

# THE WESLEYAN.

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"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

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## Poetry.

### CONFESSION OF FAITH.

(By Rev. Charles Wesley.)

On the 4th of November, 1744, when the Wesleyans, Moravians, and Calvinistic Methodists had become so many distinct bodies, they held a "general love-feast" at the Tabernacle in London, when they unitedly sang the following "Confession of Faith." It is a fine specimen of the author's charity and sanctified genius.

"The doctrine of our dying Lord,  
The faith he on Mount Calvary seal'd  
We sign, and every steadfast word  
Within his Testament reveal'd  
We firm believe; and cursed be they,  
Who add thereto, or take away.

"And now before this awful crowd  
Of brethren militant on earth  
Before the first born church of God  
We hearty own the second birth:  
We constantly consent to this,—  
Who hath not Christ is none of his.

"Also to blood we this maintain,  
That none are righteous, no, not one,  
But those for whom the Lamb was slain,  
Who're justified by faith alone:  
And whose in his name believes,  
Himself and all Christ hath received.

"Our works and merits we disclaim,  
We trample on our righteousness;  
Our holiest actions we condemn,  
As dung and dross; and this confess,  
They are but sand; who builds thereon  
Denies and shifts the Corner-Stone.

"No other doctrine dare we bear,  
But Christ alone our Saviour is;  
To all beside we stop our ear,  
And shun as dangerous heresies:  
This truth to death we will proclaim,—  
There is no Saviour but the Lamb!

"He is the only Lord and God,  
The Father of the Three in One!  
His name, dear, righteousness, and blood  
Shall be our glory, this alone:  
His Godhead and his death shall be  
Our song to all eternity.

"On Him we venture all we have,  
Our bodies, souls, and spirits too:  
None will we ask beside to save,  
Nought but the Saviour will we know:  
This we subscribe with heart and hand,  
Resolved through grace by this to stand.

"This now, with heaven's resplendent host,  
We echo through the church's bounds:  
And 'midst the Heathen make our boast  
Of our Redeemer's blood and wounds:  
And loud like many waters join  
To shout the Lamb, the Man divine!

"By this our mark will we be known  
In heaven and in the earth abroad,—  
That every doctrine we disown,  
And every faith, and every god,  
But Christ Emmanuel, and that faith  
Which apprehends his blood and death."

### IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

(Rev. Joseph Stedman, A. M.)

If vigour of intellect decay with physical strength, why do we see this Nestor great in council, and busy in camps at a very advanced age? His hands can throw but a feeble dart, yet the gaicties of youth sport on his temples while amusing the Kings of Greece with the chivalry of his meridian days. "At the east, I Clytemedea overthrew; in wrestling, I Ancæus vanquished." Many of the scripture characters, as those in other histories, have achieved their most brilliant actions in hoary age, and bloomed and flourished like the almond tree when all the leaves were fallen to the ground. Yea, in dying, good men, whom we thought expired, are often seen to revive for a moment, and speak of their future hope in a most affecting and delightful manner. How can a dripping fountain thus augment its stream without rain? How can these expiring tapers brighten up their flames without a fresh supply of oil?

We proceed. If the mind be infantile in infancy, manly in youth, and doting in age, if the mind be material as the body, and grow by the same animal and vegetable food, there must in general be the closest connexion between the strength of the body, and the strength of the mind. Whereas, in cases without number, the contrary is demonstrable. We often see the brightest intellect in a body weak and deformed, while the most powerful men are often so dull and absent, as to be fit for little but scavengers and homogeneous labour. Is there then, in all this wide scale of cases, ground of inference, that the smallest shade of identity of essence subsists between the body and the mind?—Certainly not. The body decays indeed, while its augmentation of infirmities happily goads the mind to vigour of intellect, to the renewal of researches concerning life and death, time and eternity; as a poet has well observed,

"The soul's dark cottage, battered and decay'd,  
Lets in new light through chinks which time has made."

Nor should it escape remark, that if matter be uniform in all her configurations; if every distinct substance be subject to its own laws of solution and reorganization; if heat and cold, moisture and drought, produce the same effects, why does the human mind refuse subjection to any of those laws? Why, for instance, is the memory sometimes so surprisingly retentive, and sometimes so amazingly absent? We can read a book at all times with the same ease, and refer to the sections by the index, why are we then often at so total a loss to decipher the too closely written, or the worm-eaten pages of the brain? Does not this circumstance alone, afford a strong presumptive proof, that the register and the registrar, are beings distinct in essence, and distinct in office? The brain is mechanically fixed as the seat of the soul, the cabinet where the sovereign presides; but the soul is so unconfined, that it can stretch the eye for vision, brace the ear for sound, feel in all the nerves, strike with the arm, run with the feet, while the fancy, leaving earth behind, can launch away beyond the movements of the spheres.

Coincident with these ideas are the afflicted objects we often see, of a body almost truncated, the arms taken off while loading a cannon, the legs shot away by a ball, and yet the unextended soul is whole, and perfect in all its powers. In other instances, we see the sight removed, and yet the John Flamstead, alike stranger to the sight of a problem, or a star, takes the lead of his country in in mathematics and astronomy!—Proofs demonstrative that the mind is not "built up before our eyes by the exercise of the five external senses," but is, on the contrary, the celestial tenant of a perishable habitation.

But all this fine spirit of emulation, so conducive to the happiness of man, and the good of society, is checked and destroyed by the appalling notion, that the mind is annihilated in death. Men who believe in a future state connect all the pleasurable feelings of the heart, and success of enterprise, with the exuberant joys of an immortal hope. What must have been the transports of Columbus on discovering the new continent; of Newton in adjusting the laws of gravity; of Herschel when he perceived the most illustrious planet of our system! On a minor scale, what are the godlike feelings of a benevolent heart that saves a family from perishing by want, of a tar who saves a comrade from sinking in the waves, of a pastor who saves a soul from death? All these, in their several kinds and degrees, feel a pleasure which connects itself with enlargements of eternal delights.

It is the same with regard to works of art, and monuments of illustrious virtues. The splendid temples once raised for the glory of God, and the good of posterity; the writings composed for the instruction of youth; the stately ships which connect the most distant nations in commerce; the canals,

the bridges, and all inventions of art, and discoveries in science, are done with designations to benefit society, and to transfer the laurels of genius to flourish in a future world. The contrary opinions would torporize the human heart, and seal up the soul in the darkness of the polar regions, never again to see the sun.

This hope, ever cherished in the heart of man, forms its grand support under all afflictions and aspects of dissolutions. Am I poor, and overlooked by the world? I have riches of grace and glory laid up in the Lord. Am I pinched with hunger and cold? The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed me, and lead me unto living fountains of water, and wipe away all tears from my eyes. Am I afflicted with pains and wounds? In a little while I shall leave them all in the tomb, and put on immortal youth and beauty. Am I shut up in solitude, and left to suffer alone? I nevertheless belong to the heavenly family, angels are in constant attendance, and will soon convey my spirit to the realms of eternal joy. Let then, the rich man keep his wealth, the courtier guard his rank; let the grass wither, and the flower fade, for God will renovate the whole in the paradise of eternal joy.

Certainly these are the native sentiments of the human heart: sentiments which owe their origin to heaven, and whose consummations must ever bear a conformity to its own law. All men are seeking to be happy, how mistaken sever they may be in the objects of their pursuits. The prince in his splendour, the beggar in his grovelings, the scholar in his books, the profligate in his vice, all in their different ways, seek to shake off misery, and regain felicity. And though it be true, that while seeking it in improper objects they are always disappointed, yet so strong is the propensity, that they renew the hopeless research a thousand and a thousand times.—May we not then infer, from an impulse so powerful, that the All-perfect Being has designations of happiness for his creatures, which cannot be obtained in the present world! The precarious life of man is too short a summer for genius to unfold its powers, and arrive at maturity and perfection.

In our progress of moral and mental improvements, it is requisite to add, that man is very much impeded by the wants and weaknesses of the body. In these endowments he surpasses the brutes, which, in many respects, surpass him in corporeal vigour. Man has neither the eagle's eye, nor the vulture's scent. He has neither the agility nor strength of many animals, nor the clothing which keeps them warm. He is confined to hard and daily labour, which afford little improvement of the mind. Other animals, at the age of puberty, have attained the perfection of their nature, while man, groaning under the weight of years, has but just begun to live. He is daily exposed to the shafts of death, fears of which animals are not conscious, and, in the full career of knowledge, he is arrested by the hand of death. Just as he begins to be consulted for his wisdom, he must leave his plans incomplete, his manuscripts untranscribed, and all his blooming hopes blighted in the bud. And, what is worst of all, while kindling up the spark of hope, that death will rejoin him to a beloved wife, to his parents, to his early companions, and to illustrious men, his medical attendant rings the fatal knell, that "the mind is annihilated in death." What a strange dissonance of sentiment and creed! The physician consigning the whole to the tomb while the patient stretches out his arms to lay hold on immortality, and be disencumbered of the load of flesh and blood!

If this be true, if an unfounded philosophy must supersede revelation, a darkness, a moral darkness, worse than Egyptian, envelops all the hopes of man. Vice and virtue, truth and error, rewards and punishments, exist no more. All the noble and

generous sentiments of the heart are nipped in the bud. Why should this Howard leave his little Eden at home, to unfold the angel face of charity in the prisons of Europe? Why should this Thornton, and this Reynolds, shelter the aged sick and poor; they are surpassed by the kindness of the Hottentot, who cans a council, and kills his father, when he can no longer follow the kraal. Let the artist waste his lamp no more to make worth and beauty survive on the canvass. Let the sculptor cast his tools aside, and no more give us statues in the sublime of action. Let "the poet's eye roll no more in phrenzy," to record the worth of heroes and illustrious men: the worms shall devour his books, and the devastating hand of time shall lay the monuments in the dust.

Ask with seriousness, May not the worst of consequences be averted to society from principles so appalling? When faith is lost, and hope is fled, what may not weak minds do in the hour of temptation! May not this Cato again arm his own hands against himself, on the approach of Caesar to Rome? Fool that he was, though accounted just and wise, Caesar reigned but an hour! And, in our own times, what if the French, groaning under the loss of friends, titles, and estates, had thrown their guilty pistols into the Seine, they might have lived to see the sunshine of order, government, and peace, return to their country. What can we think of the brilliant Madame de S— and her male companion drinking a bottle of brandy in a morning, and then deliberately destroying themselves, in a manner too shocking to be named!

Good men may be afflicted, they may cry, and cry out of wrong, and not be heard. But they hope in a God and a Father, whose justice, however involved in the cloud of unfinished providences, will certainly emerge with meridian lustre, and in glory equal to his wisdom and power. The martyr must rest till the proper time be come to avenge their blood. The exercise of mercy, preceding the final strokes of justice, must allow the wicked a space for repentance." A Boethius may have his character foully aspersed, Chryses, the priest of high thundering Jove, may have his daughter taken off; the whole property of a Job may be swindled away, yet, where human laws cannot reach the culprit, there is an appeal, at the bottom of the heart, to the bar where injured innocence is sure to obtain redress. If earthly tribunals keep the wicked in awe, how much more that awful throne, where neither the intentions nor the actions of the wicked can possibly escape; and where every perfection of the Deity stands engaged, to ensure the rewards of suffering virtue? Without this recourse to the rewards and punishments of a future state, as was the faith of the whole primitive world, we cannot demonstrate the moral perfections of the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth.

Compared with these supports of suffering virtue, systems of infidelity are of no avail in the hour of strong temptation. Their light is a sort of ignis fatuus, which gives no heat, fortitude is borne down, character is lost, and when conscience is overloaded with guilt, the horrors of materialism do but consummate the series of their victims.

### RICHES OF REDEEMING GRACE.

(M. Wesley, A. M.)

You cannot, my brethren, but have remarked Paul's prediction for the term riches, as adapted to convey in the most forcible manner the idea of exuberance or profusion, particularly when descending upon the beneficence of the Deity, or the benefits which flow to us through the mediation of Christ. And how justly are the mercies of the new covenant called "the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Mark their variety. Man is a dependent being. He was so before he lost the glory