

FOR THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.—No. 1.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.—1 Pet. ii. 21.

Our blessed Lord is not only the *Saviour* of sinners, but their *pattern in godliness*. It is undoubtedly the highest excellence in the creature, to be like unto the Creator. In the image of God made he man at first; and since the fall his mercy towards the sons of Adam has been manifested only in bringing them back to the divine image and likeness. Be ye holy, because I am holy. The whole family in heaven and in earth should resemble "The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," who rules over it in love.

An angel might have given as perfect an example of godliness as did our Lord. Those pure and happy spirits of light might any of them have demonstrated to man the beauty and excellence of a life devoted to God in all things. And if barely a perfect example had been all that were needed, we see not why an angel, or even such a human being as Elijah or John the Baptist might not have done all. Still, as I humbly conceive, it would have been deficient in a material point. It would have been wanting in that peculiar power of application to certain feelings of which a thinking being is susceptible, which we may discover in the example of our blessed Lord. In point of dignity and majesty of character, and the air of authority therewith connected, any creature whatever must sink into the merest nothingness in comparison of the Creator and Lord of all. Long would it be remembered were the King from his throne to come in mean appearance among a poor degraded portion of his disloyal subjects, and by his daily conduct teach them a practical lesson in order to raise their moral and intellectual character, and fit them for a place among the nobles of the land, and near to his sacred person. The action would carry with it a power of appeal to the generous part of our nature, which would utterly eclipse the same line of conduct in any subject of the realm. It could lose none of its authority as a command; and it would gain amazingly in other respects,—in reaching the hidden recesses of the soul, where a solitary command could never penetrate. It would fasten its hold upon all that is yielding and relenting in the human heart. It would summon "the blushes of ingenuous shame" from their inmost retreats, in generous suffusion upon the crimsoned cheek of conscious unworthiness. It would seize with lion grasp upon the plumes of rebel pride, and lay his haughty crest in the dust.

All this and more has been effected by him in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, but yet who made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. Though he created all things for his own pleasure, yet it pleased him to assume the garb of the lowest humility, and with all patience under every form of contradiction, to make, in his own person, a striking exhibition of the moral qualifications which in man are most acceptable to himself; and which therefore are the true elements of innocent enjoyment and lasting happiness. A particular class of temper and disposition distinguishes the inhabitants of that happy land where the Lord of Life has established the throne of his glorious dominion. It is his good pleasure that we, who like sheep have gone astray, should be invited to seek the privilege of citizenship among them. In our present tempers and habits we are altogether unfit to be promoted to such distinguished honor. We need not only a *Saviour* from the thrall of our present condition, but an *Instructor* in the manners of the inhabitants of that happy world, before we are capable of relishing its delights and enjoying its privileges. He selects not even his most trusty servants for that end:—Neither cherubim nor seraphim are charged with the commission of teaching his ways to the children of men. Before him had been the law and the prophets; but this "grace and truth" were reserved for him alone. The king himself came to teach the ignorant and reclaim the vicious—and he came too in a mean and despised condition, purposely to transfix the rebel heart of disobedience with the arrows of compunction and remorse, and to point the shafts of self reproach, and to slay the monster pride, and to

awaken the throes of contrition and godly sorrow for sin against so great a Monarch and so kind a friend, and so tender a parent, in the objects of his pity and compassion. Take *my yoke*, saith he, and *learn of me*; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. I upon whose breath hangs suspended the fate of all things, upholding them by the word of my resistless power—I have descended from the bosom of the Eternal Father, to give you an example of humility, and to teach you by familiar intercourse how to become the reconciled friends of your offended maker and repudiated God. Be ye therefore *followers of God* as dear children; and walk in love as *Christ also* hath loved you, and hath given himself for you. As good subjects of the heavenly King, this we are bound to do. The disciple must willingly be *as his master*. How significant was that action of washing his own disciples feet. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life to ransom for many." The ransom were ill bestowed without the pattern of godliness; and the example he adds that the redeemed may learn to be like the Redeemer; that they together may form a fit body for such a glorious head—a fit temple for such a living God!

Christ our Lord is "the *Captain* of our Salvation,"—and we are called to be "soldiers of the cross." The captain of a band of soldiers both commands and leads them. There is no danger which they encounter but he leads the way. Jesus is the believer's leader; and his course lies through trial and suffering. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps." A Christian cannot suffer ail that his Master suffered; but he must follow him *in suffering*. He must look unto Jesus the author of his faith; who for the joy that was set before him despised the shame, enduring the cross. What was this joy? Was it the simple consciousness of overcoming difficulty? No, it was not: but it was the pleasure resulting from his own works of mercy and labor of love in the salvation of sinners. We read it in his acceptance of them in the day of Judgment: Come, ye blessed of my Father, *inherit the kingdom*:—and in his word to the disciples: I go and prepare a place for you, and will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also. The successful general marches in triumph at the head of his brave veterans who together with him have shared the dangers of the field, that with him they may share the glory of conquest. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. They are to reign with the Lamb for ever and ever. But he is faithful on both hands, to himself as well as to us, and to us only as he is faithful to himself as a just sovereign. If we deny him, he also will deny us: he cannot deny himself; because he hath sworn that the unbelievers shall not enter into his rest. His promise even under oath is subject to a revocation with those who will not keep his covenant, and think upon his commandments to do them.

Our redemption has cost him dearly; and therefore our *salvation* must cost us something. He chooses that there should be a mutual suffering;—he for our sakes, we for his; he out of love and mercy, in that while we were yet sinners he died for us; we out of *gratitude* to him to whom we are so amazingly indebted. True gratitude is all,—all that he requires of us; for that is the sum total of all the faith we can have, of all the good works we can perform. But this gratitude, the price of our salvation, the only fee that he asks of us, must also cost us something;—must cost us self-denial, and the bearing of his cross. And so in the end, when his suffering mercy shall be repaid by our suffering gratitude,—then shall we understand the sublime mystery of "the *fellowship* of his sufferings;" for they who thus suffer together shall rejoice together; and the fellowship of suffering shall be regarded as the corner stone of the foundation of the fellowship of heavenly joy. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations: and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." David said "I will not worship God with that which shall cost me nothing." In imitation of David, the generous-hearted disciple will say: "I will not desire to wear the crown which my Saviour has purchased for my benefit with his 'agony and bloody sweat,' unless it also cost me at least a short trial of