

true disciple will be ashamed to profess his Master.

But let us now attend to the answer of the Psalmist to the question he has put; for it is one that demands so much that the best may well pause and ask himself doubtfully, "Art thou such an one?" The description given in the 4th verse of the man whom God will choose embraces the various great characteristics of a righteous man, each expression enunciating something distinct from the others; so that it may almost be regarded as a logical division of what is necessary in such a man. The verse gives both a positive and a negative definition or description, and each deserves our consideration. (1) Speaking positively of such a man, i. e., laying down what he must be or must have, it is stated that he "has clean hands and a pure heart;" i. e., he is both outwardly and inwardly good. It may be said that one of these qualities includes the other, for that when the heart is pure before God, the outward life will also be necessarily good. Still the division, for the sake of clearness and emphasis, is quite admissible, inasmuch as there are many not openly profane, and to whose conduct little can be objected before a human court, whose hearts are unregenerate and hard, pitiless where suffering calls for pity, impure in thought in the very presence of virtue. Certainly the grand principle of Christianity, and one to be found both in the Old and New Testaments, is its law of heart purity, the superiority it ascribes to pure desires and purposes in the inner man over mere outward acts. Its language is, "My son, give me thy heart." Its thorough-going principle is, go to the fountain head, heal it, and the wholesome waters will flow. "If the root be holy, so are the branches. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit." Christ pronounces every action to be good or bad according to the motives which influenced us to do it, and every thought or wish to be as decidedly an element in morals, in right or wrong doing, as actual behaviour. On no other principle can man's whole being be reached and reformed. And this is what Christianity aims at, the *regeneration* of our whole man, the bringing of us, soul and body, into a right relation with God and his laws. All religions that are of human origin are incomplete; in some respects they may be excellent, but they are sure to be wanting in others. And in that which is deepest and most pervasive, in grand principles from which alone life flows, they fail most utterly. Thus Rabbinism, and Hindooism, and Mohammedanism, all attempted to regulate the outward life, to lay down minute directions for every possible case that might occur. Of course such an attempt is hopeless; such systems only succeed in making their most earnest votaries groan under a yoke of rules, rites and observances. Therefore, my hearers, I beseech of you do not fall into the error, which in spite

of our doctrinal orthodoxy is very common, of supposing that external rectitude is sufficient to entitle a man to "stand in God's holy place." Certainly it is much better to live decently than profligately; but dream not that any form of outward behaviour proves you to be men after God's own heart. None observed the ritual of the Mosaic law so rigorously as the Pharisees. They added to it many ceremonial observances, "holding the traditions of the elders." "Except they washed their hands oft, they ate not." This strait-laced piety of theirs was shocked at seeing our Lord's disciples eat with unwashed hands. "They made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments." They were venerated by the people as holy men, and respectfully saluted in the market-places with "Rabbi, Rabbi." Who so able in expounding the law, who more strict in paying all their lawful debts and taxes, even though it might be on the trifling articles of mint, anise and cummin. And yet what was the tremendous sentence launched against them by Him who was so gentle to the publican and the Magdalene? "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

So, then, the heart must be "pure;" and so also must the hands be "clean." True, "to the pure all things are pure;" but it is only to the "pure" that they are so. There is a vile Antinomian doctrine, now dead and buried it is to be hoped, that sin being in its nature exclusively spiritual, can exist only in the thoughts and not in the actions, and that therefore nothing is sin to those who have freed themselves from the bondage of the letter and believe that they are above all ordinances; but such a doctrine springs not from the purity but from the depravity of the heart. Body and soul are alike the Lord's; and therefore not only must our hearts "be sprinkled from an evil conscience," but our bodies also must be "washed with pure water." "Know we not that our bodies are the members of Christ?" And if so, what is the natural conclusion? Why, "let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Rom. VI. 12. Of this be well assured,—that even as under the old dispensation, the ceremonially unclean might not enter the sanctuary; so under the new, "neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 9.)

(2) The negative description of the righteous man; what he must *not* be; "who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." There have always been men who have set their affections on the things of this world, and have found their life in them, forgetful that the "fashion of this world passeth away." They have lifted up their souls