

despised—least of all in religion. The ways of men are so irreligious, so heedless, many are so opposed to Christianity, that it is a pleasant sight to see any serious, reflecting, “almost persuaded.”

We are not to cast disparagement on one “almost” a Christian. Certainly, in many respects, he is better than an infidel, or a “sinner at ease in Zion.”

Many of the readers of this paper will remember a good old book entitled Mead’s “*Almost Christian Discovered; or the False Professor tried and Cast.*” The title-page of that book, which is really a sound and excellent treatise, perhaps originated, gave currency to, and stereotyped the opinion that “Almost Christian,” and “False Professor,” or “Hypocrite” were synonymous terms, describing precisely the same individuals. This is an error, and an error of a mischievous nature. In Christian lands, in all congregations, there are some laying the truth to heart at times, really moved by the Spirit of God, and led very near to the Saviour, “almost persuaded” to venture all upon Him, yet, after all, linger and stop short on the threshold. They are in a critical state. The right word fitly spoken might help them, and arouse them to take the decisive step, and pass from without to within the door of Christ. They hear startling warnings addressed to the undecided, to those who, seemingly near, are yet “out of Christ”—“almost,” but not “altogether” persuaded; and they are alarmed. But then they hear, probably in the same discourse, the “almost” Christian called “a false professor,” “a hypocrite.” And though in the sincerity of their hearts, and under a deep sense of sinfulness, they sometimes accuse, and try to convict, themselves of falsity and hypocrisy, in this matter, yet as in truth they are not consciously harboring deceptions, they cannot make themselves believe they are. And hence they come to the conclusion that, as they are not false, not mockers, not acting the part of base dissemblers, therefore they are not “almost,” but likely “altogether” Christians, in a better state than they supposed! And this, through the indiscretion of “leaders of the blind,” they may be led from a state of honest doubt and enquiry, to indulge a security again, which may be-

come deep, lasting, fatal. There is nothing like the truth in guarded, accurate, unexaggerated language, in dealing with souls.

The man there, of whom it may be said in our day, that he is “almost” a Christian, may be thus described. He possesses a knowledge of God, of man’s condition, of Christ and the work of redemption.—A fear of God lies upon his spirit, and he is unwilling to be classed with the enemies of Christ either here or hereafter. He pays attention to religious duties more or less faithfully as he has been taught or trained, and he exhibits a general propriety in the actions of life, a useful and honest servant, a just and kind master, a friendly neighbour, a careful parent, an obedient child. He forms good resolutions, and keeps some. He is sorry for faults, and forsakes some.—He frequents the house of God, and uses means of grace. He is probably a professor of religion. He may be a diligent teacher in the Sabbath school. He may be a minister, and honestly meaning to be faithful. Though lacking the “one thing needful”—a mistaken man, he is not a dissembler. No two are much farther apart than the “almost” Christian and the hypocrite.

As the character is better, so the advantages are greater, of almost a Christian. The sense of obligation and responsibility to his family, to society, and to God, is itself a safeguard and a good to him. And religiously, he is in a safer way than the scoffer, the reprobate, or even the inconsiderate. He is in the way where God meets with men, and God may bless him. There is a hopefulness about his prospect—he is in the state which every Christian occupies for a larger or shorter period.—

At one time, just before he became a follower of Jesus, the Christian was “almost” Christian. The man of this description is in more favorable circumstances than those that are far, and keep far from the Kingdom of God. Even as it was said of the young Ruler, who was not far from, “almost” in the kingdom, “Jesus loved him,” so there is a sense in which it may be said, Jesus loves the person we are thinking of. Yet, after all, the difference between the “almost” Christian and the most impious of men, is but formal, circumstantial, not essential. Until the heart be given to God,