

affliction, and it never answers. God can meet us with crosses in sinful ways as well as in righteous ways; and He will meet us with them, and with heavier crosses too than we have turned from. Thousands with tears of anguish would tell us this. They would tell us too that, though it is easy to get out of God's path, it is not always easy to get into it again. There are quicksands of sin and sorrow on each side of the road, and He who steps aside ever so little, may sink he knows not whither. "As for such," says the psalmist, "that turn aside unto crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity"—lead them forth with them to judgement; as severely and visibly punish them. Be prepared, brethren, to have often to choose between sin and suffering in your way to Heaven; and be prepared, in Christ's strength, to choose any suffering, the heaviest cross God can lay on you, the most painful and humiliating extremities to which the world can drive you, rather than the least sin.

2. We have thus seen what this taking-up of the cross forbids; let us now see *what it enjoins*.

Christ speaks of our cross just as He often speaks of His own. That was appointed and prepared for Him by His Father; His Father laid it on Him; and yet nothing is more common with Him than to speak of it as a cross He had taken up and placed on Himself. "I lay down My life," He says, and "lay it down of Myself." The truth is, that, though it was the everlasting Jehovah who appointed Him and sent Him to be the great propitiation for our sins, though all His bitter sufferings were ordained for Him by His Father, yet He met them, He underwent them, as though the Father had nothing to do with them, as though He had chosen them all for himself. "The Lord," He says, "hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not My face from shame and spitting." "He is brought," says the prophet, "as a lamb to the slaughter," but he might have said more; He was rather like a lamb that of its own free accord leaves the happy fold, and goes itself to the slaughter.

Now transfer this to ourselves. The Lord has ordained crosses for us. "They are coming on you," says Christ. "You must soon bear them, as I am now going to bear mine. You may tell Me that, when My Father lays them on you, you will bear them; but I want more than this of you. I want you to take them up, to submit voluntarily to them, as though they were your own choice; nay, cheerfully, as though you had rather have them than have them not. I want you to go through this world of suffering, not like men who have a burden on them that they would willingly throw off, but like men who rejoice in any burden, in any suffering, so that they may but follow and be with Me."

To take up the cross is to welcome tribulation when God sends it, not to shrink from it; to kneel down, like the meek camel, to receive our burden, not, like the resisting ox, to have the yoke forced on us: and then, when the burden is on us, it is to carry it quietly, not complainingly; rejoicing that we are counted worthy to bear it, not seeking for opportunities to cast it down.

And we are to carry it patiently. Our Lord calls on us in another place to take up our cross "daily." Not that every day is to bring us some new cross; but is there an old cross on us? Then every day we are to welcome it again, to take it up again: to bear, to endure it, not to grow weary of it. And, if there is no cross on us, then we are to live in the daily expectation of one, to remember that, as Christ's disciples, we are called and appointed to suffering, and to be prepared for suffering. We are to be like seamen, who in the calm are expecting the storm; or rather, as one of our old divines says, like the willing porter standing in the street waiting for his burden.

THOUGHTS ON SABBATH SCHOOLS.

Let the teaching of the Sabbath School be Scriptural. The Sabbath school is a Scripture school. The Bible is its only text-book—its only manual. Whatever other books are in use, let them be subordinate, auxiliary—mere helps and indices to the Scriptures—never superseding or supplanting the Bible, so as to render the Sacred Oracles secondary or supplementary to any book whatever. In every Sabbath school we recommend a well-selected portion of Scripture to be steadily read slowly and solemnly, by the presiding teacher, whilst every scholar should follow the reading devoutly with his own Bible in hand. This done at the opening of the school, as a portion of religious service, would do much to solemnize and adapt the minds of both teachers and taught to the duties of the meeting. The children would thus be taught to look on the Bible, not as a school-book, but to reverence it as the *Book of God*. The Bible in every Sabbath school should be the only book of reference and authority, and always seen on the teacher's desk, as well as in his hand. When the teacher is content with giving mere human authority for his warrant, it is to be feared that his pupils may be content with somewhat less than even that. But, when he refers ever and anon to the text of Holy Writ, and invites those who can to turn up with him the references to the very text, the youthful mind becomes imbued with the conviction that there is but one infallible Christian guide, and that is the Book this is the peculiar beauty of gods word it is the merror of God, or God. God's image is seen there throughout. An old divine asked: What index can I place over every page which might truly be borne out by the text? and he answered: That only one would fit, and that one is, "Christ and Him crucified." As you sever a common glass-mirror into minute particles, still each minor piece reflects an entire image, becoming no doubt smaller with every reduction of the surface. So too the whole Bible reflects one whole God in the infinitude of omnipotence, and one whole Mediator Christ between God and man in the infinitude of love. Every Bible sentence, however small, has the same image; and analyze it as you may in the crucible of Christian inquiry, still the same lovely image of a whole and perfect Christ is represented in every atom of Divine Writ. The sacred text, as a whole, forms the solid granite rock of Truth; and that rock is Christ. *Macadamize* it into the smallest divisions, still, as particles of the same substance, as the little stones cut out of the mountain not by man's hands, placed side by side, they become the well-constructed pathway to Heaven; for, says Christ, "I am the Way, no man cometh to the Father but by Me."

We do not object to any auxiliaries, provided that they do not supplant the use or authority of Holy Scripture. But we do object to all manuals which do not throughout take God's unerring Word as their sole guide. We know no primer for Sabbath School instruction equal in this Scriptural sanction than the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. It is a book very dear to every Scotchman. It is the book, next to the Bible, which long kept alive in our land Scripture truth and Scripture morality. With the unholy cessation of its daily use in the schools and families in Scotland came in a flood of sin and immorality, which prisons—special and general—penal settlements Abroad and penal servitude at Home, have not been able and will never be able to cheek and roll back. These and all human appliances can only prune the wild vine. Religion alone can engraft the true and living vine on the core of the wild stock of fallen humanity. With the risk of being thought censorious, we must say that no Catechism we have yet seen is at all equal, in every respect, to that of our *National Catechism*; for it is peculiarly national. In the existing contest for nationality this is one of its brightest gems to be preserved, and the fruits of which will outlive the nation itself. There was a time when it was thought a disgrace to a Scotchman to be unable, not only to say, but to spell throughout his Catechism; and there is proof yet

on its first page, that it was as well the humble primer to letters as to Christianity. The secular was then the handmaid of the Christian school, and not standing afar off from the Cross. We recommend that not unfrequently the pupils should be told of the great antiquity and authority of the little book in their hands, and of the extraordinary history of its origin and preservation. Little children, getting the freshly printed book from a bookseller for one penny, know not but that it is the production of yesterday. Very likely they give its authorship to their minister or teacher, and wonder (while they admire in ignorance) where they got so many long words and strung them into what at first sight appears to them difficult sentences. Tell them it is now running in age its third century. Tell them in very plain language of the wonderful Assembly which met to concord the belief of the two nations which had just become one for time, and sought to be made so for eternity. Tell them of the eminent servants of God who composed the Assembly, of their long sessions; above all of their fervent prayers to the Throne of Grace. Tell them the few anecdotes which have floated down the stream of time,—extremely few,—just as if to show the work was God's, and so depending not on human tradition. Tell them such a story as the sudden arrest of thought and utterance on the momentous question being propounded, *What is God?*—which, under the influence of Divine guidance, has produced a response which, for truthful and simple Scriptural and logical definition, baffles all human comparison. Tell them, too, how this little book alongside the Bible, just as its index, has been an essential piece of Christian furniture for centuries in every cottage of their fatherland; how their sires were taught from childhood on the mother's knee to lip every answer; and that, when the parish minister came his stated rounds, each child was ready to win his favour and his smile by the accurate answer at any place he turned up in the little book, and to give him the proofs beside. Tell them how their grandfathers and grandmothers followed this plan of family education on every Sabbath night at the ingle-side; and how by its simple restoration into every household more good might still be accomplished in our land than national schools with local boards of discordant materials, rich alike with rates and strife, can ever effect. Tell them how it has already been translated into about 10 different languages. Tell them all this, and such as this, and you will find that the children will love their catechism, and delight to learn its answers, and turn their open countenances with delight on you whilst you are explaining its somewhat hard words, and showing its application to the practical life even of a little child. The writer has tried this with success, and never failed in interesting children with the little book, when they knew its history and object. It is a strange fact in the philosophy of mind that children are all antiquaries, and their love of antiquity somewhat diminishes with the increase of their own. What child in reading the Old Testament has not felt a delightful feeling when reading the words: "*And it standeth until this day*"—a yearning to go immediately and see this ancient pillar or other object of Scripture history? And it is difficult and sometimes painful to disabuse the youthful mind by telling them that the "*this day*" is applicable to the time of *writing* and not of *reading* the sacred record. When youth passes into manhood, the stern realities and wants of the *present* engross the mind to the exclusion of both past and future. The *now* is everything. The *has been* and the *shall be* have small place in the thoughts. It is well to lead the youthful mind to go up the stream of time. It leads them to think of the world and mankind as something existing beyond the verge of their little circle of place and time; and, knowing that there has been an interesting and instructive *past*, the mind rebounds into the regions of the *future*, which are dark to all but those who seek the light of the torch of Scripture truth.

In making the Scriptures the standard of Sabbath school teaching, we would urge the propri-