

needful. When I use the word religion, I mean spiritual religion; the religion of the heart, the peculiar principles and prospects, and resources of the Gospel; but it is undeniable that spiritual religion is to be fostered and diffused by the instrumentality of outward means prospered by the influences of the Spirit. Ordinances and outward means of grace are of God's own appointment, and we should, therefore, know them to be necessary, even if the constitution of human nature did not prove them to be so; if then you are desirous of planting or propagating true religion in any community, or in any distinct body of men, you must begin by employing its outward ordinances. In support of this principle I may appeal to the authority of St. Paul, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher?" But I have said that seamen stand peculiarly in need of such assistance. During a great part of their lives, except those who are on board the larger vessels, they are of necessity debarred from the partaking in the most solemn and impressive rites of religion; the greater need is there of their being urged to a diligent use of them when they may be resorted to. But they are not only subject to this spiritual privation; they are, at the same time, exposed to great and peculiar temptations to ungodliness. I need not enter into a detail of those moral dangers which beset the seaman, in the presence of those who will readily anticipate what I would say, but I would remind you of the cruelty and injustice (not so, indeed, esteemed and designated by the world at large; but not on that account the less cruel and unjust,) of exposing these poor men to so great and manifold dangers without an attempt, at least to furnish them with a preservative or an antidote, of placing not only their lives in jeopardy, but their souls in tenfold greater peril, for the sake of augmenting your secular gains, when, by a small expenditure, you may, under the blessing of God, greatly mitigate and diminish those perils, if not remove them altogether. Let me, in the next place, remind you that the spiritual dangers to which this class of our brethren is liable assumes an awfully formidable complexion, when we consider to how many accidents their lives are exposed, how many casualties are likely to shorten their season of repentance and preparation; how many are hurried to their account unrepentant and unprepared; but on the other hand, how encouraging and improving to their surviving companions to be able in such cases, to say, as was said by the amiable chaplain of this institution, when one of his comrades was swept away by the waters, "Happily, he was an excellent man, and there was no doubt with those who knew his habitual piety and consistency of conduct, that he was prepared to die." His conduct, adds Mr. Scoresby, was, in every case worthy of his profession; and afforded a proof, if such proof be necessary, that religion, when it is real, gives confidence and courage to the sailor, rather than destroys his hardihood and bravery. But, indeed, no proof is or can be necessary. Who would not set a far higher value upon the true moral fortitude of a pious man, upon his immovable principles of integrity and faithfulness, upon his steadfast trust in the providence of God, than upon the blind and reckless hardihood of ignorance, the mere animal fidelity of instinct or habit, and the desperate carelessness of fatalism?

(To be Continued.)

## LETTERS FROM A FATHER TO HIS DAUGHTER.

(Concluded from p. 156.)

### LETTER III.

My dear daughter,

By recurring to your last letter, received at——, I am surprised at the number of days which have slipped away since I determined that to-morrow, I should write to you. Thus it is that the petty avocations of life steal away the performance of our best resolutions; and while we are resolving that to-morrow we will correct this or that ill habit, or commence this or that reformation, to-morrow brings with it new allurements of pleasure, or its apparently pressing duties, and we defer the more important undertaking till a more propitious season for its accomplishment. In the mean time death may arrest us in the midst of our procrastination,

and fix our conditions and our characters for ever. How important then that we postpone every thing else until the great concern is safe! It is the only one that deserves a thought, comparatively speaking. The first step to holiness is to be sensible of our unworthiness, and to feel a desire to be made pure, and delivered from sinful propensities and habits. When we feel this we shall set ourselves seriously to seek the desired pardon and freedom from the dominion of sin. Many make sad mistakes in this matter. Some think they ought at once to comprehend the character of God and the manner of Christ's atonement and other mysteries of His Providence; and because they cannot, they become discouraged. But you recollect the blind man whom Jesus restored did not see clearly at once, but saw "men as trees, walking." There are many things in the councils of God, of which we must be contented in this life to be ignorant.

There are other persons who think, or seem to think, that if they find themselves affected at religious meetings, and are able to make use of certain phrases that are in vogue, that is evidence of their piety. Others lay great stress on certain feelings and think they must love the Saviour with the same strength and familiarity of affection which they feel towards any earthly object. We should feel our need of Him, and then we shall soon be enabled to feel in acceptance through him. Then it is that we "come to Christ," by which I understand the willingness of our once proud but now subdued hearts, to be saved of his mere mercy and not by our merits, and to enter upon a life of humble obedience to all his commands.

There are many words and phrases used by religious persons which probably are understood by themselves, but which never conveyed any definite idea to my mind. I tried to understand them but was unable. When I laid aside all books of deep questions in theology, and left off endeavoring to comprehend any thing relating to them, and began to look into my own heart and life, it made me sorrowful and humble, but I hope prayerful; and I found peace. It is the peace of God, and passeth all understanding. I pray that you may find it. It is sometimes found in the way of a strict life of humble obedience to every thing which God in his word has required, regardless of the smiles and frowns of the world; yet not relying on such attempted obedience as the ground of acceptance with him. Only seek the Lord—he will certainly be found.

*Fasts* are seasons appointed for deep humiliation before God: such as the forty days of Lent; but chiefly Ash-Wednesday and Good-Friday. Festivals should be kept with devotion and temperance; fasts should be observed with prayer, abstinence, and inward contrition. 1 Cor. v. 8; Joel ii. 15, 16, 17; Isaiah xlvi. 5, 6, 7, 8.—*Sword's Almanac.*

*Sundays in Advent*, beginning Nov. 29.—The four Sundays before Christmas have the name of Advent, from the Latin compound verb *advenire*, to come to. They are designed to prepare us for celebrating with becoming faith, seriousness, and devotion, the advent of Christ in the flesh; and to direct our view to that second advent, when he will come to judge those to whom he before came to offer his salvation. The language of the Church, therefore, in reference to both views of this holy season, is—"Prepare ye the way of the Lord." St. Luke iii. 4.—*Ibid.*

It may be proper to observe, that it is the peculiar computation of our Church, to begin her year, and to revive the annual course of her services with this time of *Advent*: For she neither follows the course of the sun, or moon to number her days, and measure her seasons, according to her revolution; but Jesus Christ being to her as the only sun and light whereby she is guided, following his course alone, she begins, and counts on her year with him. When this Sun of righteousness, therefore, doth arise, that is, when his coming and incarnation are first propounded to us, then begins the year of the Church, and from thence are all her other days and times computed.—*Ibid.*

Religion was never yet thoroughly relinquished by a heart full of the world. The world in return cannot be completely enjoyed where there is just religion enough to disturb its false peace. In such minds heaven and earth ruin each other's enjoyments.—*Hannah More.*