

very moment when he was singing it, was not truly a child of God? Whence came that pathetic undertone that trembles beneath some of PAUL'S richest autobiographic passages, if not from the occasional distress that comes over every thoughtful man as he becomes increasingly conscious of the distance between him and his ideal?—or, as he hears, now fainter and now more distinct, like the roar of the surge upon the shore, the unceasing sound of the sins and sufferings of mankind? Whence, again, that soothing utterance of PETER, as he says to his friends, "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness," if not from his own experience of the effect of suffering on a sensitive and ardent nature?

Thus it is not only uncharitable but untrue to say that despondency must be always traced to sin; and he who unfeelingly alleges that if a soul be in sadness it has never been really renewed, may yet be led to revise his theory of the Christian life, as he passes through some valley of shadow, or lies in some dark Gethsemane, sobbing out the cry, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Immense harm has been done sometimes to a timid, shrinking, yet conscientious spirit, by such thoughtless and unsympathetic utterances; so let it stand out clear and distinct before you this morning, as the first inference we draw from this text, that a man may be a sincere, earnest, and devout follower of the LORD JESUS, and yet "be walking in darkness."

But while his despondency furnishes no valid reason for calling the genuineness of his religion in question, it is very far from being a comfortable thing in itself. It is not a state of mind in which any one desires to remain. And he should be encouraged to get out of it as quickly as possible. For it puts everything about him into shadow. It sets all his songs to a minor key. It gives to all

his prayers a wailing pathos. It takes away much of his buoyancy and elasticity for work. And it stamps his countenance with a settled melancholy, which gives to those around him a disagreeable impression as to the results of serving GOD. It is, therefore, in every way desirable, both for his own happiness and for the good of others, that he should be brought out of the darkness into the light.

Now, it may contribute to the production of that result if I turn your thoughts for a little to the causes out of which despondency may spring, and to the counsels which in this text are given to those who are suffering from it.

Adverting, then, to the causes of spiritual despondency, I mention first, that it may spring from natural temperament. However we may account for it, whether on the principle of hereditary transmission, or on that of special characteristic being given directly by GOD to every man, it is the fact, that each of us is born with a certain predisposition to joy or sadness, to irascibility or patience, to quickness of action or deliberateness of conduct, which we call temperament. And it is also true, that while conversion may Christianize that temperament, it does not change it. The sanguine man does not become after conversion a melancholy man. But then, on the other hand, the man of melancholy temperament is not made over into the sanguine when he comes to CHRIST. THE LORD takes men as they are, and works in and through their very idiosyncrasies, so as to produce in His Church that unity in variety which is the charm of the physical universe.

Now, there are some men to whom Christianity altogether apart, it comes as natural to be joyful as it does to the lark to sing its morning carol as it mounts up to mid-heaven. And there are others, alas! whose disposition inclines them always to look on the darker side of things. In the former case there is no merit in