. But some of these are of more consequence than others. If a *post* or a *beam* is taken away, the building is greatly marred and in danger of falling; yet, if well *covered*, it may still be a comfortable dwelling. Again, although a *brace* or a *pin* is of service to strengthen the building, yet either may be taken away without very serious injury. But a *frame* may be *complete* in all its parts, and yet be no building. Without a *covering*, it will not answer a single design of a house; and just in proportion as it is well covered, will it be a comfortable residence. Just so with Christianity. The covering of the house is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, producing gracious affections, which manifest themselves in a holy life. But the covering of a house cannot exist without some kind of frame-work. So experimental and practical piety cannot exist without a belief of the principal doctrines of the gospel. The Holy Spirit operates upon the heart *through the truth*. He gives it a personal application; brings it home to the heart and conscience, and makes it effectual in changing the heart and life. "Sanctify them *through thy truth*: thy word is truth." "Of his own will begat he us, *with the word of truth*." "Seeing ye have purified your souls, in *obeying the truth through the Spirit*." "Being born again *by the word of God*." Thus, the agency of the Spirit is always acknowledged in connection with the truth. Any religious feeling or experience, therefore, which is not produced by the truth made effectual by the Holy Spirit, is not genuine. There is a kind of indefinite religious feeling, which many mistake for Christian experience. They *feel*, and perhaps deeply; but they know not *why* they feel. Such religious feeling is to be suspected as spurious. It may be the delusion of the devil. By persuading people to rest upon this spurious religious feeling, he accomplishes his purpose as well as if he had kept them in carnal security. And the clearer our views of truth, the more spiritual and holy will be our religious affections. Thus, godly sorrow arises from a sight of our own depravity, with a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as committed against a holy God, and against great light and mercy. Faith is produced by a spiritual view of the atonement of Christ, and of his infinite fulness as a complete and perfect Saviour. Love is excited by a discovery of the excellence of God's moral perfections. Holy fear and reverence arise from a sight of the majesty and glory of his natural attributes, and a sense of his presence. Joy may come from a sense of the infinite rectitude of his moral government; from the sight of the glory of God, in his works of providence and grace; or from a general view of the beauty and excellence of divine truth. Comfort may be derived from evidence of

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the divine favor; and confidence, from an appropriation of God's promises to ourselves. And in many other ways, also, the Holy Spirit produces spiritual feelings through the instrumentality of the truth. But all religious feeling, produced by impulse, without any rational view of the truth, is to be suspected. It may be the work of Satan, who is very busy in counterfeiting religious experiences for those he wishes to deceive. Every religious affection has its counterfeit. Thus, sorrow may be produced by the fear of hell, without any sense of the evil of sin; a presumption of our own good estate may be mistaken for faith, and this will produce joy; we may exercise a carnal or selfish love to God, because we think he loves us, and has made us the objects of his special favor; and the promises of God, so far as they concern the personal good of the believer, may administer as much comfort to the hypocrite as to the real saint.

How exceedingly important is it, then, that you should not only exercise a general belief of the great doctrines of the gospel, but that you should have a right apprehension of them. The *truth* is so necessary in the Christian warfare, that it is called the *sword of the Spirit*. But of what benefit is the sword to the soldier who knows not how to use it? The sword is used as much to ward off the blows of the enemy, as to attack him. But the novice, who should engage an enemy, without knowing the use of his weapon, would be thrust through in the first onset. Hence, the peculiar force of the prayer of our Lord, "Sanctify them through thy truth." It is by the use of the truth, as the "sword of the Spirit," in the Christian warfare, that the work of satisfaction is carried on.

But, as the frame-work of a building, though complete in all its parts, would be no house without a covering; so we may have a perfect knowledge of the abstract doctrines of the Christian religion, and be no Christians. It is the practical and experimental application of these doctrines to our own hearts and lives, that makes the building complete. Regard yourself as a subject of God's moral government, and the doctrines of the Bible as the laws of his kingdom; and you will feel such a personal interest in them, that you cannot rest in abstract speculation. Study these doctrines, that you may know how to live to the glory of God.

I will now give you a few simple directions for obtaining a correct knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible.

1. *Approach the subject with the spirit of a little child.* "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word." "Except ye be converted and *become as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." A little child is always satisfied of the truth of what his father tells him. "My father says so," is reason enough for him. He does not say, "I will not believe it, because I cannot understand it." So it should be your first

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object to ascertain what the Bible teaches, and then submit to it with the confidence of a little child. You cannot expect fully to comprehend the ways of an infinite Being. You can see but a very small part of the system of his moral government. It cannot be strange, then, if you are unable to discover the reasonableness of every truth which he has revealed. Do not try to carry out difficult points beyond what is plainly taught in the Scriptures. God has revealed all that is necessary for us to know in this life. He knows best where to leave these subjects. If there were no difficulties in the truths revealed, there would be no trial of our faith. It is necessary that we should take some things upon trust. There are also some truths taught which we find it difficult to reconcile with others as plainly revealed. Be content to believe both, on the authority of God's word. He will reconcile them hereafter. "What I do, thou knowest not *now*, but thou shalt know hereafter." Let this consideration always satisfy you: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." I am the more particular on this point, as it is the place where error always begins. The setting up of feeble reason in opposition to the word of God, has been the foundation of all mistakes in religion. And, if we determine to be satisfied of the reasonableness of the truth before we believe it, and carry out the principle, we shall land in downright atheism. By this, I do not mean that any truth is unreasonable. It is not so. Divine truth is the perfection of reason. But there are some truths which may appear unreasonable, because we cannot see the whole of them. Thus, a fly, on the corner of a splendid edifice, cannot see the beauty and symmetry of the building. So far as his eye extends, it may appear to be sadly lacking in its proportions. Yet this is but a faint representation of the narrow views we have of God's moral government. There is, however, no truth which he has revealed, in relation to that government, that is more difficult to understand, than many things that philosophy has discovered in the natural world. Yet, even infidels do not think of disputing facts conclusively proved by philosophy, because they cannot understand them. It becomes us, then, with the deepest humility and self-abasement, to submit our reason to the word of God.

2. *Avoid a controversial spirit.* Do not study for the sake of finding arguments to support your own opinions. Take the place of a sincere inquirer after truth, with a determination to embrace whatever you find supported by the word of God, however contrary it may be to your favorite notions. But when objections arise in your mind against any doctrine, do not suppose you have made some new discovery, and therefore reject it without farther inquiry. The same objections have perhaps occurred to the mind of every inquirer, on the same subject; and very probably they have often been satisfactorily answered by able writers. This is a common error of young inquirers. They are apt to think others take things upon trust, and that they are the only persons who have thought of the difficulties which start up in their minds. But, when their reading becomes more extensive, they learn, with shame, that what appeared to them to be original thought, was only following an old, beaten track.

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3. *Use such helps as you can obtain.* Read carefully selected and judicious authors, on doctrinal subjects.[A] The advantages arising from the perusal of other books than the Scriptures, to obtain doctrinal knowledge, are these: 1. You may profit by the experience of others. You see how the difficulties which arise in your own mind appeared to them, and how they solved them. 2. Much light may be thrown upon many difficult passages of Scripture, by an intimate acquaintance with the times and circumstances under which they were written; and men who undertake to write on these subjects generally search deeply into these things. 3. God has been pleased, in every age, to raise up men “*mighty in the Scriptures.*” By the extraordinary powers of mind which he has given them, they may have clearer perceptions of divine truth than you are able to obtain by the exertion of your own faculties alone. You may also employ the sermons which you hear, for an increase of doctrinal knowledge, as well as an excitement to the performance of duty. But all these things you must invariably bring to the test of God’s word. We are commanded to “try the spirits, whether they be of God.” Do not take the opinions of men upon trust. Compare them diligently with the word of God, and do not receive them till you are fully convinced that they agree with this unerring standard. Make this your text-book; and only use others to assist you in coming to a right understanding of this.

4. *In all your researches after doctrinal knowledge, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.* Make it a subject of daily prayer, that God would enable you to understand his word, that you may be “rooted and grounded in the faith.” The influences of the Holy Spirit are two-fold. He enlightens the understanding, to lead it into a correct knowledge of the truth; and he applies the truth to the sanctification of the heart. Pray diligently that you may have both. If you persevere in the proper observance of this direction, you cannot fail to profit by the others. But, if you neglect this, your pursuit of doctrinal knowledge will serve only as food to your pride, self-confidence and vain-glory, and exert a blighting influence upon your soul.

Your affectionate Brother.

[Footnote A: The reader will find a list of suitable books in the Appendix.]

LETTER III.

True Religion a Work of Grace in the Heart; but it must be carried out in all our Conduct.

“And he (the righteous) shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: *his leaf shall not wither.*”—PS. 1:3.



“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, *but her leaf shall be green*; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, *neither shall cease from yielding fruit*.”—JER. 17:7, 8.

MY DEAR SISTER,

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In my first letter I spoke of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as represented by our Lord under the similitude of a living spring. In my last I endeavored to show that the operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart is inseparably connected with the truth. My present object will be to show the *effects* produced by both these agents acting together. This is most beautifully described in the passages quoted above. Here the Christian is represented under the similitude of a tree planted by the *rivers* of water. The grace of God, or the Holy Spirit acting in unison with the word, to carry on the great work of regeneration and sanctification in the soul, is represented by the constant flowing of *rivers of water*. This shows the abundance of the provision. But a tree may stand so near a river as to be watered when it overflows its banks; and yet, if its roots only spread over the surface of the ground, and do not reach the bed of the river, it will wither in a time of drought. This aptly represents the professor of religion who appears engaged and in earnest only during remarkable outpourings of the Spirit. He is all alive and full of zeal when the river overflows, but when it returns to its ordinary channel, his leaf withers; and if a long season of spiritual drought follows, he becomes dry and barren, so that no appearance of spiritual life remains. But, mark how different the description of the true child of God. "He shall be as a tree *planted* by the rivers of water." This figure appears to have been taken from the practice of *cultivating* trees. They are removed from the wild state in which they spring up, and their roots firmly fixed in a spot of ground *cultivated* and *prepared*, to facilitate their growth. This *planting* well represents the *fixed* state of the renewed soul, as it settles down in entire dependence upon the word and Spirit of God, for nourishment and growth in grace. But the figure is carried out still farther,—*"and spreadeth out her roots by the river."* When the roots of the tree are spread out along the bed of the river, it will always be supplied with water, even when the river is low. This steadiness of Christian character is elsewhere spoken of under a similar figure. "The *root* of the righteous *shall not be moved*." "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to *take root*." "Being *rooted* and grounded in love." Hence the prophet adds, that the heat and the drought shall not affect it; but its *leaf shall be green*, always growing; and it *shall not cease to bring forth* fruit. And throughout the Scriptures, the righteous are represented as bringing forth fruit. "And the remnant that is escaped out of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward." Here is first a taking deep root downward, or the sanctification of the faculties of the soul, by which new principles of action are

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adopted; and a bearing fruit upward, or the exercise of those principles, in holy affections and corresponding outward conduct. Again, "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." The bud and blossom represent, in a very striking manner, the first exercises of Christian experience. However, this may be easily counterfeited. Every tree bears a multitude of false blossoms, which, by the superficial observer, may not be distinguished from the true. They may for a time appear even more gay and beautiful. As it appears in full bloom, it would be impossible for the keenest eye to discover them. But as soon as the season arrives for the fruit to begin to grow, these fair blossoms are withered and gone, and nothing remains but a dry and wilted stem. But the real children of God shall not only bud and blossom, but they shall "*fill the face of the world with fruit.*" In the Song of Solomon, the church is compared to "an orchard of pomegranates, with *pleasant fruits.*" This is a beautiful figure. The pomegranate is a kind of apple. The tree is low, but spreads its branches, so that its breadth is greater than its height. So the true Christian is humble and lowly; while his good works spread all around him. The blossoms of this tree are large and beautiful, forming a cup like a bell. But when the flowers are double, no fruit follows. So the double-minded hypocrite brings forth no fruit. The pomegranate apple is exceedingly beautiful and delicious; and so the real fruits of Christianity are full of beauty and loveliness. Again, the church is said to lay up for Christ all manner of pleasant fruit, new and old. But, *backsliding* Israel is called an empty vine, bringing forth fruit *unto himself*. Here we may distinguish between the *apparent* good fruits of the hypocrite and those of the real Christian. The latter does everything for Christ. He really desires the glory of God, and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom; and this is his ruling motive in all his conduct. But the former, though he may do many things good in themselves, yet does them all with selfish motives. His ruling desire is to gratify himself, and to promote his own honor and interest, either in this world, or in that which is to come.

The *fruit* which his people bring forth is that on which Christ chiefly insists, as a test of Christian character. "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." He compares himself to a vine, and his followers to branches; and informs them that every branch which beareth not fruit shall be taken away. In the passage quoted from the first Psalm, the righteous is said to bring forth fruit *in his season*. And in the 92d Psalm and 14th verse, it is said, "They shall still bring forth fruit *in their old age*; they shall *be fat and flourishing*;" thus exhibiting a constancy of fruit-bearing, and an uninterrupted growth, even down to old age.

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But, it becomes a matter of serious inquiry to know what is meant by bringing forth fruit *in his season*. The apostle Paul says, "The fruit of the Spirit is in *all* goodness, and righteousness, and truth." Hence, we conclude, that bringing forth fruit *in season* must be carrying out the principles of the gospel into every part of our conduct. In another place, the same apostle informs us more particularly what are the fruits of the Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Let us, then, carry out these principles, and see what influence they will have upon the Christian character. *Love* is something that can be *felt*. It is an outgoing of heart towards the object loved, and a feeling of union with it. When we have a strong affection for a friend, it is because we see in him something that is lovely. We love his society, and delight to think of him when he is absent. Our minds are continually upon the lovely traits of his character. So ought we to love God. The ground of this love should be the infinite purity, excellence, and beauty of his moral perfections, independent of our relations to him. He is infinite loveliness in himself. There is such a thing as feeling this love in exercise. In the Song of Solomon, love is said to be "*strong as death*." Surely, this is no faint imagery. Is it possible for a person to exercise a feeling "*as strong as death*," and yet not be sensible of it? Love takes hold of every faculty of soul and body. It must, then, be no very dull feeling. Again; the warmth and the settled and abiding nature of love are represented by such strong language as this: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Surely this can be no fitful feeling, which comes and goes at extraordinary seasons. It must be a settled and abiding principle of the soul; though it may not always be accompanied with strong emotions. We may sometimes be destitute of emotion towards the friends we love most. But, the settled principle of esteem and preference is abiding; and our attention needs only to be called to the lovely traits in our friend's character, to call forth emotion.

David, under the influence of this feeling, breaks forth in such expressions as these: "My soul *thirsteth* for thee; my flesh *longeth* for thee:" "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so *panteth* my soul after thee, O God: My soul *thirsteth* for God, for the living God:" "My soul *longeth*, yea, even *fainteth*, for the courts of the Lord; my *heart and my flesh crieth out* for the living God:" "My soul *breaketh* for the longing it hath unto thy judgments *at all times*." Surely there is no dulness, no coldness, in such feelings as these. They accord with the spirit of the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with *all*

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thy might." And this was not, with the Psalmist, an *occasional lively frame*. This soul-breaking longing was the habitual feeling of his heart; for he exercised it "*at all times*" And what was it that called forth these ardent longings? Was it the personal benefits which he had received or expected to receive from God? By no means. After expressing an earnest desire to dwell in the house of the Lord, *all the days of his life*, he tells us why he wished to be there: "*to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.*" The object of his love was "*the beauty of the Lord;*" doubtless meaning his moral perfections. Intimately connected with this was his desire to know the will of the Lord. For this he wished to "*inquire in his temple.*" And whenever the love of God is genuine, it will call forth the same desire. The apostle John, whose very breath is love, says, "This is the love of God, that we *keep his commandments.*" The child that loves his parents will delight in doing everything he can to please them. But the child that cares for his parents only as he expects to be benefited by them, will always do as little as possible for them, and that little unwillingly. So, in our relations with God. The hypocrite may have a kind of love to him, because he thinks himself a peculiar object of divine favor, and because he still expects greater blessings. But this does not lead him to delight in the commands of God. He rather esteems them as a *task*. His heart is not in the doing of them; and he is willing to make them as light as possible. But, the real Christian *delights* in the law of God; and the chief source of his grief is, that he falls so far short of keeping it.

Again, if we love God, we shall love the image of God, wherever we find it. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Our love to Christians, if genuine, must arise from the resemblance which they bear to Christ; and not from the comfort which we enjoy in their society, nor because they appear friendly to us. This hypocrites also feel. If we really exercise that love, we shall be willing to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of our Christian brethren. We are directed to love one another *as Christ loved us*. And how did Christ love us? So strong was his love that he laid down his life for us? And the apostle John says, we ought, in imitation of him, "to lay down our lives for the brethren;" that is, if occasion require it. Such is the strength of that love which we are required to exercise for our Christian brethren. But, how can this exist in the heart, when we feel unwilling to make the least sacrifice of our own feelings or interests for their benefit?

Again; there is another kind of love required of us. This is the love of compassion, which may be exercised even towards wicked men. And what must be the extent of this love? There can be but one standard. We have the example of our Lord before us. So intense was his love, that it led him to make every personal sacrifice of ease, comfort, and worldly good, for the benefit of the bodies and souls of men; yea, he laid down his life for them. This is the kind of love which is required of us, and which was exercised by the apostles and early Christians.

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Another fruit of the Spirit is JOY. We are commanded to rejoice in the Lord *at all times*. If we have a proper sense of the holiness of God's moral character; of the majesty and glory of his power; of the infinite wisdom which shines through all his works; the infinite rectitude of his moral government; and especially of that amazing display of his love, in the work of redemption—it will fill our hearts with “JOY UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY.” Nor is rejoicing in God at all inconsistent with mourning for sin. On the contrary, the more we see of the divine character, the more deeply shall we be abased and humbled before him. Says Job, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now *mine eye seeth thee*. *Wherefore*, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” It was a *sight* of God which brought this holy man so low before him.

Another fruit of the Spirit is PEACE. This is of two kinds; peace with God, and peace with man. The impenitent are at war with God; there is therefore no peace for them. God is angry with them, and they are contending with him. But the Christian becomes reconciled to God through Christ. He finds peace in believing in him. The Lord is no longer a God of terror to him, but a “God of peace.” Hence the gospel is called the “way of peace;” and Christ the “Prince of Peace.” Jesus, in his parting interview with his beloved disciples, says, “Peace I leave with you, *my peace* I give unto you.” Righteousness, or justice and peace, are said to have met together and kissed each other. “We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Bible is full of this subject, but I cannot dwell upon it. I wish you to look out the following passages; read and compare them diligently, and meditate upon the blessed truth which they contain Ps. 37:37; 85:8; 119:165. Prov. 16:7. Isa. 20:3; 57:19. Lu. 2:14. John 16:33. Rom. 8:6; 14:17. 1 Cor. 7:15. Eph. 2:11, 15. Phil. 4:7. Col. 3:15.

I know not how to speak of this exercise of the mind. It is better felt than described. It is a calm and holy reconciliation with God and his government; a settled feeling of complacency towards everything but sin. It begets a serene and peaceful temper and disposition of the heart. But this gracious work of the Holy Spirit does not stop with these exercises of the mind. However we may seem to feel, in our moments of retirement and meditation, if this peaceful disposition is not carried out in our intercourse with others, and our feelings towards them, we have reason to suspect ourselves of hypocrisy. Whatever is in our hearts will manifest itself in our conduct. If we exercise a morose, sour, and jealous disposition towards others; if we indulge a censorious spirit, not easily overlooking their faults; if we are easily provoked, and irritated with the slightest offence; if we indulge in petty strifes and backbiting—surely the peace of God does not rule in our hearts.

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So much does Christ esteem this peaceful spirit, that he says peacemakers shall be called the children of God. Again, he tells his disciples to “have peace one with another.” The apostle Paul, also, gives frequent exhortations to the exercise of this grace. “Be at peace among yourselves.” “Follow peace with all men.” “If it be possible, live peaceably with all men.” “That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.”

MEEKNESS is a twin-sister of Peace. It is a temper of mind not easily provoked to resentment. The word used in the original signifies *easiness of mind*. The cultivation of this grace resembles the taming of wild animals. It is the bringing of all our wild and ungovernable passions under control. It is an eminent work of the Spirit; and we may judge of our spiritual attainments by the degree of it which we possess. The Scriptures abound with exhortations to the cultivation of it. It is preeminently lovely in the female character. Hence, the apostle Peter exhorts women to adorn themselves with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price.

LONG-SUFFERING and GENTLENESS are twin-daughters of Meekness. The latter is the disposition of the heart. The former are the actions which flow out from that disposition, in our intercourse with others. Long-suffering is godlike. It is an imitation of the forbearance of God towards his rebellious creatures. He is long-suffering, and slow to anger. He does not let his anger burn hot against sinners, till all means of bringing them to repentance have failed. O, how should this shame us, who cannot bear the least appearance of insult or injury from our fellow-sinners, without resentment! But, if we would be the children of our Father in heaven, we must learn to bear ill treatment with a meek and quiet and forgiving temper. Gentleness is one of the most lovely of all the graces of the Spirit. It is a “softness or mildness of disposition and behavior, and stands opposed to harshness and severity, pride and arrogance.” “It corrects whatever is offensive in our manner, and, by a constant train of humane attentions, studies to alleviate the burden of common misery;” the constant exercise of this spirit is of the greatest importance to the Christian who would glorify God in his life, and do good to his fellow-creatures.

GOODNESS is another fruit of the Spirit. I suppose the apostle here means the same that he expresses in another place by “bowels of mercies and kindness.” It is doing good both to the bodies and souls of others, as we have opportunity. “Be kindly affectioned one to another.” “Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted.” This is a distinguishing trait in the Christian character. It shone forth in all its loveliness in our divine Redeemer. He *went about* doing good. So ought we to imitate his example. It should be our chief aim and study to make ourselves useful to others; for we thereby glorify God. If we have the Spirit of Christ, this will be the great business of our lives.

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Another fruit of the Spirit is FAITH. Although this is mentioned last but two in the catalogue, yet it is by no means the least important. Indeed, it may be called the father of all the rest. The proper definition of faith is, a *belief of the truth*. Faith is a very common principle of action, by which is transacted all the business of this life. People universally act according to their faith. If a person is fully convinced that his house is on fire, he will make haste to escape. If a man really believes a bank-note is good, he will receive it for its professed value. If the merchant believes that his customer is able to pay for them, he will give him goods upon credit. If a child really believes his parent will punish him for doing mischief, he will keep out of it. And so, in everything else, we act according to our belief. No person ever fully believes a truth which concerns himself, without acting accordingly. That faith which is the fruit of the Spirit is a hearty belief of all the truths of God's word. And in proportion as we believe these truths, in their application to ourselves, we shall act according to them. The reason why the sinner does not repent and turn to God, is that he does not fully believe the word of God, as it applies to himself. He may believe some of the abstract truths of the Scriptures, but he does not really believe himself to be in the dreadful danger which they represent him. The reason why Christians live so far from the standard of God's word is that their belief in the truths contained in it is so weak and faint. We all profess to believe that God is everywhere present. Yet, Christians often complain that they have no lively sense of his presence. The reason is, that they do not fully and heartily believe this truth. So strong and vivid is the impression when this solemn truth takes full possession of the soul, that the apostle compares it to "*seeing him that is invisible*." Now, but for our unbelief, we should always have such a view of the divine presence. O, with what holy awe and reverence would this inspire us! On examination, we shall find that all the graces of the Spirit arise from faith, and all our sins and short-comings from unbelief. It is a belief of the moral excellence of God's character which inspires love. It is a belief of our own depravity, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, which creates godly sorrow. It is a strong and particular belief of all the overwhelming truths of the Bible, which overcomes the world. "This is the victory; even our faith." It is a firm and unshaken belief in these truths, presenting the glories of heaven just in view, which supports the Christian in the dark and trying hour of death. It is the same belief which makes him "as bold as a lion" in the performance of his duty. This is what supported the martyrs, and enabled them cheerfully to lay down their lives for Christ's sake. It is this which must support you in the Christian warfare. And in proportion to your faith will be your progress. I would be glad to say more on this subject. It is large enough to fill a volume.

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TEMPERANCE is another fruit of the Spirit. This consists in the proper control of all our desires, appetites, and passions. The exercise of this grace is of vital importance, not only as it concerns the glory of God, but our own health and happiness.

I have felt much straitened in giving a description of the fruits of the Spirit in a single letter. I have not pretended to do justice to the subject. My principal object has been to show the beautiful symmetry of the Christian character, as it extends from the heart to all our actions, in every relation of life. And this will serve as an introduction to the more particular consideration of the various Christian duties.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER IV.

On the Reading and Study of the Holy Scriptures

“Search the Scriptures.”—JOHN 5:39.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I feel persuaded that you will take a deep interest in the subject of this letter; for, to a true child of God, nothing is so precious as the volume of inspiration. It is like rubies in a case of gold. That which is most valuable for practical use lies on the surface; while every examination discovers new gems of surpassing beauty.

There is this difference between the *devotional reading* and the *thorough study* of the Holy Scriptures,—that the object of the former is to affect the heart, while that of the latter is chiefly to inform the understanding. Although this blessed book should never be used without practical application, yet, when all the powers of the mind are taxed to ascertain the critical meaning of the text, there is less opportunity for the exercise of the affections of the heart than when the mind is suffered simply to dwell upon obvious truth. For the systematic study of the Bible, portions of time should be set apart, if possible, separate from our regular seasons of devotion; or, perhaps, immediately after. For the former, a small portion should be selected from the more practical and devotional parts of the Bible.

We are commanded to *search the Scriptures*. *Searching* is a difficult and laborious work. To induce us to engage in it, we must have a strong desire for something valuable. Here is a treasure of sufficient value to call forth this desire. This blessed book contains the revealed will of God. All who love God will be anxious to know his will. They will make it the rule of their conduct. “Thy word,” says the Psalmist, “is a lamp, unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” The will of God, as made known in his word, is like a lantern, which sheds a light on our path, and directs the steps of our feet.

The sincere Christian will search after a knowledge of God's will, with more eagerness than he would search for hidden treasures of gold and silver. He will *set his heart*

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to the work. This is what God commands. After Moses had given the law of God to the children of Israel, he said unto them, "*Set your hearts* unto all the words which I testify among you this day." This is a very strong expression. To *set our hearts* to any work, is to go about it in earnest, with all the energies of our souls. Again; when we make great search for anything we very much desire and highly prize, and find it, we are very apt to keep it. Hence David says, "Thy word have I *hid* in my heart." But mark the reason of his conduct. Why did he hide God's word in his heart? He explains his motive: "That I might not *sin against thee*." His object, in hiding God's word in his heart, was to know how to regulate his conduct so as not to sin against him. You must feel a personal interest in the truth. You must study it as the directory of your life. When you open this blessed book, let this always be the sincere inquiry of your heart: "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to *do*?" Come to it with this childlike spirit of obedience, and you will not fail to learn the will of God. But when you have learned your duty in God's word, *do it without delay*. Here are two very important points of Christian character, quite too much overlooked. (1.) An earnest desire to know present duty. (2.) A steadfast and settled determination to *do it as soon as it is known*. Here lies the grand secret of high spiritual attainments. A person who acts from these principles may make greater progress in a single day than a tardy, procrastinating spirit in a long life. The pressure of obligation rests upon the present moment. Remember, when you have ascertained present duty, the delay of a single moment is *sin*. With these remarks, I submit a few practical directions for the profitable reading and study of the Holy Scriptures.

1. *Read the Bible in your closet, or under circumstances which will secure you from interruption, either by the conversation of others, or the attractions of other objects.* Do not attempt to fill up little broken intervals of time with the reading of God's word. Leave these seasons for lighter reading. Remember, the reading of the Scriptures is nothing less than conversing with God. When any one pays so little attention to your conversation as not to understand what you say, you consider it a great breach of politeness. God speaks to you whenever you read his holy word. His all-seeing eye rests upon your heart; and he knows whether you are engaged in solemn trifling. If you read his word so carelessly as not to understand its meaning and drink in its spirit, you treat him as you would disdain to be treated by an earthly friend. O the forbearance of God, who suffers such indignity from those who call themselves his children! Never approach the word of God but with feelings of reverence and godly fear.

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2. *Come to the work with a preparation of heart.* If you were going to visit some person of great consequence, whose favor and esteem you wished to secure, you would take care to have everything about your person adjusted in the most becoming manner. So let it be with your mind, when you come to converse with God. Shut out all worldly thoughts. Strive to bring yourself into a tranquil, holy, and tender frame, so that the truths you contemplate may make their proper impression upon your heart.

3. *Seek the aid of the Holy Spirit.* Christ promised his disciples that, when the Holy Spirit should come, he would “*guide them into all truth.*” Without his enlightening influences, we cannot understand the word of God; and without his gracious influences upon the heart, we shall not be disposed to obey it. We have the most abundant encouragement to seek the aid of this Divine Instructor. Christ assures us that God is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. Before opening God’s word, pray that he would show you the truth, the rule of your duty, and incline your heart to obey it. As you proceed, keep your heart silently lifted up to God for the same object.

4. *Read with self-application.* Whenever you have discovered any truth, ask what bearing it has upon your *present duty*. If it relates to spiritual feelings, compare it with the exercises of your own heart. If they do not correspond, you have work for repentance. Go immediately to the cross of Christ; give yourself away to him anew, and seek for pardon and needed grace. This you may do instantly, either in a silent or an audible prayer. If it relates to the spirit and temper of Christians, in their intercourse with one another, or with the world, compare it with your own conduct. If you find yourself condemned, you have the same course to pursue, with a steadfast determination to exhibit more of the spirit of Christ. If it relates to some positive duty, inquire whether you have done it. If not, you have to go through the same work of repentance and application to the blood of Christ. But do not stop here. *Do your duty immediately.*

5. *Read the Scriptures regularly.* To sustain these frail bodies, a daily supply of nourishment is required. Equally necessary is daily food for the soul. The word of God is the bread of eternal life. Take, then, your regular supplies of spiritual food, that your soul may not famish. Choose for this purpose those seasons when you are least liable to interruption; when you can retire and shut out the world; when you can best command the energies of your mind. There is no time more fit and suitable for this than the morning. Then the mind is clear, vigorous, unincumbered, and prepared to receive an impression. There is also a propriety in consulting God’s word at the close of the day. But this depends much upon the state of bodily feeling. If you become exhausted and dull, after the labors of the day, I would rather recommend taking the whole time in the morning. But by no means confine yourself to these stated seasons. Whenever the nature of your pursuits will admit of your seclusion for a sufficient length of time to fix your mind upon the truth, you may freely drink from this never-failing fountain of the water of life.

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6. *Study the Scriptures systematically.* If you read at random, here a little and there a little, your views of divine truth will be partial and limited. This method may indeed be pursued in regard to reading *strictly devotional*; but only when other time is taken for obtaining a connected view and a critical understanding of the whole Bible. The Bible is like a dish of savory meats. There is almost every variety of style and matter. There is *History, Biography, Argumentative and Didactic Essays, and Poetry*. Although these various kinds of writing are contained in a great number of books, written by various authors, at different times, without concert, yet a remarkable unity of design runs through the whole. They all aim at the development of the plan of God's moral government; and a most striking harmony of sentiment prevails throughout. We find everything, from the very beginning, pointing to the glorious plan of redemption revealed in the Gospel. Although we may, at first view, feel the want of a regular system of divinity, yet, a careful attention to the subject will convince us that God's plan is best. We have here the principles of his government exhibited in *living examples*; which give us a clearer view, and more vivid impression of them, than we could obtain from the study of an abstract system. There are several things to be observed, in the systematic and thorough study of the Bible, some of which I shall mention.

(1.) Always keep distinctly before you the grand design of the Scriptures; which is, to convince mankind of their lost and ruined condition, make known the way of salvation, and persuade them to embrace it.

(2.) Make it your constant aim to ascertain what is the plain and obvious meaning of the writer; for this is the mind of the Spirit. To aid you in this, observe the following particulars: 1. Endeavor to become acquainted with the peculiarity of each writer's style. Although the matter and words of Scripture were dictated by the Holy Spirit, yet it was so done that each writer employed a style and manner peculiar to himself. This does not invalidate the evidence of their divine origin. On the contrary, it shows the wisdom of the Spirit. For, if the whole Bible had been written in a uniform style, it would have given opposers a strong argument against its authenticity; while the want of that uniformity furnishes conclusive evidence that it could not have been the work of a single impostor. Again; a continued sameness of style would make the reading of so large a book as the Bible tedious and unpleasant; but the rich variety presented by the various authors of this blessed book, helps our infirmities, and makes the reading of it pleasing and delightful. 2. "Inquire into the character, situation, and office of the writer; the time, place, and occasion of his writing; and the people for whose immediate use he intended his work." This will enable you to understand his allusions to particular circumstances

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and customs, and to see the practical application of the principles he advances. 3. Consider the principal scope or aim of the book; or, what was the author's object, design, or intention, in writing it. Notice also the general plan or method which he has pursued. This will enable you to discover his leading ideas, if it be an argumentative work; or the particular instructions of God's providence, if it be historical. 4. Where the language is difficult to be understood, pay strict attention to the context, and you will generally find the author's meaning explained. But, if you do not, consider whether the difficult phrase is a peculiarity of the writer's style. If so, look out the place where he has used it in a different connection, and see what meaning is attached to it there. But, if this does not satisfy you, examine the passages, in other parts of the Scriptures, which relate to the same subject, and compare them with the one under consideration. This will generally clear up the darkest passages. But, if you still feel in doubt, you may find assistance from consulting commentators, who have made themselves thoroughly acquainted with all the particulars I have mentioned; which, with a knowledge of the language in which the book was originally written, may have enabled them to remove the difficulty. But, do not trust the opinions of commentators any farther than you see they agree with the general system of revealed truth; and, above all, do not follow them in any scheme of fanciful interpretation or visionary speculation.

(3.) Do not task yourself with a certain *quantity* of reading at the regular seasons devoted to the study of the Bible. This may lead you to hurry over it, without ascertaining its meaning, or drinking in its spirit. You had better study one verse thoroughly, than to read half a dozen chapters carelessly. The nourishment received from food depends less on the quantity than on its being perfectly digested. So with the mind; one clear idea is better than a dozen confused ones; and there is such a thing as overloading the mind with undigested knowledge. Ponder upon every portion you read, until you get a full and clear view of the truth it contains. Fix your mind and heart upon it, as the bee lights upon the flower; and do not leave it till you have extracted all the honey it contains.

(4.) Read in course. By studying the whole Bible in connection, you will obtain a more enlarged view of the plan of God's moral government. And you will see how it all centres in the Lord Jesus Christ. But I would not have you confine yourself entirely to the regular reading of the whole Bible in course. Some portions of the historical part do not require so much *study* as that which is more argumentative and doctrinal; and some parts of the word of God are more devotional than others, and therefore better fitted for daily practical use. A very good plan is, to read the Old and New Testaments in course, a

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portion in each, every day. If you begin at Genesis, Job, and Matthew, and read a chapter every day, at each place, omitting the first, and reading three Psalms, on the Sabbath, you will read the whole Bible in a year, while on every day you will have a suitable variety. Besides this, the more devotional and practical books should be read frequently. The Psalms furnish a great variety of Christian experience, and may be resorted to with great profit and comfort, under all circumstances. This is the only book in the Bible which does not require to be read in course. The Psalms are detached from each other, having no necessary connection. The other books were originally written like a sermon or a letter. They have, for convenience, since been divided into chapters and verses. If you read a single chapter by itself, you lose the connection; as, if you should take up a sermon and read a page or two, you would not get a full view of the author's subject. I would therefore recommend that, in addition to your daily reading in the Old and New Testaments, you have also some one of those books which require most study, in a course of reading, to take up whenever you have an occasional season of leisure to devote to the study of the Bible. But, when you have commenced one book, finish it before you begin another. You will find great advantage from the use of a reference Bible and concordance. By looking out the parallel passages, as you proceed, you will see how one part of the Scriptures explains another, and how beautifully they all harmonize. This will also give you a better view of the *whole Scriptures* than you can obtain in any other way. But if you are a Sabbath-school teacher or scholar, your regular lesson will furnish as much study of this description as you will be able thoroughly to accomplish.

(5.) In reading the Scriptures, there are some subjects of inquiry which you should carry along with you constantly: 1. What do I find here which points to Christ? Unless you keep this before your mind, you will lose half the interest of many parts of the Old Testament. Indeed, much of it will otherwise be almost without meaning. It is full of types and prophecies relating to Christ, which, by themselves, appear dry, but, when understood, most beautiful and full of instruction. 2. Remember that the Bible contains a history of the church. Endeavor, then, to learn the state of the church at the time of which you are reading. For the sake of convenience, and a clearer view of the subject, you may divide the history of the church into six periods: (1.) From the fall of Adam to the flood. (2.) From Noah to the giving of the law. (3.) From that time to David and the prophets. (4.) From David to the Babylonish captivity. (5.) From that time till the coming of Christ. (6.) From Christ to the end of time, which is called the gospel dispensation. From the commencement you will see a gradual development of God's designs of mercy, and a continually

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increasing light. Take notice of what period of the church you are reading; and from this you may judge of the degree of obligation of its members; for this has been increasing with the increase of light, from the fall of Adam to the present day; and it will continue to increase to the end of time. Note, also, the various declensions and revivals of religion which have occurred in every period of the church, and endeavor to learn their causes and consequences. By this, you will become familiar with God's method of dealing with his people; from which you may draw practical lessons of caution and encouragement for yourself. 3. Inquire what doctrinal truth is either taught, illustrated, or enforced, in the passage you are reading; and also, what *principle* is recognized. Great and important principles of the divine government and of practical duty are often implied in a passage of history which relates to a comparatively unimportant event. Let it be your business to draw out these principles, and apply them to practice. Thus, you will be daily increasing your knowledge of the great system of divine truth, the necessity of which I need not urge. 4. Note every promise and every prediction; and observe God's faithfulness in keeping his promises and fulfilling his prophecies. This will tend to strengthen your confidence in him. You will find it profitable, as you proceed, to take notes of these several matters, particularly; and, at the close of every book, review your notes, and sum them up under different heads.

(6.) Read the gospels with great care, for the particular purpose of studying the character of the blessed Jesus. Dwell upon every action of his life, and inquire after his motives. By this course you will be surprised to find the Godhead shining through the manhood, in little incidents which you have often read without interest. Look upon him at all times in his true character, as Mediator between God and man. Observe his several offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. See in which of these characters he is acting at different times; and inquire what bearing the particular action you are considering has upon his mediatorial character. Observe, also, the particular traits of character which appear conspicuous in particular actions; as power, energy, manly hardihood, dignity, condescension, humility, love, meekness, pity, compassion, tenderness, forgiveness, &c. Take notes; and when you have finished the course, draw from them, in writing, a minute and particular description of his character. This will be of great service to you as a pattern. You will also, by this means, see a peculiar beauty and fitness in Christ for the office he has undertaken, which you would not otherwise have discovered. But, do not stop with going through this course once. Repeat it as often as you can consistently with your plan of a systematic study of the Holy Scriptures. You will always find something new; and upon every fresh discovery, you can revise your old notes.

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(7.) In reading the historical and biographical parts of Scripture, several things are necessary to be observed: 1. The histories contained in the Bible are the histories of God's providence. Observe his hand in every event. You will there find some principle or law of his moral government exemplified. Inquire what that principle is, and carefully observe its application to the conduct of nations, communities, and individuals. 2. Whenever you read of particular mercies or judgments, as experienced by nations, communities, or individuals, look back for the cause. By this you will discover the principles upon which God acts in these matters. 3. In the biographies of the Bible, study the motives and conduct of the characters described. If they are unconverted men, you will learn the workings of human depravity, and discover what kind of influence a correct religious public sentiment has in restraining that depravity. If they are good men, you will see, in their good actions, living illustrations of the great doctrines of the Bible. Endeavor to learn by what means they made such eminent attainments in holiness, and strive to imitate them. If their actions are bad, look back and inquire into the cause of their backslidings. If you discover it, you will find a way-mark, to caution you against falling into the same pit.

(8.) The poetical and didactic parts of the Scriptures are scattered throughout the whole Bible. These abound with highly wrought figures. This is probably owing partly to the insufficiency of ordinary language to express the sublime and lofty ideas presented to the minds of the writers by the Spirit of truth. Endeavor to obtain a clear and correct understanding of the figures used. These are often taken from prevailing habits and customs, and from circumstances peculiar to the countries where the Scriptures were written. These habits and circumstances you must understand, or you will not see the force of the allusions. Others are taken from circumstances peculiar to particular occupations in life. These must also be thoroughly studied, in order to be understood. But, where the figures are drawn from things perfectly familiar, you will not perceive their surprising beauty and exact fitness to express the idea of the sacred pen-man, until you have carefully studied them, and noted the minutest circumstances. Beware, however, that you do not carry out those figures so far as to lead you into fanciful and visionary interpretations.

(9.) The books of the prophets consist of reproofs, exhortations, warnings, threatenings, predictions, and promises. By carefully studying the circumstances and characters of those for whom they were written, you will find the principles and laws of God's moral government set forth, in their application to nations, communities, and individuals. From these you may draw practical rules of duty, and also learn how to view the hand of God, in his providence, in different ages of the world. The predictions

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contained in these books are the most difficult to be understood of any part of the Bible. In reading them you will notice, 1. Those predictions whose fulfilment is recorded in the Bible, and diligently examine the record of their fulfilment. You will see how careful God is to fulfil every jot and tittle of his word. 2. There are other prophecies, the fulfilment of which is recorded in profane history; and others still which are yet unfulfilled. To understand these, it will be necessary to read ancient and modern history, in connection with the explanation of the prophecies by those writers who have made them their study. An attention to this, so far as your circumstances will admit, will be useful in enlarging your views of the kingdom of Christ. But, beware of becoming so deeply absorbed in these matters as to neglect those of a more practical nature; and especially be cautious of advancing far into the regions of speculation as to what is yet future.

(10.) You will find it an interesting and profitable employment occasionally to read a given book through, for the purpose of seeing what light it throws upon some particular subject,—some point of Christian doctrine, duty, practice, character, &c. For example, go through with Acts, with your eye upon the doctrine of Christ's divinity. Then go through with it a second time, to see what light it throws on the subject of Revivals. Pursue the same course with other books, and in respect to other subjects. In this way you will sometimes be surprised to find how much you have overlooked in your previous reading.

It will be perceived that I have laid out a very extensive and laborious work. But this is the great business of our lives; and, indeed, the contemplation of the glorious truths revealed in the Bible will form the business of eternity; and even that will be too short to learn the length and breadth, and height and depth, of the ways of the Almighty.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER V.

Prayer and Fasting.

“In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”—PHIL. 4:6.

MY DEAR SISTER,

The subject of this letter is one of vital interest to every Christian. It is, therefore, of the utmost consequence, that it be both well understood and diligently practised. It seems hardly necessary to urge prayer upon the Christian *as a duty*. Every true Christian must feel it to be a soul-exalting *privilege*. It is his breath; without it, he can no more maintain

his spiritual life, than animal life can be sustained without breathing. Prayer is an intimate communion with God, by which we unbosom our hearts to him, and receive communications of his grace, and fresh tokens of his love. What Christian, then, whose soul burns with divine love, will be disposed

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to apply to this holy employment the cold appellation of *duty*? Yet, God sees so much the importance of prayer, that he has not only *permitted*, but *commanded* us to pray. Our Lord frequently directed his disciples, and us through them, to “watch and pray.” He also teaches us to persevere in prayer: “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” The apostle Paul is frequent in exhorting Christians to pray: “Pray without ceasing.” “I will that men pray everywhere.” “Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” “I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.” “Continuing instant in prayer.” The duty of prayer is also enforced by the example of all the holy men whose biography is given in Scripture. Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, and all the prophets, were mighty in prayer. So were also the apostles. But, above all, the Lord Jesus, our blessed pattern, has set before us a life of prayer. You will find it very profitable to read the lives of these holy men, but especially that of our blessed Saviour, for the special purpose of noticing how much they abounded in prayer. Our Lord never undertook anything of importance, without first observing a special season of prayer. Oft we find him retiring into the mountains, sometimes a great while before day, for prayer. Indeed, on several occasions, he continued all night in prayer to God. If, then, it became the Lord of life and glory to spend much time in prayer, how much more, such weak and sinful creatures as we, who are surrounded with temptations without, and beset with corruptions within! Prayer is necessarily so intermingled with every duty, that the idea of a prayerless Christian is an absurdity.

Prayer not only secures to us the blessings which we need, but it brings our minds into a suitable frame for receiving them. We must see our need, feel our unworthiness, be sensible of our dependence upon God, and believe in his willingness to grant us, through Christ, the things that are necessary and proper for us. An acknowledgment of these things, on our part, is both requisite and proper; and, without such acknowledgment, it might not be consistent with the great ends of his moral government for God to grant us our desires.

Prayer is the offering up of the sincere desires and feelings of our hearts to God. It consists of *adoration*, *confession*, *supplication*, *intercession*, and *thanksgiving*. *Adoration* is an expression of our sense of the infinite majesty and glory of God. *Confession* is an humble acknowledgment of our sins and unworthiness. By *supplication*, we ask for pardon, grace, or any blessing we need for ourselves. By *intercession*, we pray for others. By *thanksgiving*, we express our gratitude to God for his goodness and mercy towards us and our fellow-creatures. All these several

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parts are embraced in the prayers recorded in Scripture, though all of them are not generally found in the same prayer. The prayer of Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, commences with adoration, and proceeds with supplication and intercession. The prayer of Daniel, in the time of the captivity, commences with adoration, and proceeds with confession, supplication, and intercession. The prayer of the Levites, in behalf of the people, after the return from captivity, commences with thanksgiving and adoration, and proceeds with confession, supplication, and intercession. The prayers of David are full of thanksgiving. The prayer of Habakkuk consists of adoration, supplication, and thanksgiving. The prayer of the disciples, after the joyous return of the apostles from the council of their persecutors, consists of adoration, a particular rehearsal of their peculiar circumstances, and supplication. The apostle Paul particularly enjoins "prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving." If you wish to learn *how* to pray, I would advise you to look out and study all the prayers recorded in Scripture. Although most of them are probably but the substance of what was said on the several occasions when they were offered, yet you will find them much better patterns than the prayers of Christians at the present day. There is a fervent simplicity about them, very different from the studied, formal prayers which we often hear. There is a definiteness and point in them, which take hold of the feelings of the heart. The Lord's prayer furnishes a comprehensive summary of the subjects of prayer: and you will take particular notice what a prominent place is assigned to the petition for the coming of Christ's kingdom. This shows that, in all our prayers, the glory of God should be the leading desire of our hearts. But, it is evident that Christ did not intend this as a particular form of prayer, to be used on all occasions; although it includes all that is necessary. We are so made as to be affected with a *particular* consideration of the subjects in which we are interested. We find our Lord himself using other words to suit particular occasions; although the subjects of his prayers were all included in this. The same thing, also, we observe in the practice of the apostles and early Christians. This is only intended as a general pattern; nor is it necessary that all the petitions contained in the Lord's prayer should ever be made at the said time.

Prayer must always be offered in the name of Christ. There is no other way by which we can approach God. There is no other channel through which we can receive blessings from him. Jesus is our Advocate and Intercessor. Our blessed Lord, speaking of the time of his glorification, says to his disciples, "Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall *ask the Father in my name*, he will give it you." This, however, does not forbid us to pray directly to Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, which was a common practice with the apostles.

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When the power of prayer is properly understood, it becomes a subject of amazing interest. I am persuaded there is a vast amount of unbelief, in relation to this matter, among Christians. If it were not so, the chariot wheels of God's salvation would roll on with mighty power. There would be a glorious movement in every part of the world. The Spirit of the Lord would be shed forth like a "mighty rushing wind." The promises of God to his people are so large and full, that the utmost stretch of their faith cannot reach them. The great and eternal God has condescended to lay himself under obligation to hear and answer the prayers of mortal worms. If we collect the promises relating to this subject, we shall be astonished at the amount of assurance which is given. So confident was David on this point, that he addresses God as the *hearer of prayer*, as though that were a distinguishing trait in his character. Again, he says, "He will *regard* the prayer of the destitute, and *not despise* their prayer." Solomon says, "The prayer of the upright *is his delight*;" and again, "He heareth the prayer of the righteous." The apostle James says, "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man *availeth much*." The apostle Peter says, "The eyes of the Lord are open to the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." And Christ himself has assured us, in the strongest possible terms, of the willingness of God to give spiritual blessings to those that ask for them. He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every *one* that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." But, as if this assurance were not sufficient to convince us of this most interesting truth, he appeals to the tenderest sympathies of our natures. He asks if any father would insult the hungry cries of his beloved son, when fainting for a morsel of bread, by giving him a stone; or, if he ask an egg, to gratify his appetite, will he give him a venomous scorpion, to sting him to death? [B] He then argues, that if sinful men exercise tender compassion towards their children, how much more shall our heavenly Father, whose very nature is love, regard the wants of his children who cry unto him. Is it possible to conceive a stronger expression of the willingness of God to answer the prayers of his people?

[Footnote B: The scorpion is a little animal, of the shape of an egg, whose sting is deadly poison.]

And these precious promises are confirmed by striking examples, in every age of the church. Thus, Abraham prayed for Sodom; and, through his intercession, Lot was saved. His servant, when sent to obtain a wife for Isaac, received a direct answer to prayer. When Jacob heard that his brother Esau was coming against him, with an army of four hundred men, he wrestled all night in prayer, and prevailed; so that

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Esau became reconciled to him. Moses prayed for the plagues to come upon Egypt, and they came; again, he prayed for them to be removed, and they were removed. It was through his prayers that the Red Sea was divided, the manna and the quails were sent, and the waters gushed out of the rock And through his prayers, many times, the arm of the Lord was stayed, which had been uplifted to destroy his rebellious people. Samuel, that lovely example of early piety, and the judge and deliverer of Israel, was given in answer to the prayer of his mother. When the children of Israel were in danger of being overthrown by the Philistines, Samuel prayed, and God sent thunder and lightning, and destroyed the armies of their enemies. Again, to show their rebellion against God, in asking a king, he prayed, and God sent thunder and lightning upon them in the time of wheat harvest. In order to punish the idolatry and rebellion of the Israelites, Elijah prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not for three years and six months. Again; he prayed that it might rain, and there arose a little cloud, as a man's hand, which spread and covered the heavens with blackness, till the rain descended in torrents. Again; when wicked Ahab sent a band of men to take him, he prayed, and fire came down from heaven, and consumed them. Hezekiah, upon the bed of death, prayed, and God lengthened his life fifteen years. Jerusalem was invaded by the army of Sennacherib, and threatened with destruction. Hezekiah prayed, and the angel of the Lord entered the camp of the invader, and in one night slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. When all the wise men of Babylon were threatened with destruction, because they could not discover Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel and his companions prayed, and the dream and its explanation were revealed. Jonah prayed, and was delivered from the power of the fish. It was in answer to the prayer of Zacharias, that the angel Gabriel was sent to inform him of the birth of John the Baptist. It was after a ten days' prayer-meeting, that the Holy Ghost came down, on the day of Pentecost, "like a mighty rushing wind." Again; while the disciples were praying, the place was shaken where they were assembled, to show that God heard their prayers. It was in answer to the prayers of Cornelius, that Peter was sent to teach him the way of life. When Peter was imprisoned by Herod, the church set apart the night before his expected execution, for special prayer in his behalf. The Lord sent his angel, opened the prison doors, and restored him to the agonizing band of brethren. And when Paul and Silas were thrown into the dungeon, with their feet fast in the stocks, they prayed, and there was a great earthquake, which shook the foundations of the prison, so that all the doors were opened.

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But the faithfulness of God to his promises is not confined to Scripture times. Although the time of miracles has passed, yet every age of the church has furnished examples of the faithfulness of God in hearing the prayers of his children. But these are so numerous that it is difficult to make selections from them. However, I will mention a few. When the Arians, who denied the divinity of Christ, were about to triumph, the Bishop of Constantinople, and one of his ministers, spent a whole night in prayer. The next day, Arius, the leader of his party, was suddenly cut off, by a violent and distressing disease. This prevented the threatened danger. Augustine was a wild youth, sunk in vice, and a violent opposer of religion. His mother persevered in prayer for him nine years, when he was converted, and became the most eminent minister of his age. The life of Francke exhibits the most striking and signal answers to prayer. His orphan house was literally built up and sustained by prayer. If you have not already read this work, I would advise you to obtain it. It is a great help to weak faith. Mr. West (afterwards Dr. West) became pastor of the Congregational church in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, while destitute of vital piety. Two pious females often lamented to each other that they got no spiritual food from his preaching. At length, they agreed to meet once a week, to pray for his conversion. They continued this for some time, under much discouragement. But, although the Lord tried their faith, yet he never suffered them both to be discouraged at the same time. At length, their prayers were heard. There was a sudden and remarkable change in his preaching. "What is this?" said one of them. "God is the hearer of prayer," replied the other. The Spirit of God had led Mr. West to see that he was a blind leader of the blind. He was converted, and changed his cold morality for the cross of Christ, as the basis of his sermons. A pious slave in Newport, Rhode Island, was allowed by his master to labor for his own profit whatever time he could gain by extra diligence. He laid up all the money he earned in this way, for the purpose of purchasing the freedom of himself and family. But, when some of his Christian friends heard what he was doing, they advised him to spend his *gained* time in fasting and prayer. Accordingly, the next day that he gained, he set apart for this purpose. Before the close of the day, his master sent for him, and gave him a written certificate of his freedom. This slave's name was Newport Gardner. He was a man of ardent piety; and in 1825, he was ordained deacon of a church of colored people, who went out from Boston to Liberia. Instances of surprising answers to prayer, no less striking than these, are continually occurring in the revivals of religion of the present day.

With the evidence here presented, who can doubt that God hears and answers prayer? But, the objection arises, "If this doctrine be really true, why is it that Christians offer up so many prayers without receiving answers?" The apostle James gives some explanation of this difficulty: "Ye ask and receive not, *because ye ask amiss*." It becomes us, then, seriously and diligently to inquire how we may *ask aright* so as to secure the blessings so largely promised in answer to prayer. In relation to this subject, there are several things to be observed:

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1. *We must sincerely desire the things which we ask.* If a child should ask his mother for a piece of bread, when she knew he was not hungry, but was only trifling with her, it would not be proper for her to give it. Indeed, she would have just cause to punish him for mocking her. And do we not often come to the throne of grace, when we do not really feel our perishing need of the things we ask? God sees our hearts; and he is not only just in withholding the blessing we ask, but in chastising us for solemn trifling.

2. *We must desire what we ask, that God may be glorified.* “Ye ask amiss, *that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*” We may possibly ask spiritual blessings for self-gratification; and when we do so, we have no reason to expect that God will bestow them upon us.

3. *We must ask for things AGREEABLE TO THE WILL OF GOD.* “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything *according to his will*, he heareth us.” The things that we ask must be such, *in kind*, as he has indicated his willingness to bestow upon us. Such are, spiritual blessings on our own souls; the supply of our necessary temporal wants; and the extension of his kingdom. These are the *kind* of blessings that we are to ask; and the degree of confidence with which we are to look for an answer must be in proportion to the positiveness of the promises. Our Lord assures us that our heavenly Father is more willing to give good things, and particularly his Holy Spirit, to them that ask him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children; and he declares expressly, that our sanctification is agreeable to the will of God. The promises of the daily supply of our necessary temporal wants are equally positive. What, then, can be more odious in the sight of God, than for those who profess to be his children to excuse their want of spirituality on the ground of their dependence upon him? And what more ungrateful, than to fret and worry themselves, lest they should come to want? We may also pray for a revival of religion in a particular place, and for the conversion of particular individuals, with strong ground of confidence, because we know that God has willed the extension of Christ’s kingdom, and that the conversion of sinners is, *in itself*, agreeable to his will. But we cannot certainly know that he intends to convert a particular individual, or revive his work in a particular place; nor can we be sure that the particular temporal blessing that we desire is what the Lord sees to be needful for our present necessities.

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4. *We must ask in faith.* “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the winds, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” A difference of opinion exists among real Christians, as to what constitutes the *prayer of faith* spoken of by the apostle. Some maintain that we must *believe that we shall receive the very thing for which we ask*. This opinion is founded on some promises made by our Lord to the apostles, which those who hold the contrary opinion suppose to have been intended only for them. I shall not attempt to determine this point; nor do I think it very important which of these theories is embraced; because, in examining the history of those persons whose prayers have received the seal of heaven, I find some of them embraced one, and some the other; while many who embrace either of them seem not to live in the exercise of prevailing prayer. The main point, therefore, seems to be, that we should maintain such a nearness of communion with God as shall secure the personal exercise of the prayer of faith. Two things, however, are essential to this: (1.) *Strong confidence in the existence and faithfulness of God.* “He that cometh unto God must believe *that he is*, and that *he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*.” (2.) The prayer of faith must be *dictated by the Holy Spirit*. Faith itself is declared to be “the *gift of God*,” and the apostle says, “The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.” “He maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.” When this wonderful truth is made known, we are no longer astonished that God should assure us, by so many precious promises, that he will hear and answer our prayers. We are called the temples of the Holy Ghost. If the Holy Ghost dwell in us, to guide and direct us in all our ways, will he forsake us in so important a matter as prayer? O, then, what a solemn place is the Christian’s closet, or the house of prayer! There the whole Trinity meet in awful concert. The Holy Spirit there presents to the everlasting Father, through the eternal Son, the prayers of a mortal worm! Is it any wonder that *such a prayer* should be heard? With what holy reverence and godly fear should we approach this consecrated place!

5. *We must ask in a spirit of humble submission*, yielding our wills to the will of the Lord, committing the whole case to him, in the true spirit of our Lord’s agonizing prayer in the garden, when he said, “*Not my will but thine be done.*” If I had a house full of gold, and had promised to give you as much as you desire, would you need to be urged to ask? But, there is an inexhaustible fulness of spiritual blessings treasured up in Christ; and he has declared repeatedly that you may have as much as you will ask. Need you be urged to ask? Need you want any grace? It is unbelief that keeps us so far from God. From what has been said on this subject, I think you may safely conclude that your progress in the divine life will be in proportion to the real prayer of faith which you exercise.

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But I come now to give a few practical directions respecting the exercise of prayer. Several things are necessary to be observed by every one who would live near the throne of grace.

1. *Maintain a constant spirit of prayer.* “Pray without ceasing.” “Continuing instant in prayer.” “Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” “And he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” The meaning of these passages is not that we should be always upon our knees, but that we should maintain such a prayerful frame, that the moment our minds are disengaged, our hearts will rise up to God. Intimately connected with this is the practice of *ejaculatory prayer*, which consists of a short petition, silently and suddenly sent up from the heart. This may be done anywhere, and under all circumstances. Frequent examples of this kind of prayer are recorded in Scripture. It has also been the practice of living Christians in all ages. It is a great assistance in the Christian warfare. It helps us in resisting temptation; and by means of it, we can seek divine aid in the midst of the greatest emergencies. To maintain this unceasing spirit of prayer is a very difficult work. It requires unwearied care and watchfulness, labor, and perseverance. Yet no Christian can thrive without it.

2. *Observe stated and regular seasons of prayer.* Some professors of religion make so much of the foregoing rule as to neglect all other kinds of prayer. This is evidently unscriptural. Our Saviour directs us to enter into our closets, and, when we have shut the door, to pray to our Father who is in secret. And to this precept he has added the sanction of his own example. In the course of his history, we find him often retiring to solitary places, to pour out his soul in prayer. Other examples are also recorded in Scripture. David says, “Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray.” And again; “Seven times a day do I praise thee.” And it was the habitual practice of Daniel, to kneel down in his chamber, and pray three times a day. But this practice is so natural, and so agreeable to Christian feeling, that no argument seems necessary to persuade real Christians to observe it. It has been the delight of eminent saints, in all ages, to retire alone, and hold communion with God.

With regard to the particular times of prayer, no very definite rule can be given, which will suit all circumstances. There is a peculiar propriety in visiting the throne of grace in the morning, to offer up the thanksgiving of our hearts for our preservation, and to seek grace for the day: and also in the evening, to express our gratitude for the mercies we have enjoyed; to confess the sins we have committed and seek for pardon; and to commit ourselves to the care of a covenant-keeping God, when we retire to rest. It is also very suitable, when we suspend our worldly employments in the middle of the day, to

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refresh our bodies, to renew our visit to the fountain of life, that our souls may also be refreshed. The twilight of the evening is also a favorable season for devotional exercises. But, let me entreat you to be much in prayer. If the nature of your employment will admit of it, without being unfaithful to your engagements, retire many times in the day to pour out your soul before God, and receive fresh communications of his grace. Our hearts are so much affected by sensible objects, that, if we suffer them to be engaged long at a time in worldly pursuits, we find them insensibly clinging to earth, so that it is with great difficulty we can disengage them. But, by all means, fix upon some stated and regular seasons, and observe them punctually and faithfully. Remember *they are engagements with God*.

For your devotional exercises, you should select those times and seasons when you find your mind most vigorous, and your feelings most lively. As the morning is in many respects most favorable, you would do well to spend as much time as you can in your closet, before engaging in the employments of the day. An hour spent in reading God's word, and in prayer and praise, early in the morning, will give a heavenly tone to your feelings; which, by proper watchfulness, and frequent draughts at the same fountain, you may carry through all the pursuits of the day.

As already remarked, our Lord, in the pattern left us, has given a very prominent place to the petition, "THY KINGDOM COME." This is a large petition. It includes all the instrumentalities which the church is putting forth for the enlargement of her borders and the salvation of the world. All these ought to be distinctly and separately remembered; and not, as is often the case, be crowded into one general petition at the close of our morning and evening prayers. We are so constituted as to be affected by a particular consideration of a subject. General truths have very little influence upon our hearts. I would therefore recommend the arrangement of these subjects under general heads for every day of the week; and then divide the subjects which come under these heads, so as to remember one or more of them at stated seasons, through the day, separate from your own personal devotions. Thus, you will always have your mind fixed upon one or two objects; and you will have time to enlarge, so as to remember every particular relating to them. This, if faithfully pursued, will give you a deeper interest in every benevolent effort of the times. The following plan of a daily concert of prayer was, some years since, suggested by a distinguished clergyman in New England. It gives something of the interest of the monthly concert to our daily devotions.

SABBATH. Sabbath duties and privileges;—as preaching, Sabbath-schools, family instruction, &c. Eph. 6:18-20. 2 Th. 3:1.

MONDAY. Conversion of the world;—the prevalence of peace, knowledge, freedom, and salvation. Ps. 2:8. Isa. 11:6-10; 62:1-7; 66:8, 12.

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TUESDAY. Our country;—our rulers, our free institutions, our benevolent societies; deliverance from slavery, Romanism, infidelity, Sabbath-breaking, intemperance, profaneness, &c. Ez. 9:6-15. Dan. 9:4-19

WEDNESDAY. The rising generation:—colleges, seminaries, and schools of every description; the children of the church, the children of the ungodly, and orphan children.

THURSDAY. Professing Christians;—that they may much more abound in all the fruits of the Spirit, presenting their bodies a living sacrifice, and offering gladly of their substance to the Lord, to the extent of his requirement; that afflicted saints may be comforted, backsliders reclaimed, and hypocrites converted; that Zion, being purified, may arise and shine. Isa. 62:1. Rom. 1:8. Col. 4:12.

FRIDAY. The ministry, including all who are looking forward to that office, and also the Education Society. 1 Thess. 5:25. Luke 10:2.

SATURDAY. The Jews. Isa. 54:8. 59:20. Ezek. 36:27. Rom. 11:11-31. Also, our friends.

3. *Observe special seasons of prayer.* Before engaging in any important matter, make it a subject of special prayer. For this you have the example of the blessed Jesus. When he was baptized, before entering upon his ministry, he prayed. Before choosing his twelve apostles, he went out into a mountain, and spent a whole night in prayer. The Old Testament saints were also in the habit of “inquiring of the Lord,” before engaging in any important enterprise. And the apostle Paul enjoins upon the Philippians, “in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Also, whenever you are under any particular temptation or affliction; whenever you are going to engage in anything which will expose you to temptation; whenever you perceive any signs of declension in your own soul; when the state of religion around you is low; when your heart is affected with the condition of individuals who are living in impenitence; or when any subject lies heavily upon your mind;—make the matter, whatever it is, a subject of special prayer. Independent of Scripture authority, there is a peculiar fitness in the course here recommended, which must commend itself to every pious heart.

In seasons of peculiar difficulty, or when earnestly seeking any great blessing, you may find benefit from setting apart days of fasting, humiliation and prayer. This is especially suitable, whenever you discover any sensible decay of spiritual affections in your own heart. Fasting and prayer have been resorted to on special occasions, by eminent saints, in all ages of the world. The examples recorded in Scripture are too numerous to mention here. If you look over the lives of the old Testament saints, you will find this practice very common. Nor is the New Testament without warrant for the same. Our Lord himself set the example, by a long season of fasting, when about to endure a severe conflict with the tempter.

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And he has farther sanctioned the practice, by giving directions respecting its performance. We have also examples in the Acts of the Apostles. The prophets and teachers, in the church at Antioch, fasted before separating Barnabas and Paul as missionaries to the heathen. And when they obtained elders in the churches, they prayed, *with fasting*. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, speaks of their giving themselves to *fasting and prayer*, as though it were a frequent custom. You will find, also, in examining the lives of persons of eminent spiritual attainments, that most of them were in the habit of observing frequent seasons of fasting and prayer. There is a peculiar fitness in this act of humiliation. It is calculated to bring the body under, and to assist us in denying self. The length of time it gives us in our closets also enables us to get clearer views of divine things. But there is great danger of trusting in the outward act of humiliation, and expecting that God will answer our prayers for the sake of our fasting. This will inevitably bring upon us disappointment and leanness of soul. This is the kind of fasting so common among Roman Catholics, and other nominal Christians. But it is no better than idolatry. Most of the holidays which are usually devoted by the world to feasting-and mirth are very suitable occasions for Christians to fast and pray; and this for several reasons: (1.) They are seasons of leisure, when most people are disengaged from worldly pursuits. (2.) The goodness of God should lead us to repentance. Instead of spending these days in mirth over the blessings we have enjoyed, we should be looking into our hearts, to examine the manner in which we have received them; humbling ourselves on account of our ingratitude; and lifting up our hearts and voices in thanksgiving for them. (3.) The first day of the new year, birth-days, &c., are very suitable occasions for renewing our past lives, repenting of our unfaithfulness, making resolutions of amendment, and renewing afresh the solemn dedication of ourselves to God.

When you set apart a day of fasting and prayer, you ought to have in view some definite and particular objects. The day should be spent in self-examination, meditation, reading the Scriptures, confession of sin, prayer for the particular objects which bear upon your mind, and thanksgiving for mercies received. Your self-examination should be as practical as possible; particularly looking into the motives of your prayers for the special objects which bear heavily upon your heart. Your confession of sin should be minute and particular; mentioning every sin you can recollect, whether of thought, word, or deed, with every circumstance of aggravation. This will have a tendency to affect your heart with a sense of guilt, produce earnest longings after holiness, and make sin appear more hateful and odious. Your meditations should be upon those subjects which are calculated to give you

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a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the abounding mercy of God in Christ. Your reading of the Scriptures should be strictly devotional. Your prayers should be very particular, mentioning everything relating to the object of your desires, and all the hindrances you have met in seeking after it. Carry all your burdens to the foot of the cross, and there lay them down. Your thanksgiving, also, should be very minute and particular, mentioning every mercy and blessing which you can recollect, with your own unworthiness, and every circumstance which may tend to show the exceeding greatness of God's love, condescension, and mercy.

4. *Come to the work with a preparation of heart.* The best preparation at all times is to maintain an habitual spirit of prayer, according to the first direction. But this is not all that is necessary. We are unavoidably much occupied with the things of this world. But when we come before the great Jehovah, to ask his favor and seek his grace, our minds should be heavenly. When you go into your closet, shut out the world, that you may be alone with God. Bring your mind into a calm and heavenly frame, and endeavor to obtain a deep sense of the presence of God, "*as seeing him who is invisible.*" Think of the exalted nature of the work in which you are about to engage. Think of your own unworthiness, and of the way God has opened to the mercy seat. Think of your own wants, or of the wants of others, according to the object of your visit to the throne of grace. Think of the inexhaustible fulness treasured up in Christ. Think of the many precious promises of God to his children, and come with the spirit of a little child to present them before him.

5. *Persevere in prayer.* If you are seeking for any particular object, which you know to be agreeable to the will of God, and your prayers are not heard, you may be sure of one of two things: (1.) *You have been asking amiss.* Something is wrong in yourself. Perhaps you have been selfish in your desires; you have not desired supremely the glory of God; you have not felt your dependence: you have not humbled yourself sufficiently to receive a blessing; or perhaps you regard iniquity in your heart, in some other way. Examine yourself, therefore, in all these particulars. Repent, where you find your prayers have been amiss. Bow very low before God, and seek the influences of his Spirit to enable you to pray aright. (2.) Or, *perhaps the Lord delays an answer for the trial of your faith.* Consider then the encouragements which he has given us to be importunate in prayer. In the eleventh chapter of Luke, our Lord shows us that our friends may be prevailed upon to do us a kindness because of our importunity, when they would not do it on account of friendship. And in the eighteenth chapter, he shows us that even an unjust judge may be persuaded by importunity to do justice. Hence he argues the importance of persevering in prayer; and adds with

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emphasis, “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, *though he bear long with them?* I tell you he will avenge them speedily.” Again; look at the case of the Syrophenician woman. She continued to beseech Jesus to have mercy on her, although he did not answer her a word. The disciples entreated Christ to send her away, because she troubled them with her cries; yet she persevered. And even when Christ himself told his disciples that he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and compared her to a dog seeking for the children’s bread; yet, with all these repulses, she would not give up her suit; but begged even for the dog’s portion—the children’s crumbs. When by this means our Lord had sufficiently tried her faith, he answered her prayer. So likewise persevere in your prayers, and “in due time you shall reap, if you faint not!”

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER VI.

Temptation.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” MATT 26:41.

MY DEAR SISTER,

That there is an evil spirit, who is permitted to exert an influence upon the hearts of men, is abundantly evident from Scripture. This truth is referred to in the beginning of the gospel of Christ, where it is said Jesus went up into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. He is often represented in the Scriptures as the father of the wicked. “The tares are the children of the wicked one.” “Thou child of the devil.” He is also represented as putting evil designs into the hearts of men. “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” “The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him.” “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost?” Wicked men are spoken of as being carried captive by him at his will. He is also represented as the adversary of the people of God, seeking to lead them into sin, and, if possible, to destroy them. “Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” These, and numerous other passages, which might be quoted, fully establish the fearful truth, that we are continually beset by an evil spirit, who is seeking, by every means in his power, to injure and destroy our souls.

When we have to contend with an enemy, it is very important that we should know his character. From the Scriptures, we learn several characteristics of the great enemy of our souls.

1. *He is powerful.* He has other fallen spirits at his command. Our Saviour speaks of the “fire prepared for the devil *and his angels*.” He is called “prince of the world,” “prince of darkness,” and “the god of this world.” All these titles denote the exercise of great power. He is also called *destroyer*; and is said to walk about, seeking whom he may devour. Indeed, so great was his power, and so mighty his work of ruin and destruction in this lost world, that it became necessary for the son of God to come into the world to destroy his works. “For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might *destroy the works of the devil*.”

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But, although he is powerful, yet his power is limited. This you see in the case of Job. No doubt, his malice would have destroyed that holy man at once. But he could do nothing against him till he was permitted; and then he could go no farther than the length of his chain. God reserved the life of his servant. And the apostle Jude speaks of the devils as being “reserved *in chains*, under darkness.” But the objection arises, “As God is almighty, why is Satan permitted to exercise any power at all?” To this objection the Bible furnishes satisfactory answers. (1.) It is to try the faith of his children. This was the case with Job. The devil had slandered that holy man, by accusing him of serving God from selfish motives. By suffering Satan to take away all he had, the Lord proved this accusation to be false; and Job came out of the furnace, greatly purified. The apostle James says, “My brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” If the children of God were never tempted, they would never have an opportunity to prove the sincerity of their faith. But they have the blessed assurance, that God will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it. (2.) Again; the devil is permitted to exercise his power, for the discovery of hypocrites and for the punishment of sinners. “These have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.” “But, if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.”

2. *He has much knowledge.* He knew the command of God to our first parents, and therefore tempted them to break it. When those that were possessed with devils were brought to Christ, they cried out, “We *know* thee, who thou art, the holy one of God.” He has also a knowledge of the Bible; for he quoted Scripture, in his temptation of our Saviour. And as he has great experience in the world, he must have a great knowledge of human nature, so to be able to suit his temptations to the peculiar constitutions of individuals.

3. *He is wicked.* “The devil sinneth from the beginning.” He is called the *wicked one*; or, by way of eminence, “*The Wicked*.” He is altogether wicked. There is not one good quality in his character.

4. *He is crafty, and full of deceit and treachery.* He lays snares for the unwary. That he may the more readily deceive the people of God, he appears to them in the garb of religion. “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” In consequence of his cunning and craft, he is called the serpent.[C] He is also represented as deceiving the nations.[D] Hence we are cautioned against the *wiles* of the devil.[E]

[Footnote C: Gen. 3; Isa. 27:1; Rev. 12:9]

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[Footnote D: Rev. 20:8.]

[Footnote E: Eph. 6:11.]

5. *He is a liar.* The first thing recorded of him is the lie which he told our first parents, to persuade them to disobey God. Hence our Saviour calls him a “liar from the beginning.”[F]

[Footnote F: John 8:44.]

6. *He is malicious.* As Satan is the enemy of God, so he hates everything that is good. He is continually bent on mischief. If his power were not restrained, he would introduce general disorder, anarchy and confusion, into the government of God. He loves to ruin immortal souls; and he takes delight in vexing the people of God. Hence he is called *Destroyer*,[G] *Adversary*, *Accuser*, *Tormentor*, and *Murderer*. [H]

[Footnote G: *Abaddon* signifies *destroyer*.]

[Footnote H: Rev. 9:11; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:10; Matt. 18:34; John 8:44.]

Now, since we are beset by an adversary of such knowledge and power, so sly and artful, so false, and so malicious, it becomes us to be well acquainted with all his arts, that we maybe on our guard against them. The apostle Paul says, “For we are not ignorant of his devices.” O, that every Christian could say so! How many sad falls would be prevented! I Will mention a few of the devices of Satan, which are manifest both from the Holy Scriptures, and from the experience of eminent saints who have been enabled to detect and distinguish his secret workings in their own hearts. It is the opinion of some great and good men, that the devil can suggest thoughts to our minds only through the *imagination*. This is that faculty of the mind by which it forms ideas of things communicated to it through the senses. Thus, when you see, hear, feel, taste, or smell anything, the image of the thing is impressed upon the mind by the imagination. It also brings to our recollection these images, when they are not present. It is thought to be only by impressing these images upon the imagination, that he can operate upon our souls. Hence, we may account for the strange manner in which our minds are led off from the contemplation of divine things, by a singular train of thought, introduced to the mind by the impression of some sensible object upon the imagination. This object brings some other one like it to our recollection, and that again brings another, until we wander entirely from the subject before us, and find our minds lost in a maze of intellectual trifling.

Satan adapts his temptations to our peculiar tempers and circumstances. In youth, he allures us by pleasure, and bright hopes of worldly prosperity. In manhood, he seeks to bury up our hearts in the cares of life. In old age, he persuades to the indulgence of self-will and obstinacy. In prosperity, he puffs up the heart with pride, and persuades to

self-confidence and forgetfulness of God. In poverty and affliction, he excites feelings of discontent, distrust, and repining.

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If we are of a melancholy temperament, he seeks to sour our tempers, and promote habitual sullenness and despondency. If naturally cheerful, he prompts to the indulgence of levity. In private devotion, he stands between us and God, prevents us from realizing his presence, and seeks to distract our minds, and drive us from the throne of grace. In public worship, he disturbs our minds by wandering thoughts and foolish imaginations. When we have enjoyed any happy manifestations of God's presence, any precious tokens of his love, then he stirs up the pride of our hearts, and leads us to trust in our own goodness, and forget the Rock of our salvation. Even our deepest humiliations he makes the occasion of spiritual pride. Thus we fall into darkness, and thrust ourselves through with many sorrows. If we have performed any extraordinary acts of self-denial, or of Christian beneficence, he stirs up in our hearts a vain-glorious spirit. If we have overcome any of the corruptions of our hearts, or any temptation, he excites a secret feeling of self-satisfaction and self-complacency. He puts on the mask of religion. Often, during the solemn hours of public worship, he beguiles our hearts with some scheme for doing good; taking care, however, that self be uppermost in it. When we are in a bad frame, he stirs up the unholy tempers of our hearts, and leads us to indulge in peevishness, moroseness, harshness, and anger, or in levity and unseemly mirth.

There is no Christian grace which Satan cannot counterfeit. He cares not how much religious feeling we have, or how many good deeds we perform, if he can but keep impure and selfish motives at the bottom. There is great danger, therefore, in trusting to impulses, or sudden impressions of any kind. Such impressions *may be* from the Spirit of God; but they may also be from Satan. The fact that your religious feelings are not produced by yourself, but that they arise in your mind in a manner for which you cannot account, is no evidence, either that they come from the Spirit of God, or that they do not. There are many false spirits, which are very busy with people's hearts. As before remarked, Satan sometimes appears to us like an angel of light. He is often the author of false comforts and joys, very much like those produced by the Holy Spirit. We are, therefore, directed to "try the spirits, whether they be of God." Nor is it certain that religious feelings are holy and spiritual because they come with texts of Scripture, brought to the mind in a remarkable manner. If the feeling is produced by the truth contained in the Scripture so brought to the mind, and is, in its nature, agreeable to the word of God, it may be a spiritual and holy affection. But if it arises from the application of the Scripture to your own case, on account of its being so brought to your mind, you may be sure it is a delusion of the devil. He has power to bring Scripture to your mind when he pleases, and he can apply it with

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dexterity, as you see in his temptations of the blessed Saviour. Our own hearts are exceedingly deceitful; and our indwelling corruptions will gladly unite with him in bringing false peace and comfort to our souls. Satan, no doubt, often brings the most sweet and precious promises of God to the minds of those he wishes to deceive as to their own good estate. But we must be satisfied that the promises belong to us, before we take them to ourselves. We have “a more sure word of prophecy,” by which we are to try every impulse, feeling, and impression, produced upon our minds. Anything which does not agree with the written word of God does not come from him, for he “cannot deny himself.”

Satan manages temptation with the greatest subtlety. He asks so little at first, that, unless our consciences are very tender, we do not suspect him. If he can persuade us to parley, he perhaps leaves us for a while, and returns again, with a fresh and more vigorous attack. He is exceedingly persevering; and, if he can persuade us to give place to him at all, he is sure to overcome us at last.

We are also liable to temptation from the world without, and from the corruptions of our own hearts within. “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare.” The riches, honors, pleasures, and fashions, of this world, are great enemies to serious piety. “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed.” Remaining corruption is the sorest evil that besets the Christian. The temptations of Satan alone would be light, in comparison with the inward conflict he is compelled to maintain against the lusts of his own heart. But the devil makes use of both these sources of temptation to accomplish his ends. The former he uses as outward enticements, and the latter act as traitors within. Thus you may generally find a secret alliance between the arch deceiver and the corruptions of your own heart. It is not sin to be tempted: but it is sin to give place to temptation. “Neither give place to the devil.”

The heart is very properly compared to a castle or fort. Before conversion it is in the possession of the great enemy of souls, who has fortified himself there, and secured the allegiance of all our moral powers. But when Jesus enters in, he “binds the strong man armed,” and takes possession of the heart himself. Yet Satan, though in a measure bound, loses no opportunity to attempt regaining his lost dominion. Hence we are directed to “keep the heart *with all diligence*.” Now we know how a castle, fort, or city, is kept in time of war. The first thing done is to *set a watch*, whose business is to keep constantly on the look out, this way and that way, to see that no enemy is approaching from without, and no traitor is lurking within. Hence we are so frequently exhorted to *watch*. “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” “Take heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when

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the time is.” “And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.” “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” “Continue in prayer, and watch *in* the same, with thanksgiving.” “Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and *watching thereunto* with all perseverance.” “Let us watch and be sober.” “Watch then *in all things*.” “Watch *unto* prayer.” “Blessed is he that *watcheth*, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” If we were in a house surrounded by a band of robbers, and especially if we knew there were persons in it who held a secret correspondence with them, we should be continually on our guard. Every moment we should be *watching*, both within and without. But such is the state of our hearts. Surely, no ordinary danger would have called forth from our Lord and his apostles such repeated warnings. We are directed to watch in *all things*. Keep a continual guard over your own heart, and over every word and action of your life. But there are particular seasons when we should set a *double watch*.

1. We are directed to watch *unto* prayer. When you approach the mercy seat, watch against a careless spirit. Suffer not your mind to be drawn away by anything, however good and important in itself, from the object before you. If the adversary can divert your mind on the way to that consecrated place, he will be almost sure to drive you away from it without a blessing.

2. We are required to watch not only *unto* but *in* prayer. Satan is never more busy with Christians than when he sees them on their knees. He well knows the power of prayer; and this makes him tremble.

“Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

You should, therefore, with the most untiring vigilance, watch in prayer against all wandering thoughts and distraction of mind. You will often experience, on such occasions, a sudden and vivid impression upon your mind of something entirely foreign from what is before you. This is no doubt the temptation of Satan. If you are sufficiently upon your watch, you can banish it, without diverting your thoughts or feelings from the subject of your prayer, and proceed as though nothing had happened. But, if the adversary succeeds in keeping these wild imaginations in view, so that you cannot proceed without distraction, turn and beseech God to give you help against his wiles. You have the promise, that if you resist the devil he will flee from you. These remarks apply both to secret prayer and public worship.

3. We have need of special watchfulness when we have experienced any comfortable manifestations of God's presence. It is then that Satan tempts us to consider the

conflict over, and relax our diligence. If we give way to him, we shall bring leanness upon our souls.

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4. We have need of double watchfulness when gloom and despondency come over our souls; for then the adversary seeks to stir up all the perverse passions of the heart.
5. Watch, also, when you feel remarkably cheerful. Satan will then, if possible, persuade you to indulge in levity, to the wounding of your soul, and the dishonor of religion.
6. We have need of special watchfulness in prosperity, that we forget not God; and in adversity, that we murmur not at his dealings with us.
7. Set a watch over your tongue, especially in the presence of the unconverted. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." David says, "I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." I do not mean that you should ever engage in any sinful conversation in the presence of Christians. I know some professors of religion will indulge in senseless garrulity among themselves, and put on an air of seriousness and solemnity before those whom they regard as unconverted. This they pretend to do for the *honor of Christ*. But Christ says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." God hates lip service. However, in the company of sinners and formal professors we are peculiarly exposed to temptation, and have need therefore to set a double guard upon our lips. A single unguarded expression from a Christian may do great injury to an unconverted soul.
8. Watch over your heart when engaged in doing good to others. It is then that Satan seeks to stir up pride and vain-glory.
9. Set a *double* watch over your easily besetting sin. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Most persons have some constitutional sin, which easily besets them. Satan takes the advantage of this infirmity, to bring us into difficulty.
10. Finally, keep a constant watch over the *imagination*. Since this is the medium through which temptation comes, never suffer your fancy to rove without control. If you mortify this faculty of the soul, it may be a great assistance to your devotion. But, if you let it run at random, you will be led captive by Satan at his will. Strive, then, after a sanctified imagination, that you may make every power of your soul subservient to the glory of God.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER VII.

Self-Denial.



“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”—LUKE 9:23.

MY DEAR SISTER,

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The duty of self-denial arises from the unnatural relation which sin has created between us and God. The first act of disobedience committed by man was a setting up of himself in opposition to God. It was a declaration that he would regard his own will in preference to the will of his Creator. *Self* became the supreme or chief object of his affections. And this is the case with all unregenerate persons. Their own happiness is the object of their highest wishes. They pursue their own selfish interests with their whole hearts. When anything occurs, the first question which arises in their minds is, "How will this affect *me*?" It is true, they may often exercise a kind of generosity towards others. But, if their motives were scanned, it would appear that self-gratification is at the bottom of it. The correctness of these assertions, no one will doubt, who is acquainted with his own heart. All unconverted persons live for themselves. They see no higher object of action than the promotion of their own individual interests. The duty in question consists in the denial of this disposition. And a moment's attention will show that nothing can be more reasonable. No individual has a right to attach to himself any more importance than properly belongs to the station he occupies in the grand scale of being, of which God is the centre. It is by this station that his value is known. If he thinks himself of more consequence than the place he occupies will give him, it leads him to seek a higher station. This is pride. It is setting up the wisdom of the creature in opposition to that of the Creator. This was probably the origin of the first act of disobedience. Satan thought himself entitled to a higher station in the scale of being than God gave him; therefore, he rebelled against the government of the Most High. This act of rebellion was nothing more than setting up his own selfish interests against the interests of the universe. And what would be the consequence, if this selfish principle were carried out in the material universe? Take, for example, our own planetary system. If every planet should set up an interest separate from the whole, would they move on with such beautiful harmony? No; every one would seek to be a sun. They would all rush towards the common centre, and universal confusion would follow. God is the sun and centre of the moral universe, and the setting up of private individual interests as supreme objects of pursuit, if permitted to take their course, would produce the same general confusion. This it has done, so far as it has prevailed. Its tendency is to create a universal contention among inferior beings for the throne of the universe, which belongs to God alone. But, the interests of God, if I may be allowed the expression, are identified with the highest good of his intelligent creation. Hence we see the perfect reasonableness of the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." There can be no selfishness in this, because the best interests of the universe require it. But, by pursuing our own selfish interests as the chief good, we make a god of *self*.

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The religion of Jesus Christ strikes at the root of this selfish principle. The very first act of the new-born soul is a renunciation or giving up of self—the surrender of the whole soul to God. The entire dedication which the Christian makes of himself—soul, body and property—to the Lord, implies that he will no longer live to himself, but to God. “Present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.” “For none of us liveth to himself.” “They which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or *whatsoever ye do*, do all *to the glory of God*.” Self-denial is, then, an entire surrender of our own wills to the will of God. It is an adoption of the revealed will of God as the rule of duty; and a steadfast, determined, and persevering denial of every selfish gratification which comes between us and duty. It is a seeking of the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures, as the highest object of pursuit. In short, it is to “love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, might, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.”

By carrying out this principle, in its application to the feelings, desires, and motives of the heart, and the actions of the life, we learn the practical duty of self-denial. This is a very important matter; for the Scriptures most fully and clearly cut off all hope for such as are destitute of the true spirit of self-denial. Let us hear what our blessed Lord and Master says upon this subject. “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.” “If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*, and take up his cross and follow me. For, whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” “If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his *own life* also, he *cannot be my disciple*.” “He that loveth his life, shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” “If thy right eye offend thee, (or cause thee to offend,) pluck it out and cast it from thee.” *We must follow Christ*. Here we are taught that, unless we put away all self-seeking, and willingly surrender the dearest objects of our affections on earth, yea, and *our own lives also*, if need be, we have no claim to the character of disciples of Christ. The glory of God and the general good must be our ruling principle of action; and we must not gratify ourselves in opposition to the will of God, or the interest of our fellow-beings. Every action must be brought to this test. Here is heart-work and life-work. Self must be denied in all our spiritual feelings, and in all our devotions, or they will be abominable in the sight of God.

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Here is work for self-examination. Every exercise of our minds should be tried by this standard. Again; we must deny self in all our conduct. And here we have the examples of many holy men, recorded in Scripture, with a host of martyrs and missionaries, but especially of our Lord himself, to show what influence the true spirit of self-denial exerts upon the Christian life. In the passage quoted above, our Lord expressly declares that, in order to be his disciples, we must *follow* him. And how can this be done, but by imitating his example? He was willing to make *sacrifices* for the good of others. He led a life of toil, hardship, and suffering, and *gave up his own life*, to save sinners. His immediate disciples did the same. They submitted to ignominy, reproach, suffering, and death itself, for the sake of promoting the glory of God, in the salvation of men. Cultivate, then, this spirit. Prefer the glory of God to everything else. Prefer the general good to your own private interest. Be willing to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others. Carry this principle out in all your intercourse with others, and it will greatly increase your usefulness. It will also really promote your own interest and happiness. There is nothing which renders a person so amiable and lovely, in the sight of others, as disinterested benevolence. Think no sacrifice too great to make, no hardship too painful to endure, if you can be the means of benefiting perishing souls. Remember, it was for this that Jesus gave up his life; and he requires you to be ready to give up everything you have, and even life itself, if the same cause shall require it.

But let me caution you against placing self-denial chiefly in outward things. We are not required to relinquish any of the comforts and enjoyments of this life, except when they come in competition with our duty to God and our fellow-creatures. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving;" and godliness has the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come. The religion of some people seems to consist chiefly in denying themselves of lawful enjoyments; and you will find them very severe and censorious towards others, for partaking freely and thankfully of the bounties of God's providence. This, however, is but a species of self-righteous mockery, characterized by Paul as a voluntary humility. Instead of being self-denial, it is the gratification of self in maintaining an appearance of external sanctity. It may, however, be not only proper, but obligatory upon us, to sacrifice these lawful enjoyments, when we may thereby promote the interests of Christ's kingdom; which requires the exercise of a self-sacrificing spirit.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER VIII.

Public and Social Worship, and Sabbath Employments.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."—HEB. 10:23.

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"It is lawful to *do well* on the Sabbath days."—MATT. 12:12.

"Call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable,"—"honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words."—ISA. 68:13.

MY DEAR SISTER,

The duty of public worship is clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures: 1. From the appointment of one day in seven, to be set apart exclusively for the service of God, we may argue the propriety of assembling together, to acknowledge and worship him in a social capacity. God has made us social beings; and all the institutions of his appointment contemplate us as such. The public worship of the Sabbath is preeminently calculated to cultivate the social principle of our nature. It brings people of the same community regularly together, every week, for the same general purpose. In the house of God all meet upon a level.

2. If we look forward from the institution of the Sabbath to the organization of the Jewish church, we find that God did actually establish a regular system of public worship. An order of men was instituted whose special business was to conduct the public worship of God. After the return of the Jews from captivity, social meetings, held every Sabbath, for public religious worship, became common all over the land. They were called *synagogues*.^[1] Although we have no particular account of the divine origin of these assemblies, yet they were sanctioned by the presence of Christ, who often took part in the public exercises.

Under the gospel dispensation, the plan of synagogue worship is continued, with such modifications as suit it to the clearer and more complete development of God's gracious designs towards sinful men. A new order of men has been instituted, to conduct public worship and teach the people. As religion consists very much in the exercise of holy affections, God has appointed the preaching of the Word as a suitable means for stirring up these affections. Our desires are called forth, our love excited, our delight increased, and our zeal inflamed, by a faithful, earnest, and feeling representation of the most common and familiar truths of the Bible, from the pulpit. It is evident, then, that the private reading of the best books, though highly useful, cannot answer the end and design of public worship.

[Footnote 1: The term *synagogue* was applied both to the place of meeting and to the congregation assembling for public worship, as the term *church* is now used.]

3. The duty of public worship may be inferred from the fitness and propriety of a public acknowledgment of God, by a community, in their social capacity.

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4. This duty is enforced by the example of holy men of old; but especially of Christ and his apostles. David took great delight in the public worship of God's house. "My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and glory, *so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*" "*I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.*" "Lord, *I have loved the habitation of thy house*, and the place where thine honor dwelleth." "*I went with them to the house of God*, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day." "We took sweet counsel together, *and walked to the house of God in company.*" "*I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*" "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may *dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life*, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Such were the feelings of the man who has expressed, in strains of sweetest melody, the experience of Christians in all ages. Delight in the worship of God's house may be regarded as one of the tokens of the new birth. If you are destitute of this feeling, you have reason to form sad conclusions respecting the foundation of your hopes. But, the example of Jesus is very clear on this point. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and, *as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." From this it appears that Jesus, even before entering upon his ministry, was in the habit of attending regularly upon the public worship of God in the synagogue of Nazareth, where he had been brought up. This was the first time he had been there, after the commencement of his ministry; yet he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, *as his custom was*; evidently showing that he had always been in the habit of doing so. Again; after the crucifixion of our Lord, we find the disciples regularly assembling together upon the *first day of the week*, which is the Christian Sabbath. And Jesus himself honored these assemblies by his presence, after his resurrection. That this practice continued to be observed by the churches founded by the apostles, is evident, from the frequent allusions to it in the Acts, and in the writings of Paul. Paul preached at Macedonia upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread. In the sixteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, he gives directions for taking up collections for the poor saints *on the first day of the week*; which evidently means the time when they were in the habit of meeting for public worship. And in the eleventh chapter of the same epistle, he tells them how to regulate their conduct when they "*come together in the church.*" Again; he exhorts the Hebrews "*not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.*" From all these passages, I think the inference is plain, that, under the direction of the apostles, the public worship of God, upon the Sabbath, was observed in the primitive churches. And this is confirmed by the fact, that the same practice has since been uniformly observed by the church in all ages.

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From the foregoing arguments I draw the following conclusions: 1. It is the imperative duty of every person to attend regularly upon the public worship of God, unless prevented by circumstances beyond his control. God has appointed public worship, consisting of devotional exercises and the preaching of his Word, as the principal means of grace, for edifying his people, and bringing lost sinners to himself. We cannot, therefore, excuse ourselves for not waiting upon these means; nor can we expect the blessing of God upon any others which we may substitute in their place.

2. This duty remains the same, even under the ministry of a cold and formal pastor, provided he preaches the essential doctrines of the gospel. If he denies any of these, his church becomes the synagogue of Satan, and therefore no place for the child of God. This conclusion is drawn from the practice of Christ himself. He attended habitually upon the regularly constituted public worship of the Jews, although there appears to have been scarce any signs of spiritual worship among them. The Scriptures were read—the truth was declared; yet all was cold formality—a mere shell of outside worship.

3. No person, who neglects public worship upon the Sabbath, when it is in his power to attend, can expect a blessing upon his soul. When preaching is of an ordinary character, and not very full of instruction, or when the manner of the preacher is disagreeable, people are frequently tempted to think they can improve their time better at home, in reading, meditation, and prayer. But this is a very great mistake, unless they can spend the Sabbath profitably without the presence of God. If, as I think I have already shown, it is the *duty* of every one to attend upon the regularly instituted public worship of the Sabbath, when we neglect it we are out of the way of duty. And God will never bless us in the neglect of any positive duty, even if our whole time be spent upon our knees. Remember, this is the condition of the promise, "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" When, therefore, we are living in sin, or in the neglect of duty, (which is the same thing,) God will not hear our prayers. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," says the psalmist, "the Lord will not hear me." Again; it is the regular ministration of his word in the sanctuary, that God most eminently blesses for the growth of Christians and the conversion of sinners. And when the appointed means of grace are slighted, can any one expect the blessing of God? Will he bless the means which you have devised, and preferred to those of his own appointment? Do not, then, neglect the habitual and regular attendance upon the public worship of God, whenever there is a properly conducted assembly of orthodox Christians within your reach. I would not dare neglect this, even if the reading of a sermon were substituted for preaching.

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Having, as I think, proved the obligation to attend public worship, I will now notice a few particulars respecting the performance of the duty.

1. *Attend on the stated ministrations of your pastor.* If there is more than one church professing your own sentiments, in the place where you reside, select the pastor who is most spiritual, and will give you the best instruction. But, when you have made this selection, consider yourself bound to wait on his ministry. Do not indulge yourself in going from place to place, to hear this and that minister. This will give you "*itching ears*" and cultivate a love of novelty, and a critical mode of hearing, very unfavorable to the practical application of the truth to your own soul. If you wish to obtain complete views of truth, if you wish your soul to thrive, attend, as far as possible, upon every appointment of your pastor. Every minister has some plan. He adapts his preaching to the peculiar state of his own people, and frequently pursues a chain of subjects in succession, so as to present a complete view of the great doctrines of the Bible. Whenever you absent yourself, you break this chain, and lose much of your interest and profit in his preaching. I do not say but on special occasions, when some subject of more than usual importance is to be presented at another place, it may be proper for you to leave your own church. But, in general, the frequent assistance which most pastors receive from strangers will furnish as great variety as you will find profitable.

2. *Be punctual in attending at the stated hour of public worship.* This, though of great importance, is sadly neglected by most congregations. Punctuality is so necessary in matters of business, that a man is hardly considered honest, when he fails to meet his friend at the hour of engagement. And why should it be thought of less consequence to be exact and punctual in our engagements with God than with man? The person, who enters the house of God after the service has commenced, greatly embarrasses the preacher, and disturbs the devotions of others. Besides, he shows great want of reverence for the sacredness of the place, time, and employment. "God is greatly to be feared *in the assembly of his saints*, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Always calculate to be seated in the sanctuary a few minutes before the time appointed for the commencement of worship. As precious as time is, it would be much better to lose a few moments, than to do so much injury. But this time need not be lost. You require a little time, after entering the house of God, to settle your mind, and to lift your soul, in silent prayer, to God for his blessing.

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3. Several things are necessary to be observed, in order to wait upon God, in the sanctuary, in a proper manner:—(1.) *Go to the house of God with a preparation of heart.* First visit your closet, and implore the influences of the Holy Spirit, to prepare your heart for the reception of the truth, and to bless it to your own soul and the souls of others; and, if possible, go immediately from your closet to the house of worship. On the way, shut out all thoughts except such as are calculated to inspire devotional feelings; and, if in company, avoid conversation. Whatever may be the nature of such conversation, it will be very likely to produce a train of thought which will distract and disturb your mind during public worship. (2.) When you approach the house of worship, remember that God is there in a peculiar manner. He has promised to be where two or three shall meet in his name. It is in the *assembly of his saints*, that he makes known the power of his Spirit. As you enter his house, endeavor to realize the solemnity of his presence, and walk softly before him. Avoid carelessness of demeanor, and let your deportment indicate the reverence due to the place where “God’s honor dwelleth.” “Keep thy foot, when thou goest to the house of God.” But, above all, avoid that indecent practice of whispering and conversation in the house of God. Before service commences, it unfits the mind for the solemn employments in which you are about to engage. After the congregation is dismissed, it dissipates the impression received. When seated in the place of worship, set a watch over the senses, that your eyes and ears may not cause your mind to wander upon forbidden objects. There is great danger that the attraction of persons, characters and dress, may dissipate every serious thought with which you entered the sanctuary. By this means, you will lose the benefit of the means of grace, and bring leanness upon your soul. Again; set a watch over your imagination. This is a time when Satan is particularly busy in diverting the fancy; and, unless you are doubly watchful, he will lead away your mind, by some phantom of the imagination, before you are aware of it. Keep these avenues of temptation guarded, and seek to bring yourself into a prayerful frame of mind, that you may be suitably affected by the various exercises of public worship.

4. *Unite in spirit with the devotional part of the service.* “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” Be particularly careful that you do not mock God in singing. This part of worship, I fear, is too often performed in a heartless manner. Try to sing with the *spirit*, as well as the understanding. And whenever you come to anything in the language of the psalm or hymn which you cannot adopt as your own, omit it. If you sing before him what you do not *feel*, you lie to him in your heart. And you know, by the terrible example of Ananias and

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Sapphira, how God regards this sin. In prayer, *strive* to follow, in your heart, the words of the person who leads, applying the several parts of the prayer to yourself in particular, when they suit your case, and yet bearing in mind the various subjects of petition, which relate to the congregation and the world. In all the exercises of public worship, labor and strive against wandering thoughts. This is the time when Satan will beset you with all his fury. Now you must be well armed, and fight manfully. Be not discouraged, though you may be many times foiled. If you persevere in the strength of Jesus, you will come off conqueror at last.

5. "Take heed *how* you hear." (1.) Consider the speaker as the ambassador of Christ, sent with a message from God to yourself. For such truly is every evangelical minister of Christ. (2.) Diligently compare the doctrines, which you hear from the pulpit, with the Holy Scriptures, and receive nothing which does not agree with them. The figure used in the passage referred to, (2 Cor. 5:20,) is borrowed from the practice of one government sending a person on a particular errand to another. The analogy in this case, however, does not hold good throughout. It is like a sovereign sending an ambassador to persuade rebels against his government to submit to him, and accept of pardon. But, in such a case, it would be possible, either for some person, who was not sent, to deliver a false message in the name of the king, or for one who was really sent, to deliver a different message from the one sent by him. So it is in relation to preachers of the gospel. There are many, whom Christ has never sent, who are spreading abroad lies over the land; and there are others, really sent by Christ, who have, in some respects, misapprehended his meaning, and therefore do not deliver his message just as he has directed. But, our blessed Lord, foreseeing this, has wisely and kindly given us a *check book*, by which we may discover whether those who speak in his name tell the truth. Hence we are commanded to "search the Scriptures," and to "try the spirits, whether they be of God." And the Bereans were commended as more noble, because they searched the Scriptures daily, to know whether the things preached by the apostles were so. If, then, they were applauded for trying the preaching of the apostles by the word of God, surely we may try the preaching of uninspired men by the same standard. (3.) Beware of a fault-finding spirit. There are some persons, who indulge such a habit of finding fault with preaching, that they never receive any benefit from it. Either the matter of the sermon, the apparent feeling of the preacher, or his style and manner of delivery, does not suit them, and therefore they throw away all the good they might have obtained from his discourse. Remember that preachers of the gospel are but men. So weak are they, that the apostle compares them to "earthen vessels." Do not, then,

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expect perfection. Bear with their infirmities. Receive their instructions as the bread which your heavenly Father has provided for the nourishment of your soul. Do not ungratefully spurn it from you. What would you think, to see a child throwing away the bread his mother gives him, because it does not suit his capricious notions? Surely, you would say he did not deserve to have any. But, if your minister is cold and formal, and does not exhibit the truth in a clear, pointed, and forcible manner to the conscience, mourn over the matter in secret, before God. You will do no good by making it a subject of common conversation. It will lead to the indulgence of a censorious spirit, to the injury of your own soul, and the wounding of the cause of Christ. If you speak of it at all, let it be in a spirit of tender concern for the welfare of Zion, to some pious friends, who will unite with you in praying for your pastor. You recollect the conversion of Dr. West,[J] in answer to the prayers of two pious females. So you may be instrumental in reviving the heart of your pastor. (4.) *Hear with self-application.* From almost any passage in the Bible the Christian may draw a practical lesson for himself. Some truths may not be immediately applicable to your present circumstances; but they are, nevertheless, calculated to affect your heart. Even a sermon, addressed exclusively to impenitent sinners, is calculated to rouse up the most intense feelings of the Christian's soul. It reminds him of the exceeding wickedness of his past life; it shows him what an awful gulf he has escaped; it leads him to mourn over his ingratitude; and it calls forth his prayers and tears in behalf of perishing sinners. Strive to bring home the truth, so far as it is applicable to yourself, in the most searching manner. Examine your own heart diligently, that you lose nothing which belongs to you. (5.) *Do not hear for others.* Let every one make his own application of the truth. Many persons are so intent on finding garments for others, that they lose their own. (6.) *Hear with a prayerful frame of mind.* If any part of the discourse is intended for professors of religion, let your heart continually ascend to God, for the Holy Spirit to apply it to your own heart, and to the heart of every Christian present. If any part of it is designed for impenitent sinners, let your soul put forth an agony of prayer, that it may be blessed for their conversion. (7.) *Remember and practise what you hear.* This is of great importance; and, unless you attend to it, every other direction will be of little avail.

[Footnote J: See page 64.]

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Intimately connected with public worship are social meetings for prayer. We have examples of these in the primitive church. The disciples met for prayer *ten days* in succession before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. When the apostles returned from before the council, they held a prayer-meeting, and the place was shaken where they were assembled. When Peter was imprisoned, the church assembled for prayer *in the night*; and an angel delivered him out of the prison. We read of a place by the river side, where prayer was “wont to be made.” And at Miletus, Paul attended a precious prayer-meeting with the elders of the church of Ephesus. These meetings have been maintained among evangelical Christians in every age. They are the life of the church. They are the mainspring of human agency in all revivals of religion. Without a spirit of prayer, sufficient to bring God’s people together in this way, I see not how vital piety can exist in a church. The feelings of a lively Christian will lead him to the place where prayer is “wont to be made.” But it will not do to follow our feelings at all times, because they are variable. Be governed in everything by religious principle. If there are prayer-meetings in the place where you reside, make it a matter of conscience to attend them. Let no slight excuse keep you from the house of prayer. Especially, never let company prevent your attendance upon these meetings. There is a time for visiting; but to prefer the company of mortals to that of the living God is most unwise; and if but two or three are really met for the purpose of holding communion with Christ, they have his promise that he will be with them. In relation to punctuality, preparation, watchfulness, &c., the remarks already made in relation to public worship apply with equal force to social prayer-meetings.

But, in addition to the ordinary prayer-meetings, I would recommend to you always to attend a praying circle of females. Female prayer-meetings have often been blessed to the reviving of God’s work; and if, by the grace of God, you are enabled to offer up the prayer of faith, your influence may thus be felt to the remotest parts of the earth.

In relation to the duties of that portion of the holy Sabbath not employed in public worship, it naturally divides itself into two parts: 1. *The duty we owe to the souls of others.* We are bound to follow the example of Christ, so far as it is applicable to the station we hold in his kingdom. If we examine his life, we shall find that the love of souls was everywhere predominant. It was for this that he condescended to be made flesh, and dwell among us. It was for this that he labored and toiled. For this he suffered, bled, and died. If we can, in any manner, be instrumental in saving souls, the love of Christ must constrain us to *do what we can*. If we have not his Spirit, we are none of his. No one, with the love of Jesus burning

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in his breast, can look upon dying sinners around him, without feeling anxious to do something for their salvation. The Sabbath school opens a wide field of usefulness. Here every Christian, male and female, may become the pastor of a little flock. Such, truly, is the relation between a Sabbath school teacher and his class. He is appointed to watch for their souls. This is no ordinary office. It is one of high responsibility. The Sabbath school teacher becomes an ambassador of Christ to the little flock entrusted to his care. Every one of their souls is worth more than the world.

I shall offer no argument to persuade you to engage in this work, because I know your heart is in it, and I cannot see how any Christian can need urging to such a delightful employment. I only wish to stir up your zeal in the cause, and give a few plain and practical directions respecting this highly important duty. In doing this, it is necessary to consider the end and object of Sabbath school instruction. This is nothing less than the conversion of the children, and their subsequent preparation for usefulness in the church of Christ. To this end, three things are indispensably requisite: 1. That the children should have a clear and distinct knowledge of those great though simple truths of God's word, which teach them their lost and ruined condition by nature, and the way of salvation revealed in the gospel. Without this, they cannot become the subjects of renewing grace; for this work is carried on in the heart, through the instrumentality of God's word. These truths must, therefore, be so illustrated, simplified, and brought down to their capacities, that they will see their application to themselves, and learn from them their own immediate duty.

2. That this great end may be accomplished, it is necessary that the Holy Spirit should apply the truth to their consciences, and incline them to embrace it. For even young sinners are so depraved that they will not listen to the most tender and melting invitations of God's word, nor accept the offers of mercy and salvation in the gospel, until their dispositions are changed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

3. To prepare them to become laborers in the vineyard of the Lord, it is not only necessary that they should be converted, but that they should *grow* in *grace*, and in the *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have already shown what an intimate connection there is between high spiritual attainments and eminent usefulness, and between a knowledge of truth and the work of sanctification in the heart. But energy of mind, and habits of deep thought and close study, are of great importance, as talents to be employed in the service of God. These must also be cultivated in the Sabbath school.

Let it, then, become a subject of anxious inquiry how you may be instrumental in promoting these several objects, so necessary to the great end you have in view. In this matter, the following directions may be of service to you:—

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1. *Labor to obtain a clear, full, and discriminating view of gospel truth yourself.* This is indispensable, if you would impress the same upon the minds of others. If your general views of truth are obscure, indefinite, and unsatisfactory to yourself, your instructions will be of the same character.

2. *Study to become skilful in the sacred art of so communicating divine truth to children, that they will understand it.* Little as this may be esteemed, it is one of the most valuable talents you can possess. I know of no other which females can so profitably employ in the service of Christ. On this subject, I will offer the following suggestions:—

(1.) *Study the juvenile mind.* Observe the principles by which it is developed and called forth into action. See how you can apply these principles to effect the object in view. Be familiar with children. Become acquainted with their language and modes of thinking; and strive to adapt yourself to their capacities.

(2.) *Use such helps as you can obtain.* There are many works published on the subject of education, which develop important principles, of great use in communicating knowledge to the young. Some of these are especially designed for Sabbath school teachers. Study them with diligence; treasure up all useful hints, and apply them in practice.

(3.) *Aim at drawing out the minds of the children, and teaching them to study and think, with clearness and precision, for themselves.* There is a great difference between *conversing with* children and *talking to* them. By the former, you call their minds into exercise, and get hold of their feelings. Thus you will secure their attention. But the latter will be much less likely to interest them; for, being the recipients of thought, instead of thinking for themselves, they participate less in the exercise. By engaging them in conversation, and leading that conversation in the investigation of truth, you teach them to *think*. The mental discipline which this calls forth, is a matter of no small consequence. It may have an important bearing upon their whole future characters.

If we simply explain to a child the meaning of a passage of Scripture, the whole benefit lies in the instruction he receives at the time. But, if we show him practically how to ascertain the meaning himself, and bring him under the mental discipline which it requires, we give him a kind of key to unlock the meaning of other passages. By an ingenious mode of catechizing, children's minds may be led to perceive and understand almost any truth, much more distinctly and clearly than by any direct explanation which, a teacher can make. By *catechizing*, I do not mean the repeating of *catechisms*; but the calling out of their minds upon any Scripture truth that may be before them, by a series of simple questions, leading them to see the truth as though they had discovered it themselves.

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This is a subject well worthy of your prayerful attention. Remember that you are dependent upon the Holy Spirit for the proper direction of the powers of your mind. Pray, then, for clearness of perception, and discrimination of judgment, that you may understand the truth; and for skill to communicate it to your class. Study every Sabbath school lesson in your closet, with these ends in view. Persevere in your efforts till you become mistress of the art of teaching.

3. *Let your own heart be affected with the truth you are endeavoring to teach.* Upon this, so far as your instrumentality is concerned, greatly depends your success. Unless you *feel* the force of the truth yourself, it will be very difficult for you to convince the children that you are in earnest. While preparing the lesson, in your closet, try to obtain a realizing sense of the personal interest which you and your class have in the subject you are contemplating. See what bearing it has upon your and their eternal destiny; and pray for the Holy Spirit to impress it powerfully upon your heart. Always, if possible, spend a little season in your closet, as an immediate preparation for the duties of the Sabbath school. Get your heart refreshed, in view of the practical truth contained in the lesson; and go before your class deeply impressed with its solemn import.

4. *Make a personal application of the practical truths contained in the lesson;* and embrace frequent opportunities of conversing separately and privately with every one of your scholars, in regard to their religious feelings. If they give no evidence of piety, explain to them the duty of immediate repentance and submission to God, and urge them to perform it without delay. Do this, under the solemn impression that it *may* be your last opportunity, and that you will soon meet them at the judgment-seat of Christ.

If you have reason to believe their hearts have been renewed, show them the importance of high spiritual attainments. Urge upon them the duties of watchfulness, self-examination, studying the Scriptures, and prayer. Show them also the necessity of carrying out their religion into every action of their lives. Show them that the design of religion is to make them better; to give them better dispositions; to keep them humble; and make them more amiable, obedient, and dutiful in everything. Teach them also the great importance of improving their minds, while young, to fit them for the service of Christ. You may have before you some future Harriet Newell, or Mrs. Judson, who may willingly surrender all the comforts of this life to carry the glad tidings of salvation to the benighted heathen.

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5. *Be earnest and importunate for the Holy Spirit to bless your labors.* Without this, all your efforts will be in vain. Feel continually that you are but an instrument in the hand of God; and that all your success must depend upon him. Yet he *has promised* to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Let no day pass without presenting before the throne of grace every individual of your class: endeavor to remember as particularly as possible the peculiar circumstances and feelings of each. Visit them as often as you can; and, if possible, persuade them to meet with you once a week for prayer. But make no effort in your own strength. Search well your motives, and see that self-seeking has no place in your heart. If you seek the conversion of your class, that you may be honored as the instrument, you will be disappointed. *God must be glorified in all things.*

II. There are also duties that we owe to God, *in private*, which ought to occupy a portion of the holy Sabbath. In the present age, when so much of the Lord's day is spent in attendance upon public worship and the Sabbath school, there is danger that secret communion with God will be neglected; and thus, like the tree with a worm at its root, the soul will wither under the genial rain and sunshine of the gospel. With a few practical directions on this point, I shall close this letter.

1. *Spend as large a portion as possible of the intervals of public duties in your closet.* The time thus spent should be employed principally in the devotional reading of the Holy Scriptures; meditation, for the purpose of getting your own heart affected with divine truth; self-examination, and prayer. If you have very much time to spend in this way, you may employ a part of it in reading some devotional book; but I think our reading on the Sabbath should be principally confined to the Scriptures. But *prayer* should be frequent, and mingled with everything.

2. *Spend no part of the Lord's day in seeking your own ease or pleasure.* We are required to turn away our feet from finding our own pleasure on God's holy day. All our time is the Lord's; but the Sabbath is his in a peculiar manner. On other days of the week he allows us to do *our own* work. But on this day we must do *his work only*. There is no room, then, for the indulgence of idleness, indolence, or sloth, upon the Sabbath. The duties of this holy day are such as to require the active and vigorous exercise of all our faculties. That you may not, then, be tempted to indulge in sloth, use every means in your power to promote a lively state of your bodily energies. Make all your preparations on the afternoon of Saturday. Spend a portion of the evening in devotional exercises, for the purpose of banishing the world from your mind, and bringing it into a heavenly frame; and retire to rest at an early hour. By this means, your animal powers will be refreshed, and you will be prepared early to meet the Lord, on the approach of his holy morning.

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3. *Watch over your thoughts.* The Sabbath is a season when Satan is exceedingly busy in diverting our thoughts from holy things. Evil thoughts also proceed from our own depraved hearts. But the Lord's day is as really profaned by vain and worldly thoughts, as by the labor of our bodies. O, if we could realize this, how much food should we find for bitter repentance in the thoughts of a single Sabbath! Strive, then, to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." "I hate vain thoughts," says the Psalmist; "but thy law do I love."

4. *Set a guard over your lips.* Conversing about the affairs of the world, is a direct breach of the holy Sabbath. But we are not only required to refrain from worldly and vain conversation, but from speaking *our own words*. All unprofitable conversation, even though it be about the externals of religion, should be avoided. It has a tendency to dissipate the mind, and to remove any serious impressions which the truth may have made. Our thoughts should be fixed on divine things, and our conversation should be heavenly. We are not only required to refrain from finding our own pleasure, speaking our own words, and doing our own ways; but we are to "call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable." And so will every one regard God's holy day, who lives in the lively exercise of spiritual affections.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER IX.

Meditation.

"Meditate upon these things."—1 TIM. 4:15.

MY DEAR SISTER:

The subject of this letter is intimately connected with that of the last; and in proportion to your faithfulness in the duty now under consideration, will be your interest in the word and worship of God. Religious meditation is a serious, devout and practical thinking of divine things; a duty enjoined in Scripture, both by precept and example; and concerning which, let us observe,

1. *Its importance.* That God has required it, ought to be a sufficient motive to its performance. But its inseparable connection with our growth in grace magnifies its importance. It is by "beholding the glory of the Lord," that we are "changed into the same image." And how can we behold his glory, but by the spiritual contemplation of his infinite perfections? Again: the word of God is "a lamp to our feet;" but if we do not open our eyes to its truths, how can they guide our steps? It is only by the practical contemplation of these truths, that our souls can come into communion with them, drink

in their spirit, and be guided by their precepts. Hence, the intimate connection of this devout exercise with growth in grace.

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2. *The time and manner of Meditation.* It should be constant. Our minds and hearts should be so habitually fixed on heavenly things, that, after having been necessarily employed about our worldly affairs, our thoughts will voluntarily revert back to spiritual things, as to their proper element. Their tendency should be upward. Speaking of the godly man, David says, “in his law doth he meditate, *day and night*.” “O how love I thy law,” says the Psalmist; “it is my meditation *all the day*.” You may, perhaps, find it profitable to select a subject every morning for meditation during the day; and whenever your thoughts are not necessarily occupied with your ordinary employments, turn them to that subject. Labor after clear and practical views of the truth; and see that your *heart* is affected by it. One of the most difficult points of Christian experience is, to keep the mind habitually upon heavenly things, while engaged in worldly employments, or surrounded by objects which affect the senses. Satan will be continually seeking to divert your mind; but do not be discouraged by his assaults. The Bible saints were *fervent* in spirit, even while engaged in business; and we have accounts of pious persons in every age, who have been like them. A heavenly mind is worth the labor of years. Do not rest till you obtain it. Meditation should also be mixed with the reading of God’s word. It requires the closest meditation to understand the Holy Scriptures, and apply them to our hearts.

But, it is also necessary to set apart particular seasons of retirement for fixed and holy meditation. This position is warranted by Scripture. Holy men of old embraced the most favorable opportunities for this devout exercise. Isaac went out into the field to meditate in the stillness and solemnity of the evening. David sometimes chose the calmness of the morning. At other times, he fixed his thoughts in holy meditation, during the wakeful hours of the night. “I remember thee *upon my bed*, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.” “Mine eyes prevent the *night-watches*, that I might meditate in thy word.” But, lest the adversary should get the advantage of you, fix upon *regular seasons* for this sacred employment. Select some subject, and think upon it deeply, systematically, practically, and devoutly. System is a great assistance in everything. We can never obtain clear views of any complex object, without separately viewing the various parts of which it is composed. We cannot see the beautiful mechanism of a watch, nor understand the principles which keep it in motion, without taking it in pieces, and viewing the parts separately. So, in contemplating any great truth, which contains many different propositions; if we look at them all at once, our ideas will be confused and imperfect; but if we separate them, and examine one at a time, our views will be clear and distinct. Our meditation must be *practical*, because every

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divine truth is calculated to make an impression upon the heart; and if it fails of doing this, our labor is lost. Make, then, a direct personal application of the truth, on which your thoughts are fixed. But, our meditations must also be *devotions*. They must all be mixed with prayer. As an example of what I mean, examine the 119th Psalm. There the Psalmist, in the midst of his meditations, was continually lifting up his soul in prayer. His devout aspirations are breathed forth continually. Your success in this exercise, and the profit you derive from it, will very much depend on the manner you observe this direction.

3. *The subjects of Meditation.* The word of God furnishes abundant matter for meditation. This was the constant delight of the Psalmist. The 119th Psalm consists almost entirely of meditations upon the word of God. But, in our regular seasons of fixed and solemn meditation, you will find assistance and profit from fixing your mind on some particular portion of divine truth; and carrying it out in its various relations and applications. That these subjects may be always at hand, without loss of time in selecting and arranging them, I here suggest a considerable variety of topics, with references to passages of Scripture calculated to illustrate or enforce the subjects. It is not designed that you should confine yourself strictly to these, but to use them as an aid to your own efforts. They are intended as mere suggestions, and are therefore both imperfectly stated and partially carried out; One great difficulty, in this exercise, is, always to be able to fix the mind on some portion of truth, in such a manner as to secure variety, and to contemplate truth in its proper proportions. And probably this kind of meditation is often neglected, for want of time to select a subject, and fix the attention upon it. If Christians were always in a lively frame, perhaps this would not be necessary. The mind would spontaneously revert to spiritual things. But, humiliating as is the fact, it is nevertheless true, that our minds are often dull upon those subjects which ought always to operate as the touchstone of spiritual feeling. Yet, as right feelings can be produced only in view of truth, the way to overcome this dulness is to direct the attention to objects calculated to call forth these emotions.

I have arranged these subjects in such a manner, that, if taken in course, they will lead to the contemplation of divine truth, with some reference to its proper proportions, although they do not completely cover the ground. Any particular topic, however, can be selected, according to the circumstances or inclination of the individual. Many of the subjects are divided under various heads; and, in some cases, one or two heads may perhaps be found sufficient for one season of meditation.

I. CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

1. *Self-existence—being underived.* How this can be proved from reason. How this truth is recognized in Scripture. Ex. 3:14. Rev. 1:8. Jer. 10:10. Dan. 6:26. All other existence derived from him. Ps. 33:6. John 1:3. Col. 1:16, 17. Heb. 11:13.

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Practical Reflections. (1.) Ps. 53:1, f.c., (2.) Isa. 29:16, l.c. 45:9, 10. Rom. 9:20, 21. (3.) Ps. c. 3, 4. Isa. 43:7. Dan. 5:23, l.c.

2. *Eternity and Immutability of God.* How one of these involves the other. How these attributes can be discovered by reason. How by Scripture. Gen. 1:1. Deut. 32:40. Ps. 90:2. 102:24-27. Mal. 3:6. Heb. 13:8. Jas. 1:17. Rev. 1:4. 22:13.

Consider these attributes separately:—(1.) Eternity—being without beginning or end—ever being. (2.) Immutability—subject to no change in his manner of being, his perfections, his thoughts, desires, purposes, or determinations.

Practical Reflections. (1.) How God appears to us in view of these attributes. (2.) How necessary they are to the character of the Supreme Ruler. (3.) How these attributes make God appear to the sinner. (4.) How to holy beings. (5.) What encouragements to prayer. Suppose God were changeable in his character, feelings, and purposes, what confidence could be reposed in his promises? (6.) What feelings these attributes should inspire.

3. *Omnipresence and Omniscience of God.* (1.) Contemplate knowledge without limit, and presence without bounds. (2.) How these attributes are manifest from the works of creation. (3.) How declared in the Word of God. Ps. 139:1-12. Jer. 23:24. Ps. 147:5. Isa. 40:28.

Solemn Thoughts. (1.) In what light God is manifested by these attributes. (2.) How necessary these attributes to the Supreme Governor and righteous Judge of all. (3.) No individual so small or unimportant as to escape the attention of such a being. Matt. 10:29, 30.

Practical Reflections. (1.) Danger of forgetting or losing a sense of the presence of God. Ps. 9:17. 50:22. (2.) What feelings should be inspired in view of these attributes. Ps. 4:4. Heb. 4:13. (3.) How sinners should feel in view of them. Job 34:21, 22. Prov. 5:21. 15:3. Jer. 16:17. Amos 9:2, 3. (4.) What emotions these attributes should excite in the hearts of God's children. 2 Chron. 16:9, f.c. (5.) How these attributes will appear in the day of judgment.

4. *Omnipotence and Independence of God.* (1.) How the omnipotence of God is manifested by the works of creation. Job, chapters 38-41. Reflect on the works of creation as a whole, and minutely and particularly, and also *how* they were made. Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26. (2.) How the independence of God is manifested by his works. Creative power must be underived. (3.) How the omnipotence of God is displayed, in his upholding and governing all things. (4.) How this attribute is declared in Scripture. Gen. 17:1. 18:14. Matt. 19:26. (5.) How omnipotence proves independence.



Practical Reflections. (1.) How God is hereby qualified to be the Supreme Ruler. (2.) The condition of sinners, while they remain at enmity with such a being. Deut. 32:41. (3.) How Christians should feel, in view of this. Ex. 32:32. Rom. 9:2, 3. (4.) What they ought to do. Acts 20:31. Jas. 5:20. Jude 23. (5.) Feelings of those who can view such a being as their Friend and Father. Rom. 8:28, 38, 39. 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. (6.) Appropriate emotions on contemplating the omnipotence of God. Job 11:7, 8. 26:14. Ps. 145.

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5. *Benevolence of God.* God is essentially benevolent. 1 John 4:8. (1.) How the benevolence of God is exhibited to us by the light of reason. (2.) How by his works of creation and providence. (3.) By Revelation. *First*, by direct assertion. Exod. 34:6. Ps. 145:9. Nah. 1:7. Matt. 5:45. *Second*, by the character of his law. Ps. 19:7, 8. Matt. 22:37-39. Rom. 7:12. *Third*, by the work of redemption. John 3:16, 17.

Inferential Thoughts. (1.) The benevolence of God without bounds. (2.) Always active (3.) It constitutes his whole moral character. (4.) A being of infinite benevolence must prefer the greater good to the less, and the supreme good above all. (5.) Such a being must love the same disposition in his creatures, and hate the opposite.

Practical Reflections. (1.) How odious selfishness must be in the sight of God. (2.) Sinners directly opposed in their characters and feelings to God. Exod. 20:5, l.c. Rom. 8:7. (3.) The exceeding great evil of sin, as committed against infinite benevolence. (4.) The ingratitude and baseness of sinners. (5.) What the goodness of God should lead them to. Isa. 30:18. Rom. 2:4. (6.) What emotions the contemplation of the goodness of God should excite in the hearts of his children. Ps. 118. Isa. 63:7. Eph. 5:20. (7.) How we may apprehend the goodness of the Lord. Ps. 107:43.

6. *The Justice of God.* (1.) What justice is: *First*, as exercised by intelligent beings, whose relations will admit of mutual giving and receiving; *Second*, as exercised by a ruler towards his subjects; *Third*, as relates to all actions, with reference to the general good. (2.) Which of these relations God sustains to the universe. (3.) The disposition which would lead him to act justly in all these cases. (4.) How God is just as respects himself (5.) As respects his creatures. (6.) How the justice of God may be seen from the light of reason, and from the system of his providence. (7.) How from the Sacred History. (8.) The positive declarations of Scripture. Deut. 32:4. Isa. 45:21. Zeph. 3:5. Rev. 15:3. (9.) From the revelation of a future day of righteous retribution. Eccl. 12:14. Acts 17:31. 2 Cor. 5:10.

Practical Reflections. (1.) How, by this attribute, God is qualified to be the Supreme Governor. (2.) How terrible this renders him to the wicked. Exod. 34:7, l.c. Heb. 10:20-29. 12:29. (3.) How suffering the guilty to go unpunished, without satisfaction and reformation, would be doing injustice to the universe. (4.) Why we ought to look with complacency and delight upon this attribute.

7. *The Truth of God.* (1.) His *veracity*; or a disposition always to speak according to the real state of things. (2.) *Faithfulness*; or a disposition to conform his actions to previous declarations of his Word.

(1.) How the truth of God may be proved by reason. *First*, from his Benevolence. *Second*, from his Independence and Immutability. *Third*, from the excellence of truth and the turpitude of falsehood. *Fourth*, from the estimation in which truth is held by the intelligent creatures he has made.

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(2.) How proved from the Scriptures. *First*, by direct declarations. Exod. 34:6, l.c. Ps. 117:2. 146:6, l.c. *Second*, by the accordance of the histories recorded in Scripture with the facts substantiated by other evidence. *Third*, by the predictions of events which have since been fulfilled. *Fourth*, from the doctrines contained in his Word. *Fifth*, by the agreement of Scripture with itself. *Sixth*, by the fulfilment of promises, threatenings, covenants, &c., recorded in his Word. *Seventh*, other proofs, as they may be suggested to the mind.

Practical Reflections. (1.) How God is qualified by this attribute to be the moral governor of intelligent creatures. (2.) How necessary is faith to acceptance with God. Heb. 11:6. (3.) How odious to a God of infinite veracity must be the sin of *unbelief*. 1 John 5:10. (4.) How terrible to the wicked this renders the threatenings of God's word. (5.) How valuable his promises to the righteous. (6.) At what an infinite expense God has sustained his truth, while pardoning rebels doomed to die. Ps. 85:10. Rom. 3:26.

8. *The Mercy of God.* (1.) What mercy is. (2.) Contemplate mercy as a disposition inherent in the Divine character. (3.) The only way in which mercy can be exercised by Him, towards those who have merited anger and punishment, consistent with the moral rectitude of his character, and the great ends of his government. Ps. 85:10. Isa. 53:5, 6, 10. Acts 4:12. 5:31. Rom. 3:25, 26. (4.) How this attribute is manifested in his providence. Matt. 5:45. (5.) How in his Word. Neh. 9:17. Ps. 3:8. Matt. 5:7. Rom. 5:6. (These two may embrace several subdivisions.) (6.) Consider whether by the light of nature we could discover any possible way for God to exercise mercy towards the guilty.

Practical Reflections. (1.) The loveliness and glory of this attribute. (2.) How we should feel in view of it. Ps. 118. (3.) The great guilt and danger of indulging an unmerciful or cruel disposition. Prov. 11:17, l.c. 21:13. Mark 11:26. Jas. 2:13. (4.) The advantage of being merciful. Ps. 18:25. Prov. 11:17, f.c. Matt. 5:7. Mark 11:25.

9. *The Wisdom of God.* (1.) What wisdom is. How it differs from knowledge. How from cunning or subtilty. Whether that is wisdom which does not design to accomplish a *good* end. Whether this is a *natural* or *moral* attribute, or both. (2.) How the wisdom of God is manifested in the works of creation. Ps. 104. Prov. 3:19. Examine particular objects and see how exactly everything is fitted for the end for which it is designed, and that a good end; such as the seasons; day and night; provision made for the wants and for the comfort and pleasure of men and animals; the body and mind of man; the laws which govern the material world, carried put in a great variety of ways; in the infinite variety, and yet extensive and convenient classification, of objects; human languages; moral agency of intelligent beings, &c. (3.) The wisdom of God, as exhibited in his Word; *First*, its perfect adaptation to the wants of the world; its variety of authorship, style, matter, manner, &c.; *Second*, the truths revealed; particularly the plan of redemption. Rom. 11:33.

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Practical Reflections. (1.) Ps. 48:14. (2.) The folly of setting up our own reason in opposition to the word of God. Isa. 40:13, 14. Rom. 11:34, 35. (3.) The folly of self-conceit. Prov. 26:12. (4.) From whom all wisdom comes. Prov. 2:6. (5.) What is the only true wisdom. Job 28:28.

II. DOCTRINES.

1. *The Decrees of God.* Doctrine: That God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass.

Proved, (1.) By reason. Otherwise, he would work without a plan, and could not certainly know what would take place hereafter; which is inconsistent with the idea of infinite wisdom. Acts 15:18. (2.) From Scripture. Job 23:13. Isa. 46:10. Jer. 10:23.

This doctrine does not destroy the freedom and accountability of the creature. Acts 2:23. This is not to be understood in any such sense as to make God the author of sin. Jas. 1:13. If the will of God is done, the greatest possible good will be accomplished. Ps. 119:68, f.c. How we ought to feel, in view of this doctrine. Phil. 4:4. Duty of submission. Luke 22:42. Jas. 4:7.

2. *The Sovereignty of God.* Doctrine: That God rules the universe, according to his own pleasure, independently and without control, giving no further account of his conduct than he pleases.

Proved, (1.) By reason: *First*, his will the greatest good; *Second*, he has power to accomplish it; *Third*, if he fails to accomplish his will, he will be under constraint, which is inconsistent with the idea of an infinite being. Were he to fail of accomplishing his own will, he would not be qualified for a righteous governor. (2.) From Scripture. Ps. 115:3. Dan. 4:35. Eccl. 8:3, l.c. Job 33:13.

Reflections. (1.) God does not act *arbitrarily*, without sufficient cause, or merely for the sake of doing his own will. His actions are controlled by a supreme desire for the greatest good, and always founded on the best of reasons. (2.) The consummate folly of those who resist his will. (3.) The feelings with which we ought to regard the sovereignty of God. 1 Chron. 16:23-31. Ps. 97:1. (4.) How terrible this doctrine to sinners. Ps. 99:1. Isa. 33:11. (5.) What ground of confidence, comfort, and joy to the righteous. Ps. 15:6. Hosea 14:9. Rom. 8:28.

3. *Human Depravity.* (1.) How extensive. Rom. 3:23. Corroborated by facts. (2.) How great in degree. Gen. 6:5. Rom. 3:10-18. (3.) From whom derived. Rom. 5:12-19. (4.) How hereditary depravity becomes personal. Ps. 58:3. (5.) How human depravity manifests itself. Rom. 8:7. John 3:19, 20. 5:40. Acts 7:51. Gal. 5:19-21.

Practical Reflections. (1.) How we ought to feel, in view of our own depravity. Ezra 9:6. Job 42:6. Ps. 38:1-7. 51:4, 17. Dan. 9:8. (2.) The necessity of regeneration. Heb.

12:14, l.c. (3.) How this load of guilt may be removed. Matt. 11:28-30. 1 John 2:1, 2. (4.) What it will bring us to, if we do not obtain deliverance from it. Rom 6:23, f.c.

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4. *Regeneration*. (1.) Its nature. 2 Cor. 5:17. Eph. 4:24. (2.) Its author. John 3:5, 6. (3.) Influence of the Spirit; how exerted; not miraculous John 3:8. (4.) Man's agency in the work of regeneration. Isa. 55:6, 7. Acts 2:38. 16:31. Phil 2:12, 13.

5. *The condition of fallen man*. (1.) Alienation from God. Job 21:14, 15. Rom. 1:28. Eph. 2:1, 2. (2.) Exposure to his wrath. Deut. 32:35, 41. Ps. 7:11, 12. John 3:18, 36. Eph. 2:3. (3.) Personal misery. Isa. 57:20, 21. Misery the natural consequence of sin. Jer. 2:19.

Practical Reflections. (1.) How Christians should feel, in view of this subject. Isa. 51:1. 1 Cor. 15:10. (2.) How they should feel, in view of the condition of the impenitent. Rom. 9:1-3. (3.) How act. Acts 20:31, l.c. Rev. 22:17. (4.) The necessity of a mediator between God and man. Gal. 3:10.

6. *The plan of Redemption*. (1.) Why sin could not be pardoned without an atonement. Gen. 2:17. Dent. 27:26, compared with Deut. 32:4, l.c. Heb. 9:22. (2.) What a mediator is. Job 9:33. 2 Cor. 5:18, 19. (3.) Why it was necessary that our mediator should be God. (4.) Why, that he should be also man. (5.) Why it was necessary that he should obey the law. Isa. 42:21. Gal. 4:4, 5. (6.) Why, that he should suffer. Gal. 3:13. 4:4, 5. Heb. 9:22, 28. (7.) Why, that he should rise from the dead. Rom. 4:25. 1 Cor. 15:17. 1 Pet. 1:21. Heb. 7:25.

Practical Reflections. [1.] How the love of God is manifested in the provision of such salvation. John 3:16. Rom. 5:8. [2.] How we should feel and act in view of the amazing love of Christ. 2 Cor. 5:14, 15. [3.] What effect his love should have upon sinners. Zech. 12:10. Rom. 2:4. [4.] How Christians should feel, in view of the ingratitude of the impenitent. Ps. 119:136, 158.

7. *Justification* [1.] What justification is. [2.] Why we cannot be justified by the law. Rom. 3:23. [3.] The nature of all our good works, religious exercises, duties, &c. Luke 17:10. [4.] The ground of justification. Isa. 53:11. Acts 13:39 Rom. 8:3, 4. [5.] The instrument or medium of justification. Rom. 3:28. [6.] The effects of justification. Rom. 5:1-5. 8:1-4. 15:13. 1 Pet. 1:8.

8. *Adoption*. [1.] What adoption is. Exod. 2:9, 10. [2.] Through whom believers are adopted. Gal. 4:4, 5. [3.] How their adoption is manifested to them. Rom. 8:15, 16. Gal. 4:6. [4.] To what adoption entitles them. Rom. 8:17. Gal. 4:7. [5.] What was the moving cause of adoption. 1 John 3:1. [6.] What emotions this should excite in the hearts of Christians.

9. *Sanctification*. [1.] What sanctification is. Rom. 6:6, 11—13. 8:13. [2.] By whom believers are sanctified. Rom. 8:13, l.c. 15:16, l.c. 1 Pet. 1:22. (3.) The instrument of sanctification. John 17:19. (1.) The procuring cause. 1 Cor. 1:2. 6:11. Heb. 10:10. (5.) The importance of sanctification, or growth in grace. John 15:8. Col. 1:9-12. (6.) How

we are to strive for sanctification. Phil. 2:12, 13. 3:13, 14. (7.) How we may secure the aid of the Holy Spirit. Luke 11:13. Rom. 8:26. (8.) How Christ regards us, when we are not making progress in holiness. Rev. 3:15, 16.

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10. *Death.* (1.) Its certainty. Heb. 9:27. (2.) The uncertainty of life. Jas. 4:14. (3.) The shortness of life. Ps. 90:3-10. 1 Cor. 7:29-31. Bring death near, and commune with it; try to enter into the feelings of the death-bed. (4.) How we should live in view of the subject. Luke 12:33-40. (5.) The folly of laying up treasures for ourselves in this life. Luke 12:16-21. (6.) How death will appear to such. Isa. 33:14. (7.) How death appears to those who "set their affections on things above." 2 Cor. 5:6, 8. Phil. 1:23. (8.) The support which such have in the hour of death. Isa. 43:1, 2. 1 Cor. 15:54-57.

11. *Heaven.* (1.) Heaven a place. John 14:2, 3. Heb. 9:24. (2.) The glory of heaven. Rev. 21:22, 23. (3.) What constitutes the blessedness of heaven to the righteous. [1.] Freedom from sin, and sinful associations. 2 Cor. 5:2-4. Rev. 21:27. [2.] Freedom from pain, and all evil. Rev. 21:4. [3.] Exercise of holy affections. 1 John 4:16. [4.] The company of holy beings. Heb. 12:22-24. [5.] The immediate presence of God, and such communion and fellowship with him as will make us like him. Ps. 17:15. Isa. 33:17, f.c. 1 John 3:2. [6.] The presence of Jesus, as our Redeemer, to whom we are indebted for all this glory. John 17:24. 1 Thess. 4:17. Rev. 5:9. (4.) The employments of heaven. [1.] The contemplation of the infinite perfections of God, and the glories of his moral government. Rev. 19:1, 2. [2.] Rendering cheerful obedience to his will. Ps. 103:20, 21. Matt. 6:10. 22:30. [3.] Singing his praises. Rev. 5:9. [4.] And we may suppose holy conversation. (5.) Contemplate this state as existing forever, with the continual increase of the capacity for enjoyment, and the discoveries of the divine character, his government and works.

12. *The Resurrection.* (1.) What signal will usher in the glorious morn. 1 Cor. 15:52. 1 Thess. 4:16. (2.) What will follow. 1 Thess. 4:16, l.c. (3.) What will come to pass in regard to the saints which shall then be alive on the earth. 1 Cor. 15:51. 1 Thess. 4:17. (4.) With what bodies the saints will arise. 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 50, 53, 54. (5.) To whom the saints will ascribe their victory and triumph, in that day. 1 Cor. 15:57. (6.) How the wicked will rise. Dan. 12:2.

13. *The Judgment.* (1.) This awful ceremony is to take place at a certain time, fixed in the councils of eternity. Acts 17:31. (2.) It will come suddenly and unexpectedly. Matt. 24:36-39. (3.) Who will be the judge. Matt. 25:31. Rev. 20:11. (4.) Who will stand before him to be judged. Rom. 14:10. Rev. 20:12. (5.) In respect to what they will be judged. Eccl. 12:14. Matt. 12:36. Rom. 2:16. 2 Cor. 5:10. (6.) By what rule they will be judged. John 7:21. Rom. 2:2. (7.) How any will be able to stand this awful test. 1 John 2:1, 2. (8.) What separation will be made. Matt. 25:32. Consider this in its application to friends, and those who have in any way come under our influence. (9.) The final award of the righteous. Matt. 25:33-36. (10.) What state of feeling is indicated by their answer. Matt. 25:37-39. (11.) The final sentence of the wicked. Matt. 25:41-43. (12.) What state of feeling is indicated by their answer. Matt. 25:44.

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14. *The World of Woe*. Contemplated for the purpose of arousing the attention to the condition of the impenitent. (1.) The place itself—the prison-house of the universe. Matt. 25:46. (2.) In what manner it is described. Isa. 33:14. Matt. 13:42, f.c. Rev. 20:14. (3.) What will constitute the misery of that dread abode. [1.] The consciousness of guilt. Rom. 3:19. [2.] The recollection of mercies abused. Rom. 9:22. [3.] The company that will be there. Matt. 25:41. Rev. 21:8. [4.] The wrath and curse of Almighty God. Rom. 2:8, 9. [5.] The reflection that this misery is to have no end. Mark 9:14. (4.) What will be the employments of that place. Matt. 13:42. 24:51. How we ought to feel, in regard to those who are exposed to this awful doom. Matt. 22:39. (6.) What we should do for them. Jude 23, f.c.

III. CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

1. It is unlike that of any other being in the universe

2. A mysterious complexity in his character, which we call a union of two natures—a combination of attributes, all of which can neither be ascribed to men, nor to angels, nor to God. Gen. 19:10. Num. 24:17. Job 19:23-27. Ps. 2:7, 12, c. 1. Isa. 6:1-3. 9:5, 6. 28:16. 15:10-12, 21—25. Ps. 22: 6. Isa. 49:7. 52:14. 53:2, 3.

3. Christ is a man. Phil. 2:8. John 1:14. Luke 21:39. Heb. 2:17. 5:8.

4. He is God. (1.) The Scriptures represent Christ as pre-existing, in a glorious character, before he appeared in this world. John 1:1, 2. 3:13. 6:38. 17:5. Heb. 1:10. (2.) They represent that, in passing from that state to this, he suffered a humiliating change. 2 Cor. 8:9. Phil. 2:6, 7. (3.) The Scriptures directly assert that he possessed a superhuman nature. Heb. 1:4, 6. Col. 2:9. (4.) This superhuman nature is *divine*—the names of God are ascribed to him—the attributes of God are ascribed to him—he is represented as performing the works of God. Com. Luke 1:16, 17, with Isa. 40:3, and Isa. 6:1-3, with John 12:41. Rom. 9:5. John 20:28. 1 John 5:20. 1 Ti. 3:16. John 1:2. Rev. 22:13. Isa. 44:6. Acts 1:24. John 2:24. Jer. 17:10. 1 Kings 8:39. Matt. 9:2. 18:20. 28:20. John 10:15. Isa. 44:24. Gen. 1:1. Heb. 1:10. Jer. 10:12. Col. 1:16. John 1:3. Phil. 3:21. John 5:21. Rev. 1:5, 6. He performed miracles *in his own name*. He was worshiped by inspired men who knew his character; and the Scriptures encourage such worship. Acts 7:59. 2 Ti. 4:18. 2 Cor. 12:8. Acts 1:21. 1 Thess. 3:12. 2 Thess. 2:16. Phil. 2:10. Heb. 1:6. Rev. 5:8-14.

Contemplate the character of Christ in its moral and practical relations; (1.) As illustrating or exhibiting the character of God; (2.) As confirming and sustaining his moral government, while it admits the exercise of mercy; (3.) As the medium through which all our duties are to be performed; (4.) As the foundation of our hopes.

IV. NAMES AND OFFICES OF CHRIST.

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1. *Saviour.* (1.) What salvation is. (2.) Why we need a Saviour. What it is to be *lost*—carry out the figure in imagination. Matt. 18:11. (3.) From what Christ saves us. Matt. 1:21. (4.) How he saves us from sin. Acts 15:8, 9. (5.) His willingness to save. Matt. 11:28-30. John 6:37, l.c. (6.) His Ability to save. Heb. 7:25. (7.) The expense of this salvation. Rom. 5:7, 8. (8.) The ingratitude of neglecting so great salvation. Heb. 2:2, 3.

2. *Redeemer.* (1.) What it is to redeem—contemplate the figure, and form a clear perception of the condition of captives taken in war, and held in slavery. (2.) Our condition by nature. Rom. 6:13, f.c. 16, 20. 7:14, l.c. Gal. 3:10. (3.) How Christ has redeemed us. Gal. 3:13. (4.) The price paid for our redemption. 1 Peter 1:18, 19. (5.) How we should feel in view of this. Rev. 5:9, 10. (6.) What this should lead us to do. 1 Cor. 6:20.

3. *Prophet.* (1.) What a prophet is. (2.) How Christ teaches his people. John 1:18, 5:39. 16:13, 14. (3.) What encouragement we have to go to him for direction, in all cases of doubt and difficulty. 1 Cor. 1:30. James 1:5. (4.) With what feelings we must receive him as our great Teacher. Matt. 18:3, 4.

4. *Priest.* (1.) What a priest is. Heb. 5:1, 2. (2.) Why we need a priest. Deut. 27:26. Rom. 3:20. (3.) How he was qualified to become our priest. Heb. 5:7-9. 7:26-28. 4:15. (4.) How he has made atonement and reconciliation for us. Heb. 9:11-14, 28. (5.) How this is rendered available to believers in all ages. Rom. 8:34. Heb. 9:24. 7:25. (6.) What benefits believers may derive from his intercession. Rom. 5:2. Heb. 4:16. (7.) The sympathy of Christ with believers. Heb. 4:15.

5. *King.* (1.) What a King is. (2.) In what sense Christ is our king. Eph. 1:21, 22. (3.) The nature of the control he exercises over us. Matt. 11:30. Rom. 6:9-22. 11:17. 2 Cor. 10:5. (4.) The need we have of such a king. Matt. 12:29. (5.) Our duty to him as subjects. 2 Cor. 10:5.

6. *Mediator.* (1.) What a mediator is: one that undertakes to make reconciliation between two parties at variance. Job 9:33. We are at variance with God. Ps. 7:11. Ro. 8:7. (2.) What qualifications are required in a mediator. [1.] He must be the mutual friend of both parties. Christ both God and man. John 1:1, 14. The mutual friend of both. Luke 3:22. Heb. 2:16, 17. [2.] He must be able to render satisfaction to the injured party. Christ has done this. Isa. 12:21. Gal. 3:13. He must be able to bring back the offender to his duty. This Christ is able to do. Rom. 6:1-14. (3.) How we may become reconciled to God. 2 Cor. 5:18, 19.

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7. *Advocate and Intercessor.* (1.) What an advocate is: one that manages a cause for another at court, and undertakes to procure his justification and discharge. If his client is prosecuted for debt, he must show that the debt has been paid; if for crime, he must show some reason why he should not be punished. Jesus Christ can show both, in regard to us. 1 Peter 1:18, 19. 1 Cor. 6:20. Isa. 53:5. What an intercessor is: one that undertakes to present the petitions of a criminal at the bar of his offended sovereign. When a petition is presented for pardon, the person presenting it must become responsible for the future good conduct of the criminal. Christ has become our surety. When he asks for undeserved favor to be bestowed upon the criminal, it must be on the score of his own merits. Jesus can present our petitions with assurance on this ground. How blessed are they who have such an Advocate and Intercessor at the throne of heaven! Rom. 8:34. Heb. 7:25. How we may come to the throne of grace through his intercession. Heb. 4:16. No worship acceptable, which is not offered through the intercession of Christ. John 14:13. Acts 4:12. Eph. 5:20.

8. *Friend.* What is implied in a friend. [1.] He must be able and willing to help us. Christ is both able and willing to help all who come to him. Heb. 7:25. Matt. 11:28-30. John 6:37, l.c. [2.] Friendship must be cordial. Such is the friendship of Jesus. John 15:15, 16. [3.] A friend must possess a sympathizing heart. Such is the heart of Jesus. Heb. 4:15.

9. *Elder Brother.* (1.) The relation of an Elder Brother to the younger members of the family. (2.) How we come into this relation to Christ. Gal. 4:4-6. (3.) The blessings that we receive, through this relation. Gal. 1:7. Rom. 8:17. (4.) The goodness of the Son, who would of his own accord, receive a stranger into his Father's family, to be adopted, as a joint heir with him to his Father's estate.

10. *Husband.* (1.) Proof of this relation between Christ and the church. Isa. 54:5. Eph. 5:25-32. Rev. 19:7, 8. 22:17. (2.) What is implied in this relation. [1.] Union. John 15:5. Eph. 4:31. [2.] Protection. Matt. 16:18. Ca. 8:5, f.c. [3.] Provision. Phil. 4:19. Eph. 5:29. [4.] Sympathy and Love. Heb. 4:15. 8:6, 7. [5.] Fellowship. Ca. 5:1.

V. THE CHRISTIAN GRACES.

1. *Faith.* (1.) What faith is. Heb. 11:1. (2.) It's object. Rom. 4:3, 5 Eph. 1:12, 13. Heb. 11:6. (3.) The effects of faith on the heart. Acts 15:9. Gal. 5:6, l.c. (4.) Its effects on the life. James 2:14-26. (5.) Necessary to acceptable prayer. James 1:6.

2. *Hope.* (1.) The object of hope. 2 Cor. 4:17, 18. (2.) The ground of hope. Col. 1:27. 1 Tim. 1:1. (3.) The author of hope. Rom. 5:5. 15:13. (4.) The influence of hope upon the Christian character. 1 Thess. 5:8. 1 John 3:3. (5.) Effect of hope upon the comfort and religious enjoyment of the believer. Heb. 3:6. 6:19.

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3. *Charity, or Love.* (1.) Its nature. 1 Cor. 13:4-8. (2.) The object of love. [1.] As a feeling of complacent delight, God the chief object, and his children, as bearing his image. Matt. 22:37. 1 John 5:1. [2.] As a feeling of universal benevolence, it has for its object all mankind. Matt. 22: 39.

4. *Joy.* (1.) Nature of spiritual joy. Rom. 14: 17. (2.) The ground of joy. Rom. 15:13. 1 Peter 1: 5—8. (3.) The object of joy. Psal. 16:11. 43:4. 97:1. 33:1. Isa. 29:19. 41:16. 61:10. Hab. 3:18. Phil. 4:4. (4.) The permanency of spiritual joy. John 16:22.

5. *Peace.* (1.) Peace of conscience. Rom. 5:1. 8:1. 15:13. (2.) The ground of it. Psal. 85:10. Col. 1:20, 21. (3.) A peaceable spirit. Matt. 5:9. Rom. 12:18. Heb. 12:14. James 3:17.

6. *Brotherly Kindness.* (1.) Its nature. Eph. 4:32. (2.) Its fruits. Rom. 12:10, 15. 1 John 3: 16, 17.

7. *Humility.* (1.) Its nature. Matt. 5:3. Rom. 12:3. (2.) Its manifestations. Job 42:5, 6. Prov. 30:32. Lam. 3:28. Matt. 25:36-38. Acts 20:19. Rom. 12:10, I.c. 16. Phil. 2:3. 1 Pet. 5:5. (3.) How regarded of the Lord. Psal. 138:6. Prov. 16:19. (4.) Its reward. Job 22:29. Ps. 9:12. Prov. 15:33. Isa. 57:15. Matt. 18:4. (5.) Effects of humility. Gen. 18:27, I.c. 32:10. Job 42:1-6. Psal. 32:5. 51:5. Isa. 51:1. 64:6.

8. *Patience.* (1.) What is patience. Rom. 8: 25. James 5:7. 1 Peter 2:20. (2.) How patience is cultivated. Rom. 2:7. 5:3. James 1:3. (3.) Apply this to the every-day concerns of life. (4.) The need we have of patience. Job 14:1, 2. Eccles. 2:23. Heb. 10:36. 12:1. (5.) Motives to patience. Luke 8:15. Rom. 5:4. Heb. 6:12.

9. *Long-Suffering.* [1.] What is long-suffering. Eph. 4:2. [2.] Consider the long-suffering and forbearance of God towards us, as a motive to its exercise. Lam. 3:22.

10. *A Forgiving Temper.* [1.] Motives to its exercise. Ps. 103:3. Eph. 4:32. Gal. 6:1. [2.] Danger of the contrary spirit. Mark 11:26.

11. *Meekness.* [1.] Its nature. 1 Cor. 13:5 Col. 3:12, 13. James 1:21. [2.] How the Lord regards, and how he will bless the meek. Ps. 22:26. 25:9. 76:9. 147:6. 149:4. Isa. 29:19. Matt. 5:5. [3.] How it becomes the Christian. 1 Pet. 3:4. [4.] Its manifestations. Gal. 6:1. Eph. 4:2. 2 Tim. 2:25. James 3:13. 1 Peter 3:15.

12. *Gentleness.* [1.] Twin sister of meekness. [2.] Its manifestations. 1 Thess. 2:7. 2 Tim. 2: 24. James 3:17. [3.] The pattern of gentleness. 2 Cor. 10:1. [4.] How it adorns the Christian character.

13. *Temperance.* [1.] What is temperance. Moderation in all our desires, affections, appetites, and conduct; abstinence from injurious indulgences. [2.] Advantages of temperance. 1 Cor. 9:25. 2 Pet. 1:6.

14. *Virtue, or Moral Courage.* How this grace affects the Christian character. Prov. 28:1.
[See History of Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Daniel, Jesus, and the Apostles.]

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LETTER X.

The Preservation of Health.

"I wish, above all things, that thou mayest prosper, and *be in health.*"—3 John, 2.

MY DEAR SISTER,

If we feel suitably grateful to him who hath died for us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, we shall desire to make ourselves useful in his vineyard to the highest degree of which our natures are capable. But, to be so, we must preserve our bodies in a healthy and vigorous state. No farmer would think of employing a weak and sickly man in his field, upon full wages. The nature of the service which God requires of us is such as to call for vigor of body as well as strength of mind. Most of our efforts to benefit our fellow-creatures are attended with labor of body and sacrifices of personal ease. And these efforts are greatly impeded by a feeble state of health. Again, bodily feelings have a great influence upon the mind. When the animal powers are prostrated, the mind almost uniformly suffers with them. Hence, a feeble state of the body may be a very great hindrance to us, in maintaining the Christian warfare. I know that some individuals have lived very devoted lives, and been eminently useful, with frail and sickly bodies. But this does not prove that, with the same degree of faithfulness, and a sound body, they might not have made much higher attainments. If you have read the lives of Brainerd, Martyn, and Payson, I think you will be convinced of this. Yet, I do not say that the *affliction* of ill health might not have been the means which God used to make them faithful. But if they had been equally faithful, with strong and vigorous bodies, I have no doubt they would have done much more good in the world, and arrived at a much higher degree of personal sanctification. During much of their lives, they were borne down and depressed by feeble health, and they all died in the prime of life. Now, suppose them to have been as devoted as they were, with strong and vigorous constitutions, until they had arrived at the period of old age; might they not have brought forth much more fruit? If so, then God would have been so much more glorified in them; for our Lord says, "Herein is my Father glorified, *that ye bear much fruit.*"

If the foregoing remarks are correct, it then becomes the *duty* of every Christian to use all proper means to maintain a sound, healthful, and vigorous bodily constitution. And this is much more within the power of every individual than many imagine. It is true, that life, and health, and every blessing, come from God. But he does not give these things without the intervention of second causes. He has made our animal nature subject to certain fixed laws; and even when his own children violate these laws, he will work no miracle to preserve their health or save their lives. I am satisfied that the

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subject receives far too little attention from Christians in general. In this respect they seem to act upon the supposition that their lives are their own; and that the injury they bring upon their bodies, by imprudence and neglect of proper attention, concerns nobody but themselves. But this is a great mistake. Their lives belong to God. He has bought them with the precious blood of his dear Son. They have dedicated them to his service. They are bound, therefore, to use all proper means for their preservation, that they may be prolonged for the glory of God and the good of their fellow-men.

But when I speak of the means to be used for the preservation of health, I do not intend that excessive attention to *remedies*, which leads so many people to resort to *medicine* upon every slight illness. But I mean the study of the laws or principles of our animal existence; and a diligent care to live according to those laws. In short, I mean living *according to nature*. Probably a large proportion of the diseases to which human life is subject, are the natural consequence of living *contrary to nature*; or contravening the great laws which govern our present mode of existence.

Within the compass of a single letter, I cannot be very particular on this subject. But I would recommend to you to read approved writers on *health*, and the structure and constitution of the human body. Try to understand the *principles* upon which this truly wonderful machine is kept in motion. You will find it a most interesting subject. You will see the evidence of a mighty intellect in its construction. You will also be able to draw from it practical lessons to guide you in the most common concerns of life. I am the more earnest in this recommendation, because I think you will discover that many of those habits and customs of society, which are peculiarly under the control of ladies, need reforming. I am seriously of the opinion that the general health of society depends far more upon the *ladies* than upon the *physicians*. The former direct the preparation of the daily supplies of food, designed to sustain, refresh, and keep in motion the human system. The latter can only give prescriptions for regulating this delicate machinery, when, by mismanagement, it has got out of order. I will, however, give you a few simple rules for the preservation of health, which, though incomplete, will be of great benefit, if faithfully pursued. From experience, study, and observation, you will no doubt be able to add to them many improvements.

1. *Make attention to health a matter of conscience, as a religious duty.* Pray daily that God would give you wisdom and self-denial, that you may be able to avoid whatever is injurious, and to persevere in the judicious use of such means as are necessary to promote sound health and energy of body.

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2. *Maintain habitual cheerfulness and tranquillity of mind.* Few persons are aware of the influence which this has upon the health of the body. If you are subject to *melancholy*, avoid it, and fight against it as a *sin*, dishonoring to God, and destructive of your own health and happiness. It is dishonoring to God, because it is calculated to give the world a gloomy and repulsive idea of religion. Nor is this view of the subject at all inconsistent with the exercise of sorrow for sin, and feeling for sinners. Godly sorrow is a melting exercise, which softens the heart, and brings it low before God: while a sight of the cross of Christ, and a sense of pardoning love, bring a holy calm and heavenly peace over all the soul. But despondency comes over us like the withering blasts of winter. It congeals the tender emotions of the heart, and casts an icy gloom over every object. It hides from our view everything lovely. It makes us insensible to the mercies of God which he is daily lavishing upon us. It shuts up the soul to brood alone, over everything dark and hideous. It is no less unfriendly to the exercise of holy affections than levity of conversation and manners. Although often created by bodily infirmity, it reacts, and renders disease doubly ferocious. Yet it is so far under the control of the will, that grace will enable us to subdue it. There is a very intimate connection between the mind and body. The one acts upon the other. Depression of spirits enfeebles all the animal powers; and particularly disturbs digestion, thereby deranging the whole system. If, therefore, you ever feel a gloomy depression of spirits, try to bring your mind into a serene and grateful frame, by meditating on the mercies you enjoy, and exercising a cheerful submission to the will of God. Remember that God directs all your ways, and that you have just as much of every comfort and blessing as he sees fit to give you, and infinitely more than you deserve. Rise above yourself, and think of the infinite loveliness of the divine character. But, if this is not sufficient, walk out and view the works of Nature; and try to forget yourself in contemplating the wisdom and glory of God, as manifest in them; and the bodily exercise will assist in driving-away this disturber of your peace. Or, seek the society of some Christian friend, who is not subject to depression of spirits, and converse about those heavenly truths which are calculated to call forth the exercise of love, joy, and gratitude, and make you lose sight of yourself in the fulness and glory of God. Any violent emotion of the mind, or exercise of strong passions of any kind, is likewise exceedingly injurious to the health of the body.

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3. *Be REGULAR in all your habits.* Ascertain, as nearly as you can, from your own feelings and experience, how many hours of sleep you require. No general rule can be adopted, on this subject. Some people need more sleep than others. The want of sleep, and excessive indulgence in it, alike operate to enervate both body and mind. Probably every constitution may be safely brought between five and eight hours. Of this you will judge by making a fair trial. That period of sleep which renders both body and mind most energetic and vigorous, should be adopted. But, if possible, take all your sleep in the night. Fix upon an hour for retiring, and an hour for rising, and then conscientiously keep them. Let nothing but stern necessity tempt you to vary from them in a single instance; for you may not be able in a week to recover from the effects of a single derangement of your regular habits. We are the creatures of *habit*; but if we would *control* our habits, instead of suffering them to control us, it would be greatly to our advantage. It is also important that the hours of retiring and rising should be *early*. Upon the plan proposed, early retiring will be necessary to early rising, which is a matter of the first importance. Early rising promotes cheerfulness; invigorates the system; and in many other ways contributes to health. It also assists devotion. There is a solemn stillness before the dawn of day, in a winter morning, peculiarly favorable to devotional feelings; and nothing is better calculated to fill the mind with grateful and adoring views of the beneficence of the Creator, than the refreshing sweetness of a summer morn. Whoever sleeps away this period, loses half the pleasures of existence. To sally forth and enjoy the calmness and serenity of such a season; to listen to the sweet warbling of the birds; to behold the sparkling dew-drops, and the gayety of the opening flowers, as all nature smiles at the approach of the rising sun; to join the music of creation, in lifting up a song of softest, sweetest melody, in praise of their great Author, is no common luxury.

4. *Spend at least two hours every day in active exercise in the open air.* This time may be divided into such portions as you find most convenient. The proper seasons for exercise are, about an hour either before or after a meal. This you may do without regard to the weather, provided you observe the following precautions, when it is cold, damp, or wet:—1. Exert yourself sufficiently to keep moderately warm. 2. Do not stop on your way, to get chilled. 3. On returning, change any garment that may be wet or damp, before sitting down. This course will not only keep up your regular habits, but produce a hardiness of constitution which will greatly increase your usefulness in life. It is a great mistake to suppose that exposure to a damp, vapory atmosphere is injurious to health. The danger lies in exposing yourself when the system is

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in a relaxed state, as it is during rest, after exercise. But, while a general action is kept up, by vigorous exercise, nature itself will resist the most unfriendly vapors of the atmosphere. There is a great and growing evil in the education of ladies of the middling and higher classes, at the present day. The tender and delicate manner in which they are bred, enfeebles their constitutions, and greatly diminishes their usefulness, in every station of life. Many of them are sickly, and few of them are able to endure the slightest hardships. To show that this is the fault of their education, we need only to refer to the condition of those young women whose circumstances in life render it necessary for them to labor. In most cases they possess hale and vigorous constitutions, and are even more capable of enduring hardships than most men of sedentary habits. There may be some exceptions to this remark; but if these cases were examined, we should doubtless find that the laws of nature have been, in some other respects, transgressed. I do not see how this delicate training can be reconciled with Christian principle. If we have devoted ourselves to the Lord, it is our duty not only to do all the good we can in this world, but to make ourselves *capable* of doing as much as possible. The man in the parable was condemned for not *improving* and *increasing* his talent. Anything, then, which has a tendency to diminish our usefulness, should be regarded as *sin*.

Exposure to all kinds of weather has this advantage also. It renders a person much less likely to take cold; and, of course, less subject to sickness. For a great proportion of diseases owe their origin to common colds.

No part of a code of health is of more importance than exercise. Without it, everything else will fail. And it is as necessary that it should be *regular* every day, and at nearly the same hours every day, as it is that meals should be regular. We might as well omit eating for a day, as to neglect exercise. The one is as necessary as the other, to promote the regular operations of the animal functions.

But, when your situation will admit of it, I would advise you to take a portion of your exercise in those domestic employments which require vigorous exertion. If you open your windows, you will have the fresh air; at the same time, you will enjoy the satisfaction of rendering your hours of relaxation useful.

5. *Bathe frequently.* About five eighths of the food taken into the stomach passes off by insensible perspiration, through the pores of the skin; and with it is thrown off whatever impure matter is found in any part of the system. When this perspiration is obstructed, general derangement succeeds. It is chiefly to promote this that exercise is required. But the matter thrown off is of a very poisonous nature; and if not removed may be absorbed again into the system. It also collects upon the surface, and obstructs the regular discharge from the pores. Frequent ablution is therefore highly necessary.

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It is also essential to personal cleanliness. There is an *odor* in this insensible perspiration, which becomes offensive when the impurities collecting upon the surface of the skin are not frequently removed. The entire surface of the body should be washed every day; and if this is done on rising in the morning, with cold water, and followed with brisk rubbing with a coarse towel, it will furnish an effectual safeguard against taking cold. This, however, should be remitted, when there is any danger to be apprehended from the sudden application of cold; or serious consequences may follow. Tepid water, with soap, should occasionally be used at night, in order to remove all impurities from the skin.

6. *Pay attention to the quality and quantity of food taken into the stomach.* I know of nothing else which more necessarily affects both the health of the body, and the vigor of the intellect. It is from this that the blood is formed, and the continual waste of the system supplied. And through the blood it acts on the brain, which is the seat of the intellect. Yet, notwithstanding this, those whose peculiar province it is to direct the preparation of our food, seldom inquire into the chemical effect any such preparation may have upon the stomach, and, through it, upon the whole system. Indeed, the business is generally left to persons entirely ignorant of the principles which govern the human constitution. It is no wonder, then, that a large proportion of the culinary preparations of the present day are decidedly unfriendly to it. But in relation to this matter, I cannot here be very particular. I will only give some general rules, by which you may discover the bounds of moderation, and what articles of food ought to be avoided. The sensible effects arising from food unsuitable to the state of the stomach are generally the following:—Disagreeable eructations, accompanied with risings of food; uneasy or burning sensations of the stomach; acidity; and these symptoms are often succeeded by headache and dizziness or vertigo. The effects of an excessive quantity of food are first felt by an uneasiness and oppressive fulness of the stomach. This is succeeded by a general distension or fulness of the blood-vessels, particularly about the head; general lassitude; sluggishness and dulness of intellect, with a great aversion to mental effort. These sensations are accompanied by a general uneasiness throughout the whole system, with more or less pain. It also brings into exercise every unholy temper. It makes people fretful, impatient, and peevish. The best disposition may be ruined by the improper indulgence of the appetite. I have been particular in describing these symptoms, because people are often subject to many uncomfortable sensations, for which they cannot account, but which might be traced to this source. A large share of our unpleasant feelings probably arises either from the improper quality, or excessive quantity, of the food taken into the stomach. And the bounds of moderation are more frequently exceeded by all classes of people, than many imagine. But for a more full examination of this subject, I must again refer you to the works of judicious writers on health, and the means of preserving it. This is a matter so intimately connected with the sphere of a lady's influence, that every female should give it a thorough investigation.

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Carefully observe those articles of food which you find injurious, and avoid them. Observe, also, as nearly as you can, the *quantity* which agrees with your stomach, and see that you never exceed it. Take no food between your regular meals. The stomach is employed from three to five hours in digesting a meal; if more food is taken during that time, it disturbs and impedes digestion, and makes it more laborious. And, after one meal is digested, the stomach needs rest before another is taken. In connection with these general hints, attention to the two following rules will generally be sufficient:

(1.) Avoid highly seasoned food, fresh bread, heating condiments, and stimulating drinks.

(2.) Select the simplest dishes, and make your meal of a single course. Mixed dishes are more likely to be injurious; and a second course will almost certainly lead to excess.

But, do not give your attention so much to this subject as to become *splenetic*. The imagination has a great influence upon animal feeling; and if you are always watching the digestion of your food, you will be sure to find dyspeptic symptoms; and if you humor your stomach too much, you will weaken its capacity of accommodating itself to the kind of nutriment it receives. Having fixed your principles of regimen, adhere to them as rigidly as you can without inconvenience to others; but having done this, let your mind dwell as little as possible on the subject, and do not make it a matter of frequent conversation. Especially, do not make trouble to the friends who entertain you, when away from home, by excessive particularity. You may find some wholesome dish on the most luxurious table; and if the table is *lean*, you need not fear.

As we are commanded, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God, it may not be amiss to inquire how we may *glorify God in eating and drinking*. 1. We may eat for the purpose of strengthening our bodies, to enable us to engage in the active service of the Lord. 2. When we partake in moderation of the bounties of Providence, it is right that our animal appetites should be feasted with the delicious taste of the fruits of the earth. But we must see the glory of God in it. Here the benevolence of his character shines forth, in the wonderful provision which he has made for the gratification of our earthly appetites. Hence we may argue the ineffable sweetness of the bread of life—the food of the soul. This mortal body is but a tent pitched in the wilderness, for the residence of the soul during its pilgrimage. If, then, God has opened the treasures of the animal and vegetable kingdoms to please the taste of this meaner part, how much more abundant the provision for feasting the soul with pure spiritual food; with eternally increasing knowledge of the divine character and perfections! But we cannot so partake of those rich and hurtful dainties invented by man. The delight thus experienced

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is the glory of man, not of God. And the effect produced is the destruction of those delicate organs of taste which he has provided, that we may discern the exquisite sweetness of the natural fruits of the earth. By the same means, also, we destroy our health, and unfit ourselves for his service. 3. But, I suppose the apostle had in his mind chiefly the idea of *acknowledging God*, when we partake of his bounty, and of *honoring him* by doing everything *in obedience to his commands*. Strict and intelligent regard to these two points would generally direct us aright in the matter of eating and drinking.

Do not, by any means, think this subject beneath your attention. The greatest and best of men have made it a matter of practical study. Those who have given us the brightest specimens of intellectual effort have been remarkable for rigorous attention to their diet. Among them may be mentioned Sir Isaac Newton, John Locke, and President Edwards. *Temperance* is one of the fruits of the spirit. It is therefore the duty of every Christian, to know the bounds of moderation in all things, and to practise accordingly.

7. *As much as possible avoid taking medicine.* The practice of resorting to *remedies* for every unpleasant feeling cannot be too strongly reprobated. Medicine should be regarded as a choice of two evils. It may throw off a violent attack of disease, and save life; but it must inevitably, in a greater or less degree, impair the constitution. Medicine is unfriendly to the human system. Its very effect, which is to disturb the regular operation of the animal functions, proves this. But, when violent disease is seated upon any part, this may be necessary; and the injury received from the medicine may not bear any comparison with the consequences which would follow, if the disease were left to take its course. In such cases, the physician should be called immediately, as delay may be fatal. But the great secret lies in avoiding such attacks, by a scrupulous attention to the laws of nature. Such attacks may generally be traced either to violent colds, or the interruption of some of the regular functions of the body. The most important of these may, with proper attention, be brought almost entirely under the control of *habit*; and all of them may generally be preserved in healthy action, by proper attention to diet and exercise. But careless and negligent habits, in these respects, will ruin the most hardy constitution, and bring on a train of disorders equally detrimental to mind and body. But, in most cases of moderate, protracted disease, a return to the regular system of living *according to nature* will gradually restore lost health. Or, in other words, a strict examination will discover some violation of the principles of the human constitution, as the cause of derangement; and by correcting this error, nature will gradually recover its lost energies, and restore soundness to the part affected.

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Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XI.

Mental Cultivation. Reading.

MY DEAR SISTER,

Our minds are given us as talents to improve in the service of God. If we neglect the proper cultivation of them, we shall come under the condemnation of the servant who hid his talent in the earth. But there is a very great difference between mental cultivation and the mere reception of knowledge. So you will perceive that when I speak of the improvement of the mind, I do not mean *reading* only; but that discipline which calls into exercise the intellectual faculties, and enables us to employ them in the investigation of the truth. This discipline is a necessary preparation for profitable reading. It is a great mistake to suppose that *mind* is entirely original; or that only a few possess intellectual faculties capable of searching into the deep recesses of knowledge. It is true some possess talents of a superior order; but none, except idiots, are incapable of improvement; and many of the greatest minds have been formed upon a foundation which appeared to consist of little else than dullness and stupidity. The most crooked and unpromising twig may, by proper care and culture, become a great and beautiful tree. The object of all education is to prepare us for usefulness, either to ourselves or to others. We are not to disregard ourselves. The glory of God is as much concerned in our own spiritual growth, as in that of any other individual. But we are to love others as ourselves, and seek their good as our own. Although our heads may be filled with knowledge, yet if we have not the capacity of employing it for practical purposes, it will be of little benefit, either to ourselves or others. Many persons excuse themselves for neglecting to improve their minds, upon the ground that they are incapable of doing anything great or brilliant. But this arises from a foolish pride. If we have but a single talent, we are equally under obligation to improve it in the service of our Master as if we had ten. And it was upon this principle that the servant was condemned to whom but one was given.

The discipline of which I speak may be effected in many ways. But the method I shall propose is one that can be pursued without an instructor, while employed most of the time in active pursuits. The course already recommended, in relation to meditation and the study of the Scriptures, will be found a great assistance in the proper discipline of the mind. But this is not all that is necessary. I know of nothing which more effectually calls out the resources of the mind than writing. To a person unaccustomed to this exercise, it appears exceedingly difficult. But a little practice will make it a pleasing and delightful employment. The mind is far more richly feasted with ideas conceived and brought forth by itself, than by those produced by others, and communicated through

the medium of the senses; and all the intellectual faculties are strengthened and improved by exertion.

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I would, therefore, advise you to pursue a regular plan of written exercises. This will be very easy, if you only learn to think methodically. Select, chiefly, practical subjects; which your Sabbath-school lessons, your subjects of meditation, and your daily study of the Scriptures, will furnish in great abundance. The principal reason why young persons find this exercise so difficult is, that they usually select abstract subjects, which have scarce any relation to the common concerns of life. On this account, it will be greatly to your advantage to choose some Scripture truth as the subject of your exercise. The Bible is a practical book, and we have a personal interest in everything it contains. When you have selected your subject, carefully separate the different parts or propositions it contains, and arrange them under different heads. This you will find a great assistance in directing your thoughts. If you look at the whole subject at once, your ideas will be obscure, indefinite, and confused. But all this difficulty will be removed, by a judicious division of its parts. Set apart regular portions of time to be employed in writing. Let these seasons be as frequent as may consist with your other duties, and observe them strictly. Do not indulge the absurd notion that you can write only when you *feel like it*. Remember your object is to *discipline* the mind, and bring it under the control of the will. But, to suffer your mind to be controlled by your feelings, in the very act of discipline, is absurd. As well might a mother talk of governing her child, while she allows it to do as it pleases. Finish one division of your subject every time you sit down to this exercise, until the whole is completed. Then lay it aside till you have finished another. After this, review, correct, and copy the first one. The advantage of laying aside an exercise for some time, before correcting it, is, that you will be more likely to discover its defects than while your first thoughts upon the subject are fresh in your mind. But never commence a subject, and leave it unfinished. Such a course renders the mind fickle, and unfits it for close study and patient investigation. Finish what you begin, however difficult you may find it. Scarce any habit is of more practical importance than perseverance. Do not be discouraged, even if you should be able to bring forth but one idea under each division of your subject. You will improve with every exercise. I well recollect the first attempt I made at writing. With all the study of which I was capable, I could not produce more than five or six lines. Carefully preserve all your manuscripts. By referring to them occasionally, you will discover your progress in improvement. In these exercises you can make use of the knowledge you acquire in reading, whenever it applies to your subject. But, in everything, remember your dependence upon God, and seek the direction of his Holy Spirit.

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Reading is also of great importance. By this we call in the aid of others' minds, with the experience of past ages. But, unless you observe some system in your reading, you will derive comparatively little benefit from it. I will endeavor to mark out a simple plan, which you may find useful. For this purpose I shall arrange the various kinds of reading, under four different heads, to each of which you may assign particular days of the week.

1. *History*, two days; 2. *Biography*, one day; 3. *Doctrinal*, one day; 4. *Miscellaneous*, two days.

The advantages of this plan are, that the knowledge you acquire will be more complete than it would be if you were to pursue but one subject at a time; and the variety will add interest to the employment. But each of these different kinds of reading requires a separate notice.

(1.) History is divided into two kinds, sacred and profane. It is for this reason that I have assigned two days in the week for the reading of it. I would have one of these days devoted to the history of the church, and the other to the history of the world. Both these are highly necessary to every one who desires an enlarged view of the affairs of the world, and the dealings of God with mankind in general, and with his church in particular. In reading profane history, several things are to be kept distinctly in view.

1. *The providence of God in directing the affairs of men.* Observe the hand of God in everything; for he controls the actions even of wicked men, to accomplish his own purposes. The Bible is full of this great truth. Scarcely a page can be found where it is not recognized. "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." He calls the king of Assyria the "rod of his anger," for chastising the hypocritical Jews; but adds, "Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few." And, in a subsequent verse, he says, when he has performed his whole work, by this wicked king, he will punish his stout heart, and the glory of his high looks. But it is not in great matters alone, that the hand of the Lord is to be seen. He exercises a particular providence over the least as well as the greatest of his works. Even a single sparrow, says our Lord, shall not fall to the ground without our heavenly Father. And this is one of the brightest glories of the divine character. He who fills immensity with his presence, condescends to care for the minutest beings in the universe.

2. *Observe the connection of the events recorded in history, with the fulfilment of prophecy.* I do not, however, suppose you will be able to see this very clearly, without reading some authors who have made the prophecies their particular study. And this you will not be prepared to do with much profit, till you have the leading events of history fixed in your mind.

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3. *Observe the depravity of the human heart, and the evil nature of sin*, as manifested in the conduct of wicked men, who have been left without restraint, and in the consequences resulting from such conduct.

4. *See the hatred of God towards sin*, as displayed in the miseries brought upon the world in consequence of it. In reading history, we find that individuals, whom God could have cut off by a single stroke of his hand, have been permitted to live for years, and spread devastation, misery, and death, everywhere around them. The infidel would pronounce this inconsistent with the character of a God of infinite benevolence. But the whole mystery is explained in the Bible. All this wretchedness is brought upon men for the punishment of their sins.

5. *Observe what bearing the events recorded have upon the church of Christ.* One of the great laws of God's moral government upon earth, appears to be, that he directs and overrules all things with particular reference to the kingdom of Christ. Often, events which seem, at first glance, to be altogether foreign to the interests of this kingdom, appear, upon a closer examination, to be intimately connected with it. Take, for example, the conquests of Alexander the Great. As the life of this extraordinary man stands out alone, unconnected with the subsequent history of the church, we see nothing but the wild career of mad ambition. But, in taking a more enlarged view of the subject, we discover that he was the instrument which God employed for spreading over a large portion of the world one common language; and so to prepare the way for the introduction of the gospel. Wherever the arms of Alexander extended, the Greek language was made known; and this was the language in which the books of the New Testament were written. And, no doubt, if we could discover it, every event of history has a bearing, equally direct, upon the interests of Christ's kingdom.

But, in order to keep all these things distinctly before your mind, you must maintain, in the midst of your reading, a constant spirit of prayer.

In reading church history, you will have occasion to observe the same things, because the history of the church is necessarily connected with the history of the world. But there are also some things to be noticed, wherein the history of the church differs from that of the world. The dealings of God with his own people differ from his dealings with his enemies. The afflictions which he brings upon the former are the wholesome corrections of a tender Father, and designed for their good; those he brings upon the latter are designed either to lead them to repentance, or they are just judgments, intended for the destruction of those who have filled up the measure of their iniquities. But be careful, in reading church history, that you do not lose sight of the true church of Christ. Most of the histories which have been written, are filled either with accounts of individuals, or of bodies

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of wicked men, who could lay no claim to the character of the church of Christ. A church consists of a society of people, professing the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and practising them in their lives. Or, in other words, having both the *form* and *power* of godliness. Without these, no body of men have any right to be called the church of Christ. If you observe this, you will relieve yourself from much perplexity of mind, which the careless reader experiences from, supposing that all the evils described in any period of the history of the nominal church, do really exist in the *true* church. These very evils prove that it is not the true church of Christ.

(2.) RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY, or the lives of individuals of eminent piety, is perhaps the best kind of practical reading. It is in many respects very profitable. It furnishes testimony to the reality and value of the religion of Jesus, by the exemplification of the truths of Revelation in the lives of its followers. It also points out the difficulties which beset the Christian's path, and the means by which they can be surmounted. Suppose a traveller just entering a dreary wilderness. The path which leads through it is exceedingly narrow and difficult to be kept. On each side, it is beset with thorns, and briars, and miry pits. Would he not rejoice to find a book containing the experience of former travellers who had passed that way; in which every difficult spot is marked; all their contests with wild beasts and serpents, and all their falls described; and a beacon, or *guide-board*, set up, wherever a beaten track turns aside from the true way? All this you may find in religious biographies. There, the difficulties, trials, temptations, falls, and deliverances of God's people are described. You may profit from their examples. But, one caution is necessary. Bring every religious experience described in these works to the test of the Holy Scriptures. If you find anything contrary to this unerring standard, reject it. Satan is ever busy, and may deceive even good men with false experiences. I would advise you, so far as practicable, to keep always the biography of some eminent person in a course of reading, and devote to it what time you can spare from your ordinary pursuits, one day in the week.

(3.) In relation to doctrinal reading, I have already given general directions. If you devote to it the spare time of one day in the week, regularly, you will keep alive your interest in the investigation of truth, and yet avoid becoming so much absorbed in abstract speculation as to overlook present duty.

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(4.) Under the head of miscellaneous reading, I shall comprehend the following: Works on the prophecies, to be read in connection with history; practical works on Christian character, experience and duty; on the instruction of the young; illustrations of Scripture; on the natural sciences; on health: to these you may add, occasionally, an interesting book which may fall in your way, on subjects not included in this enumeration. Keep in a course of reading a book on some one of the above topics, and devote to it the leisure of one day in the week. The other day, which I have recommended to be devoted to miscellaneous reading, I would have you employ in reading newspapers and periodical publications. If you find one day insufficient for this, you can keep by you a newspaper, to fill up little broken intervals of time, which cannot well be employed in regular study. Do not, however, read everything you find in the newspapers, nor suffer yourself to acquire such a morbid appetite for the exciting subjects discussed in them, as to tempt you to break in upon your systematic course of reading. Newspapers and periodicals contain much trash; and you may fritter away all your leisure upon them, to the great injury of your mind and heart. Your chief object in reading them should be, to preserve in your mind the history of your own times; and to understand the subjects which interest the public mind; as well as to observe the signs of the times, in relation to the progress of Christ's kingdom.

I have sketched the above plan, hoping you may find it a useful guide in the acquisition of knowledge. The work here laid out may seem so great, at first sight, as to discourage you from making the attempt. But a little calculation will remove every difficulty. If you read but twenty pages in a day, at the close of the year you will have read a thousand pages, under each of the above divisions; more than six thousand pages in all. This would be equal to twenty volumes, of three hundred pages each. Pursue this plan for ten years, and you will have read *two hundred volumes*, containing *sixty thousand pages*. You can read twenty pages in an hour, at least; and I think you will not say it is impossible to spare this portion of time every day, for the purpose of acquiring useful knowledge. Think what a vast amount may thus be treasured up in the course of a few years! But you may not always be able to obtain books, and keep them a sufficient length of time to pursue the above plan strictly.[K] In such case, you can vary it to suit your circumstances and convenience. But always have a regular system. You will find it very profitable to take notes in writing of such thoughts as occur to your own mind, in the course of your reading; and particularly of the several points to be noted in history, and of the practical lesson which you learn from biography. And you ought always to give sufficient time to your reading to enable you to understand it thoroughly.

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[Footnote K: In the Appendix will be found a list of books, suitable for the course here recommended.]

As you have never manifested a taste for what is commonly called light reading, it is hardly necessary for me to say anything on the subject. I cannot see how a Christian, who has had a taste of “*angel’s food*” can relish the miserable trash contained in *novels*. The tendency of novel reading is most pernicious. It enervates the mental powers, and unfits them for close study and serious contemplation. It dissipates the mind, and creates a diseased imagination. It promotes a sickly sensibility, and renders its votaries unfit for the pursuits of real life. It is a great waste of time, and on this account alone may be regarded as sinful. But I would not advise you to read *any* books, merely because you can get nothing else; nor because there is nothing bad in them. There are many books which contain nothing particularly objectionable, which, nevertheless, are not the best that can be obtained. There are so many good books, that there is no necessity for wasting your precious time upon crude, ill-digested, or unprofitable works. You may, however, devote some time pleasantly and profitably, to reading the best English classics, both in poetry and prose; which, for the want of a better term, I shall include under the head of *Literary*, for the purpose of cultivating the imagination, improving the taste, and enriching your style. These should be selected with great discrimination and care, with reference both to their style and their moral tendency. Poetry, to a limited extent, tends to elevate the mind, cherish the finer sensibilities of the heart, and refine the taste.

If you cannot obtain books which furnish you a *profitable* employment for your hours of leisure, devote them wholly to the study of the Bible. This you always have with you; and you will find it a never-failing treasure. The more you study it, the more delight it will afford. You may find new beauties in it, and “still increasing light,” as long as you live; and after death, the unfolding of its glorious mysteries will furnish employment for a never-ending eternity.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XII.

Improvement of Time. Present Obligation.

“Remember how short my time is.”—Ps. 89:47.

“To everything there is a, season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”—Eccl. 3:1.

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”—Eph. 6:16.

“Behold NOW is the *accepted* time.”—2 Cor. 6:2.

MY DEAR SISTER,

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When you entered into solemn covenant with the Lord, you consecrated your whole life to his service. Your *time*, then, is not your own, but the Lord's. If you waste it, or spend it unprofitably, you *rob* God. You are not at liberty even to employ it exclusively to yourself. You are bound to glorify God with your time. And how can this be done? By so employing it that it will be most beneficial both to yourself and others. The Christian, who properly considers the great work he has to perform in his own soul, as well as the wide field of benevolent exertion which opens everywhere around him, and reflects how exceedingly short his time is, will not be disposed to trifle away any of the precious moments God has given him. Hence we are exhorted to *redeem* or *rescue* the time, as it flies. A very common fault lies in not estimating the value of a moment. This leads to the waste of immense portions of precious time. It is with time as with an estate. The old adage is, "Take care of the *pennies*, and the *pounds* will take care of themselves." So, if we take care of the *moments*, the *hours* will take care of themselves. Indeed, our whole lives are made up of moments. A little calculation may startle those who carelessly and foolishly trifle away small portions of time. Suppose you waste *only ten minutes* at a time, six times in a day; this will make an hour. This hour is subtracted from that portion of your time which might have been devoted to active employments. Sleeping, refreshment, and personal duties, generally occupy at least one half of the twenty-four hours. You have then lost one twelfth part of the available portion of the day. Suppose, then, you live to the age of seventy years. Take from this the first ten years of your life. From the sixty remaining, you will have thrown away *five years*! These five years are taken from that portion of your time which should have been employed in the cultivation of your mind, and in the practical duties of religion. For, the common excuse for neglecting the improvement of the mind, and the cultivation of personal piety, is *want of time*. Now, if you employ one half of this time in reading, at the rate of twenty pages an hour, you will be able to read more than *eighteen thousand pages*; or *sixty volumes* of three hundred pages each. If you employ the other half in devotional exercises in your closet, in addition to the time you would spend in this manner, upon the supposition that these five years are lost, what an influence will it have upon the health of your soul? Or, if you spend the whole of it in the active duties of Christian benevolence, how much good can you accomplish? Think what you might do by employing five years in the undivided service of your Master.

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But, the grand secret of *redeeming* time is, the systematic arrangement of all of our affairs. The wise man says,—“To everything there is a *season*, and a time for every purpose under heaven.” Now, if we so divide our time as to assign a particular season for every employment, we shall be at no loss, when one thing is finished, what to do next, and one duty will not crowd upon another. For want of this system, many people suffer much needless perplexity. They find a multitude of duties crowding upon them at the same time, and they know not where to begin to discharge them. They spend perhaps half of their time in considering what they shall do. They are always in a hurry and bustle, yet, when the day is gone, they have not half finished its duties. All this would have been avoided, had they parcelled out the day, and assigned particular duties to particular seasons. They might have gone quietly to their work; pursued their employments with calmness and serenity; and at the close of the day laid themselves down to rest, with the satisfaction of having discharged every duty. Form, then, a systematic plan to regulate your daily employments. Give to each particular duty its appropriate place; and when you have finished one, pass rapidly to another, without losing any precious intervals between. Bear continually in mind that every moment you waste will be deducted from the period of your earthly existence; but do not try to crowd too much into the compass of a single day. This will defeat your object. You will always be liable to numerous and unavoidable interruptions. You have friends who claim a portion of your time. It is better to interrupt your own affairs than to treat them rudely. You have also many accidental duties, which you cannot bring into the regular routine of your employments. Give, then, sufficient latitude to your system to anticipate these, so that your affairs may not be thrown into confusion by their unexpected occurrence.

The duty of being systematic in all our arrangements is enforced by several considerations. 1. *By the example of our Creator.* By a careful perusal of the first chapter of Genesis, you will see that God assigned a particular portion of the creation to each day of the week, and that he rested on the seventh day. Now the Lord has some design in everything he does. He never did anything in vain. But he could as easily have made all things at once, by a single word of his power, as to have been occupied six days in the creation. As for resting the seventh day, the Almighty could not be weary, and therefore needed no rest. What, then, could have been his design in this, but to set before us an example for the regulation of our conduct?

2. *This duty is also enforced by the analogy of the visible creation.* The most complete and perfect system, order, and harmony, may be read in every page of the book of nature. From the minutest insect, up through all the animal creation, to the structure of our own bodies, there is a systematic arrangement of every particle of matter. So, from the little pebble that is washed upon the sea-shore, up to the loftiest worlds, and the whole planetary system, the same truth is manifest.

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3. *This duty is enforced by our obligation to employ all our time for the glory of God.* If we neglect the systematic arrangement of all our affairs, we lose much precious time, which might have been employed in the service of the Lord.

I shall close this letter with a few remarks upon the nature of obligation. The very idea of obligation supposes the possibility of the thing being done that is required. There can be no such thing as our being under obligation to do what is in its own nature impossible. The idea itself is absurd. This principle is recognized by our Lord in the parable of the talents. The man only required of his servants *according to their ability*. Nothing, then, is duty except what can be done at the present moment. There are other things which may be duty hereafter; but they are not *present duty*. Now, the great principle which I would here establish is, as I have elsewhere remarked, that the *obligation of duty rests upon the present moment*. No principle can be of greater importance in practical life than this. It lies at the foundation of all Christian effort. It is the neglect of it which has ruined thousands of immortal souls, who have sat under the sound of the gospel. It is the neglect of it which keeps the church so low. If it is the duty of a sinner to repent, it is his duty to do it *now*; and every moment's delay is a new act of rebellion against God. If it is the duty of a backslider to return and humble himself before God, it is his duty to do it *now*; and every moment he delays, he is going farther from God, and rendering his return more difficult. If it is the duty of a Christian to live near to God; to feel his presence; to hold communion with him; to be affected with the infinite beauty and excellence of his holy character; the obligation of that duty rests upon the present moment. Every moment's delay is *sin*. And so of every other duty. Our first object, then, is to *know* present duty; our second, to *do* it. We cannot put off anything which we ought to do *now*, without bringing guilt upon our Souls.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XIII.

Christian Activity.

"She hath done what she could."—MARK 14:8.

MY DEAR SISTER,

You doubtless feel a deep interest in the great benevolent enterprises of the present day. No one who possesses the spirit of our Master can be indifferent towards them. It is important, then, that you should know what you *can do* towards moving forward these enterprises. For, remember that your obligation is as extensive as your ability. Christ commended the woman, referred to in the passage above quoted for doing "*what she*

could." If you do more than any within the circle of your acquaintance, and yet leave undone anything that you

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can do, you do not discharge your obligations. You have entered into the service of the Lord, and he requires you to *do what you can*. It then becomes a matter of serious inquiry, "*What can I do?*" It is an interesting fact, that the great moral enterprises of the present day, both for the conversion of the world, and for ameliorating the temporal condition of the poor, are in a great measure sustained by the energy of *female influence*. This influence is felt in every department of society; and must be, wherever the principles of the gospel prevail, so as to elevate your sex to the station which properly belongs to them. I will endeavor to point out some of the principal channels through which it can be exerted.

I. *You may make your influence felt in the Bible Society.* You know the grand object of this society is to put a copy of the Holy Scriptures within the reach of every individual of the human race. The spirit of Christ is that of the most expansive benevolence. If you possess this spirit, and value the sacred treasure contained in God's word as you ought, you will feel a thrilling interest in this cause. Your heart will overflow with compassion for those poor souls who have not the word of life. What, then, must be your emotions, when you consider that more than six hundred millions of your fellow-beings, as good by nature as yourself, are destitute of the Bible? The population of the whole world is estimated at *seven hundred and thirty-seven millions*. Of these, *five hundred and nine millions* are heathen, and *one hundred and fifty-six millions* are Roman and Greek Catholics; nearly all of whom are destitute of the word of God. This leaves but *seventy-two millions* who are called Protestants; but a vast number of these, even in our highly favored land, are living without the Bible. Can you say with the Psalmist, "Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day"? How, then, must your heart bleed in view of these facts! "But," perhaps you reply, "what can I do for these perishing millions?" I answer, *Do what you can*. This is all that God requires of you. Although what you can do will be but as a drop of water in the ocean, compared with what is to be done, yet it may be the means of saving many perishing souls. You can become a member of the Bible Society. You can act as a visitor and collector, both to ascertain and supply those families which are destitute of the word of life, and to obtain the means of supplying others. And if no female Bible Society exists in the place where your lot is cast, you can exert your influence among the ladies of your acquaintance to form one. And in his measure I would advise you to persevere, even though you find at first only two or three to unite with you. All obstacles in the way of benevolent enterprises vanish before a spirit of prayerful perseverance, and untiring exertion.



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II. *You can make your influence felt in the Tract Society.* The circulation of religious tracts has been abundantly owned and blessed of God's spirit. It seems to be almost the only means of reaching some particular classes of people, who never wait upon God in his house. It is a cheap method of preaching the gospel both to the rich and the poor. For a single cent, or even less, a sermon may be obtained, containing a portion of divine truth sufficient, with God's blessing, to lead a soul to Christ. Engage actively in the various forms of this department of benevolent labor. The distribution of a tract to every family in a town, once a month, when properly conducted, may be the means of doing great good. It furnishes an easy introduction into families where God is not acknowledged; and the matter contained in the tract will assist you to introduce religious conversation. It will enable you to ascertain and relieve the wants of the poor, without seeming to be obtrusive. It will soften your own heart, and excite your compassion, in view of the objects of distress with which you meet. It also furnishes a convenient opportunity for collecting children into Sabbath-schools. In distributing tracts, endeavor, as far as courtesy and propriety will admit, to engage those with whom you meet in direct personal conversation with regard to the concerns of their souls; and when you meet only with the female members of the family, and circumstances favor it, pray with them. By so doing, you may be the instrument of saving many precious souls. Your labor will also reflect back upon yourself, and warm your own heart. You will get a deeper sense of the dreadful condition of perishing sinners; and this will be the means of exciting a spirit of prayer in their behalf. Those engaged in this work should meet every month, after finishing the distribution, report all cases of interest, and spend a season in prayer for the divine blessing upon their labors. I would advise you to begin your distribution early in the month, and always finish it before the middle; and be sure you make a written report to the superintendent, as soon as you have finished it.

III. *You can make your influence felt in the missionary cause.* This is a cause which must be near the heart of every Christian. The spirit of missions is in unison with every feeling of the new-born soul. It is the spirit of universal benevolence; the same spirit which brought our Lord from the realms of glory, to suffer and die for perishing sinners. His last command to his disciples, before ascending up again into heaven, was, that they should follow his example, in the exercise of this spirit, until the whole world should be brought to a knowledge of his salvation. But more than eighteen hundred years have passed away, and yet at least two thirds of the inhabitants of this fallen world have never heard the gospel; and probably not more than one seventieth part of them have really embraced it. This is

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a mournful picture, and calculated to call forth every feeling of Christian sympathy, and awaken a burning zeal for the honor and glory of God. O, think how Jesus is dishonored by his own people, who thus disregard his last parting request! But here again you may inquire, "What can I do?" You can do much more than most people think they can do. Although you may not be permitted to go to the heathen yourself, yet you can help those that do go. I know that your means are limited; yet there are many ways in which you can do much for this cause with little means. By regulating all your expenses by Christian principle, you may save much, even of a small income, for benevolent purposes. But you may also exert an influence upon others. In all your intercourse with other Christians, especially ladies, you may stir up a missionary spirit. To aid you in this, become acquainted with what has been done, and what is now doing, for the conversion of the heathen. Make yourself familiar with the arguments in favor of this holy cause. By this means, you may become a zealous and successful advocate of the claims of five hundred millions of perishing heathen. As an opportunity occurs once a month for all to contribute to this cause, you know not what effect such efforts may have upon the purses of those whom God has blessed with an abundance of the good things of this life. Again; you may do much for the heathen, by forming a missionary association among the ladies where you reside. Let such an association employ their needless half a day in every week, and apply the avails of their labor to the missionary cause. This would enable every one to contribute something for sending the gospel to the heathen. But this is not all the benefit that would flow from it. Some member of the association should be appointed to read missionary intelligence, while the rest labor with their hands. This will be the means of exciting a missionary spirit, which may result in a much greater benefit than the amount of money contributed by the society. Another advantage of this plan is, that it furnishes an opportunity of social intercourse, with a great saving of time. Here you may meet your friends once a week, without being exposed to the dissipating influence of parties of pleasure. There is a little Sabbath-school book, published in Boston, entitled "*Louisa Palston*," which ought to be in the hands of every young lady. It presents the subject of missions to the heathen in a most interesting light, and also contains an excellent example of an association of the kind here recommended.

IV. *You can make your influence felt in behalf of the poor.* By frequenting the abodes of poverty and distress, you may administer to the wants of the afflicted, and call into active exercise the feelings of Christian sympathy in your own bosom. By this means, also, you will be prepared to enlist others in the same cause. Female benevolent societies, for assisting the poor, should be formed in all large towns; and in most places, much good may be done by forming societies for clothing poor children, to enable them to attend Sabbath-schools. But perhaps there is no way in which you can do so much for the poor, as by assisting them with your own hands, in their afflictions, and aiding them by your advice. Be careful, however, that you do not make them feel that you are conferring an obligation.

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There is, at the present day, a very erroneous impression abroad, in relation to the poor. Many wealthy people, and many in moderate but comfortable circumstances, seem to think God has given them their property solely for their own gratification. Go to their houses, and you will find their tables groaning with luxuries, their rooms garnished with costly furniture, and their persons decorated with finery. But, if you ask them for a small contribution for suffering poverty, you will perhaps be compelled to listen to a long complaint against the improvidence of the poor; their want of industry and economy; and possibly be put off with the plea, that supplying their necessities has a tendency to make them indolent, and prevent them from helping themselves. This may be true to some extent; for intemperance has brought ruin and distress upon many families, and we cannot expect either industry, economy, or any other virtue, in a drunkard. But this is far from being a full view of the case. I know there is much suffering even among the virtuous poor. Sickness and misfortune often bring distress upon deserving people.

The only way we can realize the sufferings of the poor is to suppose ourselves in their situation. Let a wealthy gentleman and lady, with five or six small children, be suddenly deprived of all their property, and compelled to obtain a support for their family by daily labor, and the lowest employments. Would they think they could live comfortably upon perhaps no more than seventy-five cents a day, as the proceeds of the husband's labor? Yet such is the situation of thousands of families, even in this land of plenty. I have myself recently met with families of small children, in the severity of winter, destitute of clothing sufficient to cover them, and without shoes. And, upon inquiry into their circumstances and means of support, I could not see how the parents could make any better provision. Again; ever supposing that the wretchedness of the poor is brought upon them by their own vices, is it agreeable to the spirit of Christ to refuse to relieve their distresses? Has not sin brought upon us all our wretchedness? If the Lord Jesus had reasoned and acted upon this principle, would a single soul have been saved? But, he has commanded us to be merciful, *even as our Father which is in heaven is merciful*. And how is he merciful? "He is kind unto the *unthankful* and to the *evil*." Again; "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And are we to suppose that the poor in our day are any worse than they were when Christ was upon earth? Yet we find him frequently exhorting the rich to give to the poor. This is one of the most common precepts of the New Testament. Indeed, our Lord has greatly honored the poor, in appearing himself in a condition of extreme poverty. At his birth, his parents could provide him no better bed than a manger; and while wearing out his life in the service of a lost world, he had no place to lay his head! Yet, poor as he was, he has set us an example of giving. At the last supper, when he told Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly," his disciples supposed he had sent him to give something to the poor. From this we may safely infer that he was in the habit of frequently doing so. For what else could have brought this thought to their minds?

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A Christian has nothing that is his own. He is but the steward of God's property. By withholding it, when the kingdom of Christ or the wants of the suffering poor require it, and spending it in extravagance, or hoarding it up for himself and family. He *robs God*.

But, even on the principle upon which the world acts, shall we neglect the suffering of a deserving woman, because her husband is intemperate and vicious? Or, should we suffer the children to grow up without instruction, in ignorance and vice, because their parents are vicious? Be, then, my dear sister, the devoted friend of the poor; and seek to relieve distress wherever you find it, or whatever may be its cause.

V. *You may make your influence felt in the cause of temperance.* A false delicacy prevails among many ladies, in relation to this subject. They seem to think that, as intemperance is not a common vice of their own sex, they have no concern with it. But this is a great mistake. No portion of society suffers so much from the consequences of intemperance as females. On them it spends its fury. My heart sickens when I contemplate the condition of the drunkard's wife. I turn from the picture with horror and disgust. But, is there no danger that females themselves may become partakers of this monstrous vice? My soul would rejoice if it were so. But every town, and village, and hamlet, furnishes evidence to the contrary. Even while I am writing, I can almost hear the groans of a woman in an adjoining house, who is just on the borders of the drunkard's grave. But, independent of this, it is scarcely possible to dry up the secret elements of this wasting pestilence, without the aid of *female influence*. I have no doubt, if the curtain were lifted from the domestic history of the past generation, it would appear that most of the intemperate appetites which have exerted such a terrific influence upon society were formed in the nursery. But, besides the formation of early habits, females exert a controlling influence over the public sentiment of the social circle. Here is the sphere of your influence. If young ladies would, with one consent, set their faces against the use of all intoxicating liquors, their influence could not fail to be felt throughout society. Make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the subject, and lose no opportunity of advocating the cause in every circle in which you move; or, of doing whatever is right and proper for a lady to do, in advancing it.

VI. *You may make your influence felt in every circle in which you move, by directing conversation towards profitable subjects.* Here the honor of your Master is concerned. There is a lamentable tendency, even among professors of religion, when they meet for social intercourse, to spend, their time in light and trifling conversation. The consequence is, they bring leanness upon their own souls; and if any impenitent sinners witness their conduct, it helps to rivet upon them their carnal security. "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel." And remember, Christ has declared that *every idle word* shall be brought into judgment. "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness."

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VII. *You may make your influence felt in bringing people within the sound of the gospel.* There are multitudes in this land of gospel light who live like the heathen. They do not appreciate the privileges which they might enjoy. They live in the habitual neglect of public worship, and the means of grace. This is especially the case with the poor in large towns. Poverty depresses their spirits, and they seem to feel that “no man cares for their souls.” It is impossible to conjecture how much good one devoted female may do, by gathering these people into places of worship. A lady can much more readily gain access to such families than a gentleman; and, by a pleasing address, and an humble and affectionate demeanor, she may secure their confidence and persuade them to attend public worship. In this way she may be the means of saving their souls.

VIII. Lastly. *You may make your influence directly felt by the impenitent.* That it is the duty of Christians to warn impenitent sinners of their danger, and to point them to the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” will appear from several considerations:—

1. The Apostle Peter says, “Christ suffered for us, *leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.*” Let us, therefore, inquire what was his example, with reference to the subject under consideration? The spirit of Christ, in the great work of redemption, manifests itself in COMPASSION FOR SINNERS, and ZEAL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” And in the near prospect of his agonies, his prayer was, “Father, glorify thy name.” It was that mercy might be extended to the guilty, consistently with the honor of God, that he laid down his life. Behold him, deeply feeling the dishonor done to God by ungrateful and rebellious men, constantly reproofing sin, weeping over the impenitence and hardness of heart of his country-men, and even exerting his power to drive out those who were profaning the temple. And he says, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and *follow me.*” To *follow* Christ is to imitate his example. Hence, unless we follow Christ, in his general spirit, we have no right to be called after his name. And this we must do *to the extent of our ability*, and at the expense of any personal sacrifice, not excepting, if need be, even *our own lives*. This is the true spirit of the gospel; and if it were carried out in the life of every professor of the religion of Jesus, the millennial glory would soon appear.

2. *We are required to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.* When we love a friend we are careful of his honor. If we hear him defamed, or lightly spoken of, or see him ill-treated, it gives us pain. We take part with him, and vindicate his character. But we see God dishonored, and his goodness abused, continually. Multitudes of impenitent sinners around us habitually cast off his authority, and refuse to honor him as the moral governor of the universe. What can we do more for his honor and glory than to reclaim these rebellious subjects of his government, and bring them back to loyalty and obedience?

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3. *We are required to love our neighbor as ourselves.* We profess to have seen the lost condition of perishing sinners. We think God has taken our feet from the “horrible pit and miry clay.” We profess to believe that all who have not embraced Christ are every moment exposed to the horrors of the second death. Can we love them *as ourselves*, and make no effort to open their eyes to their awful danger, and persuade them to flee from it? Said a young man, “I do not believe there is any truth in what they tell us about eternal punishment; nor do I believe Christians believe it themselves. *If they did, they could not manifest so little concern about it.*”

4. *The business of reclaiming a lost world is committed to the Church in conjunction with the Holy Spirit.* It is the business of the Church to apply “the truth” to the consciences of lost sinners. It is the office of the Spirit to make it effectual to their salvation. “The Spirit and the *bride* [the Church] say, *come.*” And even the hearer of the word is allowed to say, “*come.*” The Scriptures recognize the conversion of the sinner as the work of the Christian. “*He which converteth a sinner* from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” “Others save with fear; *pulling them* out of the fire.” “Then will I *teach transgressors* thy ways, and sinners *shall be* converted unto thee.” It is true, we cannot, of our own power, convert souls. But, if we are faithful in the use of the means of God’s appointment, he may make use of us as instruments for accomplishing this great work. Every one who has truly come to Christ *knows the way*, and can direct others to him. And in no way, perhaps, can the truth be rendered more effectual, than by personal application to the conscience. David did not understand Nathan’s parable, till the prophet said, “Thou art the man!”

As this is a plain, positive duty, it cannot be neglected with impunity. God will not bless his children while they refuse to obey him. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” You may spend all your time on your knees, while living in the neglect of a plain duty, and get no blessing. We cannot expect to enjoy the presence of God, while we refuse to point sinners to Christ. It is probable that the neglect of this duty is one of the principal causes of spiritual barrenness in the church. If, then, Christians wish their own hearts revived, they must try to persuade others to come to Christ. “He that watereth shall be watered also himself.” If we wish to maintain constant communion with God, we must live in the habitual exercise of the spirit of Christ.

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But many Christians content themselves with speaking to the impenitent whenever they meet them under favorable circumstances, in the ordinary intercourse of life. This is a duty; but it does not appear to be the *extent* of duty. It is only following *part* of the example of Christ. He *came* “to seek and to save that which was lost.” “He *went about* doing good.” Is it not, then, the obvious duty of every one of his followers, to *seek* opportunities of conversing with the impenitent upon the great subject of their soul’s salvation? We are bound to labor for the conversion of every sinner, for whom we have an opportunity of laboring. God requires us to *do all we can*. The primitive Christians carried out this principle in its fullest extent. In the 8th chapter of Acts, we read that the church at Jerusalem were all scattered abroad except the apostles. “And they that were scattered abroad *went everywhere, preaching the word.*” And afterwards, in the 11th chapter, 19th verse, we hear of them as far as Phenice and Cyprus, where they had travelled, preaching [in the Greek *talking*] the word as they went. It is to be particularly remarked that these, or at least most of them, were the private members of the church: for the apostles still remained at Jerusalem. And what was the result of these joint labors of the whole church? Revivals of religion immediately spread all over the land of Judea and its vicinity. And so might we see revivals spreading over this land, and continuing, with increasing power, and multitudes of sinners converted, if the church, as *one*, united in Christ, would come up to her duty. Nor would it stop here. The fire thus kindled would burn brighter and brighter, and extend with increasing rapidity, till it spread over the whole world. Should not all Christians, then, consider themselves placed, to some extent, at least, in the situation of watchmen upon the walls of Zion? If they neglect to warn sinners, will they be guiltless of the blood of souls? How can they meet them at the bar of God? Ezek. 33:1-9.

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Few persons are aware of what they might accomplish, if they would *do what they can*. I once knew a young lady, who was the moving spring of nearly every benevolent enterprise, in a town of seven or eight thousand inhabitants. The Bible Society of the town appointed a number of gentlemen as visitors, to ascertain who were destitute of Bibles, and make collections to aid the funds of the society. But the time passed away in which the work was to have been accomplished, and nothing was done. The books were handed over to this lady. She immediately called in the assistance of a few pious friends; and in a very short time the whole town was visited, collections made, and the destitute supplied. She imparted life and energy to the Tract Society. She set on foot, and with the aid of a few friends, sustained

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the monthly distribution. There had been, for some time, a small temperance society in the town; but its movements were slow and inefficient. She undertook to impart to it new life and vigor. The plans and efforts which she, in conjunction with her friends, put in operation, produced a sensation which was felt in every part of the town, and in a few months the number of members was increased, from about fifty, to three hundred.

The amazing influence of one Christian, who lives out the spirit of Christ, is illustrated, in a still more striking manner, in the life of a lady, who died not long since, in one of the principal cities of the United States. I am not permitted to give her name, nor all the particulars of her life. But what I relate may be relied upon, not only as *facts*, but as far below the *whole truth*. She had been, for a long time, afflicted with a drunken husband. At length the sheriff came and swept off all their property, not excepting her household furniture, to discharge his *grog bills*. At this distressing crisis, she retired to an upper room, laid her babe upon the bare floor, kneeled down over it, and offered up the following petition: "O Lord, if thou wilt *in any way* remove from me this affliction, I will serve thee *upon bread and water* all the days of my life." The Lord took her at her word. Her besotted husband immediately disappeared, and was never heard of again till after her death. The church would now have maintained her, but she would not consent to become a charge to others. Although in feeble health, and afflicted with the sick headache, she opened a small school, from which she obtained a bare subsistence; though it was often no more than what was contained in the condition of her prayer—literally *bread and water*. She had also another motive for pursuing some regular employment. She wished to avoid the reproach which would have arisen to the cause of Christ from her being maintained upon the bounty of the church, while engaged in the system of Christian activity which she adopted. She remembered the duty of being *diligent in business*, as well as fervent in spirit. She was a lady of pleasing address, and of a mild and gentle disposition. "In her lips was the law of kindness." Yet she possessed an energy of character, and a spirit of perseverance, which the *power of faith* alone can impart. When she undertook any Christian enterprise, she was discouraged by no obstacles, and appalled by no difficulties. She resided in the most wicked and abandoned part of the city, which afforded a great field of labor. Her benevolent heart was pained at seeing the grog-shops opened upon the holy Sabbath. She undertook the difficult and almost hopeless task of closing these sinks of moral pollution upon the Lord's day, and succeeded. This was accomplished by the mild influence of persuasion, flowing from the lips of kindness, and clothed with that power which always accompanies the true spirit

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of the gospel. But she was not satisfied with seeing the front doors and windows of these moral pest-houses closed. She knew that little confidence could be placed in the promises of men whose consciences would permit them to traffic in human blood. She would, therefore, upon the morning of the Sabbath, pass round and enter these shops through the dwellings occupied by the families of the keepers, where she often found them engaged secretly in this wickedness. She would then remonstrate with them, until she persuaded them to abandon it, and attend public worship. In this manner she abolished almost entirely the sale of liquors upon the Sabbath in the worst part of the city.

She also looked after the poor, that the gospel might be preached to them. She carried with her the numbers of those pews in the church which were unoccupied. And upon Sabbath mornings she made it her business to go out into the streets and lanes of the city, and persuade the poor to come in and fill up these vacant seats. By her perseverance and energy, she would remove every objection, until she had brought them to the house of God. She was incessant and untiring in every effort for doing good. She would establish a Sabbath-school, and superintend it until she saw it flourishing, and then deliver it into the hands of some suitable person, and go and establish another. She collected together a Bible class of apprentices, which she taught herself. Her pastor one day visited it, and found half of them in tears, under deep conviction. She was faithful to the church and to impenitent sinners. She would not suffer sin upon a brother. If she saw any member of the church going astray, she would, in a kind, meek, and gentle spirit, yet in a faithful manner, reprove him. She was the first to discover any signs of declension in the church, and to sound the alarm personally to every conscience. It was her habitual practice to reprove sin, and to warn sinners wherever she found them. At the time of her death, she had under her care a number of pious young men, preparing for the ministry. These she had looked after, and brought out of obscurity. As soon as their piety had been sufficiently tested, she would bring them to the notice of her Christian friends. She persuaded pious teachers to give them gratuitous instruction, and pious booksellers to supply them with books. In the same way, she procured their board, in the families of wealthy Christians. And she formed little societies of ladies, to supply them with clothing. There was probably no person in the city whose death would have occasioned the shedding of more tears, or called forth more sincere and heartfelt grief. Her memory is still deeply cherished in the heart of her pastor.[L] He has been heard to say, that he should not have felt as severely the loss of six of the most devoted men in his church.

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[Footnote L: This was first written in 1832. He has since gone to that “better land,” where he has no doubt met the hearty greetings not only of his dear fellow-laborer, but of scores whom he has been instrumental in plucking as “brands from the burning.”]

Now, what hinders you to “go and do likewise”? It is amazing to see what can be accomplished by a single individual, by earnest effort and untiring perseverance, accompanied with a simple and hearty dependence upon God. If every member of the church would do *what he or she can*, what a tremendous shock would be felt in Satan’s kingdom! What a glorious triumph would await the church! Therefore, “whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

But the work of directing sinners to Christ is one of vast responsibility. How distressing the consequences, when the weary traveller is directed in the wrong way! How deeply so, if his way lie through the forest, where he is exposed, if night overtake him, to stumble over precipices, sink in the mire, or be devoured by wild beasts! Yet, what is this, in comparison to leading astray the soul that is inquiring for the way of salvation? “He that winneth souls is wise.” I cannot, however, pursue this subject here; but must refer you to a little work, entitled “Friendly Counsel,” in which I have endeavored to give at length suitable directions for this work.

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In your active efforts, several cautions should be observed:—1. *Avoid every appearance of ostentation.* Suppress every rising of self-complacency, on account of what you do, and of the success which attends your efforts. Such feelings are abominable in the sight of God; and if indulged, will make you appear contemptible in the eyes of men. The Pharisees were active in many religious duties. They made long prayers, and were so particular in outward things as to pay tithes of the most common herbs. They also gave to the poor. But all this they did that they might have praise of men. They chose public places to pray; and when they were about to give anything to the poor, they caused a trumpet to be sounded before them, to give notice of their approach. All this was done to feed the pride of the carnal heart; and, notwithstanding their loud professions, and apparent good deeds, the heaviest curses the Lord Jesus ever pronounced were directed against them. Be modest, unobtrusive, and courteous, in all you do and say. Let the love of Jesus animate your heart, and the glory of God be your object. Make as little noise as possible, in everything you do. Never speak of what you have done, unless you see that some good can be accomplished by it. “When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” Keep yourself out of view, and give all the glory of your success to God.

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2. *Great prudence and discretion are necessary in everything.* Do nothing rashly. When you have any enterprise in view, first sit down and consider the matter seriously. Pray over it. Look at it in all its bearings, and inquire what good will be likely to result from it. When you have satisfied yourself on this point, inquire whether you have reasonable ground to hope for success. Then summon all your wisdom to contrive a judicious plan of operations. When this is done, proceed with energy and perseverance, till you have either accomplished your object, or become convinced that it is impracticable. Pay especial regard to the feelings and advice of those who act with you. Keep as much in the back-ground as you can without embarrassing your efforts; and whenever you can do it, put others forward to execute the plans you have devised. This will save you from becoming the object of jealousy, and also serve to mortify your pride.

3. *Be resolute and persevering.* When satisfied you are in the way of duty, do not be moved by the scoffs and sneers of the giddy multitude. If some good people disapprove your conduct, thinking that you attempt too much, let it lead you to a candid and impartial reexamination of your course. If by this you become convinced that you are wrong, in the particular matter in question, confess it, and change your conduct. But, if this review of the affair confirms you in the opinion that your course is right, pursue it with decision and firmness. There are some well-meaning people, of limited views, and excessive carefulness, who disapprove of the best of measures, if they happen to be at variance with their long-established customs; or, more frequently, if they were not *consulted* before the particular enterprise was undertaken.

4. BE MUCH IN PRAYER. Upon this will greatly depend your success in all things. Feel that of yourself you can do nothing; but that you can do all things through Christ strengthening you. Before undertaking anything, pray that God would give you wisdom to direct and strength to perform; and if it is anything in which the efforts of others will be required, pray that he would incline their hearts to engage in the work. Before you go out on an errand of mercy, first visit your closet, and commit yourself to the direction of the Lord. Pray that he would give you wisdom, courage, and discretion; and that he would keep down the pride of your heart, and enable you to do all things for his glory.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XIV.

Dress.

“In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness, and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.”—1 TIM. 2:9.

MY DEAR SISTER:

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We are required to do *everything* to the glory of God. Your first inquiry, then, in relation to dress, must be, "*How can I glorify God in my apparel?*" I know of no other way than by making it answer just the end for which it was originally designed. In the third chapter of Genesis, we learn that the object of dress, when first instituted, was to provide a decent covering for our bodies. It was the shame brought upon man by transgression which made this covering necessary. And, it is undoubtedly in consequence of sin, that the elements have been turned against him, so as to make clothing a necessary defence against the hostile influence of heat and cold. The immediate discovery of their nakedness, by our first parents, after their disobedience, is probably intended to show the nakedness and shame which sin has brought upon our souls; and the consequent exposure to the hostile elements aptly represents the exposure of the naked soul to the wrath of God. The invention of fig-leaf aprons may perhaps represent the self-righteousness of the carnal heart. Impenitent sinners are always seeking out some invention of their own, by which they expect to be saved from the consequences of sin. But all their self-righteousness will be no better defence against the storms of God's wrath, than fig-leaf aprons against the withering influence of a vertical sun, or the perpetual frosts of the arctic regions. The coats of skin, which the Lord made for our first parents, were perhaps designed to represent the righteousness of Christ, with which he would clothe his people. This opinion appears the more probable, from the common use of this figure, when the righteousness of Christ is spoken of, as imputed to Christians: "He hath *clothed* me with the *garments of salvation*, he hath *covered* me with the *robe* of righteousness." "And to her [the church] was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the linen is the righteousness of the saints." "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be *clothed upon* with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being *clothed*, we shall not be found *naked*. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon." "And being found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The real design of clothing, then, may be summed up in the following particulars: 1. A modest covering for our bodies. 2. A defence against the hostile elements. 3. An acknowledgment of our spiritual nakedness and exposure to the wrath of God; and our need to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Whenever we pervert it from these ends, to the gratification of our pride or vanity, we not only do not glorify God therein, but we commit actual sin.

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A few things are necessary to be observed, in relation to your apparel:—1. *All that you have is the Lord's*. You have nothing but what he has given you; and this you have solemnly promised to employ in his service. You have no right, therefore, needlessly to squander it upon your person. The apostle Paul, in the text quoted at the commencement of this letter, directs women to adorn themselves with modest apparel; and forbids the wearing of costly ornaments and jewelry. The apostle Peter also repeats the same exhortation. The love of finery displayed by many of the females of our congregations, some of whom are professors of religion, is directly at variance with these passages of Scripture. But, if the Bible had been entirely silent on the subject, I cannot see how Christians could reconcile so much needless expense upon their persons with the spirit of benevolence which the gospel breathes, when so many millions of precious souls are perishing without any knowledge of the only way of salvation, or while so many around them are suffering from penury and want. This is certainly contrary to the spirit of Christ. He who, for our sakes, became poor; who led a life of self-denial, toil, and suffering, that he might relieve distress, and make known the way of salvation,—could never have needlessly expended upon his person what would have sent the gospel to the destitute, or supplied the wants of poverty. Extravagance in dress is, therefore, obviously inconsistent with the Christian character. But, no precise rule can be laid down in relation to this matter. It must be left to the sober judgment of Christians, and a sanctified conscience will readily discern the bounds of propriety. By asking yourselves two or three questions, whenever you think of purchasing a new article of dress, you may very easily decide upon the path of duty. “Do I need this? Is it necessary for my comfort, or for my decent appearance in society? Can I glorify God in wearing it?”

2. *Your time is the Lord's*. You have no right to waste it in useless attention to dress. One of the greatest evils of the present extravagant modes of dress is, that so much precious time is consumed at the toilet. I have already shown the value and importance of time, and the obligations of Christians to spend it in the most profitable manner. I need not here advance any new arguments to show that, if you spend any more time than is necessary in the adjustment of your apparel, you sin against God.

3. *It is the duty to pay some regard to personal appearance*. A Christian lady, by making herself a *slattern*, brings reproach upon the cause of Christ, instead of glorifying God. The apostle enjoins upon women to adorn themselves with *modest* apparel. Modesty signifies *purity of sentiment and manners*. When this idea is applied to dress, it immediately suggests to the mind a neatness, taste, and simplicity of dress, alike opposed both to extravagance

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and finery, and to negligence and vulgar coarseness. The exercise of a refined taste, in the adaptation and adjustment of apparel, may also be justified by the analogy of nature. Look abroad over the landscape, and see with what exquisite taste God has clothed the flowers of the field. There is a symmetry of proportion, a skilfulness of arrangement, and a fitness and adaptation of colors, which strike the eye with unmingled pleasure. And if God has shown a scrupulous regard to the pleasure of the eye, we may do the same. This opinion is also confirmed by the practical influence of the gospel. This is particularly observable among the poor in our own land. Just in proportion as the religion of Jesus prevails among this class of people, you will see a scrupulous attention to personal appearance. By this, I do not mean the *pride of appearance*; but a decency, modesty, and propriety, opposed to negligence, coarseness, and vulgarity. But this is more strikingly manifest among those people who have been but recently raised, by the influence of the gospel, from the lowest depths of heathenism. Of this, you will be convinced by examining the history of the missions among the North American Indians, and the South Sea Islands. The same principles will also apply to equipage and household arrangements. Such regard to comfort and decency of appearance as will strike the eye with pleasure, and shed around an air of cheerfulness, doubtless contributes to moral improvement, and is not only authorized, but required, by the spirit of the gospel.

But this is a dangerous point. There is such a tendency in the human mind to mistake gayety and extravagance for neatness and propriety; and so much temptation to the indulgence of pride and vanity, that you have need of constant watchfulness, that in no respect your heart may lead you astray in this matter. You ought to make it a subject of daily prayer.

4. *Have a regard to health.* The duty of using all proper means for the preservation of health, I have already considered. Among these means, attention to dress is not the least important. Great care should always be taken that it be suited to the season, and a defence against the inclemency of the weather. This is a Christian duty; and any pride of appearance, or carelessness of habit, which leads you to neglect it, is *sin*. But, above all things, avoid the compression of any part of the body, for the purpose of improving the appearance. This is a most pernicious practice. It is astonishing that intelligent ladies can so blindly follow the mandates of fashion, as to indulge a habit so destructive of comfort and life. There is no part of the system, not even the extremity of a limb, which can suffer violent compression, without interrupting the regular circulation of the blood. But, when this pressure is about the chest, the effect is most destructive. The lungs, subject as they are to alternate distension and compression, from

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receiving and discharging both the blood and the breath, require the most perfect freedom. But when the chest is so compressed as to prevent the free play of the lungs, the whole system of respiration and circulation is deranged. The consequences are, shortness of breath, faintness, impeded circulation, producing listlessness and languor; and inclination of the blood to the head, producing headache and distressing dizziness. And, if this course is long persisted in, destruction of health is the inevitable conscience; and often the poor deluded victim of a barbarous fashion pays the forfeit of her life. I have heard of many cases of death from this cause; three of which occurred *in one family*, within the circle of my acquaintance. I need use no argument, then, to convince a Christian lady, that it is her duty to avoid this species of conformity to the world. I can regard it in no other light than a palpable violation of the sixth commandment.

5. *Do not make too much of the matter of dress.* It is our duty to avoid every species of conformity to the world which requires the sacrifice of religious principle. But, in things indifferent, we are allowed to conform to the customs of society. I do not think there is much danger of observing excessive plainness of apparel; but there is danger of making so much account of it as to cultivate a self-righteous spirit. It is remarkable that in almost every system of false religion, precise forms of dress are prescribed; especially for those who are devoted to what is termed a *religious life*; whereas, in the Bible, it is left to be regulated by the general principles and spirit of Christianity, with an occasional caution against extravagance; and it does not appear that Christ and the apostles and the early Christians adopted any peculiarity of dress. From the description given of the wardrobe of our Saviour, it is probable that he wore the common dress of a religious teacher. There is such a thing as a pride of singularity; and this is often manifested in the preparation and adjustment of the wardrobe. Satan is ever on the alert, to observe the bent of the mind, and carry it to extremes. Be not ignorant of his devices. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XV.

Social and Relative Duties.

“All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” MATT. 7:12.

MY DEAR SISTER,

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We are formed for society; and whoever refuses social intercourse with his fellow-beings, and lives to himself, violates an established law of nature. But the operation of this general principle creates the necessity of particular laws for the regulation of that intercourse. Hence, a numerous train of duties arise out of our social relations. And those duties enter more or less into the common concerns of life, according as these relations are more or less remote. The first relation which the Lord has established among men, is that of the *family*. This was established in Paradise; and it has been preserved, in all ages of the world, and in all countries, with more or less distinctness, according to the degree of moral principle which has prevailed. The Scriptures are very particular in describing this relation, as it existed in the patriarchal ages. It has its foundation in the fitness of things; and hence the duties arising out of it are very properly classed as *moral* duties. Of such consequence does the Lord regard this relation, that he has given it a place in the decalogue. Three of the ten commandments have particular reference to the family relation. From the first institution of this relation, we learn that the father and mother are to constitute the united head of the family. "*They twain shall be one flesh.*" Authority is therefore doubtless vested in them both, to exercise jointly. But, since the fall, when mankind became perverse and self-willed, the nature and fitness of things seem to require that there should be a precedence of authority, in case of a division of the united head. This precedence, the Scriptures clearly and distinctly point out. One of the curses pronounced upon the woman, after the fall, was, that her husband should rule over her. This principle was carried out in the families of the patriarchs. The apostle Peter says, that the holy women of old adorned themselves with a meek and quiet spirit, and were in subjection to their own husbands: and particularly notice the conduct of Sarah, the mother of the Jewish nation, who *obeyed* Abraham, calling him lord. The same principle is repeatedly taught in the New Testament. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." "As the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." "Likewise ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands." There can be no room for doubt, then, on this subject. But, where Christian principle prevails with both parties, there will be rarely, if ever, occasion to exercise this authority.

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The fifth commandment teaches the duty of subordination to the head of the family, not only on the part of the children themselves, but of every member of the household. So far as the general interests of the family are concerned, persons residing in it are regarded in the same light as children; subject to all its laws, rules and regulations. Thus the Lord speaks of Abraham: "I know him that he will command his children *and his household* after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." The principle is here recognized, that Abraham had a right to *command*, not only his own children, but all his household. And the same may also be inferred from the language of the fourth commandment. It is addressed to the head of the family, and enjoins upon him to see that no labor is performed on the Sabbath, by any of his household, not even excepting the *stranger* that is within his gates.

The duty of the younger members of the family to respect the elder, may be inferred,—
1. From the nature and fitness of things. The elder brethren and sisters are the superiors of the younger, in age and experience, and generally in wisdom and knowledge. They are better qualified to take the lead, and therefore entitled to respect and deference. 2. The same thing may also be inferred from the precedence always given in Scripture to the first-born.

But the great household duty is LOVE. If this is properly discharged, it will set all other matters right. If this is wanting, there will be a lack of everything else. The Scriptures insist upon the duty of brotherly love. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Christ, in his sermon on the mount, severely rebukes the indulgence of anger, and the want of kindness and courtesy among brethren. And the apostle John says, that "whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer." A kind, tender-hearted, affectionate, and peaceful temper, should be maintained, in all the intercourse of different members of the same family.

But as mankind began to multiply, it became necessary that the social relations should be extended. A number of families, residing near each other, formed a neighborhood, or community. This gave rise to the new relation of neighbor, from the necessity of intercourse between families. This was again extended, to the formation of nations and kingdoms. But all these various relations are subject to the same great laws as those of the family; for they have grown out of them. The same principle which requires subordination to the head of the family, requires also deference to the elders of a community, and subordination to the rulers of the nation. And the same principle which requires the exercise of kindness, gentleness, meekness, forbearance, condescension and love, between the members of the same family, requires the exercise of similar dispositions between individuals of the same community and nation. The principle is also still farther extended, embracing the whole world as one great family; and requiring the exercise of love and the practice of benevolence towards all mankind. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

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But, in consequence of the fall, another most interesting relation has been established. Out of this apostate world, God has chosen himself a family. Of this family, Christ is the head, and his people are the members. Here are the same relations as in the natural family; but they are different in their nature. They are spiritual, and, of course, of higher obligation. We are required to love Christ more than father or mother. And the Lord Jesus says with emphasis, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another." I have no doubt that, when grace is in full exercise in the heart, the brotherly love which Christians exercise towards one another is far stronger than the natural affection which exists between brothers and sisters of the same family.

From this general view of the social relations, we may gather the following rules of conduct:

1. Endeavor to render to all the members of the family in which you reside just that degree of deference and respect which belongs to them. Conscientiously regard the rules and regulations introduced by the head of the family, unless they are contrary to the word of God. In such case you should leave the family; because your relative duties would interfere with your duty to God.[M] Remember, it is in the domestic circle where your character is to be formed. It is here that your disposition is to be tried, and your piety cultivated. Endeavor, then, to maintain, in your family intercourse, the same dignity and propriety of deportment which you wish to sustain in society. Never descend to anything at the fireside which you would despise in a more extended circle. Bring the most minute actions of your daily life to the test of Christian principle. Remember that, in the sight of God, there are no *little sins*. The least transgression is sufficient to condemn the soul forever. "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all." Especially avoid the indulgence of a selfish disposition. It is both unamiable and unchristian. Be always ready to sacrifice your own feelings, when by so doing you can give pleasure to others. Study the wishes and feelings of others, and prefer them to your own. Manifest a disinterestedness of feeling. Strive to be helpful to others, even at the expense of personal feeling and interest. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others." "Charity seeketh not her own." Be kind to all; respectful towards superiors, courteous to equals, and condescending to inferiors. Be particularly careful not to trample upon the feelings of servants. Nothing can be more unamiable. If you cultivate these dispositions and principles of action habitually, in the domestic circle, they will become so natural and easy as to flow out spontaneously in every circle in which you move. And this will call forth the love and esteem of all your acquaintance. It will bring honor upon your profession, increase your influence, and thereby enable you to do more for the glory of God.

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[Footnote M: This direction would not be proper for a minor, in her father's house, or in the place provided by a guardian. In such cases, it would be duty to remain, and submit to the penalty of disobedience; remembering that it is a blessing to be persecuted for righteousness' sake.]

2. *There are special duties growing out of your relation to the church.* Some of these I have considered in former letters. But I have particular reference now to *social* duties. You are to regard all the members of the church as brothers and sisters. You are to love them just in proportion as they are like Christ. It is the appearance of the image of Jesus, alone, in our Christian brethren, which can call forth the spiritual exercise of brotherly love. I say the *appearance* of the image of Christ, because we may be deceived as to the existence of that image in the hearts of others, and yet our love may be as sincere and fervent as if the image were genuine. No Christian duty is more insisted on in Scripture than brotherly love. It is repeatedly enjoined by our Lord and his apostles. It is so essential a part of the Christian character, that it is mentioned by the beloved disciple as one of the principal evidences of the new birth. Now, how do we manifest our love to our brothers and sisters? We delight in their society. We love to meet them, to talk about each other's interests, and the interests of the family in general. So, if you love your brethren and sisters in the church, you will delight in their society; you will love to meet with them, to interchange kind offices; to talk of the difficulties, trials, hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows, of the way to the heavenly Canaan; and to speak of the interests of the great spiritual family to which you belong. Hence, I argue the duty of social intercourse among Christians. But, it is to be greatly feared that the real object of such intercourse is too frequently overlooked. How often do Christians meet, and talk about "trifles light as air," without once speaking of subjects which, according to their profession, lie nearest their hearts. This ought not so to be. It is a sinful conformity to the spirit of the world. The great object of social intercourse among Christians should be, to promote brotherly love and Christian fellowship. And how can these ends be answered, when their conversation is altogether about the affairs of the world? I do not say that it is wrong to talk about these things. The smallest matters claim a portion of our attention. But it is wrong to make them the principal topics of conversation, to the exclusion of heavenly things. When we do speak of them, it should be with some good end in view; and our conversation should always be seasoned by the application of Christian principle to all subjects.

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In addition to the general obligation of social intercourse among Christians, there are some particular duties which they owe to one another. They are to exercise mutual forbearance and tenderness towards each other's faults, and, at the same time, to watch over and admonish one another. Whenever you see a brother or a sister out of the way, it is your duty, with meekness, tenderly and kindly to administer reproof. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, *forbearing one another in love.*" In all cases, where one is to be selected for the performance of a particular duty, which may seem to confer honor, prefer others to yourself. "In honor preferring one another." "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves." "Yea, all of you, be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Yet, do not carry this principle so far as to refuse to act where duty calls. A disposition to be backward in such matters is often a serious hindrance to benevolent effort. Be always ready to engage in any enterprise for doing good; but prefer the office which requires the most labor with the least honor. Christians ought also to take delight in assisting each other; and to feel personally interested in each other's welfare. In short, the feeling that pervades the church should be preeminently a FAMILY FEELING.

3. *There are also some special duties growing out of your relations to general society.* Be ever ready to interchange kind offices with every one who maintains a decent moral deportment; and be kind and compassionate, even to the vicious, so far as you can, without associating with them on terms of equality. By this means you may win the affections of impenitent sinners, and thereby secure their attention to direct efforts for the salvation of their souls. But, you should never suffer your feelings of complacency and good-will towards those who are destitute of piety, to lead you to conform to the spirit of the world which influences their conduct. Your social intercourse with them should be regulated upon this principle. Never go any farther into their society than you can carry your religion with you. "Be not conformed to this world."

4. *Although it be your duty to visit, yet, in this matter, be careful to be governed by religious principle.* There is, in the human mind, a tendency to run into extremes in everything. Against this you need especially to be on your guard in social intercourse. When visiting is excessive, it dissipates the mind, and unfits it for any laborious employment. When this state of mind becomes habitual, a person is never easy except when in company. The most vigorous mind may thus be rendered comparatively inert and powerless. But, on the other hand, by shutting yourself out from society, you will dry up the social

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feelings of the heart; you will acquire a monkish love of solitude; and your temper will become soured towards your fellow-beings. You must therefore give to visiting its proper place in the routine of Christian duty. That place is just the one which it can occupy without encroaching upon more important duties. It should be the Christian's *recreation*. Seasons of relaxation from the more laborious duties of life are undoubtedly necessary; and I know of nothing which can better answer this end than the intelligent and pious conversation of Christian friends. Your friends have claims upon your time and attention. But, these claims can never extend so far as to encroach upon more important duties, or to impair your ability to do good to yourself and others. As soon as you discover a secret uneasiness, when out of company, or whenever you find that the demands of the social circle have led you to neglect other duties, it is time to diminish the number of your visits. But do not, on such occasions, violate Christian sincerity, by inventing excuses to satisfy your friends. Tell them plainly your reasons, and if they are really what they profess to be, they will see the propriety of your conduct, and be satisfied.

5. *Never go into company where the spirit and maxims of the world predominate.* I know this will cut you off from a large portion of society, yet, I believe it to be a rule founded upon the word of God. If we would not be conformed to the world, we must not follow its maxims nor partake of its spirit. I know it is often said we should go into such society for the purpose of exerting a religious influence. But the practical result is directly the contrary. The spirit which prevails in such company is destructive of all religious feeling: it freezes up the warm affections of the Christian's heart. The consequence is, he is ashamed to acknowledge his Master, and avow his principles, where the prevailing current is against him. He therefore moves along with it, to the injury of his own soul, and the wounding of his Master's cause. His worldly companions see no difference between his conduct and their own; and conclude, either that all is right with themselves, or that he is a hypocrite. Large parties, as a general rule, are unfriendly to the health both of body and soul. The most profitable kind of social intercourse is the informal meeting of small circles, of which a sufficient number are pious to give a direction and tone to conversation.

6. *When in company, labor to give a profitable direction to conversation.* If there are elder persons present, who introduce general discourse of a profitable character, let your words be few. It is generally better, in such cases, to learn in silence. When an opportunity offers, however, for you to say anything that will add interest to the conversation, do not fail to improve it. But let your ideas be well conceived, and your words well chosen. "A word fitly spoken is like apples

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of gold in pictures of silver.” The interest of conversation does not depend so much upon the multitude of words, as upon the matter they contain, and their appropriateness to the subject. But, when no other person introduces profitable conversation, take it upon yourself. If you will study to be *skilful* in the matter, you may turn any conversation to good account. This was one of the peculiar beauties of our Saviour’s discourse. Whatever subject was introduced, he invariably drew from it some important lesson. If you are on the alert, you may always give a proper turn to conversation in this way. I do not say that conversation should always be exclusively religious. But it should be of a kind calculated to improve either the mind or heart, and it should at all times partake of the savor of piety. “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.” No proper opportunity, however, should be lost, of making a direct religious impression. If the solemn realities of divine things were always present to our minds, as they ought to be, we should never be at a loss to speak of them in a becoming manner. When you meet with persons who are living without hope, lose no proper occasion to warn them of their danger, and show them the sinfulness of their lives, and the guilt of rejecting the Saviour. But this should be done as privately as possible. Speaking to them abruptly, in the presence of company, often has a tendency to provoke opposition, and harden them in sin. However, this caution is not always necessary. If there is much tenderness of conscience, admonition will be well received, even in the presence of others. Great care should be taken, on both sides, that you neither injure them by your imprudence, nor neglect your duty to their souls, through excessive carelessness. Study wisdom, skilfulness, and discretion, in all things.

7. *Set your face against the discussion of the characters of those who are absent.* This is a most pernicious practice, quite too prevalent at the present day. I would have you avoid, as much as possible, speaking even of the good qualities of those who are absent, for two reasons: 1. I see no good likely to result from it; therefore it must be an unprofitable method of spending time. 2. It leads us to speak also of their faults, so as to give their whole characters; and this is evil speaking. Never allow yourself to say anything to the disadvantage of any person, unless your duty to others may require it. This, however, will rarely happen; but it may sometimes be your duty to caution others against being ensnared by one whose character you know to be bad. The Scriptures condemn backbiting and evil speaking in the most pointed terms. “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, speaketh evil of the law.” “Speak evil of no man.” “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and *evil speaking*, be put away from you.”

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“Debates, envyings, wrath, strifes, *backbitings*, *whisperings*, swellings, tumults.”
“*Whisperers*, *backbiters*, haters of God, spiteful.” Here we see how the Lord regards this sin; for he has classed it with the exercise of the most abominable passions of the human heart. Yet, how common is it for professors of religion to speak freely, and without reserve, of the characters of others, and even of their own brethren and sisters in the church. This is a great sin, and it is productive of much evil in the church and in society. It creates heart-burnings, jealousies, and strife; and furnishes employment for *tale-bearers*, that most despicable set of mischief-makers. But this sin is often committed without saying anything directly against another. A sly insinuation is often productive of more mischief than direct evil speaking. It leaves a vague, but strong impression upon the mind of the hearer, against the character of the person spoken of; and often creates a prejudice which is never removed. This is most unjust and unfair, because it leaves the character of the injured person resting under suspicion, without his having an opportunity to remove it. This is probably what the apostle means by *whisperers*. Solomon, also, speaking of the naughty person and wicked man, says, “He *winketh with his eyes*, he *speaketh with his feet*.” “He that *winketh with the eye* causeth shame.” How often do we see this winking and speaking by gestures and knowing looks, when the characters of others are under discussion! Open and unreserved evil speaking is unchristian; but this winking and speaking with the feet is mean and dishonorable. Whenever you perceive a disposition to make invidious remarks about others, refuse to join in the conversation, and manifest your decided disapprobation. “The north wind driveth away rain; so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.” Bear in mind the words of the apostle James: “If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and *bridleth not his tongue*, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” So you see the habitual indulgence of this sin will cut off the hope of the loudest professors.

8. *Avoid speaking of yourself.* When any person makes himself and his own affairs the principal topics of conversation, he shows himself to be supremely selfish, and ridiculously vain. It is also treating others with great disrespect: as though one’s self were of more consequence than the whole company. Endeavor to keep yourself as much as possible out of view, and to direct the thoughts and conversation of the company away from personal affairs, to intellectual, moral and religious subjects. But, when any of your friends make known their difficulties to you, manifest an interest in their affairs, sympathize with them, and render them all the assistance in your power.

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9. *Never indulge a suspicious disposition.* Many persons destroy their own peace, and gain the ill-will of others, by the exercise of this unhappy temper. You have no right to think others dislike you, until they have manifested their dislike. Accustom yourself to repose confidence in your associates. It is better to be sometimes deceived, than never to trust. And if you are always jealous of those around you, be sure you will soon alienate their affections. In your intercourse with others of your own age and sex, be willing always to advance at least half way, and with those whose habits are very retiring, you may even go farther. Many persons of sterling worth have so low an opinion of themselves, as to doubt whether even their own equals wish to form an acquaintance. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." Always put the best construction upon the conduct of others. Do not attach more meaning to their language and conduct than they properly express. If at any time you really believe yourself slighted, take no notice of it. Yet be careful never to intrude yourself into society where you have good reason to believe your company is not desired.

10. *Be cautious in the formation of intimate friendships.* Christians should always regard one another as friends. Yet peculiar circumstances, together with congeniality of sentiment and feeling, may give rise to a personal attachment much stronger than the common bond which unites all Christians. Of this, we have a most beautiful example in the case of David and Jonathan. This appears to be a perfect pattern of Christian friendship. They both doubtless loved other pious people. But there was existing between them a peculiar personal attachment. Their souls were "*knit together*." Friendships of this kind should not be numerous, and the objects of them should be well chosen. Long acquaintance is necessary that you may be able to repose unlimited confidence in the friend to whom you unbosom your whole heart. Form no such friendships hastily. Think what would have been the consequence if David had been deceived in this friend. He would most certainly have lost his life.

11. *Before going into company, visit your closet.* Pray that the Lord would so direct your steps that you may do all things for his glory; that he would enable you to spend the time profitably to yourself and others; that he would keep you from evil speaking, levity, and foolish jesting, and every impropriety; and that he would enable you to exert a religious influence over those with whom you may meet. Be assured, if you go out without observing this precaution, you will return with a wounded soul.

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XVI.

Charity.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked;

thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”—1 Cor. 13:4-7.

MY DEAR SISTER:

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Although I have often alluded, in the course of these letters, to the work of the Holy Spirit, and his blessed fruit in the heart and life, yet so deeply do I feel impressed with the excellency and amiable sweetness of the grace of *Charity*, that I feel constrained to commend it to your notice in a separate letter. Charity is the queen of the graces, excelling even faith and hope, and enduring when all those gifts which add brilliancy to the character shall cease their attractions; and, though you may not possess great personal charms, superior accomplishments, or great powers of mind, yet if you do but “put on charity,” you will, like the blessed Saviour, “grow in favor both with God and man.”

The apostle calls charity the “bond of perfectness;” alluding to the girdle of the Orientals, which was not only ornamental and expensive, but was put on last, serving to adjust the other parts of the dress, and keep the whole together. It is a bond which holds all the Christian graces in harmonious union, and, by keeping them together, secures a permanent completeness and consistency of character. Without the girdle, the flowing robes of Oriental dress would present a sad appearance; hardly serving the purposes of decency. So the apostle concludes that the most brilliant gifts and heroic actions are all nothing without charity.

Charity, however, is not to be understood in the popular sense of *almsgiving*. It is the same word which is elsewhere rendered *love*. It means a benevolent disposition of heart—love to God and good will to man, diffused through the whole character and conduct. But the description of charity given by the apostle relates chiefly to its manifestations in our intercourse with our fellow-men. My principal object in this letter will be to apply this description so as to discover *negatively* what conduct is inconsistent with charity, and *positively* the effect of charity on the human character.

I. Charity *suffereth long*. It will endure ill-treatment, and prefer suffering to strife. It will not resent the first encroachments, but patiently bear with injuries as long as they can be borne. If charity reigns in your heart, you will consider how many and aggravated are your offences against God, and yet that his long-suffering bears with your perverseness, and he is daily loading you with benefits; and shall you be impatient of the slightest offences from a fellow worm? Consider also how liable you are to encroach upon the rights of others, and to try their patience by your infirmities. Do not, therefore, be hasty in the indulgence of hard thoughts of others, nor impatient of their faults and infirmities. How much contention and strife might be avoided by a little forbearance! and who is there so perfect as not sometimes to need it to be extended toward himself? The ills of social life are greatly mitigated by the exercise of mutual forbearance; and they find no place under the sweet reign of charity.

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II. But charity not only *suffereth long*, but *is kind*. "It is benign, bountiful, courteous, and obliging." But why did the apostle couple these two dispositions together? "*Charity suffereth long*, AND IS KIND." Evidently, because long-suffering without kindness would be unavailing. If you bear with the injuries or supposed offences of another, and yet suffer your mind to be soured, and your kind offices remitted, the wound will corrode and inflame, till it breaks out with tenfold violence. But benignity of temper, and the constant practice of friendly offices and benevolent actions, will disarm ill-nature, and bring the offender to see the folly of his conduct. "A soft answer turneth away wrath; and the kind treatment of an enemy will pour coals of fire on his head." What can be more lovely than a kind and obliging disposition, which delights in occasions and opportunities of contributing to the comfort and happiness of others! This disposition adorns with peculiar grace the female character. Solomon, describing a virtuous woman, says, "In her tongue is the law of kindness." If you cultivate this disposition at all times, and in all places, your presence will add a charm to every circle; you will honor your Master; and your ability to advance his cause will be greatly enhanced. In your efforts to do good, with the law of kindness in your lips, you can penetrate where, without it, you could gain no admittance; and in your expostulations with the impenitent, you can reach the heart, by the exhibition of a kind and tender spirit, where otherwise you would be repulsed like the seven sons of Seeva, who presumptuously attempted, in imitation of Paul, to cast out devils in the name of Jesus. Especially is this disposition requisite in a Sabbath-school teacher. Without it, he can accomplish very little. Children cannot be won without kindness. If, then, you would be successful in this enterprise of love, cultivate a tender regard for the "little lambs," and be kind to them whenever you meet them. Never see a child in trouble without relieving him; or, if you can do no more, show your sympathy for his sufferings by such kind offices as are within your power.

III. Charity *envieth not*. It is not grieved but gratified to see others more prosperous and wealthy, more intelligent and refined, or more holy. The extension of holiness and happiness is an object of rejoicing to the benevolent mind, without regard to himself.

There are some persons who are always complaining of the rich, and fretting about the aristocratic spirit of those whose rank and station, education or mental endowments, place them in any respect above themselves. This is a sure indication of an envious disposition. There may be, in these respects, some ground of complaint; but place these persons in the situation of those of whom they complain, and where the latter are proud, the former would probably be aristocratic; and where these are aristocratic, those would be tyrannical.

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An envious disposition argues, 1. *A want of self-respect*. If we respect ourselves, we shall not desire the factitious importance arising from wealth so much as to grieve that others have more of it than ourselves; nor shall we be willing to concede so much merit to the possession of wealth as to suspect those who have it of esteeming us the less because we have it not. 2. It argues a *want of benevolence*. The truly benevolent mind desires the increase of rational enjoyment, and will therefore rejoice in the happiness of others, without respect to his own. 3. It argues a *want of magnanimity*. The truly great will rejoice in the intellectual and moral elevation of others, as adding so much to the sum of human excellence. But the envious person cannot bear to see any other one elevated above himself. This is the spirit that brought Haman to the gallows, and Satan from the seat of an archangel to the throne of devils. 4. It argues a *narrow, selfish spirit—a little and mean mind*. The law of God requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and reason sanctions the requisition. But, the envious person will hate his neighbor, because he is not permitted to love him less than himself.

If you regard your own happiness, I conjure you to suppress the first motions of this vile and hateful temper; for, while indulged, it will give you no peace. Its envenomed darts will rankle and corrode in your bosom, and poison all your enjoyments. It is a disposition which can never be satisfied so long as there is a superior being in the universe. It is aimed ultimately at the throne of God; and the envious person can never be happy while God reigns. The effects of this disposition upon human character and happiness are strikingly illustrated in the story of Haman, which I commend to your serious attention. Cultivate, then, the habit of being pleased and gratified with the happiness and prosperity of others; and constantly seek the grace of God to enable you to exercise benevolent feelings toward all, but especially those who are elevated in any respect above you.

IV. *Charity vaunteth not itself*, (or, as in the margin,) *is not rash—is not puffed up*. “It does not act precipitately, inconsiderately, rashly, thoughtlessly.” Some people mistake a rash and heedless spirit for genuine zeal; and this puffs them up with pride and vain-glory, and sets them to railing at their betters in age, experience, or wisdom, because they will not fall into their views and measures. There is scarcely any trait of character more unlovely, especially in a young person, than self-conceit. If the youth who is puffed up with a sense of his own consequence could but see the mingled emotions of pity and disgust which his conduct excites in the bosom of age and wisdom, he would be filled with confusion and shame.

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You will hear such persons prating much of independence of mind. They have respect to the opinions of the ancients? Not they! They think for themselves; and form their own opinions without respect to what others have thought, and said, and written. They would scorn to consult a commentary to assist them in determining a difficult passage of Scripture, or the writings of a learned divine, to help them out of a theological difficulty. That would be subjecting their minds to the influence of prejudice, or betraying a want of confidence in their own infallible powers!—which is the last idea they would think of entertaining. The long-cherished opinions of great, and wise, and good men, are disposed of with a sneer. They be influenced by great names? Not they!

You will hear them delivering their opinions, pragmatically, and with strong assurance, on points of great difficulty, which good men of the greatest learning and ability have approached with diffidence; and boldly advancing ideas which they suppose to have originated in the depths of their own recondite minds, which they afterwards learn, with chagrin, are but some old, cast-off, crude theories or speculations, which had been a hundred times advanced, and as many times refuted, before they were born. But the matter appears so plain to them that they cannot imagine how any honest mind can come to any other conclusion. Hence, they are ready to doubt the piety of all who differ with them, if not to assume the office of judge, and charge them with insincerity or hypocrisy. Whereas, in truth, their strong confidence in their opinions arises from having examined the subject partially and superficially, and overlooked the objections and difficulties which readily occur to a well-balanced and discriminating mind.

I would not, however, be understood to recommend implicit submission to the judgment and opinions even of the greatest or even the best of men. This is Popery. The mind must be convinced before it yields assent to any position. But it would be the height of self-conceited arrogance for any person, but especially for a youth, to presume himself too wise to gain instruction from the writings of men who have devoted their lives to the investigation of truth; or summarily to set aside, as unworthy of his attention, opinions which have been embraced by the greatest and best of men for successive generations. Nor does it argue any uncommon independence of mind; for, you will generally find such persons arranged under the banner of some one of the various schools of theology, morals, philosophy, or politics, and following on with ardor the devious course of their leader receiving whatever falls from his lips as the voice of an oracle, and running with enthusiasm into all his extravagances. Like the vane upon the spire, that lifts up itself with proud eminence to the clouds, they are ready to be carried about by every wind of doctrine. Whereas true independence of mind consists in weighing evidence and argument impartially, and forming a decision independent of prejudice, party feeling, pride of opinion, or self-will; and, when coupled with humility, it will always rejoice to receive instruction from any source. The person who knows himself will be deeply humbled under a sense of his own weakness and ignorance, and will advance his opinions with modesty, while he treats the opinions of others with becoming respect.

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V. Again, Charity *doth not behave itself unseemly*. It does not disregard the courtesies of life, nor break over the bounds of decency and decorum; but pays a strict regard to propriety of conduct under all circumstances. But, it may not be amiss to enumerate some of those things which, by their unseemliness, render the conduct of any person repulsive and disgusting.

1. Forwardness, or a disposition to be conspicuous, is unseemly, especially in a young person. It is indeed the duty of every one to be always ready to engage in every good work; and it is wrong to be backward, and refuse to cooperate with others, in carrying on any useful enterprise. But the heart is deceitful: and, while we satisfy our consciences with the idea that we are going forward in the discharge of duty, we may be but feeding our own vain-glorious spirits, by bringing ourselves into notice. An humble Christian has a low estimate of his ability to do good; and is generally disposed to prefer others, as better qualified than himself, to occupy any conspicuous post. "In honor preferring one another." He will, therefore, be modest and retiring; though, when the course of duty is plain, he will by no means shrink from it. "The righteous are hold as a lion." There are several characteristics, however, which distinguish the forward, unseemly spirit. He is jealous and testy. You will hear him complaining of the aristocratic spirit of others; and if he is not noticed as much as he thinks he deserves, he will take offence. He will rarely be found cordially cooeperating with others, in any good work, unless he is foremost in it himself. If you wish to secure his aid, or forestall his opposition, you must be careful to consult him before you undertake any enterprise. Should you neglect to do so, however good your object, or well chosen your measures, you may expect him to find fault, and throw obstacles in the way, at every step of your progress. Such persons often exhibit a fiery zeal and restless activity, which seem for a time to eclipse all their contemporaries. But it is a zeal and activity for *self*: for it is never roused except for the promotion of an object with which self is in some manner identified.

2. To assume, in a dictatorial manner, to catechise others as to their views on any subject, especially if they are older than yourself, is unseemly. You will meet with some persons who seem to take it for granted that they have a right to call you to account for your opinions, and to determine authoritatively your claim to the character which you profess. I do not question the propriety of kind and modest inquiries as to the opinions and views of others; nor of endeavoring, by fair and candid arguments, to convince them of what we suppose to be their errors. But then we must never forget that they are our equals, possessing the same right to judge of the truth with ourselves, and accountable for their errors to the same tribunal. This will leave no ground for the exercise of a dogmatical or a dictatorial spirit.

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3. It is unseemly for young persons to be foremost in speaking, in company, or to give advice with confidence in regard to anything which is to influence the conduct of their superiors in age, wisdom, or experience. Elihu, although a man of superior knowledge and abilities, did not presume to speak to Job till his aged friends had ceased; for he said, "Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." Young persons sometimes render themselves ridiculous by such unseemly conduct. The prophet Isaiah gives this as one of the marks of a degenerate age, that "the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honorable."

4. Fierce contention about personal rights, is unseemly. It begets a selfish, jealous spirit. You never hear this where love reigns; for love is a yielding spirit. The spirit that can never brook the least encroachment upon his rights, is an unseemly spirit, which will always be embroiled in some difficulty or other.

5. All coarseness, grossness, or rudeness of character, is unseemly. This negative description of one of the characteristics of charity is sufficiently comprehensive, if exhibited in all its details, to fill a volume. It conveys the idea of an exquisite propriety of deportment, free from everything indelicate, obtrusive, repulsive, or unamiable.

VI. Charity *seeketh not her own*. It is not selfish. The temper here described is inculcated in a beautiful manner in Paul's epistle to the Philippians. He exhorts them, in lowliness of mind, each to esteem other better than themselves; and not to look exclusively on their own things, but also on the things of others; and then commends to them the example of our Lord, who, though King of kings, humbled himself to the condition of a servant, enduring hardship, contumely, and an ignominious death, for our sakes. This does not mean that we are not to love ourselves at all, nor be entirely regardless of our own interests; for the rule which requires us to love our neighbor *as ourselves*, recognizes the right of self-love; and the command, "Thou shalt not steal," establishes the right of private property. But it forbids us to make our own interest and happiness our chief concern, to the disregard of the rights of others and the general good; and requires us to make sacrifices of feeling and interest for the benefit of others, and even sometimes to prefer their happiness and interest to our own. This is the spirit of genuine benevolence; and the exercise of it will impart far more elevated enjoyment than can be derived from private advantage.

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Were this disposition in exercise, it would cut off all ground of envy and jealousy; it would remove the cause of most of the contentions that arise in society; and mitigate, in a wonderful degree, all the ills of life. Indeed, this principle lies at the foundation of all social enjoyment. The reciprocity of mutual affection depends upon the exercise of a self-sacrificing disposition; and the society where this does not exist is intolerable. Nor is it feeling or interest alone that must be given up. There is yet a more difficult sacrifice to be made, before we can be, in any considerable degree, comfortable companions. *It is the sacrifice of the will.* This is the last thing the selfish heart of man is disposed to yield. He has taken his stand, and the pride of his heart is committed to maintain it. He deceives himself, and compels conscience to come to his aid; while, in reality, it is a matter with which conscience has nothing to do, for the point might have been yielded without doing violence to that ever-wakeful monitor, whose office is thus perverted, and made to subserve the purposes of stiff-necked obstinacy. A disposition to yield to the judgment and will of others, so far as can be done conscientiously, is a prominent characteristic of that charity which seeketh not her own; while an obstinate adherence to our own plans and purposes, where no higher principle than expediency is concerned, is one of the most repulsive and uncomfortable forms of selfishness.

A selfish person never willingly makes the smallest sacrifice of feeling or interest to promote the welfare or happiness of others. He wraps himself up in his own interests and pursuits, a cheerless and forbidding object. He would gladly know no law but his own will. He has a little world of his own, in which he lives, and moves, and has his being. He makes every one, with whom he comes in contact, contribute something to his own selfish purposes. His overweening desire to promote his own interests, disposes him constantly to encroach upon the rights of others; or, if not to encroach upon their rights, to take advantage of their good nature, to drag them into his service. You might as well walk for pleasure in a grove of thorn-bushes, or seek repose on a bed of nettles, as to look for comfort in the society of selfish persons.

VII. *Charity is not easily provoked.* "It corrects a sharpness of temper, and sweetens and softens the mind." It does not take fire at the least opposition or unkindness, nor "make a man an offender for a word." One of the servants of Nabal described his character in this significant manner: "He is such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him." There are many such sons and daughters of Belial. They are so sulky and sour, so fretful and peevish, that you can hardly speak to them, but they will snap and snarl like a growling watch-dog; and if they were equally dangerous, it might not be less necessary to chain

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them. All this is the opposite of charity. The quality here negatively described may be summarily comprehended in the term *good nature*; but in a more elevated sense than this term is usually employed, it being the fruit, not of natural amiableness, but of gracious affection. This temper is essential to any considerable degree of usefulness. If you are destitute of it, your Christian character will be so marred as in a great measure to counteract the influence of your positive efforts. A bad temper, even in connection with many excellent qualities, may render a person an uncomfortable companion and an intolerable yoke-fellow, and bring great reproach upon the cause of Christ. Nor need any one excuse himself on the ground of natural disposition; for the Lord has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The gospel of Jesus Christ is a remedy for all our natural corruptions; and we are required to lay aside *every weight*, even the sin that most easily besets us.

VIII. Charity *thinketh no evil*—is not suspicious—does not lay up slight expressions or equivocal conduct, and reason out evil from them, and suffer it to corrode and sour the mind against an individual; but puts the best construction upon the words and conduct of others that they will bear, not yielding to an ill opinion of another, but upon the most indisputable evidence. There is, perhaps, no more fruitful source of disquiet and unhappiness, both to ourselves and others, than a suspicious disposition. "Jealousy," says Solomon, "is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are the coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." Nor is this language too intense. A jealous person always sees a "snake in the grass." He is afraid to trust his most intimate friend. He puts the worst construction upon the language and conduct of others that they will bear: hence he conceives himself grossly insulted, when no ill was designed; and a gentle rebuke, or a good-humored repartee, constitutes an unpardonable offence. He always looks on the dark side of human character, so that a single foible or one glaring fault will eclipse a thousand real excellences. He is always complaining of the degeneracy of the times, and especially of the corruption of the church; for he can see nobody around him who is perfect, and therefore he comes to the conclusion that there is very little piety in the world; forgetting that, were he to find a church of immaculate purity, his own connection with it would introduce corruption. Should such a person conceive it to be his duty to tell you all your faults, woe betide you! for desirable as self-knowledge is, it is no kindness to have our faults aggravated a hundred-fold, and concentrated before our minds like the converging rays of the sun, in one focal blaze, nor poured upon our heads like the sweeping torrent, nor eked out like the incessant patterings of a drizzling rain. Thus did not Paul. When he felt it his duty to reprove, he was careful to commend what was praiseworthy,

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and to throw in some expressions of kindness along with his censures. And here, though it be a digression, let me conjure you never to undertake the unthankful office of censor. You will find some inexperienced persons who will desire you, as an office of friendship, to tell them all their faults. Be sure, if you undertake this with a friend, your friendship will be short. It will lead you to look continually at the dark side of your friend's character, and, before you are aware, you will find yourself losing your esteem for it. Very soon, you will beget the suspicion that you have conceived some dislike. If the cause is continued, this suspicion will corrode and increase; and the result will be, a mutual alienation of affection. However sincerely such an experiment may be entered upon, it can hardly fail, in the nature of things, to produce this result.

It may, however, be said, that we are bound, by our covenant obligations, to *watch over our brethren*. But there can scarcely be a greater misapprehension than to understand this duty in the sense of an incessant lookout to discern and discover the little faults and foibles, or even the more marked and glaring defects of character, in our brethren. The injunction is, "If thy brother trespass *against thee*, go and tell him his fault," &c. But I know of no passage of Scripture which requires us to procure a magnifying-glass, and go about making a business of detecting and exposing the faults of our brethren. On the contrary, there are many cautions against a meddlesome disposition, and against being busy bodies in other men's matters. We are required, with great frequency and solemnity, to watch ourselves; but where is the injunction, "Watch thy brethren?" Even the Saviour himself did not thus attempt to correct the faults of his disciples. He rebuked them, indeed, and sometimes sharply; but he was not continually reminding them of their faults. He was not incessantly brow-beating Peter for his rashness, nor Thomas for his incredulity, nor the sons of Zebedee for their ambition. But he "taught them *as they were able to bear it*;" and that rather by holding up before their minds the truth, than by direct personal lectures.

Our covenant obligations unquestionably make it our duty to watch and see that our brethren do not pursue a course of life inconsistent with their Christian profession, or which tends to backsliding and apostasy; and if they are true disciples, they will be thankful for a word of caution, when they are in danger of falling into sin. And when they do thus fall, we are required to rebuke them, and not to suffer sin upon them. But this is a very different affair from that of setting up a system of espionage over their conduct, and dwelling continually upon their faults and deficiencies. This latter course cannot long be pursued, without an unhappy influence upon our own temper. The human mind is so constituted as to be affected by the objects it contemplates,

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and often assimilated to them. Show me a person who is always contemplating the faults of others, and I will show you a dark and gloomy, sour and morose spirit, whose eyes are hermetically closed to everything that is desirable and excellent, or amiable and lovely, in the character of man—a grumbling, growling misanthrope, who is never pleased with anybody, nor satisfied with anything—an Ishmaelite, whose hand is against every man, and every man’s hand against him. If there is nothing in the human character, regenerated by the grace of God, on which we can look with complacency and delight, then it is impossible for us to obey the sacred injunction, “Love the brethren.”

IX. *Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.* One mark by which the people of God are known is, that they “sigh and cry over the abominations that are done in the land,” and weep rivers of water because men keep not the law of God; while the wicked “rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked.” But we may deceive ourselves, and be indulging a morbid appetite for fault-finding and slander, while we suppose ourselves to be grieving over the sins of others. Grief is a tender emotion. It melts the heart, and sheds around it a hallowed influence. Hence, if we find ourselves indulging a sharp, censorious spirit, eagerly catching up the faults of others, and dwelling on them, and magnifying them, and judging harshly of them, we may be sure we have another mark, which belongs not to the fold of the Good Shepherd. One of the prominent characteristics of an impenitent heart is a disposition to feed upon the faults of professors of religion. Those who indulge this disposition will not admit that they take delight in the failings of Christians. They will condemn them with great severity, and lament over the dishonor they bring upon religion. Yet they catch at the deficiencies of Christians as eagerly as ever a hungry spaniel caught after his meat. This is the whole of their spiritual meat and drink. It is the foundation of their hopes. They rest their claim for admittance into the celestial paradise on being quite as consistent in their conduct as those who profess to be God’s people; hence, every deficiency they discover gives them a new plea to urge at the portals of heaven. Thus they secretly, though perhaps unwittingly, “rejoice in iniquity.” But it is to be feared, if we may judge from the exhibition of the same spirit, that many who make high pretensions to superior sanctity rest their hopes, to a great extent, on a similar foundation. With the Pharisaical Jews, they think if they judge them that do evil, even though they do the same, they shall escape the judgment of God. They are as eager to catch up and proclaim upon the house-top the deficiencies of their brethren, as the self-righteous moralist, who prides himself on making no profession, and yet being as consistent as those that do. If such persons

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do not rejoice in iniquity, it is nevertheless “sweet in their mouth,” and they “drink it in like water.” Their plea is, that they do not speak of it with pleasure, but with grief bear their testimony against it. But grief is a very different passion from that which swells in their bosoms. Grief is solitary and silent. “He sitteth alone and keepeth silence.” Who ever heard of a man’s proclaiming his grief to every passing stranger? Yet, you may not be five minutes in the company of one of these persons, till he begins to proclaim his grief at the delinquencies of his Christian brethren. And the harsh and bitter spirit, which palms itself on the conscience as a testimony against sin, is but an exhibition of impenitent pride. It bears not the most distant semblance of Christian humility and fidelity. “Brethren,” says the apostle, “if a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; *considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*” But, from the fault-finding and censorious spirit of some people, one would suppose it never came into their minds to consider whether it might not be possible for them to fall into the same condemnation; although an examination of the lamentable falls that have taken place might show a fearful list of delinquents from this class of persons. David, while in his fallen state, pronounced sentence of death upon the man in Nathan’s parable, whose crime was but a faint shadow of his own. The Scribes and Pharisees were indignant at the wretched woman who had been taken in sin; yet they afterwards, by their own conduct, confessed themselves guilty of the same crime. Judas was one of your censorious fault-finders. He was the one that found fault with the tender-hearted Mary, for her affectionate tribute of respect to the Lord of Life, before his passion. He thought it a great waste to pour such costly ointment on the feet of Jesus; and that it would have been much better to have sold it and given the money to the poor. He was very compassionate to the poor, and a great enemy of extravagance; but a little while afterwards, he sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. So, in every age, if you examine into the character of apostates, you will find that they have been noted for their severity against the sins of others; and particularly in making conscience of things indifferent, and pronouncing harsh judgment against those who refuse to conform to their views. Especially will such persons be grieved with their brethren on account of their dress, or style of living, or their manner of wearing the hair; or some such matter that does not reach the heart. I was once acquainted with a woman, who (except in her own family and among her neighbors) had the reputation of being *very devotedly pious*, who went to her pastor, (an aged and venerable man,) greatly grieved because he was in the habit of combing his hair upwards, so as to cover his baldness. She was afraid it was pride. She was a great

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talker, and often had difficulties with her brethren and sisters in the church; for she thought it her duty to exercise a watchful care over them. Whether she was self-deceived, or hypocritical, I cannot say; but she used to shed tears freely in her religious conversations. She, however, as I have since learned, after maintaining her standing in the church for many years, apostatized and became openly abandoned. You need not look over half a dozen parishes, anywhere, to find cases of a kindred character.

The humble Christian, who looks back to the “hole of the pit whence he was digged,” and remembers that he now stands by virtue of the same grace that took his feet out of the “horrible pit and miry clay,” will be the last person to vaunt over the fallen condition of his fellow-creatures. He will look upon them with an eye of tender compassion; and his rebukes will be administered in a meek, subdued, and humble spirit, remembering the injunction of Paul, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” But the spirit of which I have been speaking is not only *carnal*, but *devilish*. The devil is the *accuser of the brethren*.

But charity not only rejoiceth not in iniquity, but, *positively*, rejoiceth in the truth—is glad of the success of the gospel, and rejoices in the manifestation of the grace of God, by the exhibition of the fruits of his Spirit in the character and conduct of his people. Hence, it will lead us to look at the bright side of men’s characters; and if they give any evidence of piety, to rejoice in it, and glorify God for the manifestation of his grace in them, while we overlook, or behold with tenderness and compassion, their imperfections. And this accords with the feelings of the humble Christian. He thinks so little of himself, and feels such a sense of his own imperfections, that he quickly discerns the least evidence of Christian character in others; and he sees so much to be overlooked in himself, that he is rather inclined to the extreme of credulity, in judging the characters of others. He is ready, with Paul, to esteem himself “less than the least of all saints;” and where he sees any evidence of piety in others, he can overlook many deficiencies.

I am persuaded, that in few things we are more deficient than in the exercise of joy and gratitude for the grace of God manifested in his children. There are few of the epistles of Paul which do not commence with an expression of joy and thanksgiving for the piety of those to whom he was writing. I have been surprised, on looking over them, to find these expressions so full and so frequent. They are too numerous to be quoted in this place; but I entreat you to examine them for yourself. Even in regard to the Corinthians, among whom so many evils existed, he says, “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.” But who among us is ever heard thanking God for the

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piety of his brethren? On the contrary, how many of the prayers that are offered up in our social meetings resemble the errands of a churlish man, who never visits his neighbor's house without entering some complaint against his children! Yet, we are under greater obligations for the least exhibition of gracious fruits in the lives of his people, than for the daily bounties of his providence, inasmuch as the gift of the Holy Ghost is greater than food and raiment.

X. Thus far, with the exception of the first two heads, and a part of the last, we have had the *negative* character of Charity. We now come to its *positive* manifestations, which have, however, to a considerable extent, been anticipated in the previous consideration of the subject.

1. Charity *beareth all things*; or, as it may be rendered, *covereth all things*. This seems to be more agreeable to the context; for otherwise it would mean the same as *endureth all things*, in the latter clause of the verse, and thus make a tautology; while it leaves a deficiency in the description, indicated by the passage in Peter, "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins." "Charity will draw a vail over the faults of others, so far as is consistent with duty." What trait of character can be more amiable and lovely? It is the genuine spirit of the gospel, which requires us to "do unto others as we would they should do to us." And who would like to have his faults made the subject of common conversation among his acquaintances? If no one would like to be thus "served up," let him be cautious how he treats others. And, if it is contrary to charity thus to speak of the faults of individuals, it is not the less so to speak of the faults of masses of men, as of the clergy or of the church. The injustice is the more aggravated, because it is condemning by wholesale. A member of the church of Christ, who speaks much of its corruptions, is guilty of the anomalous conduct of *speaking evil of himself*; for the members of Christ's body are *all one in him*. It may sometimes be our duty to speak of the faults of others; but, where charity reigns in the heart, this will be done only in cases of unavoidable necessity, and then with great pain and sacrifice of feeling. The benevolent heart feels for the woes of others, and even compassionates their weakness and wickedness. It will desire, therefore, as much as possible, to hide them from the public gaze, unless the good of others should require their exposure; and even then, will not do it with wanton feelings. But these remarks apply with much greater force to the practice of Christians speaking of one another's faults. Where is the heart that would not revolt at the idea of brothers and sisters scanning each other's faults, in the ears of strangers? Yet the relation of God's children is far more endearing than the ties of consanguinity.

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2. Charity *believeth all things, hopeth all things*. This is the opposite of jealousy and suspicion. It is a readiness to believe everything in favor of others; and even when appearances are very strong against them, still to hope for the best. This disposition will lead us to look at the characters of others in their most favorable light; to give full weight to every good quality, and full credit for every praiseworthy action; while every palliating circumstance is viewed in connection with deficiencies and misconduct. Charity will never attribute an action to improper motives or a bad design, when it can account for it in any other way; and, especially, it will not be quick to charge hypocrisy and insincerity upon those who seem to be acting correctly. It will give credit to the professions of others, unless obviously contradicted by their conduct. It does not, indeed, forbid prudence and caution—"The simple believeth every word; but the prudent man looketh well to his going"—but it is accustomed to repose confidence in others, and it will not be continually watching for evil.

A charitable spirit is opposed to the prevailing disposition for discussing private character. It will not willingly listen to criticisms upon the characters of others, nor the detail of their errors and imperfections; and it will turn away with disgust and horror from petty scandal and evil-speaking, as offensive to benevolent feeling. It is a kind of *moral sense*, which recoils from detraction and backbiting.

3. Charity *endureth all things*. This is nearly synonymous with long-suffering; and yet it is a more extensive expression. It will endure with patience, and suffer without anger or bitterness of feeling, everything in social life which is calculated to try our tempers, and exhaust our patience. It is not testy, and impatient at the least opposition, or the slightest provocation; but endures the infirmities, the unreasonableness, the ill-humor, and the hard language of others, with a meek and quiet spirit.

Finally, charity is the practical application of the golden rule of our Saviour, and the second table of the law, to all our intercourse with our fellow-men, diffusing around us a spirit of kindness and benevolent feeling. It comprehends all that is candid and generous, bland and gentle, amiable and kind, in the human character, regenerated by the grace of God. It is opposed to all that is uncandid and disingenuous, coarse and harsh, unkind, severe, and bitter, in the disposition of fallen humanity. It is the bond, which holds society together, the charm which sweetens social intercourse, and the UNIVERSAL PANACEA, which, if it cannot cure, will at least mitigate, all the diseases of the social state. That you may possess it in its highest earthly perfection, is the sincere prayer of

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XVII.

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Harmony of Christian Character.

“And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.”—2 PE. 1:5-7.

MY DEAR SISTER,

In my first letter, I spoke of the importance of growth in grace, and enumerated some of the fruits of the Spirit. I revert to the same subject again, for the purpose of showing the importance of cultivating the several Christian graces in due proportion, so as to attain to a uniform consistency of character.

Nothing delights the senses like harmony. The eye rests with pleasure on the edifice which is complete in all its parts, according to the laws of architecture; and the sensation of delight is still more exquisite, on viewing the harmonious combination of colors, as exhibited in the rainbow, or the flowers of the field. The ear, also, is ravished with the harmony of musical sounds, and the palate is delighted with savory dishes. But take away the cornice, or remove a column from the house, or abstract one of the colors of the rainbow, and the eye is offended; remove from the scale one of the musical sounds, and give undue prominence to another, and harmony will become discord; and what could be more insipid than a savory dish without salt?

So it is with the Christian character. Its beauty and loveliness depend on the harmonious culture of all the Christian graces. If one is deficient, and another too prominent, the idea of deformity strikes the mind with painful sensations, somewhat similar to those produced by harsh, discordant musical sounds, or by the disproportionate exhibition of colors.

It was, probably, with an eye to this, that the apostle gave the exhortation above quoted. He was exhorting to growth in grace; and he would have the new man grow up with symmetrical proportions, so as to form the “stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus,” not having all the energies concentrated in one member, but having the body complete in all its parts, giving a due proportion of comeliness, activity, and strength to each. Thus, he says, *Add to your faith virtue*. By faith, I suppose we are to understand the elementary principle of the Christian character, as exhibited in regeneration; or the act which takes hold of Christ. But we are not to rest in this. We are to add *virtue*, or strength and courage, to carry out our new principle of action. But this is not all that is needed. We may be full of courage and zeal; yet, if we are ignorant of truth and duty, we shall make sad work of it, running headlong, first into this extravagance, and then into that, disturbing the plans of others, and defeating our own, by a rash and heedless course of conduct.

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Young Christians are in danger of making religion consist too exclusively in emotion, which leads them to undervalue knowledge. But while emotion is inseparable from spiritual religion, knowledge is no less essential to intelligent emotion. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion; and though a person may be sincerely and truly pious, with only the knowledge of a few simple principles, yet, without a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of religious truth, the Christian character will be weak and unstable, easily led astray, and carried about by every wind of doctrine. Knowledge is also essential to a high degree of usefulness. It expands and invigorates the mind, and enables us, with divine aid, to devise and execute plans of usefulness, with prudence and energy.

But knowledge alone is not sufficient; nor even knowledge added to faith. Temperance must be added, as a regulator, both of soul and body. All our appetites and passions, desires and emotions, must be brought within the bounds of moderation. And to temperance must be added patience, that we may be enabled to endure the trials of this life, and not to faint under the chastening hand of our heavenly Father. As it is through much tribulation that we are to enter into the kingdom of heaven, we have need of patience, both for our own comfort, and for the honor of religion. Indeed, no grace is more needful, in the ordinary affairs of life. It is the little, every-day occurrences that try the Christian character: and it is in regard to these that patience works experience. Many of these things are more difficult to be borne than the greater trials of life, because the hand of God is less strikingly visible in them. But patience enables us to endure those things which cross the temper, with a calm, unruffled spirit; to encounter contradictions, little vexations, and disappointments, without fretting, or repining; and saves us from sinking under severe and protracted afflictions.

To patience must be added godliness, “which is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” To be *godly*, is to be, in a measure, *like God*. It is to be “renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created us,” and to have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus. This is the fruit of that patience which works experience, and results in hope, which maketh not ashamed.

To godliness must be added brotherly kindness; which is but acting out the state of heart expressed by *godliness*, which indicates a partaking of divine benevolence.

Then comes the crowning grace of CHARITY, “which is the bond of perfectness,” comprehending the whole circle of the social virtues.

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Where all these qualities exist, in due proportion, they will form a lovely character, harmonious and beautiful as the seven colors of the rainbow; yea, with the addition of an eighth, of crowning lustre. But, if any one suffers his religious feelings to concentrate on one point, as though the whole of religion consisted in zeal, or devotional feeling, or sympathy, or the promotion of some favorite scheme of benevolence, you will find an exhibition of character as unlovely and repulsive as though the seven colors of the rainbow should concentrate in one, of livid hue, or pale blue, or sombre gray; as disagreeable as though the sweet melody of a harmonious choir were changed into a dull, monotonous bass; and as unsavory as a dish of meats seasoned only with bitter herbs.

This disproportionate development of Christian character is more frequently seen in young converts: especially such as have not received a thorough Christian education, and are, consequently, deficient in religious knowledge. They find themselves in a new world, and become so much absorbed in the contemplation of the new objects that present themselves to their admiring gaze, that they seem almost to forget that they have any other duties to perform than those which consist in devotional exercises. If these are interrupted, they will fret and worry their minds, and wish for some employment entirely of a religious nature. They wonder how it is possible for Christians to be so *cold*, as to pursue their worldly employments as diligently as they do who take this world for their portion; and often you will hear them breaking out in expressions of great severity against older Christians, because they do not sympathize with them in these feelings. Their daily employments become irksome; and they are tempted even to neglect the interests of their employers, with the plea, that the service of God has the first claim upon them. But they forget that the service of God consists in the faithful performance of every social and relative duty, "*as unto the Lord, and not to men*," as well as the more direct devotional exercises; and that the one is as essential to the Christian character as the other. The Bible requires us to be "diligent in business," as well as "fervent in spirit;" and the religion of the Bible makes us better in all the relations of this life, as well as in our relations with God.

Young Christians are also prone to undervalue *little things*. The greater things of religion take such strong possession of their souls, that they overlook many minor things of essential importance. In seasons of special religious awakening, this mistake is very common; in consequence of which, many important interests suffer, and the derangement which follows, makes an unfavorable impression as to the influence of revivals. The spirit of the Christian religion requires that every duty should be discharged in its proper time. The beauty of the Christian character

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greatly depends on its symmetrical proportions. A person may be very zealous in some things, and yet quite defective in his Christian character. And the probability is, that he has no more religion than shows itself in its consistent proportions. The new energy imparted by the regenerating grace of God may unite itself with the strong points of his character, and produce a very prominent development; while, in regard to those traits of character which are naturally weak, in his constitutional temperament, grace may be scarcely perceptible. For instance, a person who is naturally bold and resolute, will be remarkable, when converted, for his *moral courage*; while, perhaps, he may be very deficient in *meekness*. And the one who is naturally weak and irresolute, will perhaps be remarkable for the mild virtues, but very deficient in strength and energy of character. Now, the error lies in cultivating almost exclusively those Christian graces which fall in with our prominent traits of character. We should rather bend our energies, by the grace of God, chiefly to the development of those points of character which are naturally weak, while we discipline, repress, and bring under control, those which are too prominent. This will prevent deformity, and develop a uniform consistency of character.

There is, perhaps, a peculiar tendency to this *one-sided* religion in this age of excitement and activity; and the young convert, whose Christian character is not matured, is peculiarly liable to fall into this error. The mind becomes absorbed with one object. The more exclusively this object is contemplated, the more its importance is magnified. It becomes, to his mind, the *main thing*. It is identified with his ideas of religion. He makes it a *test of piety*. Then he is prepared to regard and treat all who do not come up to his views on this point as destitute of true religion; though they may exhibit a consistency of character, in other respects, to which he is a stranger. This leads to denunciation, alienation of feeling, bitterness, and strife. But one of God's commands is as dear to him as another; and we cannot excuse ourselves before him, for disobeying one, on the ground that we practise another. The perfection of Christian character consists in the harmonious development of the Christian graces. This is what I understand by the "stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus;" a man who has no deformity; who is complete in all his members and all his faculties. That you may attain to this, is the sincere prayer of

Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XVIII.

Marriage.

"Marriage is honorable in all."—HEB. 13:4.

MY DEAR SISTER,

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Some young persons indulge a fastidiousness of feeling, in relation to the subject of marriage, as though it were indelicate to speak of it. Others make it the principal subject of their thoughts and conversation; yet they seem to think it must never be mentioned but in jest. But both these extremes should be avoided. Marriage is an ordinance of God, and therefore a proper subject of thought and discussion, with reference to personal duty. But it is a matter of great importance, having a direct bearing upon the glory of God, and the happiness of individuals. It should, therefore, never be approached with levity. But, as it requires no more attention than what is necessary in order to understand present duty, it would be foolish to make it a subject of constant thought, and silly to make it a common topic of conversation. It is a matter which should be weighed deliberately and seriously by every young person. In reference to the main subject, two things should be considered:

I. *Marriage is desirable.* It was ordained by the Lord, at the creation, as suited to the state of man as a social being, and necessary to the design for which he was created. Whoever, therefore, wilfully neglects it, contravenes the order of nature, and must consequently expect a diminution of those enjoyments which arise from the social state. There is a sweetness and comfort in the bosom of one's own family, which can be enjoyed nowhere else. In early life, this is supplied by our youthful companions, who feel in unison with us. But, as a person who remains single advances in life, the friends of his youth form new attachments, in which he is incapable of participating. Their feelings undergo a change, of which he knows nothing. He is gradually left alone. No heart beats in unison with his own. His social feelings wither for want of an object. As he feels not in unison with those around him, his habits also become peculiar, and perhaps repulsive; so that his company is not desired: hence arises the whimsical attachment of such persons to domestic animals, or to other objects which can be enjoyed in solitude. As the dreary winter of age advances, the solitude of his condition becomes still more chilling. Nothing but that sweet resignation to the will of God which religion gives, under all circumstances, can render such a situation tolerable. But religion does not annihilate the social affections. It only regulates them. It is evident, then, that by a lawful and proper exercise of these affections, both our happiness and usefulness may be greatly increased.

II. *On the other hand, do not consider marriage as absolutely essential to happiness.* Although it is an ordinance of God, yet he has not absolutely enjoined it upon all. You may, therefore, be in the way of duty while neglecting it. And the apostle Paul hints that there may be, with those who enter into this state, a greater tendency of the heart towards earthly objects. There is also

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an increase of care. "The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but she that is married, careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." But much more has been made of this than the apostle intended. It has been greatly abused and perverted by the church of Rome. It must be observed that, in the same chapter, he advises that "every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband." And, whatever may be our condition in life, if we seek it with earnestness and perseverance, in the way of duty, God will give us grace sufficient for the day. But he says, though it is no sin to marry, nevertheless, "such shall have trouble in the flesh." It is undoubtedly true, that the enjoyments of conjugal life have their corresponding difficulties and trials; and if these are enhanced by an unhappy connection, the situation is insufferable. For this reason I would have you avoid the conclusion that marriage is indispensable to happiness. Single life is certainly to be preferred to a connection with a person who will diminish, instead of increasing, your happiness. However, the remark of the apostle, "such shall have trouble in the flesh," doubtless had reference chiefly to the peculiar troubles of the times, when Christians were exposed to persecution, the loss of goods, and even of life itself, for Christ's sake; the trials of which would be much greater in married than in single life.

Having these two principles fixed in your mind, you will be prepared calmly to consider what qualifications are requisite in a companion for life. These I shall divide into two classes: 1. Those which are *indispensable*. 2. Those which are *desirable*. Of the first class, I see none which can be dispensed with, without so marring the character of a man as to render him an unfit associate for an intelligent Christian lady. But, although the latter are very important, yet, without possessing all of them, a person may be an agreeable companion and a man of real worth.

FIRST CLASS.

1. *The first requisite in a companion for life is piety.* I know not how a Christian can form so intimate a connection as this with one who is living in rebellion against God. You profess to love Jesus above every other object; and to forsake all, that you may follow him. How, then, could you unite your interest with one who continually rejects and abuses the object of your soul's delight? Indeed, I am at a loss to understand how a union can be formed between the carnal and the renewed heart. They are in direct opposition to each other. The one overflows with love to God; the other is at enmity against him. How, then, can there be any congeniality of feeling? Can fire unite with water? A desire to form such a union must be a dark mark against any one's Christian character. The Scriptures are very clear and decided on this point. The

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intermarrying of the righteous with the wicked was the principal cause of the general corruption of the inhabitants of the old world, which provoked God to destroy them with the flood. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was careful that Isaac, the son of promise, should not take a wife from among the heathen. The same precaution was taken by Isaac and Rebecca, in relation to Jacob. The children of Israel were also expressly forbidden to make marriages with the heathen, lest they should be turned away from the Lord, to the worship of idols. And we see a mournful example of the influence of such unholy connections in the case of Solomon. Although he had been so zealous in the service of the Lord as to build him a temple—although he had even been inspired to write portions of the Holy Scriptures—yet his strange wives turned away his heart, and persuaded him to worship idols. Although we are now under a different dispensation, yet *principles* remain the same. The union of a heathen and a Jew was, as to its effect on a pious mind, substantially the same as the union of a believer and an unbeliever; and the former would be no more likely to be drawn away from God by it than the latter. Hence we find the same principle recognized in the New Testament. The apostle Paul, speaking of the woman, says, “If her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.” The phrase *in the Lord*, denotes being a true Christian; as will appear from other passages where the same form of expression is used. “If any man be *in Christ*, he is a new creature.” It is plainly implied, then, in this qualifying phrase, that it is unlawful for a Christian to marry an unbeliever. The same doctrine is also taught by the same apostle in another place. “Be not ye, therefore, unequally yoked with unbelievers.” In this passage the apostle lays down a general principle; which applies to all intimate associations with unbelievers. And what connection could be more intimate than this? I conclude, therefore, that it is contrary both to reason and Scripture for a Christian to marry an impenitent sinner. And, in this respect, look not only for an outward profession, but for evidence of deep-toned and devoted piety. There are many professors of religion who show very few signs of spiritual life. And there are doubtless many that make loud professions of religious experience, who know nothing of the power of godliness. Look for a person who makes religion the chief concern of his life; who is determined to live for God, and not for himself. Make this the test. Worldly-minded professors of religion are worse associates than those who make no profession. They exert a more withering influence upon the soul.

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2. *Another indispensable requisite is an AMIABLE DISPOSITION.* Whatever good qualities a man may possess, if he is selfish, morose, sour, peevish, fretful, jealous, or passionate, he will make an uncomfortable companion. Grace may do much towards subduing these unholy tempers; yet, if they were fostered in the heart in childhood, and suffered to grow up to maturity before grace began to work, they will often break out in the family circle. However, you will find it exceedingly difficult to judge in this matter. The only direction I can give on this subject is, that, if you discover the exercise of any unhallowed passions in a man, with the opportunity you will have of observation, you may consider it conclusive evidence of a disposition which would render you miserable.

3. *The person of your choice must possess a WELL-CULTIVATED MIND.* In order to produce a community of feeling, and maintain a growing interest in each other's society, both parties must possess minds well stored with useful knowledge, and capable of continued expansion. We may love an ignorant person for his piety; but we cannot long enjoy his society, as a constant companion, unless that piety is mingled with intelligence. To secure your esteem, as well as your affections, he must be capable of intelligent conversation on all subjects of general interest.

4. *His sentiments and feelings on general subjects must be CONGENIAL with your own.* This is a very important matter. Persons of great worth, whose views and feelings, in relation to the common concerns of life are opposite, may render each other very unhappy. Particularly, if you possess a refined sensibility yourself, you must look for delicacy of feeling in a companion. A very worthy man may render you unhappy, by an habitual disregard of your feelings. And there are many persons who seem to be utterly insensible to the tender emotions of refined delicacy. A man who would subject you to continual mortification by his coarseness and vulgarity, would be incapable of sympathizing with you in all the varied trials of life. There is no need of your being deceived on this point. If you have much delicacy of feeling yourself, you can easily discover the want of it in others. If you have not, it will not be necessary in a companion.

5. *Another requisite is ENERGY OF CHARACTER.* Most people think some worldly prospects are indispensably necessary. But a man of energy can, by the blessing of God, make his way through this world, and support a family, in this land of plenty, by his own industry, in some lawful calling. And you may be certain of the blessing of God, if you obey and trust him. A profession or calling, pursued with energy, is therefore all the estate you need require. But do not trust yourself with a man who is inefficient in all his undertakings. This would be leaning upon a broken staff.

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6. *The person of your choice must be NEARLY OF YOUR OWN AGE.* Should he be younger than yourself you will be tempted to look upon him as an inferior; and old age will overtake you first. I should suppose the idea of marrying a man advanced in years would be sufficiently revolting to the feelings of a young female to deter her from it. Yet such things often happen. But I consider it as contravening the order of nature, and therefore improper. In such case, you will be called upon rather to perform the office of a daughter and nurse, than a wife.

SECOND CLASS.

1. *It is desirable that the man with whom you form a connection for life should possess a SOUND BODY.* A man of vigorous constitution will be more capable of struggling with the difficulties and trials of this world, than one who is weak in body. Yet, such an erroneous system has been pursued, in the education of the generation just now coming upon the stage of action, that the health of very few sedentary persons remains unimpaired. It would, therefore, be cruel selfishness to refuse to form a connection of this kind, on this ground alone, provided they have no settled disease upon them. A person of feeble constitution requires the comfort and assistance of a companion, more than one in vigorous health. But, it certainly would not be your duty to throw yourself away upon a person already under the influence of an incurable disease.

2. *REFINEMENT OF MANNERS is a very desirable quality in a companion for life.* This renders a person's society more agreeable and pleasant, and may be the means of increasing his usefulness. Yet it will not answer to make it a test of character; for it is often the case, that men of the brightest talents, and of extensive education, who are in every other respect amiable and worthy, have neglected the cultivation of their manners; while there are very many, destitute alike of talent and education, who seem to be adepts in the art of politeness. However, this may be cultivated. A person of good sense, who appreciates its importance, may soon acquire a courteous and pleasing address, by mingling with refined society.

3. *A SOUND JUDGMENT is also very necessary, to enable a man to direct the common affairs of life.* However, this may also be cultivated by experience, and therefore cannot be called indispensable.

4. *PRUDENCE is very desirable.* The rashest youth, however, will learn prudence by experience. After a few falls, he will look forward before he steps that he may foresee and shun the evil that is before him; but, if you choose such a one, take care that you do not fall with him, and both of you break your necks together.

5. *It is a matter of great importance that the person with whom you form a connection for life, should belong to the same denomination of Christians with yourself.* The separation of a family, in their attendance upon public worship, is productive of great



inconvenience and perplexity; and there is serious danger of its giving rise to unpleasant feelings, and becoming an occasion of discord. I think it should be a very serious objection against any man, that he belongs to a different communion from yourself. Yet, I dare not say that I would prefer single life to a connection of this kind.

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In addition to these, your own good sense and taste will suggest many other desirable qualities in a companion for life.

Upon receiving the addresses of a man, your first object should be to ascertain whether he possesses those prominent traits of character which you consider indispensable. If he lack any one of these, you have no further inquiry to make. Inform him openly and ingenuously of your decision; but spare his feelings as far as you can consistently with Christian sincerity. He is entitled to your gratitude for the preference he has manifested for yourself. Therefore, treat him courteously and tenderly; yet let him understand that your decision is conclusive and final. If he possess only the feelings of a gentleman, this course will secure for you his esteem and friendship. But if you are satisfied, with respect to these prominent traits of character, next look for those qualities which you consider *desirable*, though not *indispensable*. If you discover few or none of these, it will be a serious objection against him. But you need not expect to find them all combined in any one person. If you seek for a perfect character, you will be disappointed. In this as well as every other relation of life, you will need to exercise forbearance. The best of men are compassed about with imperfection and infirmity. Besides, as you are not perfect yourself, it would seem like a species of injustice to require perfection in a companion.

While deciding these points, keep your feelings entirely under control. Suffer them to have no influence upon your judgment. A Christian should never be governed by impulse. Many persons have, no doubt, destroyed their happiness for life, by suffering their feelings to get the better of their judgment. Make the matter a subject of daily prayer. The Lord directs all our ways, and we cannot expect to be prospered in anything, wherein we neglect to acknowledge him, and seek his direction. But, when you have satisfied yourself, in relation to these things, and the person whose addresses you are receiving has distinctly avowed his intentions, you may remove the restraint from your feelings; which, as well as your judgment, have a deep concern in the affair. A happy and prosperous union must have for its basis a mutual sentiment of affection, of a peculiar kind. If you are satisfied that this sentiment exists on his part, you are to inquire whether you can exercise it towards him. For, with many persons of great worth, whom we highly esteem, there is often wanting a certain undefinable combination of qualities, not improperly termed the *soul of character*; which alone seems to call out the exercise of that peculiar sentiment of which we are speaking. But I seriously charge you never to form a connection which is not based upon this principle; and that, for the following reasons:

1. Such depraved creatures as we are, need the aid of the warmest affection, to enable us to exercise that mutual forbearance, so indispensable to the peace and happiness of the domestic circle.

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2. That the marriage covenant should be cemented by a principle of a peculiar kind, will appear from the superiority of the soul over the body. When two human beings unite their destinies, there must be a union of soul, or else such union is but partial. And the union of soul must be the foundation of the outward union, and of course precede it.

3. We may infer the same thing from the existence of such a principle in the human breast. That it does exist, may be abundantly proved, both by Scripture and experience. When Adam first saw Eve, he declared the nature of this union, and added, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife;" implying that the affection between the parties to this connection, should be superior to all other human attachments. The frown of God must then rest upon a union founded upon any other principle; for by it the order of nature is contravened, and therefore the blessings of peace and happiness cannot be expected to attend it.

However, love is not a principle which is brought into existence as it were by magic. It must always be exercised in view of an object. Do not, therefore, hastily decide that you cannot love a man who possesses the prominent traits of character necessary to render you happy. However, be fully satisfied that such a sentiment of a permanent character, does really exist in your own bosom, before you consent to a union.

In your ordinary intercourse with gentlemen, much caution should be observed. Always maintain a dignity of character, and never condescend to trifle. In your conversation, however, upon general subjects, you may exercise the same sociability and freedom which you would with ladies; not seeming to be sensible of any difference of sex. Indignantly repel any improper liberties; but never decline attentions which are considered as belonging to the rules of common politeness, unless there should be something in the character of the individual which would justify you in wishing wholly to avoid his society. Some men are so disagreeable in their attentions, and so obtrusive of their company, that they become a great annoyance to ladies. I think the latter justifiable in refusing the attentions of such men, till they learn better manners. Pay the strictest regard to propriety and delicacy, in all your conduct; yet do not maintain such a cold reserve and chilling distance, as to produce the impression in the mind of every one you meet, that you dislike his society. No gentleman of refined and delicate feelings, will intrude his company upon ladies, when he thinks it is not desired; and you may create this impression, by carrying the rules of propriety to the extreme of reserve. But the contrary extreme, of manifesting an excessive fondness for the society of gentlemen, is still more to be avoided. By cultivating an acute sense of propriety in all things, with a nice discrimination of judgment, you will be able generally to direct your conduct aright in these matters.

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Never indulge feelings of partiality for any man until he has distinctly avowed his own sentiments, and you have deliberately determined the several points already mentioned. If you do you may subject yourself to much needless disquietude, and perhaps the most unpleasant disappointments. And the wounded feeling thus produced, may have an injurious effect upon your subsequent character and happiness.

I shall close this letter with a few brief remarks, of a general nature.

1. Do not suffer this subject to occupy a very prominent place in your thoughts. To be constantly ruminating upon it, can hardly fail of exerting an injurious influence upon your mind, feelings, and deportment; and you will be almost certain to betray yourself, in the society of gentlemen, and, perhaps, become the subject of merriment, as one who is anxious for a husband.

2. Do not make this a subject of common conversation. There is, perhaps, nothing which has a stronger tendency to deteriorate the social intercourse of young people than the disposition to give the subject of matrimonial alliances so prominent a place in their conversation, and to make it a matter of jesting and mirth. There are other subjects enough, in the wide fields of science, literature, and religion, to occupy the social hour, both profitably and pleasantly; and a dignified reserve on this subject will protect you from rudeness, which you will be very likely to encounter, if you indulge in jesting and raillery in regard to it.

3. Do not speak of your own private affairs of this kind, so as to have them become the subject of conversation among the circle of your acquaintances. It certainly does not add to the esteem of a young lady, among sensible people, for her to be heard talking about her beaux. Especially is this caution necessary in the case of a matrimonial engagement. Remember the old adage:

“There’s many a slip
Between the cup and the lip;”

and consider how your feelings would be mortified, if, after making such an engagement generally known among your acquaintances, anything should occur to break it off. In such case, you will have wounded feeling enough to struggle with, without the additional pain of having the affair become a neighborhood talk.

4. Do not make an engagement a long time before you expect it to be consummated. Such engagements are surrounded with peril. A few years may make such changes in the characters and feelings of young persons as to destroy the fitness and congeniality of the parties; while, if the union had been consummated, they would have assimilated to each other.

In short, let me entreat you to cultivate the most delicate sense of propriety in regard to everything having the most distant relation to this matter; and let all your feelings, conversation, and conduct, be regulated upon the most elevated principles of purity, refinement, and religion; but do not carry your delicacy and reserve to the extreme of *prudery*, which is an unlovely trait of character, and which adds nothing to the strength of virtue.

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Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XIX.

Submission to the Will of God; Dependence upon Him for Temporal Things, and Contentment under all Circumstances.

“Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.”—1 TIM. 6:8.

MY DEAR SISTER,

The secret of all true happiness lies in a cordial acquiescence in the will of God in all things. It is

“Sweet to lie passive in his hand,
And know no will but his.”

The great doctrine that God exercises a particular providence over every event, is most precious to the heart of every Christian. It enables him to see the hand of God, in directing all his affairs. Hence, the exceeding sinfulness of a repining, discontented, and unhappy temper. Indeed, it is difficult to reconcile the habitual indulgence of such a disposition with the existence of grace in the heart. The very first emotion of the new-born soul is *submission to the will of God*. Many people lose sight of the hand of God in those little difficulties and perplexities, which are of every day occurrence, and look only at second causes. And so they often do in more important matters. When they are injured or insulted by others, they murmur and complain, and give vent to their indignation against the immediate causes of their distress; forgetting that these are only the instruments which God employs for the trial of their faith or the punishment of their sins. Thus, God permitted Satan to try the faith of Job. Thus, he permitted Shimei to curse David. But the answer of this godly man is worthy of being imitated by all Christians under similar circumstances. “Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David.” Thus, also, the Lord employed the envy of Joseph’s brethren, to save the lives of all his father’s family. “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” The principal reason why the histories of the Bible are so much more instructive than other histories is, that the motives of men and the secret agency of divine Providence are brought to light. Hence, also, the reason why the events recorded in Scripture appear so marvellous. If we could see how the hand of God is concerned in all things that occur within our observation, they would appear no less wonderful.

In this doctrine, we have the strongest possible motive for a hearty and cheerful resignation to all the crosses and difficulties, trials and afflictions, which come upon us in this life, whatever may be their immediate cause. We know that they are directed by our heavenly Father, whose “tender mercies are over all his works;” and who “doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” And, whether we are Christians or not, the duty of submission remains the same. When we consider the relation which man sustains to God, as a guilty rebel against his government, we must see that, whatever may be our earthly afflictions, so long as we are out of hell, we are the living monuments of his mercy. “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins.”

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But, if we have evidence that we are the children of God, his promises furnish the most abundant consolation, in every trial. We are assured “that *all things* work together for good to them that love God.” And of this we have many examples in the Holy Scriptures, where the darkest providences have in the end, to be fraught with the richest blessings. It was so in the case of Joseph, already mentioned. We are also taught to look upon the afflictions of this life as the faithful corrections of a kind and tender Parent. “For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” How consoling the reflection, that all our sufferings are designed to mortify and subdue our corruptions, to wean us from the world, and lead us to a more humble and constant sense of our dependence upon God. Besides, the people of God have the most comforting assurances of his presence, in affliction, if they will but trust in him. “*In all thy ways acknowledge him*, and he shall direct thy steps.” “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: *he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*” “God is our refuge and strength, *a very present help in trouble*: therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord*; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.” O, how ungrateful for a child of God to repine at the dealings of such a tender and faithful parent! O, the ingratitude of unbelief! Who can accuse the Lord of unfaithfulness to the least of his promises? Why, then, should we refuse to trust him, when the assurances of his watchful care and love are so full, and so abundant?

We have not only strong ground of confidence in the Lord, under the pressure of afflictions in general, but we are particularly directed to look to him for the supply of all our temporal wants. If we have evidence that we are living members of the body of Christ, growing in grace and the knowledge of him, we have the most direct and positive assurances that all things needful for this life shall be supplied. Our Saviour, after showing the folly of manifesting an anxious concern about the supply of our temporal wants, since the Lord is so careful in feeding the fowls of the air, and clothing the lilies and the grass of the field, says,—“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” By this, however, we are not to understand that the Lord will give us every earthly blessing which we *desire*. We are so short-sighted as often to wish for things which would prove positively injurious to us. But we are to understand that he will give us all that he sees best for us. And surely

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we ought to be satisfied with this; for he who sees the end from the beginning must know much better than we what is for our good. The Scriptures abound with similar promises. "O fear the Lord, ye his saints; for *there is no want* to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord *shall not want any good thing*." "Trust in the Lord, and do good, and *verily thou shall be fed*. I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." "*No good thing will he withhold* from them that walk uprightly." "But my God shall *supply all your need*, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the *life that now is*, and of that which is to come." It must, then, be a sinful distrust of the word of God, to indulge in anxious fears about the supply of our necessities. If we believed these promises, in their full extent, we should always rest in them, and never indulge an anxious thought about the things of this life. This, God requires of us. "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, *neither be ye of doubtful mind*." "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" "Be careful for nothing." And nothing can be more reasonable than this requirement, when he has given us such full and repeated assurances that he will supply all our wants. The silver and the gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, belong to our heavenly Father. When, therefore, he sees that we need any earthly blessing, he can easily order the means by which it shall be brought to us.

From the precious truths and promises which we have been considering, we infer the *duty of contentment* in every situation of life. If God directs all our ways, and has promised to give us just what he sees we need, we surely ought to rest satisfied with what we have; for we know it is just what the Lord, in his infinite wisdom, and unbounded goodness, sees fit to give us. But the apostle Paul enforces this duty with direct precepts. "But godliness *with contentment*, is great gain." "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith *content*." "*Be content with such things as ye have*; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Here he gives the promise of God, as a reason for contentment. It is, then, evidently the duty of every Christian to maintain a contented and cheerful spirit, under all circumstances. This, however, does not forbid the use of all lawful and proper means to improve our condition. But the means must be used with entire submission to the will of God. The child of God should cast all his care and burden upon him; and when he has made all suitable efforts to accomplish what he considers a good object, he must commit the whole to the Lord, with a perfect willingness that his will should be done, even to the utter disappointment of his own hopes.



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Your affectionate Brother.

LETTER XX.

Self-Examination.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves.”—2 COR. 13:6.

MY DEAR SISTER,

In view of the positive injunction of Scripture, above quoted, no argument is necessary to show that self-examination is a duty. But if the word of God had been silent upon the subject, the importance of self-knowledge would have been a sufficient motive for searching into the secret springs of action which influence our conduct. A person ignorant of his own heart, is like a merchant, who knows not the state of his accounts, while every day liable to become a bankrupt; or, like the crew of a leaky vessel, who are insensible to their danger. The professed follower of Christ, who knows not whether he is a true or false disciple, is in a condition no less dangerous. And, as the heart is deceitful *above all things*, it becomes a matter of the utmost importance that we should *certainly know* that we are the children of God. Although we may be Christians, without the assurance of our adoption, yet we are taught in the Holy Scriptures, that such assurance is attainable. Job, in the midst of his affliction, experienced its comforting support. “*I know*,” says he, “that my Redeemer liveth.” David says with confidence, “*I shall* be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.” Paul also expresses the same assurance. “*I know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” All Christians are taught to expect the same, and exhorted to strive after it. “And we desire that *every one of you*, do show the same diligence to *the full assurance of hope*, unto the end.” “Let us draw near with a true heart, in *full assurance of faith*.” “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we *confidence* toward God.” “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are *sealed* unto the day of redemption.”

But, as gold dust is sometimes concealed in the sand, so grace in the heart may be mingled with remaining corruption, so that we cannot clearly distinguish its motions. It might not be for the benefit of a person of such low attainments in the divine life, to receive an assurance of God’s favor, until these corruptions have been so far subdued, as to give the principle of grace an ascendancy over all the faculties of the soul. Hence

God has wisely directed that the sure evidence of adoption can be possessed only by those who have made such eminent

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progress in holiness, as to be able to discern the fruits of the Spirit in their hearts and lives. The *witness of the Spirit* must not be sought in any sudden impulses upon the mind; but in the real work of grace in the heart, conforming it to the image of God. Even if God should indulge us with such impulses or impressions, they would not be certain evidence of our adoption; because Satan can counterfeit the brightest experiences of this kind. Hence, we may account for the *strong confidence* which is sometimes expressed by young converts, who afterwards fall away. But when the image of God can be seen in our hearts and lives, we may be *certain* that we are his children. That this is the true witness of the Spirit, maybe inferred from the passage last quoted. When this epistle was written, it was the custom of princes to have their names and images stamped upon their seals. These seals, when used, would leave the impression of the name and image of their owners upon the wax. So, when God sets his seal upon the hearts of his children, it leaves an impression of his name and image. The same thing may be intended in Revelation, where Jesus promises to give him that overcometh “a white stone, and in the stone a *new name* written.” A figure somewhat similar is also used in the third chapter of Malachi. Speaking of the Messiah, the prophet says, “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” A refiner of silver sits over the fire, with his eye steadily fixed upon the precious metal in the crucible, until he sees *his own image* in it, as we see our faces in the glass. So the Lord will carry on his purifying work in the hearts of his children, till he sees his own image there. When this image is so plain and clear as to be distinctly discerned by us, then the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits, that we are his children. As *love* is the most prominent and abiding fruit of the Spirit, it may be the medium through which the union between God and the soul is seen; and by which the child of God is assured of his adoption. A strong and lively exercise of a childlike, humble love, may give a clear evidence of the soul’s relation to God, as his child. “Love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for *God is love*.” As God is love, the exercise of that holy principle in the heart of the believer shows the impression of the divine image. “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Hence the apostle John says, “We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” But, if this love is genuine, it will regulate the emotions of the heart, and its effects will be visible in the lives of those who possess it. The same apostle says, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and *keep his commandments*.” So that in order to have certain evidence of our adoption into the blessed family, of which Jesus is the Elder Brother, all the fruits of the Spirit must have grown up to some degree of maturity.

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From the foregoing remarks, we see the great importance of *self-examination*. We must have an intimate acquaintance with the operations of our own minds, to enable us to distinguish between the exercise of gracious affections and the selfish workings of our own hearts. And, unless we are in the constant habit of diligent inquiry into the character of our emotions, and the motives of our actions, this will be an exceedingly difficult matter. The Scriptures specify several objects for which this inquiry should be instituted:

I. *To discover our sins, that we may come to Christ for pardon, and for grace to subdue them.* David prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and *see if there be any wicked way in me*, and lead me in the way everlasting." The prophet Jeremiah says, "Let us search and try our ways, and *turn again* unto the Lord." This examination should be a constant work. We should search into the motives of every action, and thoroughly examine every religious feeling, to know, if possible, whether it comes from the Spirit of God, or whether it is a fire of our own kindling. We must be cautious, however, lest, by diverting our attention from the truth, to examine the nature of the emotions produced by it, we should lose them altogether. This can better be determined afterward, by recalling to recollection these emotions, and the causes which produced them. If they were called forth by correct views of truth, and if they correspond in their nature with the descriptions of gracious affections contained in the Bible, we may safely conclude them to be genuine.

But, as we are often under the necessity of acting without much deliberation; as we are so liable to neglect duty; and as every duty is marred by so much imperfection, it is not only proper, but highly necessary, that we should have stated seasons for retiring into our closets, and calmly and deliberately reviewing our conduct, our religious exercises, and the prevailing state of our hearts, and comparing them with the Word of God. There are two very important reasons why this work should be performed at the close of every day. 1. If neglected for a longer period, we may forget both our actions and our motives. It will be very difficult for us afterwards to recall them, so as to subject them to a thorough examination. 2. There is a great propriety in closing up the accounts of every day. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Every day will bring with it work enough for repentance. Again, when we lie down, we may awake in eternity. What then will become of those sins which we have laid by for the consideration of another day? Let us, then, never give sleep to our eyes till we have searched out every sin of the past day, and made fresh application to the blood of Christ for pardon. I know this is a very difficult work; but, by frequent practice, it will become less so. I have prepared

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several sets of questions, from which you may derive some aid in the performance of this duty. By sitting down in your closet, after finishing the duties of the day, and seriously and prayerfully engaging in this exercise, you may try your conduct and feelings by the rules laid down in the Word of God. You may thus bring to remembrance the exercises of your heart, as well as your actions; and be reminded of neglected duty, and of those great practical truths, which ought ever to be kept before your mind. You may bring up your sins, and set them in order before you; and discover your easily besetting sins. You may be led to exercise penitential sorrow of heart, and be driven anew to the cross of Christ for pardon, and for strength to subdue indwelling corruption. Whenever you discover that you have exercised any correct feeling, or that your conduct has in any respect been conformed to the word of God, acknowledge with gratitude his grace in it, and give him the glory. Wherein you find you have been deficient, confess your sin before God, and apply afresh to the blood of Christ, which “cleanseth from all sin.” But be cautious that you do not put your feelings of regret, your tears and sorrows, in the place of the great sacrifice. Remember that no degree of sorrow can atone for sin; and that only is *godly sorrow* which leads to the blood of Jesus. Any peace of conscience, obtained from any other source, must be false peace. It is *in believing*, only, that we can have *joy and peace*.

You will find advantage from varying this exercise. When we frequently repeat anything in the same form, we are in danger of acquiring a careless habit, so that it will lose its effect. Sometimes take the ten commandments, and examine your actions and motives by them. And, in doing this, you will find great help from the explanation of the commandments contained in the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism. This shows their spirituality, and brings them home to the heart. Again, you may take some portion of Scripture, which contains precepts for the regulation of our conduct, and compare the actions of the day with them. Or, you may take the life of Christ as a pattern, compare your conduct and motives with it, and see whether in all things you have manifested his spirit.

But do not be satisfied till the exercise, however performed, has taken hold of the heart, and led to penitence for sin, and a sense of pardon through the blood of Christ, which accompanies true contrition; for “the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”

I have inserted several sets of questions for every day in the week, differing in length, to prevent monotony, and to accommodate those occasions when you have more or less time.

QUESTIONS FOR SATURDAY EVENING.

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How was my heart improved by the last Sabbath? How have I since improved the impressions I then received? What vows did I then make? How have I performed them? What progress have I made in the divine life? What conquests have I made by the grace of God over sin? What temptations have I encountered? What victories have I gained? What falls have I suffered? What lessons have I learned by them? What improvement have I made in divine knowledge? What good have I done? What was my frame of mind, on Monday, Tuesday, &c. (specifying and considering each day by itself.) What meetings have I attended? How was my heart affected by them? What business have I done? Was it all performed to the glory of God? Do I now hail the approach of the Sabbath with delight? Or do I indulge a secret regret that my worldly schemes should be interrupted by this hallowed season of rest?

QUESTIONS FOR SABBATH EVENINGS.

Did I yesterday make all needful preparations for the holy Sabbath? What was my frame of mind, on retiring to rest, at the close of the week? When I awoke, on this holy morning, towards what were my first thoughts directed? How did I begin the day? What public or private duties have I neglected? What has been my general frame of mind this day? With what preparation did I go to the sanctuary? How were my thoughts occupied on the way? What were my feelings, on entering the house of God? What was my general frame of mind, while there? What my manner? Have I felt any sensible delight in the exercises of public worship? With what feelings did I join the devotional exercises of singing and prayer? In what character did I view the preacher? As whose message did I receive the word? For whom did I hear—for myself, or for others? Was the word mixed with faith? How much prayer did I mingle with hearing? What evidence have I that it was attended by the Holy Spirit to my heart? Did I indulge wandering thoughts, in any part of the public services? How much progress have I made, in overcoming these heart-wanderings? How were my thoughts occupied on my return from public worship? [With what preparation did I go to the Sabbath-school? When I went before my class, what were my feelings in regard to their souls, and my own responsibility? How was my own heart affected with the truths contained in the lesson? What direct efforts have I made for their conversion? What general efforts to impress their minds with the truth? What prayers have I offered in their behalf? What have been my motives for desiring their conversion?] How much time have I spent this day in my closet? What have been my feelings in prayer? What in reading God's word? What in meditation? Have I felt and acknowledged my dependence upon the Holy Spirit for every right exercise of heart? What discoveries have I had of my own guilt and helplessness, and my need of a Saviour? How has Jesus appeared

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to me? What communion have I enjoyed with God? How have I felt, in view of my sins, and of God's goodness to me? What have been my feelings, on coming anew to the cross of Christ? Have I, at any time this day, indulged vain or worldly thoughts? Have I sought my own ease or pleasure? Have I engaged in worldly or unprofitable conversation? Do I now feel my soul refreshed, and my strength renewed, for the Christian warfare?

QUESTIONS TO BE USED IN SELF-EXAMINATION AT THE CLOSE OF EVERY DAY IN THE WEEK.

I.

To be used when time is very limited.

With what feelings did I compose myself to sleep last night? How were my thoughts employed during the wakeful hours of the night? What were my feelings on awaking? How did I begin the day? With what feelings and spirit have I engaged in the various devotions of the day? How have I enjoyed my hours of leisure? How have I performed the business of the day? What has been the spirit of my intercourse with others? What errors or what sins have I committed, in thought, word, or deed? What spiritual affections have I experienced, and what has been their effect upon me since? Have I made any *progress* in the Christian race?

II.

To be used on ordinary occasions.

With what frame of spirit did I close the last day? Upon what were my thoughts occupied during the wakeful hours of the night? What were my first emotions, as I awoke this morning? How did I begin the day? What communion have I held with God, in secret, this day? For whom have I lived? What has been my frame of spirit, while engaged in the employments of the day? What tempers have I exercised, in my intercourse with others? What temptations have I encountered? What has been the result? What conflicts have I had with my own corruptions? What progress have I made in subduing them? What trials have I experienced? How have I borne them? Have I felt my dependence upon God for everything? Have I indulged undue anxiety about the affairs of this world? Have I murmured at the dispensations of Providence? Have I indulged self-complacency or self-seeking? What views have I had of myself? How did they affect me? What discoveries have I made of the divine character? How have I been affected by them? Have I felt any longing desires after conformity to the



divine image? How has my heart been affected with my short-comings in obedience and duty? Has this driven me to Christ? Have I found pardon and peace in him? What sense of the divine presence have I maintained through the day? What spirit of prayer have I exercised this day? What has been the burden of my petitions? Why have I desired these things? How constant and how strong have been these desires? How often and how fervently have I carried them to the throne

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of grace? How have I felt in regard to the interests of Zion, the salvation of souls, and the glory of God? How have I felt towards my Christian brethren? Have I spoken evil of any, or listened with complacency to evil speaking? Have I exercised harshness, or an unforgiving temper, towards any? What have I done for the glory of God, or the good of my fellow-creatures? Have I watched over my heart, my tongue, and my actions? Have I maintained spirituality of mind through the day?

III.

Dr. Doddridge's Questions.

"Did I awake as with God this morning, and rise with a grateful sense of his goodness? How were the secret devotions of the morning performed? Did I offer my solemn praises, and renew the dedication of myself to God, with becoming attention and suitable affections? Did I lay my scheme for the business of the day wisely and well? How did I read the Scriptures, or any other devotional or practical piece which I afterwards found it convenient to review? Did it do my heart good, or was it a mere amusement? How have the other stated devotions of the day been attended, whether in the family or in public? Have I pursued the common business of the day with diligence and spirituality, doing everything in season, and with all convenient despatch, and as 'unto the Lord?' Col. 3:23. What time have I lost this day, in the morning, or the forenoon—in the afternoon, or the evening? (for these divisions will assist your recollection;) and what has occasioned the loss of it? With what temper, and under what regulations, have the recreations of this day been pursued? Have I seen the hand of God in my mercies, health, cheerfulness, food, clothing, books, preservation in journeys, success of business, conversation, and kindness of friends, &c.? Have I seen it in afflictions, and particularly in little things, which had a tendency to vex and disquiet me? Have I received my comforts thankfully, and my afflictions submissively? How have I guarded against the temptations of the day, particularly against this or that temptation, which I foresaw in the morning? Have I maintained a dependence on divine influence? Have I 'lived by faith on the Son of God,' (Gal. 2:20,) and regarded Christ this day as my teacher and governor, my atonement and intercessor, my example and guardian, my strength and forerunner? Have I been looking forward to death and eternity this day, and considered myself as a probationer for heaven, and, through grace, an expectant of it? Have I governed my thoughts well, especially in such or such an interval of solitude? How was my subject of thought this day chosen, and how was it regarded? Have I governed my discourses well, in such and such company? Did I say nothing passionate, mischievous, slanderous, imprudent, impertinent? Has my heart this day been full of love to God, and to all mankind? and have I sought, and found, and improved, opportunities of doing and getting good? With what attention and improvement have I read the Scriptures this evening? How was self-examination

performed the last night? and how have I profited this day by any remarks I then made on former negligences and mistakes? With what temper did I then lie down and compose myself to sleep?"

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IV.

To be used when you have more time than usual.

Did I last night compose myself to sleep with a sweet sense of the divine presence? Did I meditate upon divine things in the wakeful hours of the night? When I awoke this morning, did my heart rise up with gratitude to my merciful Preserver? Did I remember that I am indebted for life, and health, and every enjoyment, to the sufferings and death of my dear Redeemer? Did I renewedly consecrate my spared life to his service? And have I lived this day for God, and not for myself? Have I denied self, whenever it has come between me and duty? Have I indulged a self-seeking spirit? Have I refused to make any personal sacrifice, whereby I might glorify God, or do good to others? Has my heart been affected with any discoveries of the infinite loveliness of the divine perfections? Have I had a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the corruptions of my own heart in particular? Has this driven me from resting upon anything in myself, to put my trust alone in Christ? Have I felt any longing desires after conformity to the divine image? Have I felt any delight in the law of God? Has my heart been grieved to see that I fall so far short of keeping it? Has my soul been filled with joy and peace in believing in Christ? Have I felt a lively sense of the divine presence continually? Have I maintained a cheerful, serene, and peaceful temper of heart?

Have I studied the word of God with an earnest desire to know present duty? Have I neglected or delayed to perform any duty when it has been made known? Have I felt that God was speaking *to me* through his word? Have I sought the aid of the Holy Spirit? Have I read God's word with a prayerful spirit? Have I read it with self-application? Have I felt any sensible delight while reading it?

Have I spent any time in heavenly meditation? Was this exercise performed in a prayerful spirit? Did the truth I was contemplating deeply affect my own heart? Have my thoughts been habitually directed towards heavenly things?

Have I observed my regular seasons of prayer? Has my frame of spirit been, lively, and my thoughts collected, in this exercise? Have I felt my dependence upon the Spirit of God? Have I earnestly and sincerely desired the things for which I have asked? Have I desired them for the glory of God, or for the gratification of myself? Have I *laid hold* of the promises of God? Have I maintained a constant spirit of prayer? Have I sent up frequent ejaculations to God? In all my approaches to the throne of grace, have I come with a suitable preparation of heart? Has a sense of the divine presence filled me with holy awe and reverence? Has my heart been drawn out to God with filial affection and humble confidence, through Jesus the Mediator? Have I felt my need? Have I humbled myself low before God? Have I not regarded iniquity in my heart? Have I felt an humble submission to the will of God?

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Have I watched over my heart continually, against the temptations of Satan? Have I indulged wandering thoughts, during any of the devotional exercises of the closet? Have I watched over my fancy, and kept under my imagination? or have I suffered it to wander without control?

Have I exercised a proper control over all my appetites, desires, and passions? Have I used all diligence to improve my mind, that I might be capable of doing more for the glory of God, and the good of my fellow-creatures? Have I sought the aid of the Holy Spirit in this, also? Have I felt continually that my time is not my own? Have I employed every moment of the past day in the most profitable manner? Have I felt the pressure of present obligation?

Have I neglected any opportunity of doing good, either to the souls or bodies of others? Have I been modest, unobtrusive, and courteous, in all I have done and said? Have I been prudent and discreet in all things? Have I first sought the direction of God, and then entered upon these duties in a spirit of prayer?

Have I glorified God in my dress? Have I been influenced, in this respect, by the pride of appearance? Have I wasted any time at the toilet?

Have I felt any emotions of love for Christians? Has this love arisen from the image of Christ manifest in them; or from their friendship for me, and the comfort I have enjoyed in their society? Have I refused to make personal sacrifices for their benefit? Have I felt any love for the souls of sinners? What has this led me to do for their conversion? Have I exercised any feelings of compassion for the needy? What has this led me to do for them?

Have I manifested a morose, sour, and jealous disposition towards others? Have I been easily provoked? Have I been irritated with the slightest offences or crosses of my will? Have I indulged an angry, fretful, peevish temper? Have I spoken evil of any, or listened with complacency to evil-speaking? Do I now harbor ill-will towards any being on earth? In all my intercourse with others, have I manifested a softness and mildness of manner, and a kind and tender tone of feeling? Or have I indulged in harshness and severity, pride and arrogance? Have I exercised forbearance towards the faults of others? Have I from my heart forgiven them? Have I esteemed myself better than others? Have I felt the secret workings of spiritual pride? Have I engaged in trifling and vain conversation, or in any other manner conformed to the spirit of the world? Have I maintained Christian sincerity in all things? When in company, have I improved every opportunity of giving a profitable direction to conversation? Have I improved every opportunity to warn impenitent sinners? Have I gone into company, without first visiting my closet? Have I been diligent and faithful in the business of the day? Have I done the same to others as I would wish them to do to me?

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II. *Another object of self-examination may be, to ascertain the reason why the Lord does not answer our prayers.* This reason may generally be found in ourselves. I know of but two exceptions. One is, when the thing we ask is not agreeable to the will of God. The other is, when the Lord delays to answer our prayers for the trial of our faith. The obstacles which exist in ourselves, to prevent him from granting our requests, are generally some of the following:—1. We may be living in the practice of some sin, or the neglect of some duty. “If I regard iniquity in my heart,” says the Psalmist, “the Lord will not hear me.” “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” We may weep day and night, on our knees, before God, all our lives; yet if we are living in the habitual neglect of duty, or if any sin cleaves to us, for which we have not exercised repentance, and faith in the atoning blood of Christ, he will not hear our prayers. 2. We may not be sufficiently humble before God. “Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; *but the proud he knoweth afar off;*” “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” “Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” Hence, if our hearts are proud, and we refuse to humble ourselves deeply before God, he will not answer our prayers. 3. We may not desire the things we ask, that God may be glorified, but that it may minister to our own gratification. “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” When we ask with such motives, we have no right to expect that God will hear our prayers. 4. We may not be asking in faith. “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For *let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.*” “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” 5. We may be exercising an unforgiving-temper; and, if so, the Lord has declared that he will not hear our prayers. Mark 11:25, 26. Mat. 18:35.

When, therefore, you have been for some time praying for any particular object without receiving an answer, carefully examine yourself, with reference to these points; and wherein you find yourself deficient, endeavor, in the strength of Christ, immediately to reform. If your circumstances will permit, set apart a day of fasting and prayer for this object. And, if the answer is still delayed, repeat the examination, until you are certain that you have complied with all the conditions of the promises.

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III. *Another object of self-examination is, to ascertain the cause of afflictions, whether spiritual or temporal.* If the Lord sends distress upon us, or hides from us the light of his countenance, he has some good reason for it. By reading the book of Haggai, you will discover the principles upon which God deals with his people. If, therefore, the work of your hands does not prosper, or, if the Lord has withdrawn from you his special presence, be sure that something is wrong; it is time for you to “consider your ways.” In this book the Lord informs the Jews of the cause of their poverty and distress. They had not built the house of God. He also tells them that the silver and the gold are his; and that he will bless them as soon as they do their duty. We are as dependent upon God’s blessing now as his people were then. If we withhold from him what he requires of us for advancing the interests of his kingdom, can we expect temporal prosperity? If we refuse to do our duty, can we expect his presence? These, then, should be the subjects of inquiry, under such circumstances. In such cases, also, it may be very proper to observe a day of fasting and prayer.

IV. *Another object of self-examination is, to know whether we are Christians.* “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.” This is a very important inquiry. It is intimately connected with every other, and should enter more or less into all. In order to prosecute this inquiry, you must make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the evidences of Christian character. These are clearly exhibited in the holy Scriptures. Study the Bible diligently for this purpose; and, wherever you discover a mark of Christian character, inquire whether you possess it. You may also find benefit from the writings of men of great personal experience, who have had much opportunity of observing the effects of true and false religion. In particular, I would recommend to you the careful study of President Edwards’ *Treatise on Religious Affections*. He was a man of great piety, who had attained to the *full assurance of hope*. He had also passed through a number of revivals of religion. The work of which I speak contains a scriptural view of the evidences of the new birth; and also points out, with great clearness and discrimination, the marks of false religion. He distinguishes between those things which may be common both to true and false religion, and those which are the certain marks of true conversion.

Self-examination, for this object, should be habitual. In reading the Bible, in meditation, in hearing the word, wherever you see an evidence of Christian character, inquire whether you possess it. But this is not sufficient. You ought frequently to set apart seasons for the solemn and prayerful consideration of the important question,—“*Am I a Christian?*” A portion of the Sabbath may be very properly spent in this way. You should enter upon this work with the solemnities of the judgment-day

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before you. The Scriptures furnish abundant matter for self-examination. Bring the exercises of your heart, and the conduct of your life, to this unerring standard. You will also find much assistance in this exercise by the use of the following tracts, published by the American Tract Society:—No. 21, entitled “A Closet Companion;” No. 146, entitled “Helps to Self-Examination;” and No. 165, entitled “True and False Conversions Distinguished;” and likewise from a little work entitled “Are you a Christian?” by Rev. Hubbard Winslow. You have also probably noticed several chapters in Doddridge’s *Rise and Progress*, admirably adapted to this object. I mention these, because it is advantageous frequently to vary the exercise. The subject of true and false conversion is continually undergoing discussion; and those who feel truly anxious to know the foundations upon which they rest will not fail to avail themselves of every approved treatise on the subject. But, above all, study the Bible diligently and prayerfully, for the purpose of ascertaining the genuine marks of saving grace; take time to perform the work of self-examination thoroughly, bringing to your aid all the information you can obtain from these sources—varying the exercise, at different times, that it may not become superficial and formal.

I have also prepared some questions for this purpose, which you will find below. In these questions, I have not aimed at covering the whole ground of Christian experience, so much as to bring before the mind, in connection, some of the most prominent passages of Scripture relating to the evidences of Christian character. Nor have I taken particular pains to prevent the questions from involving each other; as we may detect our deficiencies on the same points the more readily by having them held up in a variety of views. The chief design of these questions will be lost, if you do not examine the passages of Scripture referred to. Some of the traits of character here presented may not be certain evidence of piety; while, in other cases, a person may be a Christian while possessing the graces mentioned in a much less *degree* than they are here represented. It is not necessary, where time is limited, to go through the whole of these questions at once; and probably in most cases it will be found more edifying to take up a portion of them at a time.

AM I A CHRISTIAN?

1. *Let me examine as to my views of Sin.* Have I beheld sin with an abhorrence far greater than the delight it ever gave me? Has that abhorrence arisen from an apprehension of the evil consequences to which it has exposed me, or of its odious nature, and its exceeding sinfulness as committed against God? Ps. 51:4. Isa. 1:2-4. Have I had a full apprehension of my own exceeding sinfulness? Ps. 51:4. Isa. 1:5, 6. Eph. 2:1-3. Have I felt my sins to be an insupportable burden? Ps. 38:2-7. Have I ceased attempting to justify

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myself? Job 40:4. Luke 18:11-14. Have I utterly despaired of all help from myself? Rom. 3:20. Have I abandoned all attempts to establish my own righteousness, by resolutions of amendment and future obedience? Rom. 9:32. 10:3. Have I exercised sincere and heartfelt sorrow on account of my sins? Ps. 38:17, 18. Has this been the sorrow of the world which worketh death? 2 Cor. 7:10, I.c. 2 Sam. 17:23. Matt. 27:3-5. Acts 8:24. Or has it been godly sorrow, which worketh repentance not to be repented of? 2 Cor. 7:9-11. Has my heart been broken, contrite, and humble, under a sense of my sins against God? Ps. 34:18. 51:17. Isa. 57:15. Has this sense of sin emptied me of myself, and begotten a deep poverty of spirit? Isa. 66:2. Matt. 5:3. Has it led me to feel my unworthiness of God's favor? Gen. 32:10. Luke 15:19. 18:13, 14. Have I been filled with shame and self-loathing, on account of the exceeding greatness of my sin, considered under a view of the infinite purity and awful majesty of the great Jehovah, against whom it has been committed? Ezra 9:6. Job 42:1-6. Jer. 31:19. Ezek. 16:63.

2. *As to my views of the government of God.* Do I acquiesce in the government of God as a most wise, most just, and most righteous government? Rev. 15:3, 4. Do I cordially, cheerfully, and without reserve, yield myself, as a moral and accountable being, to the authority of God, as the moral Governor of the universe? Rom. 6:13. 12:1. Do I feel no reserve in my heart, making first the condition that I may be saved? Do I humbly acquiesce in the justice of God, in the eternal punishment of the wicked? Do I include myself in this, thereby "accepting the punishment of my sin"? Levit. 26:40, 41. Am I sure that this feeling is not produced by the secret consciousness that it is an evidence of a gracious state? Jer. 17:9. If all hope of salvation were suddenly taken away from me, would my heart still acquiesce in the justice of the sentence of condemnation?

3. *As to my faith in Christ.* Have I ceased from my own works, and, as a heavy-laden sinner, come to Christ for rest? Heb. 4:10. Matt. 11:28. Have I seen him to be, in all respects, a complete Saviour, just such as my ruined and lost condition requires? 1 Cor. 1:30. Gal. 3:13. 4:3-5. Col. 1:19. 2:3, 10. Have I heartily given up all for him? Matt. 10:37. Luke 14:26, 33. Phil. 3:7-10. Have I cheerfully taken up my cross and followed him? Luke 14:27. Do I now consider myself as no more my own, but the Lord's, by the purchase of the Redeemer's blood? 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. Do I therefore make it my constant and highest aim to glorify God with my body and spirit which are his? 1 Cor. 6:20. 10:31. Have I through him become dead to sin, but alive to God? Rom. 6:11. Have I crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts? Gal. 5:24. Have I become dead also to the world, not seeking my portion in its riches, honors, pleasures, or pursuits? Gal. 2:20. 6:14.

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1 John 2:15. Have I utterly despaired of acceptance with God in any other way than by the mediation of Christ? Acts 4:12. Heb. 10:26, 27. Have I cordially sought reconciliation with God through the blood of Jesus? Col. 1:20-22. Does my hope of salvation rest solely and alone in the righteousness and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ? Rom. 3:22-26. Do I receive him as my *Prophet*, submitting my will entirely to the teachings of his word and Spirit? Deut. 18:15. Heb. 1:1, 2. 2:1-3. Do I receive him in his office of *Priest*, trusting in the atonement he has made, and committing my case to him, that he may intercede for me, before the offended Majesty of heaven? Heb. 4:14, 15. 7:26, 8:1, 9:11, 12, 24, 25. With humble confidence in his intercession, do I come boldly to the throne of grace? Heb. 4:16. Do I cordially submit to him in his office of *King*? Ps. 2:6. 45:1. Isa. 9:6, l.c. Acts 5:31. Do I yield my heart unreservedly to his authority, making it my constant aim to bring into captivity every thought and action to the obedience of Christ? Matt. 11:29, 30. John 15:14. Rom. 6:16. 2 Cor. 10:5. Whenever I fall into sin, do I seek to ease my conscience by reformation and forgetfulness, or do I apply afresh to Christ, as the only propitiation for sin? 1 John 2:1, 2. Do I find peace of conscience and spiritual joy in believing in Jesus? Rom. 5:1. 8:1. 14:17. 15:13. 1 Pet. 1:8. Am I united to Christ as the living branch is to the vine? John 15:1. Do I look to my union with him, as the branch to the vine, for spiritual nourishment, strength and life? John 15:4. Phil. 2:12, 13. Heb. 13:21. Do I realize the danger of *self-confidence*? Prov. 28:26. Mark 14:29-31, 68-71. Rom. 11:20. 1 Cor. 10:12. Do I realize to what my union with Christ entitles me? Rom. 8:17. In view of this union, do I feel a filial spirit of adoption towards God as *my father*? Ps. 103:13, 14. Rom. 8:15, 16. Gal. 4:4-7. 1 John 3:1, 2. Does this union with Christ lead me to feel a union of spirit with all his disciples? John 17:21. 1 Cor. 12:12-29. What sympathy does this lead me to exercise towards them? Rom. 12:15. 1 Cor. 12:26. 1 John 3:17. Is Christ precious to my soul? 1 Pet. 2:7, f.c. Do I see a moral beauty and excellence in him above all created intelligences? Ps. 45:1, 2. Ca. 5:9-15. John 1:14. Col. 2:3, 9. Heb. 1:3. How am I affected with the contemplation of his sufferings for the salvation of my soul? 2 Cor. 5:14, 15.

4. *As to my love to God.* Do I take God for my supreme and eternal portion? Ps. 16:1-11. 73:25, 26. 119:57. Lam. 3:21. Is he the object of my highest love? Mark 12:30. Am I willing to relinquish whatever comes in competition with him as an object of my affection? Mark 10:37-39. Do I prefer his favor and dread his power above that of all other beings? Ps. 36:7. 43:3. 89:6-8. Deut. 10:12. Ps. 30:5. 33:8. 88:6-8. Jer. 10:7. Do I derive comfort in my afflictions by

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making him my refuge? Ps. 9:9. 57:1. 59:16. Jer. 16:19. When my soul is under the hidings of his countenance, can I enjoy any other good? Job 29:2-5. Ps. 38:1-10. Do I experience any ardent longings after his spiritual presence with my soul? Ps. 42:1, 2. 61:1, 2. Do I feel any earnest desires after conformity to his image? Matt. 5:6. Rom. 8:29. 1 Cor. 15:49. 2 Cor. 3:18. 4:4. Col. 3:10. Ps. 17:15. Do I delight in the moral law of God, as a transcript of his holy character? Ps. 37:31. 119:70, 72, 77, 79, 113, 131. Rom. 7:12, 22. Do I feel grieved when I see his law disregarded? Ps. 119:136, 158. Do I make his will the rule of my life? 1 John 5:3. Do I earnestly strive to bring my heart and life into complete conformity to his will? Phil. 3:7-14. Do I love his word? Ps. 19:7-11. 119:11, 16, 82, 162, 172. Do I find delight in meditating upon it? Ps. 1:2. 119:148. Do I delight in the ordinances of his house? Ps. 26:8. 36:8. 122:1. 84:10. Do I delight in the Sabbath, anticipating its return with desire, hailing it with joy, and engaging in its duties with sweet satisfaction; Isa. 58:13, 14. Do I delight in secret communion with God, in prayer and praise? Ps. 5:2, 3. 55:16, 17. 88:13. 116:2. 138:1, 2. 146:1, 2. 147:1. 148. Do I love the children of God, as bearing his image? 1 John 4:20. 5:1. Is my soul ever moved with sweet emotion in contemplating the infinite *moral* perfections of God? Ps. 30:4. 96:9. Do I delight also in his natural perfections, as appertaining to the Supreme Ruler of the universe? Ps. 96:1-13. 97:1-12. Do I feel this delight in his character, independent of the idea that he is my friend? Hab. 3:17, 18. Am I sure that even this emotion is not produced by the secret thought that the exercise of it is an evidence of my being his friend?

5. *As to my Christian character in general.* Do I realize my dependence upon the Holy Spirit for every right feeling and action? John 14:16, 17. Rom. 8:9, 13, 14. Isa. 26, 12. Are the fruits of the Spirit manifest in my heart and life? Gal. 5:22-24. Have I mortified my members which are upon the earth, and put off the works of the flesh? Gal. 5:19-21. Col. 3:5, 8. Have I put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him? Col. 3:10. Do I manifest my love to my brethren by a readiness to make sacrifices of personal feeling, interest, and enjoyment, to promote their welfare and happiness? 1 John 3:14-17. Do I manifest my love for all mankind, by doing good to all as I have opportunity? Do I feel an unalterable desire for the conversion of their souls? Rom. 9:1, 2. Am I willing to make personal efforts and sacrifices to promote this object? Do I heartily and earnestly offer the prayer,—“Thy kingdom come,” doing and giving all in my power to promote it? Is the same mind in me, in these respects, that was in Christ Jesus? Phil. 2:4-8. Rom. 15:2, 3. Do I truly feel that it is more blessed to

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give than to receive? Acts 20:35 Do I strive, as much as in me lies, to live in peace with all, and to promote peace among all men? Ps. 34:14. Matt. 5:9. Rom. 12:18. 2 Cor. 13:11. Heb. 12:14. James 3:17. Do I seek the peace of Zion, avoiding every unnecessary offence, and even sacrificing my own feelings for the sake of the peace of the church? Ps. 122:6. Rom. 14:19-21. 1 Cor. 7:15. 8:13. 14:33. Eph. 4:3. 1 Thess. 5:13. Am I long-suffering and patient under injurious treatment? 1 Cor. 13:4, 7. Do I exercise a spirit of forbearance towards the faults of others, forgiving injuries and offences? Mark 11:25. Eph. 4:2. Col. 3:13. Do I put away all envy and jealousy from my bosom—not seeking occasion of offence by putting the worst construction upon the conduct of others—not expecting great things for myself, and not being displeased when I am passed by with apparent neglect? Rom. 12:16. 1 Cor. 13:4, 5, 7. Jer. 45:5. Eph. 4:2. Col. 3:12. Do I not think of myself more highly than I ought to think? Rom. 12:3, 16. Do I in lowliness of mind esteem others better than myself? Phil. 2:3. Am I self-willed, headstrong, determined to have my own way? or am I ready to prefer the judgment of my brethren, and submit to them, when I can do it conscientiously? Eph. 5:21. 1 Peter 5:5. Am I tender of spirit, kind, gentle, and courteous, in my intercourse with others? 1 Thess. 2:7. 2 Tim. 2:24. Titus 3:2. James 3:17. Eph. 4:32. Col. 3:12. 1 Peter 3:8. Have I put on *meekness*, not being easily provoked to the indulgence of resentful feelings? 1 Cor. 13:5. Have I put away from me all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and *evil-speaking*, with all malice, not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing? Eph. 4:31. 1 Pet. 3:9. Do I love my enemies, bless them that curse me, and seek the good of those who strive to injure me? Matt. 5:44. Rom. 12:14, 20. Do I recognize the hand of God in the daily blessings of this life? James 1:17. Do I likewise recognize his hand in the little perplexities and trials of every-day life? Do all my trials subdue and chasten my spirit, working in me patience, experience, and hope? Rom. 5:3, 4. Heb. 13:6-11. Am I content with such things as the Lord gives me, day by day, not taking anxious thought for the morrow, nor disquieting myself for the future? Matt. 6:25-34. Phil. 4:11. 1 Tim. 6:8. Heb. 13:5. Does my faith lead me to look at the things that are unseen, and set my affections on things above, and not on things on the earth? 2 Cor. 4:16-18. Col. 3:1, 2.

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Remember, this is a fearful question. Your all is at stake upon it. But, if at any time you come to the deliberate conclusion that you are resting upon a false hope, give it up: but do not abandon yourself to despair. Go immediately to the cross of Christ. Give up your heart to him, as though you had never come before. There is no other way. This is the only refuge, and Jesus never sent a soul

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empty away. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Persevere, even though you find scarce evidence enough to give a faint glimmering of hope. Continually renew your repentance and faith in Christ. Diligence in self-examination may be a means of growth in grace: and if you are really a child of God, your evidences will increase and brighten, till you will be able to indulge "a good hope through grace." "For, in due time, we shall reap, if we faint not."

V. Another object of self-examination is, to ascertain whether we are prepared to approach the Lord's table. But let a man examine himself, and so let him "eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Here the duty of self-examination, before partaking of the Lord's Supper, is evidently taught. And, in the next verse, we are told what is requisite to enable us to partake of this ordinance in an acceptable manner. It is, that we have faith in lively exercise to discern the Lord's body. A backslider in heart, even though a real Christian, is not prepared to partake of this spiritual feast, without renewing his repentance and faith. In this examination, two subjects of inquiry present themselves: 1. "Am I a Christian?" 2. "Am I growing in grace?" In regard to the first of these inquiries, enough has already been said. To answer the second, you will need consider, —1. Whether you were living in the exercise of gracious affections at the last communion. 2. Whether you have since made any progress in the divine life. To aid you in these inquiries, I have prepared the following questions, which may be varied according to circumstances:

The last time I partook of this ordinance, did I meet the Lord at his table, and receive a refreshing from his presence? Did I there renew my covenant vows? Have I kept my vows? Have I since lived not unto myself, but unto God? Have I enjoyed more of the presence of God? Have I lived a life of faith and prayer? Have I been daily to the cross of Christ for pardon and strength? Have I maintained continually a deep and lively sense of divine things? Have I lived a life of self-denial? Have I obtained any conquests over indwelling sin? Have I made any progress in subduing the unholy tempers of my heart? Has my will been brought more entirely to bow to the will of God, so that I have no will of my own? Has my love increased? Do I feel more delight in contemplating the divine character, in reading his word, in prayer, in the ordinances of his house, &c.? Do I feel more intense longings of soul after conformity to his image? Have I any deeper sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Do my own sins in particular appear more aggravated? Do I think less of myself? Does a sense of my own vileness and unworthiness humble me low before God? Does this lead me to see my need of just such a Saviour as Jesus? Am I now disposed to cast my all upon him? Has my love for Christians increased? Do I feel any more compassion for dying

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sinner? Has this led me to do more for their conversion? Have I abounded more in every good word and work? Have the fruits of the Spirit increased in my heart and life? Have I been more faithful in all the relations of life? Do I perceive any growing deadness to the world? Does my relish for spiritual things increase, while my taste for earthly delights diminishes? Do I see more and more my own weakness, and feel a more steady dependence upon Christ? Do I feel increasing spirituality in religious duties? Do I feel increasing tenderness of conscience, and maintain more watchfulness against sin? Do I feel greater concern for the prosperity of the church and the conversion of the world? Am I becoming more meek and gentle in spirit, less censorious, and less disposed to resent injuries? Am I more ready to receive reproof from others, without anger or hardness of feeling?

If you have time to keep a journal, you may find some advantage from reviewing it on such occasions. It will aid your memory, and help you to give your past life a more thorough examination. You will thereby be the better able to judge whether you are making progress. However, this is a dangerous experiment, as it is difficult to divest ourselves of the idea that we are writing for the perusal of others; and this furnishes many temptations. But, however unfit this examination may find you, do not let Satan tempt you to stay away from the Lord's table. It is your duty to commemorate his dying love. It is your duty also to do it with a suitable preparation of heart. Both these duties you will neglect by staying away. In doing so, you cannot expect God's blessing. But set immediately about the work of repentance. Come to the cross of Christ, and renew your application to his pardoning blood. Give yourself away to God anew, and renew your covenant with him. In doing this, he will bless your soul; and the Lord's table will be a season of refreshing. But if this repentance and preparation be heartfelt and sincere, its fruits will be seen in your subsequent life.

CONCLUSION.

I have now completed my intended series of letters. I have endeavored to present the Christian character, and the duties required of the followers of Christ, in the light of God's word. I know, however, that I have done it with much imperfection. But, do not rest with the mere mechanical performance of the duties here recommended. Do not engage in any of them with the hope of meriting God's favor. Use them only as the means of promoting your spiritual progress; depending on the Holy Spirit, through the blood and merits of Christ, to sanctify your heart. For it is very possible for you to observe all these things, and yet deceive yourself. Remember that true religion is a deep work of grace in the heart, changing the bent and inclination of the soul, and giving a new direction to all its faculties. O may you so live that Jesus shall say to you, as to the church at Thyatira, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works and THE LAST TO BE MORE THAN THE FIRST." Take also

his exhortation to the church at Smyrna: "BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE."

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Your affectionate Brother.

APPENDIX.

COURSE OF READING.

I. HISTORY.

1. *Sacred and Ecclesiastical History*.—Josephus' Works; Millar's History of the Church; Jahn's Hebrew Commonwealth, Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History; Milner's Church History; Scott's Continuation of Milner; Life of Knox; Gilpin's Lives of the Reformers; Fuller's and Warner's Ecclesiastical History of England; Millar's Propagation of Christianity; Gillies' Historical Collections; Jones' Church History; Mather's Magnalia; Neale's History of the Puritans; Wisner's History of the Old South Church, Boston; Bogue and Bennett's History of the Dissenters; Benedict's History of the Baptists; Life of Wesley; History of Methodism; Life of Whitefield; Millar's Life of Dr. Rodgers; Crantz's Ancient and Modern History of the Church of the United Brethren; Crantz's History of the Mission in Greenland; Loskiel's History of the North American Indian Missions; Oldendorp's History of the Danish Missions of the United Brethren; Choules' Origin and History of Missions. Those who have not sufficient time for so extensive a course, may find the most interesting and important events in the progress of the church during the first sixteen centuries of the Christian era, in the author's Sabbath-school Church History.

2. *Secular and Profane History*.—Rollin's Ancient History; Russel's Egypt; Russel's Palestine; Plutarch's Lives, to be kept on hand, and consulted as the names appear in history; Wharton's Histories; Beloe's Herodotus; Travels of Anacharsis; Mitford's Greece; Ferguson's History of the Roman Republic; Baker's Livy; Middleton's Life of Cicero; Murphy's Tacitus; Sismondi's Decline of the Roman Empire; Muller's Universal History; Hallam's History of the Middle Ages; James' Life of Charlemagne; Mills' History of the Crusades and of Chivalry; Turner's History of England; Burnett's History of his own Times; Robertson's History of Scotland; Robertson's Charles V.; Vertot's Revolutions of Sweden; Vertot's Revolutions of Portugal; Sismondi's History of the Italian Republics, (abridged in Lardner's Cabinet of History;) Roscoe's Lorenzo de Medici and Leo X.; Sketches from Venetian History; Malcolm's History of Persia; Irving's Life of Columbus; Prescott's Ferdinand and Isabella; Robertson's History of America; Bancroft's History of America; Winthrop's Journal; Ramsay's American Revolution; Marshall's Life of Washington; with the Biographies of Penn, Jay, Hamilton, Henry, Greene, Otis, Quincy, Morris, the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, Sparks' American Biography, with the Lives of any other distinguished Americans; Scott's Life of Napoleon.

II. CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

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Paley's Evidences; Chalmers' Evidences of Christianity; Halyburton against the Deists; Brown's Compendium of Natural and Revealed Religion; Dwight's Theology; Bates' Harmony of the Divine Attributes; Edwards on Original Sin; Watts' Ruin and Recovery; Dr. Woods on Native Depravity; Fuller's Works; Payson's Sermons; Boston's Fourfold State; Edwards' History of Redemption; Dr. Owen on the Death and Satisfaction of Christ; Butler's Analogy; Cole on the Sovereignty of God; Griffin on Divine Efficiency; Charnock on the Dominion of God in his Works; Edwards' Sermons; King, Toplady, Cooper, and Tucker, on Predestination; Whitby and Gill on the Five Points; Wesley's Predestination Considered; Edwards and Day on the Will; Scott's Essays; Colquhoun on the Covenants; Evans on the Atonement; Griffin on the Atonement; Stewart on the Atonement; Jenkyn on the Atonement; Witherspoon on Regeneration; Doddridge's Ten Sermons on Regeneration; Dr. Owen on the Spirit; Hinton on the Spirit; Works of Robert Hall; Dr. Owen on the 130th Psalm; Scott's Treatise on Repentance; Young's Last Day; Watts on Death and Heaven; Saurin's Sermons; Baxter's Saint's Rest; Chalmers' Works.

Cotton's Power of the Keys; Hooker's Survey of the Sum of Church Discipline; Owen's Inquiry into the Nature of Churches; Mitchell's Guide; Hall's View of a Gospel Church; Brown's Vindication of the Presbyterian Form of Government; Dr. Miller on the Office of Ruling Elder; King's Constitution of the Church; Stillingfleet's Origines Sacrae; Dr. Woods on Infant Baptism; The Baptized Child; Household Consecration: Robinson's History of Baptism.

III. BIOGRAPHY.

Burner's Memoirs; Memoirs of Isabella Graham, Mrs. Huntington, Mrs. Savage, Mrs. Harriet Newell, and Mrs. Paterson: Philip Henry; Oberlin; Francke; Neff; Payson; Henry Martyn; Brainerd; Howard; Dr. Hopkins; President Edwards; Mrs. Emily Egerton; Mrs. Myra W. Allen: Rev. Samuel Davies; Lives of Maclaurin, Baxter, Doddridge, Owen, Watts, Howe, Mather, Dwight; Gill, Banyan, Robinson, Andrew Fuller, Hall; Fletcher, Asbury, Clarke, Watson; Cecil, Fenelon. Mrs. Judson, James B. Taylor, Rev. Joseph Emerson, Harlan Page; Mrs. Winslow, Parsons and Fiske, Gordon Hall; Life of Schwartz.

Lives of Henry Kirke White, Elizabeth Smith: Johnson's Lives of the Poets; Life of Johnson; Teignmouth's Life of Sir William Jones; Southey's Life and Correspondence of Cowper.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS.

1. *Works on the Prophecies*.—Bishop Newton's Dissertations; Keith; Smith's Key to the Revelation; Sir Isaac Newton's Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse; Gray's Key to the Old Testament; Faber on the Prophecies.

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2. *On Christian Character, Experience, and Duty*.—Edwards on Religious Affections; Doddridge's Rise and Progress; Owen on Indwelling Sin; Serle's Christian Remembrancer; Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress; Scougal's Life of God in the Soul; Howe's Blessedness of the Righteous; Owen on Spiritual-Mindedness; Leighton on Peter; Baxter's Practical Works; Flavel's Works; Prayer experimentally considered; Abbott's Young Christian, and Path of Peace; Gallaudet's Every-day Christian; Works of Robert Philip; Dr. Skinner's Religion of the Bible; The Great Teacher, by Harris; The American Tract Society's Evangelical Family Library, which includes some of the works above named.

3. *On the Instruction and Discipline of the Young*.—Abercrombie on the Intellectual Powers; Abbott's Teacher; Abbott's Mother at Home; Mother's Friend; Mother's Magazine; Todd's Sabbath-school Teacher; Hannah More's Letters on Female Education.

4. *Illustrations of Scriptures*.—The Comprehensive Commentary, to be referred to in connection with the study of the Bible; Townsend's Bible, for its chronological information and notes.

5. *Health*.—Combe on the Constitution; Catechism of Health; Carnaro on Temperance.

6. *Travels*.—Bruce's Travels In Abyssinia; Denon's Travels in Egypt; Belzoni's Personal Narrative; Humboldt's Personal Narrative; Clarke's Travels in Russia; Mackenzie's Travels in Iceland; Mungo Park's Mission to Africa; Denham's and Clapperton's Mission to Africa; Lander's Journal; Sismondi's Italy, France, and England; Dr. Humphrey's Tour; Rome in the 19th Century; Buchanan's Researches; The Christian Brahmin; Ramsey's Journal; Ellis' Polynesian Researches; Stewart's Voyage in the South Seas; Tyerman and Bennett's Journal; Williams' Missionary Enterprise in the South Sea Islands; Reed and Matheson's Journal; Journals of the Missionaries, in the bound volumes of the Missionary Herald.

7. *The Sciences*.—Watts on the Mind; Locke on the Human Understanding; Brown's Lectures on the Philosophy of the Mind; Douglass on the Advancement of Society; Dick's Works; The Bridgewater Treatises; Mrs. B.'s Conversations on Philosophy and Chemistry; Wayland's Moral Science, and Political Economy.

8. *Belles Lettres*.—Hannah More's Works; Jane Taylor's Works; Madame de Stael; Johnson's Rasselas; Selections from the Spectator and Rambler. Poems of Milton, Young, Dryden, Cowper, Thomson, Montgomery, Hemans, Sigourney, Tappan.

9. *Promiscuous*.—Mrs. Farrar's Young Ladies' Friend; Mrs. Sigourney's Letters to Young Ladies; Female Student, by Mrs. Phelps.